

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

These guidelines outline the requirements and responsibilities of students admitted to the MA in Liberal Studies Program. Please read them carefully and retain them for future consultation. Changes to the Graduate School policies or Liberal Studies Program regulations will pre-empt any below information. Please read the rules and requirements printed in the Graduate Catalog pertaining to the year of your admission to the program.

All students should be subscribed to the **MALS listserv** in order to receive important program information and learn about deadlines for registration, graduation application, and more. You can sign on the MALS listserv through the Computing Services website: <http://ualr.edu/computingservices/listservadd.asp>

If you have any questions about the program, please contact the MALS Coordinator: Angela Hunter, 683-7066, anhunter@ualr.edu

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- I. Advising Protocol**

Each student enrolling in courses must be advised by the Graduate Coordinator each semester. The degree plan (the list of courses required for the student's degree) is updated at each advising session and appropriate courses are chosen. The official degree plan will be signed by the student and the Graduate Coordinator. The student is responsible for seeking approval to enroll in any restricted course from the professor and/or department in question.

Students may choose to seek additional advising from the chair of the thesis/final project committee or from the Graduate Coordinator in the department of the major area of study. If the student is not enrolling in courses for a semester or more, s/he should alert the Graduate Coordinator in writing of the absence.

II. **Primary/Secondary Areas of Study and Courses**

Students are strongly encouraged to choose the major area of study before entering the program, and to verify they have sufficient background in the area. Some students may not have decided on a minor area of study upon entry and will choose based on course options or thesis/project topic decision. The typical degree plan is primary/secondary area split, with 15 hours in the primary area and 9 hours in the secondary area. **All students are required to enroll in the graduate-level "methods" or foundation course in their primary area**, when such a course exists (for example, "Seminar in Historical Methods" for History, or "Introduction to Research Methods" in Rhetoric and Writing). Lists of these courses will be maintained through the Graduate Coordinator. The student may also be required to enroll in an additional course if the particular area of study recommends a methods course and a theory course. The rest of the courses in the areas will be chosen based upon individualized design of the degree plan, with approval of the Graduate Coordinator.

Students with specific thesis/project topics or career goals in mind may choose instead of a primary/secondary split to pursue another format of study combining three areas (15/6/3 credits each or 9/9/6 credits each, for example). It is beneficial for students to have a strong grounding in one area, so it is recommended that students verge from the primary/secondary (15/9) path only with careful forethought and planning. Discuss ideas and needs with the Graduate Coordinator to find out what might work best for your individualized degree plan.

Students are allowed to take no more than 9 hours of credit in a college other than Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS), such as the College of Professional Studies or the College of Education. Some students opt to complete a secondary area in a discipline outside AHSS, such as Social Work, Gerontology, Communication, Journalism, Criminal Justice, Health Science, Higher Education, etc. If you are interested in one of these areas, contact the Graduate Coordinator for the specific program for information about which courses are open to students from outside the program (courses may be restricted or have pre-requisites).

5000-level Course RESTRICTION: Graduate courses with 5000-level numbers are dual-listed for both undergraduate and graduate credit. Simply stated, each 5000-level graduate

course has a parallel 4000-level undergraduate course. Both courses will meet together. **No more than 40 percent of a program's required minimum credit hours may be earned in 5000-level courses.** In the case of the MALS program, of the required minimum 36 hours needed to graduate only 14.4 hours may be earned from 5000-level courses (a practical **limitation of 15 hours—5 courses**). Students should bear in mind the lower-level hour restriction when developing a degree plan.

III. Liberal Studies Courses

There are 4 required Liberal Studies courses: LIST 7310, 7390, 8310, 8320. The first two are content courses that will help students develop skills and knowledge in research and in interdisciplinary studies as well as hone writing skills. Each student must enroll in LIST 7310 in the first fall s/he enters the program. Each student must enroll in LIST 7390 in the first spring semester after s/he has completed (at least) 9 hours of coursework.

LIST 8310 and 8320 are 6 credits (2 courses) dedicated to the thesis or final project. They must be taken consecutively (not simultaneously) when the student is ready to begin the thesis or project. **The grade for each is CR/NC** (credit or no-credit). Details are below.

- **LIST 7310: Introduction to Liberal Studies**

In this course, students refine their ability to read and think critically, to understand and make effective arguments, to study and practice research techniques, and to communicate effectively in writing. Students will study interdisciplinary processes and formulate an interdisciplinary research project. A sampling of major texts from various disciplines will be considered from an interdisciplinary perspective. The course is offered in the fall.

- **LIST 7390: Liberal Studies Colloquium**

This course will be taken by all MALS students in the course of completing their degrees. The recommended prerequisite is the completion of Introduction to Liberal Studies and at least 9 graduate hours. The course has a general topic (such as ‘memory’ or ‘sex and society’) which is approached with a focus on interdisciplinary reading, writing and research. The course will allow students to sharpen their ability to communicate effectively across disciplines by sharing data, research methods, and writing techniques. Students will participate in an active dialogue in the classroom by presenting an interdisciplinary research paper or project on the selected class topic. This course is offered in the spring.

- **LIST 8310: Thesis/Final Project**

The thesis/project committee must be assembled and officially recognized before the student is allowed to enroll in 8310 (thesis/project); in addition, each member of the committee must approve in writing the thesis/project proposal (see below). In order to register for 8310, the student needs to have THREE IMPORTANT things in order:

1. A supervising committee (major chair, minor chair)
2. The approval of major chair to register for the course: the major chair is the faculty person from the primary area of study and is the person to whom the student reports during the course and who assigns the grade for 8310 and 8320
3. A thesis or project proposal: the proposal approval form must be signed by the full committee

The student and major chair will come to an agreement before LIST 8310 begins to establish: a) work product goals, b) the projected schedule or frequency of meetings and of turning in product, and c) a timeline for completion of thesis/project. This agreement must be in writing at the beginning of the semester with copies held by the student, the chair of the committee and the secondary area committee member (the minor chair). The minor chair will be consulted by the student regarding the schedule and timeline. If revisions to the thesis/project and/or to the timeline are made at the end of 8310, the revisions must be approved by the major chair and the minor chair at the beginning of 8320.

Workshop Requirement for LIST 8310

In addition to the above requirements, all LIST 8310 students are required to attend two group meetings during the semester. These meetings will be WORKSHOPS, and attendance at and participation is mandatory. To receive a grade of CR in LIST 8310 the student must complete all the required work and participate in the workshops.

• LIST 8320: Thesis/Final Project

Successful completion of the thesis/project is the goal of 8320. The student and major chair will come to an agreement at the beginning of the course that establishes: a) the work product goals, b) the projected schedule or frequency of meetings and/or turning in of product, and c) a timeline for completion of thesis/project, including the defense. The minor chair will also be consulted about the product expected and the timeline.

Reflective Essay Requirement for LIST 8320

For students who entered the program in Fall 2007 and after only.

As part of LIST 8320, the student will revisit his/her LIST 7310 methods paper by writing a new essay. This will be a reflective essay on the student's earlier work and on his/her developed perspective on questions of disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods. This essay must be submitted to the MALS coordinator and placed into the MALS

Student Portfolio (see below) before the last exam day for the semester in which the student takes 8320. The student will not receive a grade for LIST 8320 until the reflective essay is submitted to the portfolio. Failure to submit the essay will result in a grade of NC.

IV. Student Portfolio

Each MALS student will maintain an official student portfolio, housed in the MALS Office. The portfolio will contain assignments and documents written by the student during her/his MALS career, and will also serve as an assessment tool. **The student is responsible for ensuring that all elements required are in the portfolio each academic year.** The student should consult the graduate coordinator or the GA about items in the portfolio.

Below is a list of documents that must be submitted to the portfolio, including the course number if the documents are associated with a specific Liberal Studies course:

- LIST 7310: methods paper and the article used in writing the methods paper; draft of thesis/project proposal (*for students entering the program in Fall 2007 or after*)
- LIST 7390: interdisciplinary (final) paper
- Approved thesis/project proposal (to be replaced with updated versions as needed)
- LIST 8320: Reflective essay on methods paper written in LIST 7310 (*for students entering the program in Fall 2007 or after*)
- Thesis/final project (final, approved version)

V. Thesis/Final Project

Each student combines two (or more) disciplines to create an interdisciplinary thesis or final project. The thesis or final project is the culmination of the MALS degree. It should represent the student's interdisciplinary research. A thesis is a scholarly or creative research paper that attempts to add knowledge to the disciplines that the student has studied during his or her program. A project is a work of some sort which integrates both of the student's disciplines into a unique form. In general, MALS theses range from 50-150 pages in length; final project length and structure depend on the type of project (some may incorporate an exhibition or performance, for example). The specific requirements for the thesis/project will be set out by the supervising committee (major and minor chair).

Examples of MALS theses and final projects can be found in the MALS office and on the MALS website:

http://ualr.edu/ma/LIST/index.php/home/program_requirements/thesis_projects/thesis_examples/

http://ualr.edu/ma/LIST/index.php/home/program_requirements/thesis_projects/project_examples/

Resources about thesis writing, proposals, research, and more, can be found on the MALS website: <http://ualr.edu/ma/LIST/index.php/home/resources/>

Thesis/Final Project Supervising Committee

The thesis/final project committee is composed of a major chair (typically a faculty person from your primary area), a minor chair (typically a faculty person from your secondary area), and a Liberal Studies faculty person (typically the graduate coordinator). The committee supervises and evaluates the thesis/final project, and conducts the formal defense.

Depending on student status (full-time or part-time), the student should begin seeking a major thesis chair at the end of the first 9-12 hours. **Upon completing 18 hours of study, the thesis committee should be established. The student needs to have an idea for the thesis/project before putting together a committee. The student is responsible for securing members for the committee.**

It may take some time to find the right committee members – students will want to choose based on faculty research and/or teaching interests, relationship with faculty, and faculty availability. If students have trouble finding an appropriate committee, they should discuss their interests with the Graduate Coordinator of the department in question (or chair for departments that don't have Graduate Coordinators) and ask for recommendations.

The major chair of the committee must have full graduate faculty status granted by the UALR Graduate Council. If the student desires to work with a faculty member who does not hold full status, please see the Graduate Coordinator about options. The student may also choose to invite someone outside UALR to be the minor chair or even an additional reader of the thesis. However, if the outside faculty person agrees to be the minor chair, s/he must apply for graduate faculty status (please see the Graduate Coordinator for more information).

Thesis/Final Project DEFENSE

Each student must pass a formal defense of the thesis or final project (usually lasting 90 minutes). In the defense, the student presents his/her work and the full committee asks critical questions of the student about the work and its implications. The student should be able to present clearly and with sophistication the thesis/project as well as be able to answer capably questions posed about the research and the process. The “grade” for the defense is Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. In order to graduate, a student must receive Satisfactory.

In addition to the committee members, the academic community is invited to attend the thesis/project defense. Students may also invite friends or family members. No audience

member participates in the formal question process or in the deliberation process, but the student is welcome to accept questions from the audience.

The student is responsible for scheduling his/her defense (coordinating with the schedules of the committee members), including reserving a space for the defense and securing any audiovisual equipment needed. The student must learn work within the timeline set for graduation by the Graduate School (see below).

VI. Graduation

In order to graduate, a MALS student must complete successfully the approved course of study (degree plan) while maintaining satisfactory academic status, complete the thesis/final project to the satisfaction of the committee, pass a formal defense of the thesis/project, and complete all the graduation requirements of the Graduate School.

The student must **apply for graduation** in the semester s/he plans to graduate. The online application can be found through BOSS, or on the Graduate School webpage. If the student does not graduate in the intended semester, s/he must re-apply in the next semester.

The Graduate School homepage contains a list of **important requirements for graduation. Detailed instructions and deadlines (including thesis information) can be found at: <http://www.ualr.edu/gradschool/thesisinfo.asp>.**

Each student will need to check the specific Graduate School deadlines in the semester s/he plans to graduate, and confer with the committee about the timing of the defense. Thesis writers are required to have 3 official copies of the thesis bound (see Graduate School instructions) and a copy uploaded to ProQuest. The MALS Program encourages students completing final projects to bind at least 1 copy to be included in the Ottenheimer Library, and 1 copy to be housed in the MALS Office (audiovisual components can be bound into the document in most cases). Final projects must be approved and defended by the date of thesis submission set by the Graduate School.

NOTE: Earlier submission dates may be required for thesis or final project writers depending on the thesis/project committee and other administrative deadlines.

VII. General Information

Academic Policies: Each student should be familiar with the academic policies of the Graduate School, including good standing status, probationary status, incomplete and withdrawal policies, grading policies, transfer course policy, courses applied toward two degrees, and graduation timelines. This information is covered in the Graduate Catalog which is found in hard copy at the Graduate School and also as a .pdf file online. It is the student's

responsibility to be aware of these requirements for the catalog year governing the student (the year admitted to the program, whether conditionally or regular status).

Note that the timeline for completion of all requirements for an MA degree is 6 years (for those admitted under a catalog prior to 2008) and 7 years (for those under the 2008 or later catalog). This means that you must complete all the required elements and graduate successfully within this time. Military service is a special exception.

Graduate Assistantships: There are GA positions in the MALS Program and across campus, typically available for students attending full-time (9 hours per semester). These positions provide tuition and a stipend. Positions are for 10 or 20 hours per week.

Applications are online through the Graduate School page. The MALS GA position requires administrative and computer skills, self-motivation and people skills. For more information, contact the Graduate Coordinator. For more information about applying, visit this link: <http://www.ualr.edu/gradschool/application.php>

Graduate School Orientation: The Graduate School offers an online orientation session for new students. You can find it here: <http://www.ualr.edu/gradschool/orientation.htm>

Graduate Student Association: In addition to sponsoring a Research Forum and informative presentations, the GSA offers benefits to current students. Find out more: <http://www.ualr.edu/gsa/>

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense and the MALS Program treats it as such. Students are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. The UALR Student Handbook states:

“Plagiarism: To adopt and reproduce as one's own, to appropriate to one's own use, and incorporate in one's own work without acknowledgement the ideas or passages from the writings or works of others.” “The determination that a student's work was the result of dishonest action can be considered in the faculty member's evaluation of that work and in the determination of the course grade. In addition, disciplinary action will be taken by the appropriate university official, e.g., Dean of Students, or by the Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee.” This could include but may not be limited to: failing grade in a course, suspension from the university, and perhaps even prosecution under the Federal copyright laws by the copyright owner.

UALR: <http://www.ualr.edu/owl/plagiarism.htm>

UALR Copyright Central: <http://www.ualr.edu/copyright/articles/?ID=4>

VII. **Other Resources**

There are a number of academic and support services on campus that are free to current students.

The Writing Center, Student Union B 116, 569-8343

Health Services, DSC 102, 569-3188

Disability Resource Center, DSC 103, 569-3143

Veterans Affairs, Admin South 203, 569-8171

Computing Services, Student Union B205, 569-3345

Minority Student Advocacy, 569-3308

Women's Advocacy, 569-3213