

MASTER *of* ARTS *in* LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

GRADUATE HANDBOOK



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UF | Center for
Latin American Studies
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

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 expectations, benchmarks and opportunities 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 Program Overview

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

There are four requirements to earn a MALAS degree:

1. **Credit hours and coursework:** Earn **30** graduate credit hours, at least **15** in LAS courses.
2. **Specialization:** Complete an interdisciplinary specialization (**9** of the **30** required graduate credit hours, in courses related to the 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 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** additional credits in courses listed with a LAS prefix.
- **15** remaining credits: can be selected from other UF departments, depending on student interests.

For registration and drop/add timelines: check the [UF graduate academic calendar](#).

Individualized course options:

- In any semester and with approval, students may register for up to **3** credits of **LAS 6905** (Independent Study) for reading or research in Latin American Studies topics but cutting across disciplines. Maximum 9 credits total.
- **Thesis students must** register for at least **3** credits of **LAS 6971** (Research for Master's Thesis) in the semester of graduation (or **2** credits, if summer). See Section 1.7 for more details on graduation steps.
- In any semester and with approval, **internship students** may 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).

Some special considerations and cases:

- In general, MALAS students should only register for graduate courses (5000 level or above). In special circumstances (such as language courses), up to **6** credits of UF undergraduate level courses may 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.

REQUIRED FORM: Individual Development and Study Plan (IDSP).

In Semester 1, students are required to develop an individualized Plan of Study in coordination with the Graduate Coordinator and [fill out an 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

To maintain satisfactory academic standing, students must earn a **cumulative GPA of 3.0** truncated (i.e. a 2.99 GPA will not be rounded up to a 3.0) or better. Students with below a 3.00 GPA may not hold an assistantship or fellowship.

If progress toward completing the program is unsatisfactory to the academic unit, college, or Dean of the Graduate School, the student may be denied further registration.

MALAS specializations

[Specializations](#) connect faculty and students with shared interests and help MALAS students and their committees navigate the wide reach of Latin American Studies topics at UF.

Each MALAS student works with a graduate advisor to fulfill requirements in one of 12 interdisciplinary specializations. (See Section 8 for graduate advisor contacts.)

Selecting a 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)**. Students may complete a **maximum of two specializations** with the approval of their committee chair. If a student pursues two specializations, only one course counts 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](#)

Please note: A student's specialization is not listed on their transcript or diploma; instead, it is an internal requirement whose fulfillment is recognized by a certificate of completion.

Project options: Thesis, internship, or capstone

MALAS students may complete a thesis, internship or capstone project in a topic of their choice, under the guidance of a supervisory committee.

- Details on the selection and responsibilities of the supervisory committee can be found in **Section 1.4**.
- See **Section 1.5** for details about the project proposal.
- Procedures and expectations for each type of culminating graduate project are described in **Sections 2 (thesis), 3 (internship) and 4 (capstone)**.

To see examples of previous projects for reference: 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 Graduate Coordinator.

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 obtain a BA or BS plus a MALAS degree through a “4+1” combined degree program, completed in five years. “4+1” students are encouraged to follow this schedule:

Year 4: Fall Semester (Undergraduate)*

- **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).

Year 4: Spring Semester (Undergraduate)*

- **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.

Year 5, Fall Semester (Graduate)

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

Year 5, Spring Semester (Graduate)

- 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 taken in the Undergraduate Year 4 semesters may double count toward BA/BS and MA degrees, provided that the student earned a B grade or higher in each of those courses.*

Students wishing to use graduate course work as part of their undergraduate degree are required to fill and submit the [combination degree request](#) in the final semester of their undergraduate degree program. If the graduate coursework taken is not used as part of the undergraduate degree, a transfer credit request must be submitted to the Graduate School for approval. Students must work with a graduate advisor to ensure this process is completed before their final semester of study.

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 a graduate certificate

Taking advantage of the interdisciplinarity of Latin American Studies, MALAS students may pursue one or two 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.

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 should review the [Graduate Certificate Policies](#) and consult with a graduate advisor before applying for a certificate.

1.4 Supervisory committee and committee chair

Each student will select a faculty member to serve as the chair of their supervisory committee. The committee comprises 2-3 faculty members (including the chair). A thesis committee must have 3 faculty members. A capstone/internship committee must have 2 faculty members.

The main role of the committee is to guide and advise the student on their MALAS project, whether thesis, internship or capstone. Committee members support the development and implementation of the MALAS project plan in various ways, with the following required responsibilities:

- All members read and comment on the plan for the project and evaluate the final document.
- All members meet at least two times: 1) to discuss the plan for the project (usually early **Semester 3**), and 2) to participate in an oral defense of the project.

Forming the supervisory committee

- **Selecting a chair:** Upon admission to the program, new MALAS students are first assigned a tentative committee chair based on the interests expressed in their application materials. **By the end of Semester 1**, students are responsible for selecting a permanent committee chair.
- **Adding other committee members: By midpoint of Semester 2**, students must choose their additional supervisory committee member(s).

Supervisory Committee members may be core faculty at the Center or affiliated faculty across campus. Committee chairs must hold LAS Graduate Faculty status; 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.

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 proposal for a thesis, internship, or capstone project is a living document that evolves throughout study, adapting to changing ideas, circumstances, and opportunities.

- During **Semester 1**, each student begins developing a project proposal as part of their work in the gateway seminar LAS 6220 *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies*).
- During **Semester 2**, in conjunction with the gateway seminar LAS 6293 *Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies*, students work with their committee chairs to further develop and refine the proposal content.

Once the proposal is complete, it must be approved and signed by the chair.

Please note: if the student wishes to apply for field research grant (FRG) funding, they will need to adapt their proposal for Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance. See **Section 1.6** for more details.

Proposal content

An initial proposal is approximately 2,000-4,000 words, with the goal of developing it to 3,000-5,000 words. The proposal includes the following:

- 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?
- 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 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 funding and IRB approval

Students who wish to conduct their research at a field site are encouraged to apply for a Field Research Grant (FRG). For more information about requirements and deadlines, please refer to the [FRG website](#).

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.

Researchers 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).

[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 based on the random or anecdotal collection of information and/or has no general applicability does not fall within the federal definition of research.

[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.

Students must work with their committee to clarify their methodology and meet with a Graduate Advisor before submitting their documents to the IRB. In some cases, research proposals may not require IRB clearance based on the definition of research and human subject research (e.g. an internship or archival research). These projects may be eligible for an **exemption from the IRB** through the [Nonhuman Tool](#) or the [Exempt Tool](#).

For proposals that require IRB review and approval, the IRB will determine if it requires (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.

Projects that require IRB approval and whose research will be conducted in a country outside the US that has an official IRB system (e.g., Brazil, Colombia), **must also receive approval from the IRB of the intended specific country**. This process is not necessary if a country does not have their own official IRB system.

IMPORTANT TIMELINE: Approval by the UF IRB is contingent on approval by the national IRB of the country of research. Since approval timelines vary from country to country (in some cases 3+ months), students should check early in Semester 1 if their research country is likely to require extended approval time.

1.7 Final semester requirements

During the semester in which they expect to graduate, students 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.

Degree application

To graduate, students must complete online degree applications via ONE.UF (regardless of applications in previous terms). This deadline is early in the term in which they expect to

graduate, 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.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE FORM: 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 Schedule of required events

MALAS students are required to attend the following events:

- **Before the start of Semester 1:** New MALAS students must attend a series of orientation and welcome activities, held each August.
- **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 their research at the Fieldwork Festival and a related field research workshop. All MALAS students from both years are expected to attend and participate.

2. Thesis Guidelines

The thesis option offers students the 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 should 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 and checkpoints

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

MALAS students typically complete their coursework **in four semesters of study, on campus**. The following timeline details the important deadlines and checkpoints for the four-semester thesis path. Students planning to complete their coursework in fewer or more than four semesters should meet with a graduate advisor for an individualized plan.

Semester 1	Required course: Enroll in LAS 6220 <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i> .
Month 1	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 a research proposal and submit to Graduate Advisor.
Midpoint (October)	Meet with a Graduate Advisor to: 1) Select one of the MALAS specializations , 2) Develop an Individualized Plan of Study, and 3) Begin the IRB 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 appointed before the end of the semester. Ask Graduate Coordinator to register the committee chair in the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).
	Fill out, with committee chair approval, required Individual Development and Study Plan .
Semester 2	Required course: Enroll in LAS 6293 <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 and timeline; request the document from the Graduate Coordinator, gain approval and signature from committee chair.
	Fill out pre research form and submit to Graduate Coordinator.
	Obtain IRB 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 not applicable.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
Summer	Conduct MA thesis project. Carry out research related to thesis, either in field, archive, or other. Prepare thesis plan to present to committee.
Semester 3	Students may enroll 1-3 credits in LAS 6971 <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 LAS 6905 <i>Independent Study</i> .
Month 1	Committee meeting to discuss thesis plan, sign approval form.
	Fill out post research form and submit to Graduate Coordinator.
Midpoint (October)	Check Graduate School requirements and deadlines for graduation next semester.
	Submit signed thesis plan form to Graduate Coordinator
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
Semester 4	Required course: Students who plan to graduate this semester MUST enroll in a minimum of 3 credits of LAS 6971 . If the student has

	completed 27 credits, only 3 credits of LAS 6971 are required to graduate in the final semester. Students may take up to 6 credits if needed.
Month 1	Resolve any incomplete grades. Submit Degree Application in the One.UF portal.
Midpoint (February)	Submit thesis paper to committee chair for final review and approval.
	Schedule defense and inform the Graduate Coordinator of the defense date.
	Send approved thesis paper to committee members 14 days prior to defense.
By First Submission Deadline	1. Thesis defense with chair and committee. 2. Submit thesis document in GIMS. 3. Submit Publication Agreement to Graduate Coordinator.
By Final Submission Deadline	1. Submit all required revisions to the Editorial Office via GIMS and obtain Final Approval. 2. Complete and submit ETD signature page.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
	Fill out MALAS Exit Survey and submit a copy of your final thesis to the Graduate Coordinator.

2.2 Thesis proposal & meeting

In Semester 2, students build on their initial Semester 1 research proposal, expanding and refining their ideas (3,000-5,000 words). Proposal components are described in Section 1.5. All committee members should be consulted in this process. A proposal approval form must be signed by the chair and filed with the Graduate Coordinator.

2.3 Thesis plan & meeting

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. Students build their thesis plan from their proposal, after most research has been carried out. In addition to updated proposal content, the thesis plan should contain a writing plan with deadlines and an outline for the written thesis, with:

- Tentative titles for planned chapters

- Issues and questions to be addressed in each chapter
- Methods used to date
- Materials and findings obtained
- Contribution the thesis is intended to make.

Thesis plans are generally 4,000 to 6,000 words.

Students are responsible for arranging the thesis plan meeting and making sure that each committee member receives a copy of their thesis plan. In the meeting, the student and committee should review the proposed thesis outline and discuss options and strategies for organizing and developing its content, reflect on research findings, and establish a plan for ongoing research and writing. After the meeting, students will check in with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that the thesis plan form is signed and submitted.

2.4 Written thesis

A MALAS thesis demonstrates the ability to conceive a research question, identify and apply literature from various sources, carry out primary research, analyze data and/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.

A master's thesis typically comprises the following elements (though 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.

The thesis should follow one of three major writing and citation styles: Chicago Manual of Style (CMS, commonly used in the social sciences); Modern Language Association (MLA, commonly used in the humanities); or American Psychological Association (APA, commonly used in behavioral sciences). [Purdue Owl](#) provides excellent quick guides to all three styles. UF libraries offer digital access to [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).

UF has its own [technical regulations](#) for master's and doctoral theses (procedures, formatting, style). To avoid the stress of making last-minute edits close to the deadline, students are urged to start their thesis using the [UF template](#). For writing assistance, UF offers workshops on Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Submissions throughout the year.

2.5 General criteria for assessing thesis

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 delivers a public presentation followed by a defense of the paper with their committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the master's degree in Latin American Studies and is commonly referred to as "the defense."

Students are responsible for scheduling their defense, with their committee chair's approval. They must also inform the Graduate Coordinator of their defense date and send their written thesis to all committee members **at least 10 days in advance of the defense date.**

After their defense, students must complete all edits and required format changes in a timely manner and submit their thesis to UF Graduate School.

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, but specific cases must be discussed and resolved in advance with the Graduate Coordinator.

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 reviews 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 research and written thesis in various ways. All members read and comment on the thesis plan, and on the final paper. All members participate in at least two formal meetings: to discuss the thesis plan (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
- creative works of art (e.g., exhibition, video, documentary, performance, creative writing)

The capstone project allows students to demonstrate the ability to develop and complete a professional and creative work with vision, strategy, and skill.

Students are required to submit final capstone documents, which vary from project to project and may include a wide range of formats. But in all cases, the final submission consists of two documents:

1. **The written capstone paper** (6,000-12,000 words) in which 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
2. **The capstone product itself** (graphic novel, documentary, program evaluation, record of the conducted community-based initiative, etc.)

Over the course of capstone project development and completion, students are required to prepare four submissions, consulting with their supervisory committee members:

1. Written capstone proposal and timeline early in the process
2. Written capstone outline after research is completed
3. Written capstone first draft midpoint in semester 3
4. A final draft of capstone paper and product

These four submissions represent evolving stages of an academic project that defines the product and its 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 and checkpoints

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

MALAS students typically complete their coursework **in four semesters of study, on campus**. The following timeline details the important deadlines and checkpoints for the

four-semester capstone path. Students planning to complete their coursework in fewer or more than four semesters should meet with a graduate advisor for an individualized plan.

Semester 1	Required course: Enroll in LAS 6220 <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i> .
Month 1	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 project proposal including conceptual frameworks and methods and submit to Graduate Advisor.
By midpoint (October)	Meet with a Graduate Advisor to: 1) Select one of the MALAS specializations , 2) Develop an individualized Plan of Study, and 3) start IRB 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 Graduate Coordinator to register the committee chair in the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).
	Fill out, with committee chair approval, required Individual Development and Study Plan .
Semester 2	Required course: Enroll in LAS 6293 <i>Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies</i> .
By midpoint (February)	Select full committee (minimum one member and chair).
	Develop a capstone proposal and timeline. Meet with committee chair to discuss the proposal and fill out pre

	research form. Submit completed form to Graduate Coordinator.
	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 Individual Development and Study Plan .
Summer	Carry out capstone project (timing will vary).
Semester 3	Option to enroll in additional hours of LAS 6905 Independent Study .
Month 1	Fill out post research form and submit to Graduate Coordinator. Prepare capstone outline, gain chair approval, and submit to committee members.
	Committee meeting to discuss Capstone Paper Plan. Ask Graduate Coordinator for approval form and send to committee
By midpoint (October)	Prepare first draft (paper and product), gain chair approval, and submit to committee members at least 10 days before meeting with them. Ask Graduate Coordinator for approval form to send to committee.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
Semester 4	Option to enroll in additional hours of LAS 6905 Independent Study for students needing extra time to finish capstone project.
Month 1	Resolve any incomplete grades.
	Submit a Degree Application in One.UF portal.
By midpoint (February)	Submit capstone paper and product to committee chair for final review and approval, then schedule defense. Inform the Graduate Coordinator of the defense date.
	Send final capstone paper (and capstone product) to committee at least 10 days before defense.

Before Final Submission Deadline	Capstone project presentation and defense with committee.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
	Fill out MALAS Exit Survey and submit a copy of your final project to the Graduate Coordinator.

3.2 Capstone proposal and timeline

In Semester 2, students develop a detailed capstone proposal (3,000-5,000 words), 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 how the proposed project will address audience needs and desired impacts. All committee members should be consulted, and a proposal approval form must be signed by the chair and filed with the Graduate Coordinator.

If the capstone project includes partners, as in community-based projects or program evaluations, students may work with contacts in their own networks or pursue connections maintained by the Center for Latin American Studies through local, state, national and international linkages. When relevant, students should send cover letters and CVs to potential partners and arrange virtual or in-person meetings. The committee chair and the Graduate Coordinator may assist in this process and must formally approve the proposed project.

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 outline & planning meeting

Usually, in the first month of Semester 3, each student presents a capstone outline to all committee members and arranges a meeting to discuss the plan. Students build their capstone outline from their proposal, after the project has been initiated. In addition to updated proposal content, the capstone outline should contain a schedule of dates for

finishing and presenting the capstone product. The specifics of how to construct an outline are described in Section 3.4. Capstone outlines are generally 3,000 to 5,000 words.

Students are responsible for outlines, capstone meetings and making sure that each committee member receives a copy of their proposal, timeline and outline, as well as the MALAS capstone guidelines.

REQUIRED FORM: Capstone Plan Approval Form, which the student obtains from the Graduate Coordinator and brings to the capstone planning meeting.

In the planning meeting, the student and committee should reflect on the project activities to date, review the proposed table of contents and discuss options and strategies for organizing the paper, and establish a plan for completing the project.

3.4 Written capstone paper

A MALAS capstone project demonstrates the ability to generate a cultural or professional product aimed at a specific audience, incorporating theoretical concepts of Latin American Studies and interdisciplinary and/or creative approaches.

The capstone paper may vary in design, although it is usually 6,000 to 12,000 words, including bibliography. It typically comprises the following elements (though 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.

The capstone paper should follow one of three major writing and citation styles: Chicago Manual of Style (CMS, commonly used in the social sciences); Modern Language Association (MLA, commonly used in the humanities); or American Psychological Association (APA, commonly used in behavioral sciences). [Purdue Owl](#) provides excellent quick guides to all three styles. UF libraries offer digital access 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 vary, its assessment method should be agreed on between the student and the committee chair in advance, preferably during Semester 2.

Despite the variability of capstone projects, the paper and product are still expected to reflect comparable quality of a thesis in terms of critical thinking, clarity, and delineation of project goals, context, theoretical perspective, activities, and discussion of learning outcomes from the capstone experience and final product.

3.6 Capstone project presentation and defense

As detailed in Section 5, each capstone student delivers a public presentation followed by a defense of the capstone project with their committee. This presentation and discussion constitute a final exam for the master's degree in Latin American Studies and is commonly referred to as "the defense."

Students are responsible for scheduling their presentation, with the committee chair's approval. They must also inform the Graduate Coordinator of their defense date and send their final capstone paper to all committee members **at least 10 days in advance of the defense date**. If the nature of the capstone product does not allow previous submission to the committee, it should be shown, screened, or displayed during the defense.

Capstone documents (final product and paper) are not submitted to UF Graduate School. However, they may be entered into the institutional repository of university if the student wishes. To explore this possibility, contact the Graduate Coordinator.

3.7 Responsibilities of the chair and 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 an 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

The 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 projects in various ways. All members review and comment on the capstone project plan 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 the oral defense of the project.

4. Internship Guidelines

[Internships](#) related to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx communities in the U.S. offer valuable opportunities for applied and practical learning. The Center encourages internship students to gain experience working with organizations that inform and deepen their classroom study and open career possibilities.

While the Center has networks and alumni linkages that could offer possibilities, the student is responsible for generating and pursuing their own internship opportunities. Due

to the limitations of a competitive workforce and academic timelines, the Center cannot guarantee an internship for a student. **It is strongly recommended that students start the process of finding an internship during Semester 1.** In the event that a student cannot secure an internship, they will need to implement a thesis or capstone back-up plan.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE: Information about internship possibilities can be found at [UF Center for Latin American Studies](#), [UF Career Connection Center](#), and other sources.

Written agreements for internships

The following written agreements assure that students, their committee, the host agency, and Graduate Coordinator agree on explicit expectations and procedures:

- **Plan of Internship:** Before embarking on the project: the [Plan of Internship](#) must be approved with a signature from the Graduate Coordinator, the UF faculty instructor of record (usually the chair), and the host agency (the organization or institution with which the student will collaborate).
- **Internship Agreement:** 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.
- **Written Evaluation:** A representative of the host agency assumes responsibility to oversee the internship and submits a written evaluation to the instructor of record upon completion of the internship.

Students interested in pursuing an internship project must review the [MALAS Internship Guidelines](#) before meeting with their Graduate Advisor.

4.1 Standard internship timeline and checkpoints

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

MALAS students typically complete their coursework **in four semesters of study, on campus**. The following timeline details the important deadlines and checkpoints for the four-semester path. Students planning to complete their coursework in fewer or more than four semesters should meet with a graduate advisor for an individualized plan.

Semester 1	Required course: Enroll in LAS 6220 <i>Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies</i> .
Month 1	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 internship committee.
	Explore internship options. <i>F1 and J1 students may contact the International Center to learn about requirements for internships in the US.</i>
	Draft a project proposal including conceptual frameworks and methods.
Mid-term (October)	Meet with a Graduate Advisor to: 1. Select one of the MALAS specializations and 2. Developed an Individualized Plan of Study.
By end of term	Supervisory committee chair appointed. Ask Graduate Coordinator to register the committee chair in the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).
	Apply to internships (Note: deadlines generally range from December to March).
	Fill out Individual Development and Study Plan .
Semester 2	Required course: Enroll in LAS 6293 <i>Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies</i> .
By midterm	Select full committee (minimum 1 member in addition to chair).
	If relevant, submit proposals for funding. Recommended: 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.
	Develop an internship paper plan and Internship Agreement . Gain approval and signature from the host agency, supervising faculty, and Graduate Coordinator; file documents with Graduate Coordinator.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .

Summer	Carry out internship (timing and intensity will vary). At the end of the internship, submit performance evaluation.
Semester 3	Internship students may enroll in LAS 6949 <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 Graduate Coordinator.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
Semester 4	Option to enroll in additional credits of LAS 6949 <i>Internship in Latin American Studies</i> , or LAS 6905 <i>Independent Study</i> for students needing extra time to finish internship paper.
Month 1	Resolve any incomplete grades.
	Submit Degree Application in the One.UF portal.
By Midpoint (February)	Submit the final draft of your internship paper to committee chair for final review and approval, then schedule defense. Inform the Graduate Coordinator of the defense date.
	Send approved final internship paper to committee members at least 10 days before defense.
Before Final Submission Deadline	Internship paper defense with chair and committee.
By end of term	Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan .
	Fill out MALAS Exit Survey and submit a copy of your final paper to the Graduate Coordinator.

4.2 Internship proposal & agreement

In addition to the initial proposal for master's project described in Section 1.5, the internship option requires the following steps and procedures:

- **First, the student must find an internship.** It is strongly recommended to start during Semester 1. 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.

- International students pursuing an internship in the U.S. 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 U.S. 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 their project, the student must:
 - Obtain approval of a [Plan of Internship](#)
 - Develop and submit an [Internship Agreement](#)
 These last two 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 will:

- Keep a daily or weekly journal with comments, questions and a log of activities.
- Prepare and submit a progress report (3-5 pages) to the UF instructor of record midway through the internship period.
- Submit a longer report to the UF instructor of record at the end of the internship.

At the end of the internship, and within the last two weeks of the internship semester, the host agency supervisor should submit a written evaluation of the intern's performance to the UF faculty instructor of record, indicating satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance of the duties required for the internship. No other form is required.

4.4 Internship paper plan & meeting

In Semester 2, the student develops an internship paper plan, which is an outline (1,500 to 3,000 words) of the final internship paper (6,000 to 10,000 words). In the internship paper plan, the student establishes deadlines and strategizes how to incorporate the data and knowledge gathered from journal entries, internship reports, and other materials produced during the internship for the contents of the internship paper (described in Section 4.5).

Once the internship paper plan is completed, the student share the internship paper plan with all members of the committee and arranges a meeting to discuss. Students are responsible for ensuring that each committee member receives a copy of the 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 and impacts 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. Nonetheless, in every case, it should 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.

An internship paper typically comprises the following elements (though 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.

The internship paper 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 differ according to the nature of the internship, it is still expected to reflect comparable quality of a thesis in terms of critical thinking, clarity, and delineation of internship goals, context, theoretical perspective, activities, and discussion of the learning outcomes from the internship experience.

4.7 Internship project presentation and defense

As detailed in Section 5, each internship student will deliver 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 master's degree in Latin American Studies, and is commonly referred to as "the defense."

Students are responsible for scheduling their presentation, with the committee chair's approval. They must also inform the Graduate Coordinator of their defense date and send their final internship paper to all committee members **at least 10 days in advance of the defense date**.

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.
- Ensures student submission of journal entries and a mid-term progress report and responds to these documents while student is still carrying out internship.
- Ensures submission of final internship reports from student and host agency soon after internship activities are finished.
- Submits a grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory), 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

The capstone 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 review and comment on the internship paper plan and the final internship 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

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, the agency commits to providing educational experiences within the agency's ongoing work and to supporting the intern's work on a specific project or issue. The agency assigns responsibility for supervising 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 completing the internship. These arrangements should be agreed upon by the agency and intern and written into the Internship Agreement.

5. Final Oral Exam (Defense)

All MALAS students complete a final oral exam that consists 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 to their committee members at least 10 days before the defense date. Because committee members usually represent various departments with their own procedures, students are responsible for ensuring that each committee member receives a copy of MALAS guidelines. The student is also responsible for obtaining necessary paperwork from the Center's Graduate Coordinator after their defense and before the submission deadline.

A master's defense usually lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. During the defense, both student and chair should be present in person in the same room unless the Graduate School amends this policy. Students should be prepared to deliver a polished and professional oral presentation and answer questions. The defense is a public event; colleagues, professors, and friends may attend if the student wishes. 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. In no particular order, the presentation should:

- Present student's positionality (how they became 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.

A slide deck or other audiovisual material is welcome but not necessary. It is often useful to show relevant information visually: the table of contents of the thesis or internship paper, map(s) to locate work, charts and graphs, or photographs of the site and subject matter, for example. Students are discouraged from putting too much text on a slide and/or reading the slides aloud.

During the defense: Committee feedback

After the presentation, 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 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 Graduate Coordinator. Theses, internship papers, and capstone documents (where possible) should also be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

Written thesis papers must 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 celebrate the culmination of a learning journey and academic achievement. Most faculty members come to a defense having carefully reviewed the student paper and anticipate 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: This world-class collection contains approximately 500,000 volumes, 50,000 microforms, thousands of current and historical serial titles and digital resources, accompanied with specialized staff support.

Academic Writing, Grammar, and Style: The [UF Writing Studio](#) helps University of Florida students and faculty from all levels and disciplines meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. It 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.

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 Health Care Center](#) 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.

CONTACT: *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 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 [UF Office for Student Financial Affairs](#) websites for current information about scholarships, assistantships, and fellowships for academic year study at UF, 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](#), the [UF MDP program website](#), and other sources. International students may also apply for funding in their respective countries.

8. Contact Information

Academic Advisor

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Graduate and Undergraduate Coordinator
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(352) 273-4714

Graduate Coordinator

Po Echeguren
Academic Program Specialist
Grinter Hall 316
secheguren@ufl.edu
(352) 273-4709

Thesis Checklist

Semester 1

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ Enroll in **LAS 6220** *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies*.

Month 1:

- ☐ 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 thesis committee.
- ☐ Explore topics, approaches, and methods for thesis project.
- ☐ **Draft a project proposal** for including conceptual framework and methods and submit to Graduate Advisor

Midpoint (October):

Meet with a Graduate Advisor to:

- ☐ Select one of the MALAS specializations.
- ☐ Develop an individualized Plan of Study.
- ☐ Begin the IRB 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.

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.
- ☐ Supervisory committee chair appointed before the end of the semester. Ask Graduate Coordinator to add the committee chair to the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).

Semester 2

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ Enroll in **LAS 6293** *Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies*.

Midpoint (February):

- ☐ Select full committee (minimum one member and chair).
- ☐ Develop a research proposal and timeline.
- ☐ **Meet with** committee chair and discuss proposal and timeline.
- ☐ Fill out pre research form and submit to Graduate Coordinator.

- ☐ Obtain [IRB](#) clearance and apply for visa, if relevant.
- ☐ If relevant, submit proposals to compete for a Field Research Grant (FRG). FRG requires IRB clearance as approved, exempt, or not applicable.

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.

Summer

- ☐ Conduct thesis research (timing will vary).
- ☐ Prepare thesis plan to present to committee.

Semester 3

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ (Optional) Enroll in **LAS 6905** Independent Study or **LAS 6971** Research for Masters Thesis

Month 1:

- ☐ Fill out post research form and submit to Graduate Coordinator.
- ☐ Meet with thesis chair and committee to discuss your thesis plan.

Midpoint (October):

- ☐ Submit signed thesis plan form to Graduate Coordinator.
- ☐ Check Graduate School requirements and deadlines for graduation next semester.

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.

Semester 4

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ **(Mandatory)** Enroll in at least 3 credits of **LAS 6971** Research for Masters Thesis.

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.

Midpoint (February):

- ☐ Submit thesis paper to committee chair for **final review and approval**.
- ☐ Schedule defense and inform the Graduate Coordinator of the defense date.

- ☐ Send approved thesis paper to committee members **14 days prior** to defense.

Before First Submission Deadline (Final Oral Defense):

- ☐ Thesis defense with committee.
- ☐ Submit thesis in GIMS.

Before Final Submission Deadline (Thesis Submission):

- ☐ Submit all required revisions to the Editorial Office via GIMS and obtain Final Approval by the Final Approval Deadline.
- ☐ Complete ETD signature page.
- ☐ Submit Publication Agreement to Graduate Coordinator.

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.
- ☐ Fill out MALAS Exit Survey and submit a copy of your final thesis to the Graduate Coordinator.

Capstone Checklist

Semester 1

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ Enroll in **LAS 6220** *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies*.

Month 1:

- ☐ 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 project proposal** including conceptual framework and methods and submit to Graduate Advisor.

Midpoint (October):

Meet with a Graduate Advisor to:

- ☐ Select one of the MALAS specializations.
- ☐ Develop an individualized Plan of Study.
- ☐ Begin the IRB 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.

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.
- ☐ Supervisory committee chair appointed before the end of the semester. Ask Graduate Coordinator to add the committee chair to the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).

Semester 2

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ Enroll in **LAS 6293** *Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies*.

Midpoint (February):

- ☐ Select full committee (minimum one member and chair).
- ☐ Develop a capstone proposal and timeline.
- ☐ **Meet with** committee chair and discuss proposal and timeline.

- ☐ *Fill out pre research form and submit to Graduate Coordinator.*
- ☐ *Obtain [IRB](#) clearance and apply for visa, if relevant.*
- ☐ *If relevant, submit proposals to compete for a Field Research Grant (FRG). FRG requires IRB clearance as approved, exempt, or not applicable.*

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ *Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.*

Summer

- ☐ *Carry out capstone project (timing will vary).*

Semester 3

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ *(Optional) Enroll in **LAS 6905** Independent Study.*

Month 1:

- ☐ *Fill out post research form (follow up) and submit to Graduate Coordinator*
- ☐ *Prepare capstone outline, gain chair approval, and submit to committee members.*

Midpoint (October):

- ☐ *Prepare **capstone first draft** (paper and product), gain chair approval, and submit to committee members at least **10 days** before meeting.*
- ☐ *Committee meeting to discuss first draft. Ask Graduate Coordinator for approval form and send to committee.*

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ *Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.*

Semester 4

Before the first day of classes:

- ☐ *(Optional) Enroll in additional hours of **LAS 6905** Independent Study.*

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.*

Midpoint (February):

- ☐ *Submit capstone paper and product to committee chair for **final review and approval**.*

- ☐ *Schedule defense and inform the Graduate Coordinator of the defense date.*
- ☐ *Send approved capstone paper and product to committee members **10 days prior** to defense.*

Before Final Submission Deadline:

- ☐ *Capstone project presentation and defense with committee.*

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ *Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.*
- ☐ *Fill out MALAS Exit Survey and submit a copy of your final project to the Graduate Coordinator.*

Internship Checklist

Semester 1

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ Enroll in LAS 6220 *Issues and Perspectives in Latin American Studies*.

Month 1:

- ☐ 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 internship committee.
- ☐ Explore internship options. (F1 and J1 students may contact the International Center to learn about requirements for internships in the U.S.)
- ☐ Draft a **project proposal** including conceptual frameworks and methods and submit to Graduate Advisor

Midpoint (October):

Meet with a Graduate Advisor to:

- ☐ Select one of the MALAS specializations.
- ☐ Develop an individualized Plan of Study.

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.
- ☐ Supervisory committee chair appointed before the end of the semester. Ask Graduate Coordinator to add the committee chair to the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS).
- ☐ Apply to internships (Deadlines generally range from December to March).

Semester 2

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ Enroll in **LAS 6293** *Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies*.

Midpoint (February):

- ☐ Select full committee (minimum one member and chair).

- ☐ *If relevant, submit proposals for funding. Recommended: Have a contingency plan—in the form of capstone or thesis—in case internship, funding or accommodation does not work out.*
- ☐ *Develop an internship paper plan*
- ☐ *Meet with committee chair and discuss paper plan.*
- ☐ *Fill out Internship Agreement, gain approval from the host agency, your chair, and advisor and submit to the Graduate Coordinator.*

Before the end of the semester:

Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.

Summer

- ☐ *Carry out internship (timing and intensity will vary).*
- ☐ *Submit performance evaluation after conclusion of internship.*

Semester 3

Before first day of classes:

- ☐ *(Optional) LAS 6949 Internship in Latin American Studies*

Month 1:

☐ *Committee meeting to discuss progress on paper. Submit any pending approval forms that have not already been sent to your Graduate Coordinator.*

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ *Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.*

Semester 4

Before the first day of classes:

☐ *(Optional) Enroll in **LAS 6905** Independent Study or **LAS 6949** Internship in Latin American Studies*

Month 1:

- ☐ *Resolve incomplete grades.*
- ☐ *Submit Degree Application in One.UF portal.*

Midpoint (February):

- ☐ *Submit final draft of internship paper to committee chair for **final review and approval**.*

- ☐ *Schedule defense and inform the Graduate Coordinator of the defense date.*
- ☐ *Send approved final paper to committee members **10 days prior** to defense.*

Before Submission Deadline:

- ☐ *Internship paper defense with committee.*

Before the end of the semester:

- ☐ *Fill out required Individual Development and Study Plan.*
- ☐ *Fill out MALAS Exit Survey and submit a copy of your final paper to the Graduate Coordinator.*