

# MASTER *of* ARTS *in* LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

## GRADUATE HANDBOOK



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# 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 more than 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:**

- Inform students of the opportunities, expectations, and benchmarks of the MALAS degree program.
- Support faculty in positive experiences advising MALAS students by clearly defining responsibilities of advisors, chairs and supervisory committees, 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 in Latin American Studies" through successful defense of culminating projects and graduation.

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

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

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# 1. MALAS Academic Program

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

MALAS students are expected to fulfill **four requirements**:

1. **Credit hours and coursework:** Earn **30** graduate credit hours, from which at least **15** must be in LAS courses.
2. **Specialization:** Complete an interdisciplinary specialization (9 credit hours of the required 30 credits, in courses that cover topics related to the chosen specialization).
3. **Project:** Produce and successfully defend a thesis, internship, or capstone project.
4. **Language proficiency:** Demonstrate advanced proficiency in Portuguese or Spanish, or intermediate proficiency in Haitian Creole or another creole or indigenous language of the region.

### Credit hours and coursework

MALAS students must earn **30** graduate credit hours, fulfilling course distribution as follows:

- **15** LAS credits
  - **6** credits of gateway seminars (mandatory courses):
    - **LAS 6220** *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies*.
    - **LAS 6293** *Research Design and Methods in Latin American Studies*.
  - At least **9** more credits in courses listed with a LAS prefix.
- The other **15** credits required depend on the student's interests and track and can be selected from other UF departments.

Check the [UF graduate academic calendar](#) to check deadlines for course registration and drop/add timelines.

*Some specific considerations and cases regarding credit hours and coursework:*

- All students can opt to register for up to **3** credits of **LAS 6905** (*Independent Study*)—for reading or research in topics of interest focusing on a Latin American area studies, but cutting across disciplines—in any semester, and a maximum of 9 credits in total.
- Thesis students **MUST** register for at least **3** credits of **LAS 6971** (*Research for Master's Thesis*) in the semester of graduation (**2** credits, if summer). See Section 1.7 for more details on graduation steps.

- In any semester and with approval, internship students may opt to register for **3 credits of LAS 6949** (*Internship in Latin American Studies*).
- Neither **LAS 6971** nor **LAS 6949** counts towards degree major eligible credit (that is, the **15 LAS credits** must be additional).
- Students will preferably register in graduate courses only (5000 level or above). In special circumstances (such as language courses), up to **6 credits** of UF undergraduate level courses will count towards the master's degree.
- If the student is concurrently enrolled in two graduate programs, up to **6 credits** can count towards both programs.

**In the Semester 1, students are required to design an individualized Plan of Study in coordination with the Graduate Coordinator** and fill out an [Individual Development and Study Plan](#) (IDSP) form. The Plan of Study reflects the students' focus, background, and academic needs. **The IDSP form should be completed every semester** so all academic progress and updates are recorded with the department.

## Academic standing

Satisfactory scholarship is defined as maintaining a B average (GPA: 3.0). **Students with less than a 3.00 GPA may not hold an assistantship or fellowship.** To graduate with a MALAS degree, students need an **overall GPA of 3.0** truncated (i.e. a 2.99 GPA will not be rounded up to a 3.0). 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.

## MALAS specializations

[Specializations](#) foster connection and collaboration around shared interests among current UF faculty and students to help graduate students and chairs navigate the vast curricular landscape supporting Latin American Studies at UF. Each MALAS student works with a graduate advisor (see Section 9 for contact information of graduate advisors) to fulfill requirements in **one of 12 interdisciplinary specializations**.

Selection of the specialization and specialization courses should be done in consultation with a graduate advisor and in agreement with the committee chair, **by the midpoint of Semester 1**.

A specialization consists of **three courses (9 credits)**. 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 the consent of the chair of their committee. 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.

- [Arts, Museums and Cultural Heritage](#)
- [Caribbean Studies](#)
- [Crime, Law, and Governance in the Americas](#)
- [Culture, Theory and Society](#)
- [Development Studies and Economic Analysis](#)
- [Education in the Americas](#)
- [Indigenous Studies](#)
- [Latin American Business Environment](#)
- [Latin American Politics and History](#)
- [Latinx Studies, Migration & Transnational Studies](#)
- [Race, Gender, and Sexuality](#)
- [Tropical Conservation and Development](#)

## Thesis, internship, or capstone projects

MALAS students can choose to complete a thesis, internship or capstone project in a topic of their interest, and under the supervision and guidance of a chosen supervisory committee. Details on the creation and responsibilities of the supervisory committee can be found in Section 1.4 below. Procedures and expectations for each type of culminating graduate project are described in Sections 2, 3 and 4. See Section 1.5 to see details about developing a project proposal for the master's project.

Thesis papers completed by MALAS students can be found at the UF library, listed from newest to oldest. Students can request copies of archived capstone and internship papers with the Academic Assistant as needed.

## Language proficiency

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\*.

*\*Native speakers are not required to take an exam.*

## 1.2 Combined degrees: 4+1 and MALAS/JD

### 4+1 combined degree

UF undergraduate students may choose to obtain a MALAS degree through a 4+1 program. A combined degree program, a BA or a BS plus a MA degree, can be completed in five years. Students admitted to this program are encouraged to follow this sample schedule:

#### Fall Semester, 4th Undergraduate (or Senior) Year\*

- **LAS 6220** *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (3 credits).
- 3 credits of another approved course for MA in Latin American Studies (i.e. LAS 6000 courses).

#### Spring Semester, 4th Undergraduate (or Senior) Year\*

- **LAS 6293** *Research Design and Methods in Latin American Studies* (3 credits).
- 3 credits of another approved course for MA in Latin American Studies (i.e. LAS 6000 courses).

#### Summer between Year 4 and 5

- Conduct research for thesis/capstone or conduct internship.

#### Fall Semester, 5th Year

- 9 credits of courses approved for MA in Latin American Studies.

#### Spring Semester, 5th Year

- 3 credits of courses approved for MA in Latin American Studies.
- 3 credits of **LAS 6971** *Research for Master's Thesis* (thesis) OR 3 credits of **LAS 6905** *Independent Study* (capstone- optional) OR 3 credits of **LAS 6949** *Internship in Latin American Studies* (internship- optional).

\*Courses during these semesters may double count toward BA/BS and MA degrees.

### MALAS/JD combined degree

A joint [MALAS/JD degree](#) is offered in collaboration with the UF Levin College of Law. Students must be admitted to the JD program to choose this path. Advising will be provided in conjunction with the College of Law.

## 1.3 Adding another graduate certificate or minor

While not mandatory, MALAS students may pursue one or two of [120 graduate certificates](#) and minors offered at UF in topics such as Tropical Conservation and Development, Global Health, Digital Humanities, Public Affairs, Gender and Development, and Sustainable Development Practice.



Credits taken towards a certificate can count for the MALAS program too. However, if a student is interested in pursuing two certificates (in addition to the MALAS program), credits for one certificate cannot count towards another certificate.

Interested students are expected to review the [Graduate Certificate Policies](#) and consult with a graduate advisor before applying for another certificate or minor.

## 1.4 Forming a supervisory committee

Each student will choose a professor or faculty member to serve as their MALAS advisor, who will act as chair of their supervisory committee. A student's supervisory committee is formed by 2-3 professors or faculty members (including the chair), and its main role is to guide and advise the student regarding the MALAS project (thesis, internship or capstone).

Committee members support the development and implementation of the MALAS project plan in various ways. All members read and comment on the plan for the project and evaluate the final document. All members meet two times: to discuss the plan for the project (usually early Semester 3), and to participate in an oral defense of the project.

### Process of forming the supervisory committee

- **Step 1:** New MALAS students are first assigned a tentative committee chair upon admission to the program, based on the interests expressed in the application materials. By the end of Semester 1, students are responsible for choosing a permanent chair of the supervisory committee.
- **Step 2:** At least by midpoint of Semester 2, the student must choose the 1 or 2 additional supervisory committee members (at least 2 professors or faculty members for the thesis track and at least 1 professor or faculty member for capstone and internship tracks are mandatory).

Supervisory Committee members can be chosen from the core faculty or the affiliated faculty of the Center. Committee chairs must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status and, in the case of thesis supervisory committees, at least two members must hold LAS Graduate Faculty status. Any other options should be discussed on a case-by-case basis. The responsibilities of the chair and the supervisory committee will be detailed in each section.

The Center has 20 core faculty members with expertise in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. In addition, the Center draws on the expertise of over 190 distinguished faculty affiliates located in colleges and professional schools across campus. To learn more

about Latin American Studies faculty at UF, review the [Core Faculty](#) and [Affiliate Faculty](#) pages.

## 1.5 Developing a MALAS project proposal

The MALAS proposal for a thesis, internship, or capstone project is a living document that evolves throughout the course of studies, adapting to changing ideas, circumstances, and opportunities.

During Semester 1, each student develops an initial project proposal as part of their work in the first semester gateway seminar, **LAS 6220** *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies*. In the following gateway seminar during Semester 2, **LAS 6293** *Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies*, students work with their chairs to further develop their thesis, internship, or capstone proposals, which after completed will be approved and signed by the student's advisor (chair). In many cases, students adapt their proposal to apply for field research grant (FRG) competitions for which the Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance is needed.

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, or 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, and 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 master's 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.

## 1.6 Field Research Grant & Institutional Review Board

Every year, the Center for Latin American Studies sponsors a [Field Research Grant](#) Competition across campus to support graduate student research in Latin America and the Caribbean. **All MALAS students competing for a Field Research Grant (FRG) require clearance** from an IRB-02 (Behavioral/Non-Medical). IRB clearance means that the project:

- May not require IRB approval, or
- May qualify for an IRB exemption, or
- May need IRB approval.

Faculty, staff, and students at the University of Florida who plan to conduct “*human subject research*,” as defined by the Common Rule, must receive **prior approval** or exemption from the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB)—usually for MALAS students, the [IRB-02](#) (specific for Behavioral/Non-Medical research).

[Research](#), according to The Common Rule, is defined as “systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.” In other words, a study or project that is based on the random or anecdotal collection of information and/or that has no general applicability does not fall within the federal definition of research. More specifically, [human subject research](#) refers to all research on living human individuals, through which the researcher obtains data and/or identifiable private information through intervention or interaction.

Given that not all MALAS projects will fall within the federal definition of “human subjects research,” and therefore will not require IRB approval, **students must work with their committee chair and professors to clarify their methodology in their MALAS proposal and meet with a Graduate Advisor for personalized guidance before submitting their documents to the IRB.** For example, internship track students, since usually not conducting human subjects research, are not likely to require approval from a UF IRB, and some capstone projects might not involve human subjects research at all (such as archival research). Additionally, some of the Thesis and Capstone projects that fall within the federal

definition of “human subject research” may pose *minimal risk*. These projects may be eligible for an **exemption from the IRB** through the [Nonhuman Tool or the Exempt Tool](#).

Other MALAS projects will indeed fall within the federal definition of research *and* will not be eligible for an exemption. In those cases, they need to go through IRB review and approval, and the IRB will decide if they it is (i) an Expedited Review or (ii) a Full Board Review. Please refer to the [UF IRB-02 website](#) for more information and contact a Graduate Advisor for personalized guidance.

MALAS students whose projects do need IRB approval and that also involve conducting research in a country outside the US that has an official IRB system (e.g., Brazil, Colombia), **must also receive approval from an IRB of the intended specific country. This must be done with enough time in advance.** The UF IRB demands the research project to be approved by the national IRB of the specific country, before granting their own approval. Times to clear the approval vary from country to country, it is strongly recommended to check early during Semester 1 if the research country is likely to require extended approval time. This process is not necessary if a country does not have their own official IRB system.

For more information about requirements and deadlines, please refer to the [FRG website](#).

## 1.7 Planning for final semester - Graduation and degree application

During the semester in which graduation is expected, a student pursuing the thesis option MUST enroll in **LAS 6971 Research for Master’s Thesis** (even if that student has already earned credits in **LAS 6971**). If graduation is in 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, February 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 to access the degree application.

Check the [UF graduate academic calendar](#) to check graduation-related deadlines.

## 1.8 Calendar of required events

MALAS students are required to attend the following relevant events:

- **Before the start of Semester 1:** New MALAS students must attend a series of orientation and welcome activities, held each August by the Center for new students.
- **In Semester 1:** New MALAS students must schedule a one-on-one check-in meeting with a graduate advisor by October (mid-term).
- **In any semester of the program:** All MALAS thesis students must attend a [workshop](#) on the thesis submission guidelines. Other available workshops are optional.
- **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 expected to attend and participate.

For exact dates on events and deadlines on MALAS events, look at the Center's [Calendar](#).

## 2. Thesis Guidelines

The thesis option provides students with an opportunity to conduct systematic research. A thesis project involves asking and answering relevant research questions. The formulation of the research questions, the overall design and methodological approach, the data collection methods and the analysis and interpretation of results are expected to be grounded in existing scientific literature, concepts, and frameworks. MALAS students who are interested in pursuing an academic career as scientists and/or want to strengthen their research skills will find the thesis option particularly useful.

### 2.1 Standard thesis timeline

Each thesis project is guided by a supervisory committee with at least three members, including a thesis advisor, who serves as chair, and two other members. Their roles and responsibilities are described in Section 2.7.

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



<b>Semester 1</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Enroll in <b>LAS 6220</b> <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i> .
First 4 weeks	Meet with a Graduate Advisor to discuss options and opportunities.
	Meet with faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of the thesis committee.
	Explore topics, approaches, and methods. Draft an initial research proposal.
Mid-term (October)	Meet with a Graduate Advisor to: <b>1)</b> select one of the <a href="#">MALAS specializations</a> , <b>2)</b> design an Individualized Plan of Study, and <b>3)</b> start <a href="#">IRB</a> approval process if needed. 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 (ex: Brazil, Colombia).
By end of term	Thesis advisor/committee chair should be appointed before the end of the semester. Ask Academic Assistant to register the committee chair in the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).
	Fill out, with committee chair approval, required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Semester 2</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Enroll in <b>LAS 6293</b> <i>Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies</i> .
By midterm	Select committee members (minimum 2 members and chair).
	Develop a research proposal; request the document from the Academic Assistant, gain approval and signature from committee chair.
	Obtain <a href="#">IRB</a> clearance and apply for visa, if relevant.
	Submit proposals to compete for a Field Research Grant (FRG), if relevant. FRG requires an IRB clearance as approved, exempt, or nonhuman.
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Summer</b>	Conduct MA thesis project. Carry out research related to thesis, either in field, archive, or other. Prepare thesis plan to present to committee.
<b>Semester 3</b>	Students may enroll 1-3 credits in <b>LAS 6971</b> <i>Research for Master's Thesis</i> , with committee chair for the purpose of working on aspects of the thesis, but this is not required. A better option in some cases will be <b>LAS 6905</b> <i>Independent Study</i> .
Month 1	Request form for Thesis Plan from the Academic Assistant. Committee

	meeting to discuss thesis plan, sign approval form.
Month 2	<a href="#">Check Graduate School requirements</a> and deadlines for graduation next semester.
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Semester 4</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Students who plan to graduate this semester <b>MUST</b> enroll in a minimum of 3 credits of <b>LAS 6971</b> . If the student has completed 27 credits, only 3 credits of <b>LAS 6971</b> are required to graduate in the final semester. Students may take up to 6 credits if needed.
Month 1	Submit pre-final complete version of thesis to committee chair. With chair's approval, set defense date with committee. Inform the Academic Assistant about the defense date. Students must <a href="#">review required forms</a> from the grad school before the defense and double check final submission deadlines for their thesis.
Month 2	Any incomplete grades need to be resolved and a grade change form submitted by the instructor. Submit Degree Application in the One.UF portal.
Before midterm	Send the final version of thesis to the committee at least 10 days before defense.
By midterm	Thesis defense with committee in time to submit form signed by all committee members to Academic Assistant AND to revise thesis in time to submit before the <a href="#">First Submission Deadline</a> .
UF due date set near midterm	Submit thesis to UF Graduate School, following <a href="#">Master's Thesis Submission Checklist</a> .
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .

## **2.2 Thesis proposal & meeting**

Usually in Semester 2, students develop a detailed proposal for research (3,000-5,000 words long), building on the initial proposal described above. All committee members should be consulted, and a proposal approval form must be signed by the chair and filed with the Academic Assistant.

## **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, in the first month of Semester 3, 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 their own expectations and procedures, and students are responsible for making sure that each committee member receives a copy the thesis plan.

This meeting provides a forum for student, chair, and other committee members to reflect together on research findings, 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, students will check in with the Academic Assistant to ensure that all forms are signed and submitted.

## **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.

Most MALAS theses range 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.

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

*Bibliography*

- 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.

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 offer 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 (varying by thesis, topic, and committee members)**

### *Composition of paper*

- The purpose of study and research questions are stated at the beginning of the thesis and addressed at the end.
- The subject is clearly demarcated, and the data collected is 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 the appendices.

### *Theoretical perspective*

- Clear expression of the author's positionality in terms of locus of enunciation 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 a variety of methodological and theoretical positions and includes Latin American sources and other foreign language publications.

#### *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, and 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 Thesis presentation and defense

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. With committee chair's approval, the student schedules the public presentation and defense and sends the written thesis to all committee members **at least 10 days in advance**.

Students are required to inform the Academic Assistant of their defense date, submit their thesis to UF Graduate School, and complete all required format changes in a timely manner.

## 2.7 Responsibilities of the chair and supervisory 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. Center-based faculty and affiliate faculty usually hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status (specific cases must be discussed and resolved in advance with the Graduate Coordinator and Academic Assistant).

The committee chair is responsible for accompanying the student through four main milestones:

- 1) **Research proposal** (Semester 2).
- 2) **IRB clearance** (Semester 2).
- 3) **Thesis plan** (Semester 3).
- 4) **Thesis defense and submission** (Semester 4).

At each stage, the committee chair reads the documents prepared by the student, discusses them in a meeting, and signs the corresponding forms documenting approval. The full thesis committee should convene for meetings to discuss the thesis plan and the thesis defense.

### *Thesis Committee Members*

Each thesis committee must have at least three members, including the student's chair, 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. Capstone Project 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 communities. 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 professional and/or creative work, demonstrating both vision and competence to prospective employers.

The capstone final submitted materials (hereafter referred to as final “capstone documents”) vary from project to project and may include a wide range of formats and shapes. But in all cases, as explained in Section 3.5, the final submission consists in two documents: **1) a written capstone paper** (4,000-8,000 words long) where the student engages with theoretical concepts, explains the methodology used, discusses context and results, and outlines the project’s presentation or dissemination to the public, and **2) the capstone product itself** (the graphic novel, the documentary, the program evaluation, the record of the conducted community-based initiative).

In conjunction with the design and realization of a capstone project, students are required to prepare three submissions, and to discuss these with the supervisory committee members, following guidelines provided below. In dialogue with the evolving project, students prepare 1) a written capstone proposal early in the process; 2) a written capstone paper plan partway through the process; and 3) final capstone documents. These three submissions represent evolving stages of an academic product 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.

### 3.1 Standard capstone timeline

Each capstone project is guided by a supervisory committee with at least two members, including the chair. Their roles and responsibilities are described in Section 3.7.

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

<b>Semester 1</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Enroll in <b>LAS 6220</b> <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i> .
First 4 weeks	Meet with Graduate Advisor to discuss options and opportunities.
	Meet with faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of the capstone committee.
	Explore topics, approaches, and methods for capstone project. Draft a proposal for project including conceptual framework and methods.
Mid-term (October)	Meet with a Graduate Advisor to: <b>1)</b> select one of the MALAS <a href="#">specializations</a> , <b>2)</b> design an individualized Plan of Study, and <b>3)</b> start <a href="#">IRB</a> process if needed. 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 (ex: Brazil).
By end of term	Supervisory committee chair appointed before the end of the semester. Ask Academic Assistant to register the committee chair in the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).
	Fill out, with committee chair approval, required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Semester 2</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Enroll in <b>LAS 6293</b> <i>Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies</i> .
By mid-term	Select full committee (minimum one member and chair).
	Develop a capstone proposal. Gain approval and signature from committee chair and relevant partners; file documents with Academic Assistant.

	If relevant, submit proposals to compete for a Field Research Grant (FRG). FRG requires IRB clearance as approved, exempt, or not applicable.
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Summer</b>	Carry out capstone project (timing will vary).
<b>Semester 3</b>	Option to enroll in additional hours of <b>LAS 6905 Independent Study</b> .
Month 1	Prepare capstone paper plan, gain chair approval, and submit to committee members ten days before meeting.
	Committee meeting to discuss Capstone Paper Plan. Ask Academic Assistant for approval form and send to committee
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Semester 4</b>	Option to enroll in additional hours of <b>LAS 6905 Independent Study</b> for students needing extra time to finish capstone project.
Month 1	Any incomplete grades need to be resolved and a grade change form submitted by the instructor. Submit Degree Application in One.UF portal.
Month 2 or 3	Gain committee chair's approval of pre-final complete version of capstone "documents," then schedule defense. Inform the Academic Assistant of the defense date.
Month 3	Send final capstone paper (and capstone product) to committee at least 10 days before defense.
Defense is completed at least one month before end of term	Capstone project presentation and defense with committee in time to submit revised copy and complete paperwork in GIMS system before <a href="#">Final Submission Deadline</a> .
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .



## 3.2 Capstone proposal & meeting

Usually in Semester 2, students develop a detailed capstone proposal (3,000-5,000 words long), building on the initial proposal described in Section 1.5 and including the specific capstone elements listed in Section 3.4. The proposal should include a discussion of which target audience the student hopes to reach and, if relevant, of desired and potential impacts. It should also indicate how the proposed project will be useful to and/or needed by the intended audience. All committee members should be consulted, and a proposal approval form must be signed by the chair and filed with the Academic Assistant.

If the capstone project includes third partners, as in community-based projects or program evaluations (unlike solo projects such as a novel or an architectural model), 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. If relevant, students should send cover letters and CVs to potential partners and sponsors and arrange virtual or in-person meetings. The committee chair and the Graduate Coordinator may assist in the process and must formally approve the proposed project.

If relevant, capstone proposals may also include **a)** timeline of meetings with sponsors, clients, and other stakeholders; **b)** calendar of site visits, **c)** needed preliminary research, **d)** description of methodological instruments and/or analytical tools, **e)** calendar of activities, **f)** budget and funding, and **g)** legal issues such as copyright.

## 3.3 Capstone paper plan & meeting

The capstone paper plan, developed after the project has been initiated, updates all content of the capstone proposal, with the addition of a schedule with dates for finishing and presenting the capstone product, and an outline of the written capstone paper (described in Section 3.4). Capstone paper plans are generally 3000 to 5000 words long.

Usually during the first month of Semester 3, each student presents a written capstone paper plan to all committee members and arranges a meeting to discuss the plan. Committee members represent various departments, each with their 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 a Capstone Paper Plan Approval Form from the Academic Assistant.

This meeting provides a forum for students 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. Together, the student and committee members look at the 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 paper plan and signed form are stored in the student's file.

### 3.4 Written capstone paper

A MALAS capstone project demonstrates the ability to generate a particular cultural or professional product aimed at a specific audience, incorporating theoretical concepts of Latin American Studies and interdisciplinary and/or creative approaches. Capstone projects consist of a capstone product and a final capstone paper. The capstone paper may vary in shape and design (usually 4,000 to 8,000 words long, including bibliography), yet it may include the following elements (not necessarily organized in this order):

*Title*

*Abstract* (approximately 200 words, no references cited)

*Acknowledgements* (optional)

*Table of contents*

*Introduction*

- Character and purpose of capstone project.
- Justification and relevance: 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).
- Capstone goals, including finished products.
- When, where, and with whom was the project carried out?
- Summary of main findings.
- Roadmap guiding readers through the rest of the paper.

*Framework and interdisciplinary analysis*

- Context and background of the target audience (geographical, cultural, political, economic, etc.)
- Theories, principles, and movements that motivate and inform the approach of the project.

- Key concepts/ideas developed and applied in the project.
- Comment on and critique what is known and not known (literature review) about the project idea.
- Connections with issues and approaches in Latin American Studies.

#### *Methodology or materials and methods*

- Elements involved in the design of the capstone product (if relevant).
- How and with what was the capstone product made? (if relevant).
- Discussion of advantages and limitations of the methodology or materials and methods used.

#### *Body*

- Brief description of the capstone product itself, if needed.

#### *Conclusion*

- What was learned from the capstone project (about the topic and the context)?
- How was the student changed by the experience? What challenges were faced?
- Impact of capstone project.
- Contributions to scholarship and/or to society.
- Strategy for disseminating results or the capstone product to the appropriate audience.

#### *Bibliography*

- List all literature, including gray literature, that you have cited or quoted. Relevant gray and academic literature may include scholarly articles and books, trade and professional literature, projects and reviews of similar products, historical archives, media articles and video clips, records of organizations and people involved, legislation, program descriptions, catalogs, administrative reports and memoranda, websites, etc.
- Capstone students should contact librarians in the Latin American and Caribbean Collection for assistance in locating sources and generating bibliographies. All LAS capstone papers use evidence-based writing and must cite, summarize and comment on literature consulted.

Capstone papers 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](#).

### **3.5 General criteria for assessing capstone project**

Capstone projects consist of two final documents: the capstone product itself and the final capstone paper. Since capstone products may vary in nature and extent, its assessment method should be agreed in advance between the student and the committee chair, preferably during Semester 2.

Although capstone papers may differ widely according to the nature of the capstone product, it is expected to reflect similar quality of a thesis regarding critical thinking, clarity, and organization of the exposition of goals (instead of research questions), context, theoretical perspective, activities done, and discussion of the learning outcome (results) of the capstone experience and final product.

### **3.6 Present and defend the capstone product and paper**

As detailed in Section 5, each capstone student will make a public presentation followed by a defense of the capstone project with the student's supervisory committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the MA degree in Latin American Studies. Capstone documents are not submitted to UF Graduate School. With the committee chair's approval, the student will schedule the public presentation and defense of the project outcome and the paper. Final paper should be sent to all committee members at least 10 days in advance. If the nature of the capstone product does not allow previous submission to the supervisory committee, it should be shown, screened, or displayed on the defense. Capstone documents are not submitted to UF Graduate School.

### **3.7 Responsibilities of the chair and the Supervisory Committee**

#### *Capstone Committee Chair*

- May assist the student with identifying and designing capstone project.
- May consult with the partners, sponsors, or collaborators on the project, if relevant.
- Approves a Capstone Proposal and establishes assessment method before implementation begins.

- Maintains regular contact with the student throughout the project.
- Serves as instructor of record for **LAS 6905 *Independent Study*** and submits a grade for the work, if applicable.
- Presides over two formal meetings with the student and committee: one to discuss the Capstone Paper Plan and one final oral exam in which the project and paper are defended and assessed.

### *Capstone Supervisory Committee*

Consists of a chair and at least one other faculty member; one member of the committee must hold LAS graduate faculty status. 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 evaluate final capstone documents. 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.

## **4. Internship Guidelines**

[Internships](#) related to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx communities 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 or chair, and Graduate Coordinator agree on explicit expectations and procedures. Before embarking on a project, a student must submit a [Plan of Internship](#) for approval and receive a signature from the Graduate Coordinator, the UF Faculty Instructor of Record (usually, the chair), 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 host agency assumes responsibility to oversee the internship and submits a written evaluation to the instructor of record. Students interested in pursuing an internship project must review the [MALAS Internship Guidelines](#) before meeting with their Graduate Advisor.



## 4.1 Standard Internship timeline

Each internship project is guided by a supervisory committee with at least two members, including the chair. Their roles and responsibilities are described in Section 4.8.

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

<b>Semester 1</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Enroll in <b>LAS 6220</b> <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i> .
First 4 weeks	<p>Meet with Graduate Advisor to discuss options and opportunities.</p> <p>Meet with faculty members to explore shared interests, learn about upcoming courses, and consider who might become a member of the internship committee.</p> <p>Start looking for internship options and draft an initial proposal for an internship project including conceptual framework and methods. F1 and J1 students may contact the International Center to learn about requirements for internships in the US.</p>
Mid-term (October)	<p>Meet with a Graduate Advisor to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) select one of the <a href="#">MALAS specializations</a> and</li> <li>2) design an Individualized Plan of Study.</li> </ol>
By end of term	<p>Supervisory committee chair appointed. Ask Academic Assistant to register the committee chair in the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).</p> <p>Apply to internships (Note: deadlines generally range from December to March).</p> <p>Fill out, with committee chair approval, required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a>.</p>
<b>Semester 2</b>	<b>Required course:</b> Enroll in <b>LAS 6293</b> <i>Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies</i> .
By midterm	<p>Select full committee (minimum 1 member in addition to chair).</p> <p>If relevant, submit proposals for funding.</p> <p><b>Recommended:</b> Have a contingency plan—in the form of a capstone or thesis—in case internships, funding, or accommodations do not work out. Prepare by having a research question or framework and, if relevant, by applying for FRG funding.</p>

	Develop a <a href="#">Plan of Internship</a> and <a href="#">Internship Agreement</a> . Gain approval and signature from the host agency, supervising faculty, and Graduate Coordinator; file documents with Academic Assistant.
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Summer</b>	Carry out internship (timing and intensity will vary). At the end of the internship, submit performance evaluation.
<b>Semester 3</b>	Internship students may enroll in <b>LAS 6949</b> <i>Internship in Latin American Studies</i> .
Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss internship paper plan, sign approval form; after approval, file document and form with the Academic Assistant.
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .
<b>Semester 4</b>	Option to enroll in additional credits of <b>LAS 6949</b> <i>Internship in Latin American Studies</i> , or <b>LAS 6905</b> <i>Independent Study</i> for students needing extra time to finish internship paper.
Month 1	Any incomplete grades need to be resolved and a grade change form submitted by the instructor.
Month 2 or 3	Gain the committee chair's approval of the complete pre-final version of the internship paper, then schedule defense. Inform the Academic Assistant of the defense date. Submit Degree Application in the One.UF portal.
Month 3	Send final 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 the <a href="#">Final Submission Deadline</a> .
By end of term	Fill out required <a href="#">Individual Development and Study Plan</a> .

## 4.2 Internship proposal & agreement

Aside from the initial proposal for master's project described in Section 1.5, the Internship option requires additional steps than the Thesis and Capstone options:

- **First, the student must find an internship.** It is strongly recommended to start during Semester 1. 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 interviews. The committee chair 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 Connection Center](#), and other sources.

- International students pursuing an internship in the USA are also responsible for reaching out to [UF International Center](#) and filling out the documentation to get required approvals for Curricular Practical Training. International students **MUST** verify with the International Center the current policies, regulations, and limitations that apply to their visas. **International students conducting an internship in the USA must be enrolled in LAS 6949 at the same time of the internship;** if during the summer, fees may apply.
- During Semester 2 and before embarking on a project, the student must:
  - Obtain approval of a [Plan of Internship](#)
  - Develop and submit an [Internship Agreement](#)

These last two linked forms must be signed by the Graduate Coordinator, the UF Faculty Instructor of Record (usually, the chair), and the Host Agency.

### 4.3 Internship, journal, and reports

During the internship (usually in summer) the student:

- Keeps a daily or weekly journal, including a log of activities, together with comments and questions.
- Midway through the internship period, prepares and submits a progress report (3-5 pages).
- At the end of the internship, submits a longer report to the UF instructor of record.
- At the end of the internship, and within the last two weeks of the internship semester, the agency supervisor should submit a written evaluation of the intern's performance to the UF faculty instructor of record within the last two weeks of the internship semester, indicating satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance of the duties required for the internship. No other form is required.

### 4.4 Internship paper plan & meeting

The internship paper plan is a commented outline (generally 1500 to 3000 words long) of the final internship paper (generally, 6,000 to 10,000 words long). In the internship paper

plan, the student establishes deadlines and organizes strategically how to incorporate the gathered data and knowledge (from journal entries, internship reports, and other materials produced during internship) to the contents for each section of the internship paper (described in Section 4.5).

Once the internship paper plan is completed, the student gives the internship paper plan to all members of the committee and arranges a meeting to discuss. Committee members represent various departments, each with their own expectations and procedures. 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, and the student may start writing the internship paper.

## 4.5 Written internship paper

A MALAS internship paper demonstrates the ability to reflect on the challenges of incorporating theoretical knowledge into real world professional experiences. As such, the contents and structure of the internship paper may vary according to the student's main interests and experience, but in every case, it may identify and utilize literature from various sources, carry out personal reflections on the actual internship, analyze data or materials, and make a persuasive argument in clear prose.

Most MALAS internship papers range between 6,000 and 10,000 words (25 to 40 pages double-spaced, including bibliography and appendices). However, there is no established maximum length.

Elements usually included in an internship paper (not necessarily organized in this order):

### *Introduction*

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

- Information in the literature about the context of your internship. 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.
  - 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 internship goals and assignments, 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 and context of the internship?
- What did you learn about the approach and challenges faced by the agency or program?
- Challenges faced in student's individual efforts.
- Questions raised by experiences, by literature, and by relations between them.

- Connections with issues and approaches in Latin American Studies.

### *Conclusion*

- Sum up what was learned.
- How the 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 the host agency or other organizations, not formally published).
  - Mission statement.
  - Planning or evaluation documents.
  - Research reports.
  - Educational materials.
- Internship students should contact librarians in the Latin American and Caribbean Collection for assistance in locating sources and generating bibliographies. All LAS internship papers use evidence-based writing and must cite, summarize and comment on literature consulted.

Internship papers 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](#).

## **4.6 General criteria for assessing internship paper**

Although internship papers may differ widely according to the nature of the internship, it is expected to reflect similar quality of a thesis regarding critical thinking, clarity, and organization of the exposition of goals (instead of research questions), context, theoretical perspective, activities done (instead of methodology), and discussion of the learning outcome (results) of the internship experience.

## 4.7 Present and defend the internship paper

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. With the committee chair's approval, the student will schedule the defense and send the internship paper to all committee members at least 10 days in advance. Internship papers are not submitted to UF Graduate School.

## 4.8 Responsibilities of the chair and supervisory committee

### *Internship Committee Chair*

- May assist the student in identifying and securing an internship opportunity.
- May consult with the host agency supervisor regarding expected duties.
- Approves a Plan of Internship before implementation begins.
- Usually serves as Instructor of Record for internship credits in **LAS 6949 Internship in Latin American Studies**.
- 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 the 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.

### *Internship Supervisory Committee*

Consists of a chair and at least one other faculty member; the chair of the committee must hold LAS Graduate Faculty Status. Additional members may come from within and beyond UF. Committee members support the development and implementation of the 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 early Semester 3), and to participate in the oral defense.

#### **4.9 Responsibilities of the host agency or institution**

A representative of the agency usually interviews the potential intern and may also talk with committee chair 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 the agency and intern and written into the Internship Agreement.

### **5. Final Oral Exam**

**All MALAS students complete a final oral exam, consisting of a presentation and a defense.** The final oral exam of a capstone project may also include the presentation of the work itself, in the form of an exhibit, film, design, or other product. The final oral exam is commonly referred to as "the defense."

#### *Planning for the defense*

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, internship paper or capstone documents at least 10 days before the defense date. Committee members usually represent various departments, each with their 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 Academic Assistant after their defense and before the Submission Deadline. 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 of no longer than 10 to 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.

### *Starting the defense: 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.

### *During the defense: 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. The opening should contain the following elements (not necessarily in order):

- Present student's positionality (how candidate got interested in the topic, relation to the student's academic path).
- Put the work in perspective to relevant issues: conceptual or methodological debates, public policy, historical events, or contemporary social challenges.
- Summarize main questions and findings of thesis, capstone or internship paper.
- Highlight strengths and contributions, discuss challenges and weaknesses, and address future intended activities in the field.

Using Power Point or other audio-visual material is welcome but not necessary. It is often useful to show a slide with the table of contents of the thesis or internship paper, map(s) to locate work, and photographs of the site and subject matter. Students are discouraged from putting too much text on a slide and/or reading the slides aloud.

### *During the defense: Committee feedback*

Members of the committee make observations, offer suggestions, and ask questions. The candidate should answer all questions as directly and succinctly as possible. Usually, one member of the committee will ask their questions, then pass the floor to another member. The chair or supervisor usually goes last. Sometimes deliberations are less structured.

### *During the defense: The committee confers*

After the presentation and discussion, the candidate and observers are asked to leave the room. The committee evaluates the candidate's performance and comes to an agreement

about an assessment, and about revisions that may be required in the text. This meeting usually takes 10 to 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 three ways:

- The committee withholds signatures until each member has read and approved a revised version.
- Committee members sign the forms and delegate responsibility to the chair to ensure that stipulated improvements are made.
- The committee and the chair sign the forms and trust the candidate to make requested changes before submitting the final document.

### *After the defense: Documentation and submissions*

Signed forms must be submitted in coordination with the Academic Assistant. Theses, internship papers, and (where possible) capstone documents should be also submitted to the Academic Assistant.

Theses must also be submitted to the UF Graduate School before the Final Submission Deadline for the intended term of degree award. Do not assume that the 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 email indicating final clearance. No changes can be made after a manuscript is accepted by the graduate school.

### *Putting the defense in perspective*

The defense is an opportunity to value and 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. Debates may lead beyond the scope of the candidate’s competency, in which case wise students simply answer, “I do not know” (rather than rambling on) and seek direction from the committee, taking advantage of the opportunity for collective feedback.

## 6. University of Florida Resources and Policies

**The 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. The UF Writing Studio supports 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. The following resources are also available for students seeking to clarify career and academic goals and deal with academic challenges:

- **Personal and career counseling:** [University Counseling Center](#), 301 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-1575
- **Career development assistance and counseling:** [Career Resource Center](#), Reitz Union, (352) 392-1601
- **Personal counseling:** Student Mental Health, [Student Health Care Center](#), (352) 392-1171
- **Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS):** [Student Health Care Center](#), (352) 392-1161.

**Students with Disabilities Act:** The Dean of Students Office coordinates accommodations needed for students with disabilities. This includes the registration of disabilities, accommodation 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](mailto: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 master's 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

Consult the [Center of Latin American Studies](#) and for [UF Office for Student Financial Affairs](#) websites 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. International students may also apply for funding in their respective countries.

## 8. Contact Information

### Graduate Advisors

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