

Graduate Handbook **Master in Latin American Studies at the University of Florida (MALAS)**

The UF Center for Latin American Studies is among the oldest and highest-ranked centers in the world. The renowned richness of the Center's academic programs is sustained through dialogue among faculty and students with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities. Students pursuing a Master in Latin American Studies (MALAS) degree collaborate with 200 core and affiliate faculty members from the humanities, social and natural sciences, and professional schools to develop individual programs of study that integrate courses selected from across the university. MALAS graduates are employed in educational and research institutions, international organizations, government agencies, and private businesses across the Americas; many continue their studies in Ph.D. programs.

This handbook is designed to:

- Guide students to advance through MALAS studies knowing the expectations and benchmarks of their degree program.
- Support faculty in positive experiences advising MALAS students by clearly defining responsibilities of advisors and expectations for students in thesis, internship, and capstone projects.
- Promote consensus and constructive collaboration between students and committee members, and among committee members from diverse academic programs across the university.
- Assure consistency of expectations and procedures, starting with the introductory course on *Issues and Perspectives* through successful defense of culminating projects and graduation.

Information on other graduate programs at UF Center for Latin American Studies:

- [Master in Sustainable Development Practice](#) (MDP)
- Graduate Certificate in [Latin American Studies](#)
- Graduate Certificate in [Sustainable Development Practice](#) (SDP)
- Graduate Certificate in [Tropical Conservation and Development](#) (TCD)

Sections of this Handbook:

1. MALAS Academic Program
 - 1.1. Curriculum for Master of Arts Degree
 - 1.2. Certificates and Combined Degrees
 - 1.3 Graduation and degree application
 - 1.4 Academic standing
 - 1.5 Calendar of required events
 - 1.6 Initial proposal for master's project
2. Thesis Guidelines
 - 2.1 Standard THESIS timeline
 - 2.2 Thesis proposal & meeting

- 2.3 Thesis plan & meeting
- 2.4 Written thesis
- 2.5 General criteria for assessing thesis
- 2.6 Present and defend the thesis
- 2.7 Responsibilities of the thesis committee
- 3. Internship Guidelines
 - 3.1 Standard INTERNSHIP timeline
 - 3.2 Responsibilities of the student
 - 3.3 Responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisory committee
 - 3.4 Responsibilities of the host agency or institution
- 4. Capstone Project Guidelines
 - 4.1 Standard CAPSTONE timeline
 - 4.2 Responsibilities of the student
 - 4.3 Responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisory committee
- 5. Final Oral Exam (presentation and defense of graduate project)
- 6. University of Florida Resources and Policies
- 7. Student Funding

1. MALAS Academic Program

1.1 Curriculum for the Master of Arts Degree

Requirements for the Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (MALAS) at UF

- Earn 30 graduate credit hours, fulfilling distribution requirements listed below
- Demonstrate advanced proficiency in Portuguese, Spanish, or intermediate proficiency in Haitian Creole
- Complete an interdisciplinary specialization of 12 credit hours
- Produce and successfully defend a thesis, internship, or capstone project

Course distribution requirements

6 hours of gateway seminars

- LAS 6293 Research Design and Methods in Latin American Studies
- LAS 6220 Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies

At least 15 of the 30 credits earned must be in courses listed as LAS

Thesis students register for 3 credits of LAS 6971 in the semester of graduation (2 credits if summer)

Internship and Capstone students register for 3 credits of LAS 6949 in any semester

*Neither LAS 6949 nor LAS 6971 counts towards degree credit (that is, the 15 LAS credits must be additional). These can also be achieved through Independent Study courses.

MALAS specializations

Specializations foster connection and collaboration around shared interests among current and prospective UF faculty and students, and help graduate students and advisors to navigate the vast

and constantly shifting curricular landscape supporting Latin American Studies at UF. Each MALAS student works with a specialization coordinator to fulfill requirements in one of 13 interdisciplinary specializations. A specialization consists of four courses (12 credits). Selection of specialization courses should be done in consultation with the thesis/internship/capstone advisor. The student is responsible for the courses that count toward the specialization and informing Po Echeguren before graduation. Please note that your specialization will not be listed on your transcript or diploma. This is an internal requirement that will be recognized by a certificate of completion. Students may complete a maximum of two specializations with their advisor's consent. In this case, a maximum of one course can count for both specializations. To see curricula, associated courses, and engaged faculty, click on each specialization at this [link](#).

Please Note: These are in the process of being updated during the academic year 2023-2024.

Andean Studies
Arts, Literature and Culture
Brazilian Studies
Caribbean Studies
Crime, Law, and Governance in the Americas
Development Studies and Economic Analysis
Education in the Americas
Race, Diaspora, Gender and Sexuality
Indigenous Studies
International Communications
Latin American Business Environment
Latinx Studies, Migration & Transnational Studies
Latin American Politics
Tropical Conservation and Development

Language requirements

Students must demonstrate advanced reading, writing, and speaking proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese, or intermediate proficiency in Haitian Creole or another creole or indigenous language of the region, either through coursework or an oral proficiency exam. We request that the student has an oral or written exam with Dr. Emily Hind who is recognized as fluent in the language, and who will afterwards provide a written note attesting to the student's fluency during the third semester. To schedule an appointment, or if you have any questions regarding the exam, you can reach Dr. Hind at ehind@ufl.edu. Study of a second Latin American language is encouraged.

Thesis, internship, or capstone projects

Procedures and expectations for each type of culminating graduate project are described in sections below. Thesis papers completed by MALAS students can be found at [UF library](#), listed from newest to oldest. Starting in 2019, Capstone and Internship papers are also archived with LACC after being submitted to Po Echeguren.

1.2 Combined degrees and graduate certificates

In a combined degree program, a [BA or a BS plus an MA](#) degree can be completed in five years.

A joint [MALAS/JD degree](#) is offered in collaboration with the UF Levin College of Law.

Simultaneously with MALAS, students may pursue one of 120 [graduate certificates](#) offered at UF in topics such as Tropical Conservation and Development, Global Health, Digital Humanities, Public Affairs, Gender and Development, and Sustainable Development Practice.

1.3 Graduation and degree application

During the semester in which graduation is expected, a student pursuing the thesis option MUST enroll in LAS 6971 (even if that student has already earned credits in LAS 6971). If graduation is spring or fall, 3 credits of LAS 6971 are required; for summer graduations, 2 credits are required.

All degree candidates must complete online degree applications via ONE.UF early in the term in which they expect to graduate (regardless of applications in previous terms). Deadlines are usually in September for fall graduation, January for spring graduation, and April for summer graduation. All degree requirements must be completed before the date of certification. Go to <https://student.ufl.edu/>, select My Record, then Certificate/Degree Application from the left menu.

1.4 Academic standing

Satisfactory scholarship is defined as maintaining a B average (GPA: 3.00). Students with less than a 3.00 GPA may not hold an assistantship or fellowship. In order to graduate with a MALAS degree, students need an overall GPA of 3.00 truncated (i.e. a 2.99 GPA will not be rounded up to a 3.00). If progress toward completing the program is unsatisfactory to the academic unit, college, or Dean of the Graduate School, a graduate student may be denied further registration.

1.5 Calendar of required events

- Each August the Center holds a series of orientation and welcome events in August. New and returning students are required to attend relevant events with invites sent via Outlook.
- New students participate in a mid-term check-in during their first semester in the program by scheduling a one-on-one meeting with Dr. Korsant by October of their first semester.
- Each Fall all MALAS students in any semester of the program attend a workshop on thesis, internship, and capstone projects.
- Each Spring second year MALAS students who received FRG funding are required to present at the Fieldwork Festival and a related workshop on field research, but all students from both years are encouraged to attend and participate.

For exact dates on events and deadlines, look at the Center's [Calendar](#) to keep up-to-date.

1.6 Initial proposal for master's project

Deeper understandings of the interdisciplinary field of LAS developed in the required course *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies* further enrich visions and plans for master's

projects. During semester one, each student develops an **initial proposal** for a thesis, internship, or capstone project. The proposal is a living document that develops throughout the course of studies, adapting to changing ideas, circumstances, and opportunities. In a methodology course (LAS 6293) required during the second semester, students work with their advisors to develop thesis, internship, or capstone **proposals** that gain advisors' signatures. In many cases, students adapt these proposals to apply for field research grant competitions and IRB approval.

Form and length of initial proposals vary; they are generally 2000–4000 words long and include the following content:

- Title
- Identification of phenomenon or issue to be studied
- Research question(s): what does the project seek to discover or understand?
- Purpose(s): what will findings/products contribute (to science, to society, to a specific debate)?
- Interdisciplinary character of the project and relevance to the field of Latin American Studies
- Methods and instruments to be used (e.g., surveys, archival research, participatory action research, ethnoecology tools, literary analysis, focus groups, ethnographic observation, data or discourse analysis, mapping)
- How does methodological approach support topic, questions, context?
- Statement of own positionality as researcher and intellectual
- Description of collaborating organization(s), actors, or institution(s), as relevant
- Definition of key concepts
- Theories or approaches to be applied in analyzing findings and answering research questions
- Areas of literature to be studied
- Spatiotemporal parameters of topic (historical period, geographic location, population of study)
- Spatiotemporal frame of activities (where and when student's masters project activities will be carried out)
- Tentative description of final product (thesis, internship paper, capstone presentation)
- Strategy for disseminating findings and outcomes to appropriate audiences

2. Thesis Option Guidelines

2.1 Standard THESIS timeline

Most students complete MALAS coursework in four semesters on campus. The following sample timeline represents the common paths of completing in four (rather than three) semesters, recognizing that individual timelines will vary.

Each thesis project is guided by a thesis committee with at least three members, including a thesis advisor who serves as chair of that committee, and who must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status,

and at least one other member with LAS Graduate Faculty Status. Roles and responsibilities for each member are described in section 2.7.

Thesis students should contact librarians in the Latin American and Caribbean Collection for assistance in locating sources and generating bibliographies. All LAS theses use evidence-based writing and must cite, summarize and comment on literature consulted.

Example plan for completing MALAS degree with thesis in 4 semesters

Semester 1	Enroll in LAS 6220 <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i>
	Meet with several faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of thesis committee
	Explore topics, approaches and methods. Draft an initial research proposal following procedures in methods course
	Thesis advisor/committee chair appointed before end of semester. Ask Po Echeguren to register advisor in university system.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Semester 2	Enroll in LAS 6293 <i>Design and Methods of Research</i>
By midterm	Committee members selected (minimum 2 members, in addition to chair)
By midterm	Submit proposals to competition for field research funding, if relevant
By midterm	Obtain IRB approval, apply for visa , if relevant. IRB approvals can take several months. Check early with the IRB office to discover if the research country is likely to require extended approval time (for example: Brazil)
By end of term	Develop a research proposal , gain approval and signature from advisor; file signed document with Po Echeguren
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Summer (Between Semester 2 and 3)	Conduct MA Thesis Project. Carry out research related to thesis, either in field, library, or other. Prepare thesis plan to present to thesis committee
Semester 3	Students may enroll in LAS 6971 Master's Research 1-3 credits with advisor for the purpose of working on aspects of the thesis, but this is not required. A better option in some cases will be Independent Study.
Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss thesis plan , sign approval form. After approval, file document and form with Po Echeguren
Month 2	Check Graduate School requirements and deadlines to graduate next semester
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Semester 4	Students who plan to graduate this semester MUST enroll in LAS 6971 . If the student has completed 27 credits, only 3 credits of LAS 6971 are required to graduate in the final semester (2 credits in summer).
Month 1	Submit complete draft of thesis to advisor; with advisor approval, set defense date with committee. Students must obtain required forms from the grad school before the defense, and double check final submission deadlines for their thesis.

Month 1	Any Incomplete grades need to be resolved and a grade change form submitted by the instructor
Before midterm	Send thesis to committee at least 10 days before defense
By midterm	Thesis defense with committee in time to submit form signed by all committee members to Po Echeguren AND to revise thesis in time to submit before “Master’s Thesis First Submission” deadline for graduation
UF due date set around midterm	Submit thesis to UF Graduate School, following Master’s Thesis Submission Checklist
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan

2.2 Thesis proposal & meeting

Usually in semester two, student develops a detailed proposal for research, building on initial proposal described above. All committee members should be consulted, and a **proposal** approval form must be signed by the chair and filed with Po Echeguren.

2.3 Thesis plan & meeting

The **thesis plan**, developed after most research has been carried out, updates all content listed above for a thesis proposal, with the addition of an outline for written thesis and a writing plan with deadlines. A thesis plan should provide tentative titles for planned chapters and identify issues and questions to be addressed in each, report methods used to date, describe materials and findings obtained, and specify the contribution the thesis is intended to make. Thesis plans are generally 4000 to 6000 words long.

Usually, the first month of semester three, each student presents a thesis plan to all committee members and arranges a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of the present MALAS thesis guidelines. Students are also responsible for obtaining bringing copies of the [MALAS Proposal Approval Form](#) from Po Echeguren to bring to the meeting.

This meeting provides a forum for student, chair, and other committee members to reflect together on research findings, to assess strategies for developing the written thesis, and to establish consensus on plans for ongoing research and writing. Student and committee members look together at the proposed thesis outline and discuss various options for organizing ideas and materials. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and sign the approval form, a copy of the plan and signed form are stored by Po Echeguren in the student’s file.

2.4 Written thesis

A MALAS thesis demonstrates the ability to conceive a research question, identify and utilize literature from various sources, carry out primary research, analyze data or materials, and make a persuasive argument in clear prose. The thesis should make an original contribution to the field of Latin American Studies.

Elements usually included in a master's thesis (not necessarily organized in this order)

Title

Abstract (approximately 200 words, no references cited)

Acknowledgements (optional)

Table of contents

Introduction

- Topic
- Research question(s)
- Context of study: geographic, political, socio-economic, etc.
- Statement of own positionality as researcher and intellectual
- Very brief summary of main findings
- Roadmap guiding readers through the thesis

Framework of study

- Research design
- Approach or theories that guide work
- Key concepts developed and applied in the thesis
- Methodological instruments developed and applied to gather material
- Justification of instruments selected and methodological approach
- Analytic approaches to analyzing and interpreting findings

Body (elements may be organized and interconnected in numerous ways)

- Reflection on literature pertinent to the topic, approach and context
- Presentation of research findings
- Discussion or interpretation of findings

Conclusion

- Summary of answer to research question(s)
- Contribution of the study to science and/or to society

Bibliography

Technical requirements

Most MALAS theses have ranged between 16,000 and 36,000 words (70 to 150 pages double-spaced, including bibliography and appendices). However, there is no established minimum or maximum length.

Each thesis should carefully follow one of three major writing and citation styles. Work in social studies most commonly uses Chicago Manual of Style (CMS); work in humanities tends to use the Modern Language Association (MLA); and behavioral sciences might choose the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide. [Purdue Owl](#) provides excellent quick guides to all three styles. UF libraries offers access from your computer to [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).

UF has its own set of [technical regulations](#) for master's and doctoral theses (procedures, formatting, style guides) and it is more efficient to start a thesis with the UF template than to adjust it at the end. Throughout the year, UF offers workshops on Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Submissions.

2.5 General criteria for assessing thesis (will vary by thesis, topic, committee members)

Composition of paper

- Purpose of study and research questions are stated in the beginning of the thesis and addressed at the end.
- Subject is clearly demarcated, and the data collected are thoroughly described.
- Contents are organized according to logical structure evident in the table of contents and subheadings.
- Identifies, cites, and shows connections with relevant scholarly literature.
- Demonstrates that research questions are significant and that findings contribute to a stated purpose.

Methodology

- Research is carried out with sound and well-designed methods.
- A variety of instruments are applied; preferably including both qualitative and quantitative dimensions.
- Instruments used, and processes of applying each, are explicitly described.
- Advantages and limitations of selected methods and instruments are discussed.
- If appropriate, specific research instruments and findings are included in appendices.

Theoretical perspective

- There is a clear expression of the author's own positionality in terms of identity and theory.
- Work goes beyond description to apply explicitly identified concepts and theories, and to develop original analysis or interpretation.
- Approaches or ideas developed in different academic disciplines are applied and combined in new ways to address issues relevant to interdisciplinary Latin American Studies.
- Theses may draw on material, methods, and theories from the humanities, social sciences and/or natural sciences, and from professional schools such as health, communications, agronomy, and law.

Reference to relevant research and literature

- Literature presented and applied in the thesis includes readings in MALAS coursework.
- Publications on the topic of study, on the selected theoretical and methodological approach(es), and on the geographic region(s) are identified and discussed.
- Thesis brings together literature from multiple disciplines, by authors representing diverse (ethnoracial, gender, national, theoretical) positions, and includes foreign language publications and other sources outside of US-based academic literature.

Research results

- The thesis presents original results generated with appropriate methods.
- Sufficient and reliable material is gathered via field research and/or the study of documents, databases, web material, or other sources.
- The thesis complements and contextualizes primary material with secondary data (e.g., demographic, or geographical information; economic statistics; climate records; information from scholarly, scientific and government sources).

Critical thinking

- The phenomenon of study is illuminated from more than one perspective.
- The author, subjects, concepts, theories, approaches to critical scrutiny and gives attention to the socio-historical context and origins of each.

Style and presentation

- A clear distinction is made between review of prior literature, presentation of new findings, and author's analysis or interpretation.
- Punctuation in text references and bibliography follows chosen style guidelines.
- Tables and figures are clearly labeled and interpreted in the text.

2.6 Present and defend the thesis

With advisor's approval, the student schedules a public presentation and defense, and sends the written thesis to all committee members at least ten days in advance. As detailed in section 5, each thesis student makes a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student's thesis committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies.

2.7 Responsibilities of the thesis committee

Thesis Advisor / Thesis Committee Chair

The faculty member who serves as advisor and chair of a thesis committee must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status. The advisor is responsible for accompanying the student through three main milestones: research proposal 2nd semester, thesis plan 3rd semester, and thesis defense and submission 4th semester. At each stage, the advisor reads a paper prepared by advisee, discusses it in a meeting, and signs a form documenting approval. The advisor serves as chair to the full thesis committee, which convenes at meetings for the thesis plan and the thesis defense.

Thesis Committee Members

Each thesis committee must have at least three members, including the student's advisor, and at least one other member with LAS Graduate Faculty Status. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of the research and written thesis in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the thesis, and on the final paper. All members participate in at least two formal meetings: to discuss the plan for the thesis (usually early semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense.

3 Internship Option Guidelines

Internships related to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx in the US offer valuable opportunities for applied and practical learning. The Center supports experience working with an array of organizations in ways that inform and deepen classroom study and open career possibilities.

Written agreements assure that students, host agencies, faculty supervisor, and graduate advisor agree on explicit expectations and procedures. Before embarking on a project, a student must obtain approval of a [Plan of Internship](#) with a signature from the graduate advisor, the UF Faculty Instructor of Record, and the organization or institution with which the student will collaborate (hereafter referred to as the “host agency”). Then, these participants collaboratively develop an [Internship Agreement](#) that demonstrates the project’s relation to Latin American, Caribbean, or Latinx Studies; describes the bulk of the work as substantive and non-clerical; and indicates whether the work is paid or unpaid. A representative of the agency providing the opportunity assumes responsibility to oversee the internship and submits a written evaluation to the instructor of record.

3.1 Standard INTERNSHIP timeline

Most students complete MALAS coursework in four semesters on campus. This timeline represents the four-semester path, recognizing that individual timelines will vary.

Semester 1	Enroll in LAS 6220 <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i>
Before or beginning of semester	Meet with several faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of internship committee
	Explore topics, approaches and methods for internship, draft an initial proposal for internship project and report including conceptual framework and methods
	Supervisory Faculty Member/committee chair appointed before end of semester. Ask Po Echeguren to register Supervisor in university system.
By end of term	Begin applying to internships (Note: deadlines generally range from December to March)
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Semester 2	Enroll in LAS 6293 <i>Design and Methods of Research</i>
By midterm	Committee selected (minimum 1 member in addition to supervisor)
	If relevant, submit proposals for funding
	Recommended: Have a contingency plan in case internships, funding, or accommodations do not work out in the form of a capstone or thesis. Prepare by having a research question or framework and applying for FRG funding
By midterm	Develop a Plan of Internship and Internship Agreement . Gain approval and signature from the host agency, supervising faculty, and graduate advisor; file documents with Po Echeguren
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan

Summer (Between semester 2 & 3)	Carry out internship (timing and intensity will vary)
Semester 3 Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss plan for internship paper , sign approval form; after approval, file document and form with Po Echeguren
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Semester 4	Option to enroll in additional credits of LAS 6949, or LAS 6905 for students needing extra time to finish internship paper. If the student has completed 27 credits, only 3 credits of LAS 6949 or LAS 6905 is required to graduate in the final semester (2 credits in summer).
Month 1	Any Incomplete grades need to be resolved and a grade change form submitted by the instructor
Month 2 or 3	Gain supervisor's approval of draft, then schedule defense
Month 3	Send internship paper to committee at least 10 days before defense
Defense is completed at least one month before end of term	Internship paper defense with committee in time to submit revised copy and complete paperwork in GIMS system before final submission date for graduation
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan

3.2 Responsibilities of the student

Find an internship

Students may explore internship options on their own or pursue possibilities via connections maintained by the Center for Latin American Studies through local, state, national and international networks and alumni linkages. Students should send cover letters and CVs to potential partners and arrange for interviews. The faculty supervisor and graduate coordinator may assist in the process and must approve arrangements before they are implemented. Information about internship possibilities can be found at [UF Center for Latin American Studies](#), [UF Career Resource Center](#), [UT-Austin Enlace Career Center](#), and other sources.

Establish a committee

Each student will form a supervisory committee consisting of one supervising faculty member (hereafter referred to as “supervisor”) and one or more additional faculty members. At least one committee member must hold Graduate Faculty Status in Latin American Studies. In most cases, the supervisor will serve as instructor of record for internship credits.

Gain approval on internship plan and internship agreement

A student works with supervisor and host agency to develop a written [plan for internship](#), and to draft a [formal internship agreement](#). Using forms linked here, the student obtains signature of Host Agency Supervisor, UF Faculty Instructor of Record, and Graduate Coordinator, then submits signed copy to Po Echeguren.

Record experiences in journal and prepare two reports

- Keep a daily or weekly journal, including a log of activities, together with comments and questions.
- Midway through the internship period, prepare and submit a 3-5 page progress report.
- At the end of the internship, submit a longer report to the UF instructor of record.

Develop an internship paper plan (usually third semester)

Make a tentative outline for paper, and sketch ideas about possible contents in each section. Plan strategically to incorporate, and to build on, journal entries, internship reports, and other materials produced during internship. Internship paper plans are generally 1500-3000 words long. The following outline may be adapted to each unique internship project.

Internship paper content

Introduction

- Character and purpose of internship
- Statement of own positionality informing choice and approach to internship
- When, where, with whom internship was carried out
- What was learned? Why is the experience important?
- Outline to guide reader through the rest of internship paper

Background on topic(s) and context(s) drawn from literature

- Literature presented, applied, and discussed should include selections from MALAS course readings.
- Key ideas and debates in the literature about the **topic** of your internship (e.g. immigrant needs, environmental protection, women's rights, literacy campaign, business policy, Latinx fraternities).
- Information in the literature about the **context** of your internship (e.g. rural Guatemala, Chicago immigrant neighborhood, post-conflict Colombia, youth scene in Lima). Some of the following may be relevant, among others:
 - Country/region/city where you worked
 - Socio-economic characteristics and issues
 - Demographic profile
 - Socioeconomic data
 - Geographical characteristics of location
 - Historical considerations
 - Political and cultural conditions and traditions
 - Considerations relating to class, gender, sexuality, or ethnoracial identities and relations
 - Environmental concerns and issues
 - Primary sources of employment and production
 - Market linkages or lack thereof
 - Aspects of policy and regulatory framework, including tenure

The Internship

- Describe the host agency.
 - Mission (if possible, quote agency's own mission statement)
 - Organization
 - Employees and volunteers
 - Stakeholders
 - Practical activities, objectives and operations
 - Background history
 - Position or politics of the organization
- Describe the student's internship goals and assignment, including anticipated products.
- Describe practices and methods used while carrying out the internship.
- Justify methodological approach and activities chosen.
- Testimony of notable experiences.
- Identify key challenges and accomplishments.

Interdisciplinary analysis

Connect ideas and context information from the literature with information gathered and experiences gained during the internship:

- What did you learn about the **topic** of the internship?
- What did you learn about the **context** of the internship?
- What did you learn about the approach of and challenges faced by the **agency or program**?
- Challenges faced in **student's** individual efforts
- **Questions raised** by experiences, by the literature, and by relations between them
- Connections with issues and approaches in **Latin American Studies**

Conclusion

- Sum up what was learned
- How student was changed by the experience
- Impact of internship on host agency
- Contributions to scholarship and/or society
- Strategy for disseminating results or findings to appropriate audiences

Bibliography

- List all published literature on topic and context that you have cited or quoted.
- List grey literature that you have cited or quoted (paper or web-based materials produced by host agency or other organizations, not formally published).
 - Mission statements
 - Planning or evaluation documents
 - Research reports
 - Educational materials

Present internship paper plan to committee

The meeting to plan the internship paper, usually held early in semester 3, provides a forum for student, supervisor, and other committee member(s) to reflect together on lessons learned and plans for writing the paper. The plan includes description and data on the internship experience, together with proposed outline of paper, and writing plan with deadlines. Each student gives an internship paper plan to all members of the committee and arranges a meeting to discuss. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of these MALAS internship guidelines. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and approve the plan, a signed copy is stored in the student's file.

Write a final internship paper

Design and styles may vary, yet each paper should cover the points identified above under *internship paper plan*. Final papers range from 6,000-10,000 words. This paper should follow writing standards described in Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), including citation style and bibliography. UF Libraries offers online access to [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), and [Purdue Owl](#) provides an abbreviated guide.

Present and defend the internship paper

With supervisor's approval, the student will schedule a defense, and send the internship paper to all committee members at least a week in advance. As detailed in section 5, each internship student will make a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student's supervisory committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies.

3.3 Responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisory committee

Supervisor

- May assist the student with identifying and securing an internship opportunity.
- May consult with the host agency supervisor regarding expected duties.
- Approves a Plan of Internship before implementation begins.
- Serves as Instructor of Record for internship credits in LAS 6949.
- Maintains regular contact with the student and the host agency supervisor throughout the internship.
- Requires submission of journal entries and a mid-term progress report and responds to these documents while student is still carrying out internship.
- Requires submission of an internship report soon after internship activities are finished.
- Submits a grade of S or U, based on the report of the host agency supervisor, and a review of the student's journal, mid-semester report, and final report.
- Presides over two formal meetings with student and committee: one to discuss the plan for the internship paper, and one final oral exam in which the project and paper are defended and assessed.

Supervisory committee

Consists of a supervisor and at least one other faculty member; one member of the committee must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status in LAS. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of internship plan in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the internship paper, and on the final paper. All members meet two times: to discuss the PLAN for the internship paper (usually semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense.

3.4 Responsibilities of the host agency or institution

A representative of the agency usually interviews the potential intern by telephone, Skype or in person, and may also talk with faculty supervisor or graduate coordinator, who together approve the proposed internship. By accepting an intern, an agency commits to provide educational experiences within the agency's ongoing work, and also to allow and support the intern to work on a specific project or issue. The agency assigns responsibility for supervision of the intern to a specific individual who, at the end of the internship period, submits a written review assessing performance of the agreed duties. The host agency may provide wages, reimbursement for travel, or other remuneration while the student is on internship. These arrangements are agreed upon by agency and intern and written into the Internship Agreement.

4 Capstone Project Option Guidelines

The capstone option provides students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills acquired through the program to a specific need or issue related to Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinx. The Center supports a wide array of projects that inform and deepen classroom study, including but not limited to: community-based initiatives, architectural models, design-build projects, program evaluations or grant proposals for non-profits/NGOs, website construction, journalistic articles, exhibit catalogues, and creative works of art (e.g., exhibition, video, documentary, performance, creative writing). A capstone project allows a student to demonstrate the ability to plan and complete a significant professional and creative work, demonstrating both vision and competence to prospective employers.

In conjunction with design and realization of a capstone project, students are required to prepare three documents, and to discuss these with advisors and committee members, following guidelines provided below. In dialogue with the evolving project, students prepare a written capstone proposal early in the process; a written capstone plan partway through the process; and a final capstone paper. These three documents represent evolving stages of a text that defines the project and context, describes the method and process in detail, reviews relevant literature, reflects independent research and analysis, and shows how the project makes an original contribution to knowledge and society.

4.1 Standard CAPSTONE timeline

Most students complete MALAS coursework in four semesters on campus. This timeline represents the four-semester path, recognizing that individual timelines will vary.

Semester 1	Enroll in LAS 6220 <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i>
	Meet with faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of capstone committee
	Explore topics, approaches, and methods for capstone project, draft a proposal for project including conceptual framework and methods
	Supervisory Faculty Member/committee chair appointed before end of semester. Ask Po Echeguren to register Supervisor in university system.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Semester 2	Enroll in LAS 6293 <i>Design and Methods of Research</i>
By mid-term	Committee selected (minimum 1 member in addition to supervisor) appointed by midterm
	If relevant, submit proposals for funding
	Develop a Capstone Proposal . Gain approval and signature from supervising faculty, graduate advisor, and relevant partners; file documents with Po Echeguren
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Summer (Semester between 2 and 3)	Carry out capstone project (timing will vary)
Semester 3	Prepare Capstone Plan , gain advisor approval, submit to committee members ten days before meeting
Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss Capstone Plan, sign approval form; after approval, file document and form with Po Echeguren
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan
Semester 4	Option to enroll in additional hours of LAS 6949 or LAS 6905 for students needing extra time to finish capstone project. If the student has completed 27 credits, only 3 credits of LAS 6949 or LAS 6905 are required to graduate in the final semester (2 credits in summer).
Month 1	Any Incomplete grades need to be resolved and a grade change form submitted by the instructor
Month 2 or 3	Gain supervisor's approval of draft, then schedule defense
Month 3	Send paper to committee at least 10 days before defense
Defense is completed at least one month before end of term	Capstone project presentation and paper defense with committee in time to submit revised copy and complete paperwork in GIMS system before final submission date for graduation
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan

4.2 Responsibilities of the student

Forge a capstone project idea

Students may explore capstone options on their own or pursue connections maintained by the Center for Latin American Studies through local, state, national and international networks and

alumni linkages. Students should send cover letters and CVs to potential partners and sponsors and arrange Skype or live meetings. Faculty supervisor and graduate coordinator may assist in the process and must formally approve of the project proposed.

Establish a committee

Each student will form a supervisory committee consisting of one supervising faculty member (hereafter referred to as “supervisor”) and one or more additional faculty members. At least one committee member must hold graduate faculty status in Latin American Studies. In most cases, the supervisor will serve as instructor of record for required 3 credits of LAS 6949 (additional credits up to 6 total are optional).

Develop a capstone proposal (usually second semester)

A proposal of around 1500-2500 words, developed early in the process, presents a preliminary vision, justification, and plan for a capstone project. The capstone plan and the final capstone paper will build on this proposal, enriching original sections and reporting on implementation and outcome of the project. The proposal should include a discussion of which target audience the student hopes to reach, and of desired and potential impacts. Provide the background that shows the proposed project will be useful to and/or needed by the intended audience. For instance, a proposal to write a series of newspaper articles about problems faced by Puerto Rican hurricane refugees in Florida would include statistics about the numbers of such refugees in Florida, descriptions of the problems faced by refugees, challenges they create for local governments, identification of relevant legislation and agencies, etc.

Elements to be addressed in the capstone proposal (and developed further in the capstone paper)

Short introduction

- Character and purpose of capstone project
- Student’s capstone goals, including anticipated/finished products
- When, where, with whom the project will be/was carried out
- What will be/was learned? Why is the experience important?
- Outline to guide reader through the rest of the paper

Purpose and need

Clearly identify the issue, problem, or opportunity addressed by the capstone project, and explain why the project will be valuable for a specific audience (profession, organization, social group, and/or industry). Describe and analyze the situation by gathering information from sources such as:

- Meetings with sponsors, clients, and other stakeholders who may be involved in the project
- Information from experts on the issue, publications, media, as well as other stakeholders

- Site visits conducted to obtain sense of the context and to talk with and/or observe environment and people involved in the issue, problem, or opportunity

Conceptual framework and questions

Introduce key ideas and show how these are defined and applied in the project. Identify theories, principles, movements that motivate and inform the approach of the project.

Review of literature and other sources

Report and synthesize secondary research relevant to project. Make connections with select readings from MALAS courses. Comment on and critique what is known and not known about the project idea. Draw on literature to establish background on project and context (geographical, cultural, political, economic, etc.). Relevant trade and/or academic literature may include:

- Scholarly articles and books
- Trade and professional literature
- Projects similar to the one proposed
- Reviews of completed projects similar to the one proposed
- Historical archives
- Media articles and video clips
- Records of organizations and people involved
- Legislation, program descriptions and examples, administrative reports and memoranda, Web sites

Methodology

Map out primary research for the planning and execution of the project, and outline the steps involved in the design, production, and presentation of the project itself. Describe details of the method(s) and justify why the method you choose is the most appropriate for planning and designing the project. Discuss advantages, disadvantages, and strategies to address limitations.

Address those relevant to research and design of project:

- Preliminary research
- Description of population engaged, and justification for type of sample and population chosen
- Development of instruments for gathering observations and information
- Description of data coding and analysis
- Findings expected, or found

Address those relevant to implementation of project:

- Activities
- Timeline—which activities will be performed and when completion is expected
- Budget—dollar figures for equipment, supplies, and technical assistance
- Funding—who is responsible for payment of expenses
- Description of the final form of the project, e.g., visual, audio, multimedia, built

- Legal issues such as copyright, use of trademarks, proprietary information from clients, sponsors, distribution of royalties, as relevant

Presentation and dissemination of outcome

Plans for presentation to master's committee at UF. Plans for presentation or dissemination to the public, intended audience, partners, clients and/or sponsors. Make clear where the project outcome will be available and how to access it.

Bibliography

- List all literature on topic and context that you have cited or quoted.
 - List grey literature that you have cited or quoted.

Capstone plan & meeting

The capstone plan, developed after the project has been initiated, updates all content listed above for a capstone proposal, with the addition of a schedule with dates for finishing and presenting project, and an outline of the written capstone paper. Capstone plans are generally 2000 to 5000 words long.

Usually during the first month of semester 3, each student presents a written capstone plan to all committee members and arranges a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of MALAS capstone guidelines. Students are also responsible for obtaining from Po Echeguren Capstone Plan Approval Form, and bringing copies to the meeting.

This meeting provides a forum for student and committee members to reflect together on project activities to date, to assess strategies for developing the written paper, and to establish consensus on plans for completion of project. Student and committee members look together at proposed table of contents and discuss various options for organizing ideas and materials. After committee members meet, make suggestions, and sign the approval form, a copy of the Capstone Plan and signed form are stored in the student's file.

Carry out capstone project, earn credits

Students should sign up for minimum of 3 credits of LAS 6949 during a semester in which work on capstone is underway (if that is summer, credits may be earned the following semester). Additional credits may be earned in LAS 6949, up to 6 total. A UF faculty member is registered as instructor of record and will grade the capstone on a S/U basis.

Write capstone paper

Capstone projects must be accompanied by final papers, which range from 4,000-8,000 words long, including bibliography, and follow writing standards described in *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS), including citation and bibliography style. UF Libraries offers online access [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), and [Purdue Owl](#) provides an abbreviated guide.

The capstone paper may vary in shape and design, yet each paper should cover all the elements identified above under *capstone proposal and capstone plan*, together with the following elements:

Interdisciplinary analysis

Connect ideas and information from coursework and literature with information gathered and experiences gained during the project:

- What did you learn about the topic of the project?
- What did you learn about the context of the project?
- Challenges faced in student's efforts
- Questions raised by experiences, by the literature, and by relations between them
- Connections with issues and approaches in Latin American Studies

Conclusion

- Sum up: What was learned in the capstone project?
- How student was changed by the experience
- Impact of capstone project
- Contributions to scholarship and/or society
- Strategy for disseminating results or findings to appropriate audiences

Present and defend the capstone project and paper

With supervisor's approval, the student will schedule a public presentation and defense of the project outcome and the paper. Final paper should be sent to all committee members at least a week in advance. As detailed in section 5, each capstone student will make a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with the student's supervisory committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee

Supervisor

- May assist the student with identifying and designing capstone project.
- May consult with the partners, sponsors, or collaborators on the project.
- Approves a Capstone Proposal before implementation begins.
- Maintains regular contact with the student throughout the project.
- Serves as instructor of record for LAS 6949 and submits a grade of S or U for the work.
- Presides over two formal meetings with student and committee: one to discuss the plan for the capstone project, and one final oral exam in which the project and paper are defended and assessed.

Supervisory committee

Consists of a supervisor and at least one other faculty member; one member of the committee must hold LAS graduate faculty status in LAS. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of capstone project plan in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the capstone project, and on the final paper. All members meet two times: to discuss the plan for the capstone paper (usually early semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense of the project.

5 Final Oral Exam

All MALAS students complete a final oral exam. The defense of a thesis or an internship paper is described in detail here. The final oral exam of a capstone project will be similar to these defenses, and may also include presentation of the work itself, in the form of an exhibit, film, design, or other product.

After gaining approval of committee chair or supervisor, each student finds a date and time convenient for all committee members, reserves a room, and distributes copies of the thesis or internship paper at least ten days before the defense date. Committee members usually represent various departments, each with its own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy of MALAS guidelines. The student is also responsible for obtaining necessary paperwork from the Center's Program Assistant and bringing it to the defense to be signed. During the defense both student and chair should be present in person in the same room unless the Graduate School amends this policy.

A master's defense usually lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. Students may prepare for the defense by clarifying their main message and practicing an opening presentation no longer than 10-15 minutes. The defense is a public event: colleagues, professors, and friends may be invited to attend, others may show up. Refreshments may be provided but are not expected.

The committee's pre-defense meeting

Before commencing the defense, the student and audience members will be asked to leave the room for a short pre-defense meeting. The chair or supervisor leads a discussion among committee members to ensure consensus regarding procedures and parameters of assessment. Committee members may raise questions or concerns at this time.

Opening presentation

Most candidates begin the defense with a brief presentation that provides context and sets the tone for the defense. This should not exceed 10-15 minutes in length.

- Summarize main questions and findings of thesis or internship paper.
- Highlight strengths of the work and its contributions.
- Put the work in perspective to relevant issues: a conceptual or methodological debate, public policy, historical event, or contemporary social challenge.

- Put the work into perspective with respect to oneself: how candidate got interested in topic, relation to student's MALAS studies, or plans to continue pursuing or engaging with aspects of it.

Using Power Point or other audio-visual material is acceptable but not necessary. It is often useful to show a slide with the table of contents of the thesis or paper, map(s) to locate work, and photographs of the site and subject matter. It is usually not useful to put too much text on a slide or read the slides out loud.

The defense

Members of the committee make observations, offer suggestions, and ask questions. The candidate should answer each question as directly and succinctly as possible. Usually one member of the committee will complete his/her questions, then pass the floor to another member. The Chair or Supervisor usually goes last. Sometimes deliberations are less structured.

The committee's post-defense meeting

After the presentation and discussion, the candidate and observers are asked to leave the room. The committee assesses candidate's performance and comes to an agreement about an assessment, and about revisions that may be required in the text. The post-defense meeting usually takes 10-30 minutes.

The committee agrees on one of three possible outcomes: "Pass," "Pass pending required revisions," and "Fail." The most common outcome, "Pass pending required revisions," may be handled in several ways:

- 1) The committee withholds signatures until each member has read and approved a revised version.
- 2) Committee members sign the forms and delegate responsibility to the Chair or Supervisor to ensure that stipulated improvements are made, then provide the final signature.
- 3) The committee and the chair or supervisor sign the forms and trust the candidate to make requested changes before submitting the final document.

Signed documents must be submitted to the Center's Program Assistant Po Echeguren. Internship and Capstone papers should also be submitted to Po Echeguren electronically. Thesis papers must go to UF Graduate School before the Final Submission Deadline for intended term of degree award. Do not assume that submitted document will be accepted; the Editorial Office may ask for further adjustments. Once the Editorial Office's requirements are met, the student receives an e-mail indicating final clearance. No changes can be made after a manuscript is accepted by the graduate school.

The defense in perspective

The defense is an educational opportunity to value and an occasion to celebrate learning and accomplishment. Most faculty members come to a defense having carefully reviewed the student

paper and anticipating a lively, substantive, and rewarding conversation. Good discussions explore strengths and weaknesses of the project and paper, consider related issues, and probe the candidate's ability to think in new directions. Productive debates often lead beyond a candidate's competency, in which case wise students simply answer "I do not know" (rather than rambling on) and pose questions to the committee, taking advantage of the opportunity for collective feedback.

6 University of Florida Resources and Policies

- **Latin American and Caribbean Collection at UF Libraries:** Specialized staff support searches among the 500,000 volumes, 50,000 microforms, thousands of current and historical serial titles and digital resources in [this world-class collection](#).
- **Academic Writing, Grammar, and Style:** The [UF Writing Studio](#) is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. We support independent learning and scholarship by providing one-on-one consultations, workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate), and faculty retreats focusing on publishing original research. Students and faculty at all levels and in every discipline are welcome!
- **Personal Challenges:** Students experiencing personal problems or crises that interfere with general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling Center and Student Mental Health both provide confidential counseling services at no cost for enrolled students. Resources are also available for students seeking to clarify career and academic goals and deal with academic challenges.
 1. [University Counseling Center](#), 301 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-1575; personal and career counseling.
 2. Student Mental Health, [Student Health Care Center](#), (352) 392-1171, personal counseling.
 3. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, (352) 392-1161.
 4. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, (352) 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.
- **Students with Disabilities Act:** The Dean of Students Office coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes the registration of disabilities, academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services, and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. *Dean of Students Office*, 202 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-7066.
- **Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students at the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.
- **Technical difficulties for E-learning in CANVAS:** Contact the [UF Help Desk](#) at Learning-support@ufl.edu or (352) 392-HELP - select option 2.

- **Academic Misconduct:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Work submitted for credit by UF students should not include any form of plagiarism, cheating, or unauthorized aid. Unless aspects of classwork or masters project are explicitly identified as group effort, all work should be completed independently. Students should understand and follow the Student Honor Code that they signed upon enrollment at the University of Florida: *“I understand the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”*

Student Grievance Procedures. The University of Florida is committed to treating all members of the University community fairly regarding personal and professional concerns. Procedures outlined in this policy are intended to provide students with a fair and expeditious resolution of their disputes with University of Florida faculty and/or staff.

7 Student Funding

Websites for the Center of Latin American Studies and for UF Office for Student Financial Affairs should be consulted for current information concerning scholarships, assistantships and fellowships for academic year study at UF; field research grant competitions; summer foreign language fellowships and more funding opportunities.

MALAS applicants and students are encouraged to pursue a range of outside funding sources, which can be explored on UF scholarship search engine, UF International Center, on the website for UF MDP program, as well as other sources.