

# Graduate Academic Assessment Plan

MA Latin American Studies

2012 2013

Masters of Arts in Latin  
American Studies

Liberal Arts and Sciences

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# Masters of Arts in Latin American Studies

## Graduate Academic Assessment Plan

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The Masters of Arts (MA) in Latin American Studies (LAS) recognizes a student's commitment to and a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean and attests to their knowledge of Latin American area studies as well as their proficiency in at least one language of Latin America (typically Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, or Haitian Creole).

### A. Mission Statement

The Center for Latin American Studies at UF was founded in 1930 and is one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions of its kind. More than 170 Center-based and affiliate faculty devote their teaching, research, service and other professional activities to Latin America and the Caribbean. UF library resources related to Latin America and the Caribbean are among the best on the world. Thus UF provides students with unique opportunities to enhance their expertise related to Latin America and the Caribbean. The Center's mission is to advance knowledge about Latin America and the Caribbean and its peoples throughout the Hemisphere, and to enhance the scope and quality of research, teaching, and outreach in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies at the University of Florida.

The Masters of Arts in Latin American Studies (LAS) at UF provides students with broad knowledge of contemporary and historical issues relevant to Latin America and more specific expertise in their thesis research area. The program's objective is to provide students with knowledge of Latin America from an interdisciplinary perspective. As stated in the university's mission and the college's mission, research and scholarship are integral to the educational process and to the expansion of our understanding of the world and as such, MALAS students will be able to demonstrate general and specific knowledge related to Latin American area studies and articulate this knowledge clearly and effectively in a thesis completed for their graduate degree. The mission aligns with the missions of the college and the university by linking to the traditions and cultures of all societies and nurturing generations of young people from diverse backgrounds to address the needs of the world's societies.

Requirements for the degree are as follows:

1. 30 credit hours of coursework with Latin American or related content with a grade of C or better, distributed as follows: LAS 6220, LAS 6293, 15 credit hours in a MALAS specialization and 9 credit hours outside the specialization.
2. A thesis submitted and defended before a committee of at least three faculty members and at least 3 credits of LAS 6971.
3. Intermediate proficiency in a Latin American language (typically Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian Creole) as measured by coursework through the second year, standardized exams, or individual assessment by a language professional.

### B. Student Learning Outcomes

#### Content

Students will identify, describe and explain the prevailing issues in and scholarly perspectives on Latin American Studies.

#### Skills

Students will critically evaluate the significance, quality and veracity of information gathered in the literature, apply it effectively in research for a thesis, and communicate that knowledge effectively in spoken and written formats.

## Professional Behavior

Students will defend their thesis in an oral exam before their committee members. Many MALAS students will present their research in professional meetings or other academic settings.

## C Research

Research training is an integral component of the MA program in Latin American Studies. All students must complete a thesis, which is the capstone of the program. Ideally, the thesis demonstrates the ability to conceive a problem, identify and utilize source materials, carry out research, analyze data, and to make a persuasive argument in lucid prose.

Students are encouraged to begin thinking of potential topics from the beginning of their program and are expected to have determined a thesis area and advisor by the second semester in the program. A thesis prospectus must be approved by the thesis committee before or during the third semester in the program. Students are required to take LAS 6293, Design and Methods of Research in Latin American Studies, usually in their first semester. Many of the 18 specializations in the program also require an additional methods class (e.g., political science, anthropology, sociology). The Center for Latin American Studies sponsors a thesis workshop each fall, and a grants workshop, field research clinic and poster session each spring. The Center also sponsors a summer Field Research Grant competition for which students submit research proposals for Center funding (\$1-2k) to support research in Latin America (or in the US for Latino Studies). Students are expected to present their results in the spring poster session. Many MALAS students also present papers at professional conferences and a number of them publish in peer-reviewed journals.

## D. Assessment Timeline

Program: MA Latin American Studies

College: CLAS

Assessment	Assessment 1
<b>SLOs</b>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	
#1	Thesis
<b>Skills</b>	
#2	Thesis and defense
<b>Professional Behavior</b>	
#3	Oral defense/presentations

## E. Assessment Cycle Chart

Assessment Cycle for: MALAS

College: Liberal Arts and Sciences

Analysis and Interpretation:

May/June

Improvement Actions:

Completed by August 15

Dissemination:

Completed by September 15

SLOs	Year	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
<b>Content Knowledge</b>					
#1		X	X	X	X

<b>Skills</b>				
#2	X	X	X	X
<b>Professional Behavior</b>				
#3	X	X	X	X

The primary assessment method for each of the student learning objectives will be a thesis related to Latin America completed and defended before a faculty committee. The thesis will demonstrate knowledge of the scholarly literature and issues relevant to the thesis topic. The thesis is evaluated and approved by a committee composed of a thesis director and two committee members who also supervise an oral defense of the thesis.

## F. Measurement Tools

To monitor the success of the Latin American Studies MA program, the director of the Center for Latin American Studies will appoint a faculty committee every three years to review a sampling of student theses and determine if they indicate students are demonstrating achievement of the student learning objectives. The committee will recommend appropriate action, including sending criteria to thesis committee members.

Committee members will vary, but will be expected to abide by the following grading rubric:

Students demonstrate the knowledge SLO as they pertain to the MA thesis including the oral defense of the thesis; successful completion of the written thesis. Students demonstrate the skills SLO by analyzing data in published literature or collected, synthesizing the information collected, and applying an accepted methodology. Successful completion of these skills is assessed through the written and oral thesis, to be evaluated by the students' advisor and thesis supervisory committee members. The student's ability to demonstrate professional attributes in the professional behavior SLO is measured by presence or absence of submitting an abstract and presentation. Student's professional attributes will be viewed during the oral presentation of the MA thesis.

Sample Rubric for grading senior thesis				
	A Paper	B Paper	C Paper	Unsatisfactory
Ideas	Excels in responding to assignment. Interesting, demonstrates sophistication of thought. Central idea/thesis is clearly communicated, worth developing; limited enough to be manageable. Paper recognizes some complexity of its thesis: may acknowledge its contradictions, qualifications, or limits and follow out their logical implications. Understands and critically evaluates its sources, appropriately limits and defines terms.	A solid paper, responding appropriately to assignment. Clearly states a thesis/central idea, but may have minor lapses in development. Begins to acknowledge the complexity of central idea and the possibility of other points of view. Attempts to define terms, not always successfully.	Adequate but weaker and less effective, possibly responding less well to assignment. Presents central idea in general terms, often depending on platitudes or clichés. Usually does not acknowledge other views. Shows basic comprehension of sources.	Does not have a clear central idea or does not respond appropriately to the assignment. Thesis may be too vague or obvious to be developed effectively. Paper may misunderstand sources.
Organization & coherence	Uses a logical structure appropriate to paper's subject, purpose, audience, thesis, and disciplinary field. Sophisticated transitional sentences often develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations. It guides the reader through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas.	Shows a logical progression of ideas and uses fairly sophisticated transitional devices. Some logical links may be faulty, but each paragraph clearly relates to the paper's central idea.	May list or arrange ideas randomly. May use transitions, but they may not be logic based. Paragraphs have topic sentences but may be overly general.	Organization may be random and lack internal paragraph coherence using few transitions. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences or main ideas, or be too general or too specific to be effective. Paragraphs may not all
Support	Uses evidence appropriately and effectively, providing sufficient evidence and explanation to convince.	Begins to offer reasons to support its points and interpret the evidence/explain connections between evidence and main ideas.	Uses generalizations often to support main points. Examples may not be obvious or relevant. Often depends on unsupported opinion or	Uses irrelevant details or lacks supporting evidence. May be a summary rather than analysis.
Mechanics	Almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.	May contain a few errors, which do not impede understanding.	Usually contains several mechanical errors but do not impede the overall understanding.	Contains many mechanical errors or a few important errors that block the reader's understanding and ability to see connections between thoughts.

## Assessment Oversight

Name	Department Affiliation	Email Address	Phone Number
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## Figure 1. University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric

Related resources are found at <http://www.aa.assessment.edu>

Program:

Year:

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Mission Statement	Mission statement is articulated clearly.				
	The program mission clearly supports the College and University missions, and includes				

	specific statements describing how it supports these missions.				
<b>Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessment Measures</b>	SLOs are stated clearly.				
	SLOs focus on demonstration of student learning.				
	SLOs are measurable.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLO.				
<b>Research</b>	Research expectations for the program are clear, concise, and appropriate for the discipline.				
<b>Assessment Map</b>	The Assessment Map indicates the times in the program where the SLOs are assessed and measured.				
	The Assessment Map identifies the assessments used for each SLO.				
<b>Assessment Cycle</b>	The assessment cycle is clear.				
	All student learning outcomes are measured.				
	Data is collected at least once in the cycle.				
	The cycle includes a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation.				
	The cycle includes a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis.				
	The cycle includes a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders.				

University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric, continued

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
<b>Measurement Tools</b>	Measurement tools are described clearly and concisely.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs.				
	Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.				
	The report presents examples of at least one measurement tool.				
<b>Assessment Oversight</b>	Appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified				

