



Master's Project Guidelines and Procedures

A requirement for the Master of Arts degree is the completion of a Master's Project (MP), which is a culmination of graduate studies at CLACS. The project should be based on research and on the concentration of academic coursework. Most often, students compose a CLACS MP in the form of an academic paper which is related to their specific interests. Occasionally students make a case for an alternative kind of project; this is an option, and can be discussed with a CLACS advisor. The MP is developed over the course of graduate study at CLACS, and is approved by two readers and a CLACS advisor by the end of a student's final semester.

1. MP Proposal

The key phase in preparing an MP is to define a problem or research question. This question is consolidated into an MP Proposal during the first year of the MA program. All new students entering CLACS will write a preliminary MP proposal during their first Core Course, the Fall Semester's "Intro I Seminar." During the Spring Semester's "Intro II Seminar" Core Course, students will further develop their proposals while working on a more extended literature review and refining their research design and methods. By the end of the first year, students will have a complete MP Proposal. Students often use this document to apply for travel grants for summer research. It is also useful while inquiring to faculty members about their serving as readers. It is highly recommended that students discuss this document with their CLACS advisor.

2. MP Readers

First Reader: The first reader is the primary source of guidance to the student during the development of the MP. This reader is an NYU faculty member with expertise in the area of the project. Students often take classes and meet with the professor early on in their graduate studies at CLACS, and inquire about their being a reader at some point in their first year.

Second Reader: The second reader generally offers a lesser degree of support to the student, perhaps offering recommendations for changes to an early final draft of the MP. When contacting the second reader students should let them know of their secondary role, the general topic of research, and the name of the primary reader.

CLACS Advisor: All CLACS MA students will have one of the CLACS faculty as an advisor who will offer them guidance and support throughout their time at CLACS, and who will need to approve the final MP.



Students should keep their first readers and CLACS advisors informed of their progress throughout the development of their MP. It is the student's responsibility to submit an appropriate number of drafts to the readers before the final MP is submitted to the CLACS advisor for final approval.

3. Research

The summer in between academic years is usually used to perform research that will support a MP. Students often travel to the region during the summer and incorporate this field work into their projects.

4. Writing the MP

At the beginning of the third semester students will inform their CLACS Advisor and the Assistant Director of their progress. Students may want to enroll in the "Writing and Research Seminar" in the Fall Semester of their second year. As soon as they know their intended graduation date, students must register to graduate via Albert.

If an academic paper, the final MP is usually around 35 pages long. Here is an example of how it might be constructed:

- **An Introduction:** a clear statement of the problem researched, a thorough discussion of the background / context which defines the issues at stake, and a brief statement of the argument (thesis / major findings) (2-3 pages).
- **A Literature Review (discussion of the conceptual frameworks):** discussion of how this research relates to the work of other scholars who studied the topic and addressed similar issues. Grouping the existing research into different 'schools,' 'types,' or 'debates' this section will include the different ways in which previous and current researchers have addressed the topic and the conclusions they have drawn. The literature review situates this research topic and approach in relation to different debates and defines / discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the main concepts used to discuss the topic and findings (6-8 pages)
- **Research Design:** a brief description of the way in which the research was conducted, the kind of sources consulted, and the methodology followed to collect and analyze the data. This may also require a brief discussion of the validity of the evidence presented to back up the argument (1-2 pages)
- **Description, discussion, analysis of your findings** (around 20 pages)
- **Conclusion:** a summary of your findings, a well elaborated statement of your argument, and brief description of the significance / contribution of your research.



5. Submitting the MP

The MP must be formatted according to the guidelines outlined below, unless the student is enrolled in a dual degree program; students must follow the format relevant to their respective / specific degree. Both readers and a CLACS advisor must approve the MP and sign the MP Approval Form in order for it to be accepted by CLACS.

Students will submit the **MP Approval Form** (found on the CLACS website), signed by both readers and their CLACS advisor, along with a hard copy of their **final and approved MP** to the Assistant Director of CLACS on or before:

- a. the first week in January — for January degrees
- b. the first week in September — for September degrees
- c. the first week in May — for May degrees

Format:

- Include a cover page which **includes this exact information:**
 - Name of Student
 - Title of MP
 - MASTER PROJECT SUBMITTED AS FINAL REQUIREMENT FOR MA IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES*
 - Semester (Fall, Spring, Summer yyyy)
 - Readers' Names:
 - Primary Reader:
 - Secondary Reader:
- Include a table of contents following the cover page
- Prepare the document according to the Chicago Manual of Style, the *MLA Style Sheet*, or another widely accepted published format. Use only one format throughout the entire document
 - Please make sure the document is typed, double-spaced, with a 1" margin
- Include a clear bibliography, also prepared in accordance with the style chosen for the document



For students completing the joint CLACS/Museum Program MA (36 or 48 points):

Museum Studies students need to have their research project approved by both their faculty advisor from Museum Studies and their faculty advisor from CLACS.

For students completing the joint CLACS/Journalism MA (46 points):

Journalism requires that students register for a 2 point Directed Reading and submit an article in the form of a long (6,000 to 10,000 word) article (think The New Yorker, Harper's, Atlantic), in narrative, explanatory or investigative style. It can also be a heavily researched work of media analysis, but again, presented in journalistic form (please see Journalism Dept. for guidelines). CLACS requires an academic paper, around 20 pages in length, which will serve as a companion piece to the Journalism MA Paper. The format should roughly correspond to that set out above for the CLACS MA, only shorter in length.

NOTE: A few students will wish to prepare an MP in another format – e.g. a catalogue for an exhibition, a documented first-hand account (based on field research) of a Latin American locale or issue, or a video carefully prepared on a theme benefiting greatly from that mode of presentation. (Past CLACS students have used all these modes). Any of these modes will also require a companion piece consisting of a 20-page academic paper following the description set out above. If you are using an alternative format so discuss your project in depth with your readers and your CLACS advisor, and give yourselves ample time to prepare your MP.