



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND POLICIES

FOR THE

M. S. OR M. A. IN ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

AND M.S. IN FORENSIC SCIENCE

OFFERED BY

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

FALL 2007

I. Admission Procedures

The USM *Graduate Bulletin* outlines application procedures and the minimal requirements for admission to the several masters degree programs of the University. The first step for interested parties is therefore to consult the *Graduate Bulletin*. It may be viewed online at <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/>. Hard copies may be obtained by contacting the Office of Graduate Studies by telephone (601-266-4369), by FAX (601-266-5138), or by post (USM Box 10066, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0066).

While the basic application procedures and minimal requirements for admission to all masters degree programs are established by the USM Office of Graduate Studies, degree-granting academic entities may require additional application materials and procedures, and may mandate admission requirements exceeding those specified in the *Graduate Bulletin*.

Persons holding an undergraduate degree, master's degree in another field, law degree, or doctorate in any academic discipline are eligible to apply for admission to the program.

Submission of Admission Materials:

The following materials must be *submitted directly to the Office of Graduate Studies*:

1. A completed application form;
2. Application fee;
3. Copies of official transcripts from all institutions previously attended;
4. Certified scores on all three components of the Graduate Records Examination (GRE);

Office of Graduate Studies
The University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive, # 10066
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0066

Remaining admission materials must be submitted to the Department of Administration of Justice:

5. A full resume (curriculum vita) detailing educational and professional experiences related to the degree being sought;
6. Three letters of recommendation from individuals who are directly knowledgeable of the applicant's suitability for graduate study;
7. Personal Statement: A typed statement of 750 to 1,000 words summarizing the individual's motivation for applying to the program as well as the professional contributions s/he intends to make assuming successful completion of the degree.

Department of Administration of Justice
The University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive, # 5127
Hattiesburg, MS 39406

Important Note:

In addition to the foregoing materials, applicants may also be required to attend an in-person interview with members of the Graduate Admissions Committee for purposes of resolving any questions that may exist on behalf of either party.

II. Admission Criteria

Admission to the Master's program in Administration of Justice is of two types - regular and conditional.

Regular Admission:

Regular admission requires:

1. A competitive score on the verbal and quantitative sections of the GRE.
2. A GPA of 3.0 or greater on prior undergraduate course work; or a 3.0 or greater on prior graduate work.

3. Successful completion of prior coursework in research methodology at least equivalent to that required by the USM B.A. degree in Administration of Justice, namely Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning (AJ 420).
4. Successful prior coursework in the theory of justice (criminal jurisprudence as well as criminology) at least equivalent to that required by the USM B.A. degree in Administration of Justice, namely Criminal Justice Theory (AJ 325).
5. Successful prior coursework or professional experience confirming expertise in substantive and procedural criminal law and justice administration at least equivalent to that required by the USM B.A. in Administration of Justice, namely Criminal Law (AJ 330), Criminal Procedure (AJ 430), Evidence, Search and Seizure (AJ 433), Introduction to Modern Corrections (AJ 352), and Introduction to Juvenile Justice (AJ 360).

Regular admission requires no coursework above the semester-hour minimum for the master's outlined below.

Conditional Admission:

Conditional admission is granted when an applicant's credentials suggest aptitude for successful graduate study but are deficient in one or more of the five areas outlined immediately above. In addition, conditional admission is granted where students possess an undergraduate degree in a major other than criminal or administration of justice. Students who possess degrees other than criminal or administration of justice will be admitted conditionally until after the completion of twelve (12) hours of undergraduate administration of justice courses with a B or better in each course. These courses are as follows: AJ 325, AJ 330, AJ 352 and either AJ 341 or AJ 360. Hence conditional admission requires a variable amount of preliminary coursework above the minimal semester-hour requirement for the master's outlined below as a condition of regular admission.

Important Note:

Enrollment in or completion of coursework at the undergraduate level does not imply or automatically guarantee matriculation into the master's program. In other words, the admissions process is separate and distinct for each program of study.

II. Programs of Study

The Administration of Justice Department offers seven masters degrees with three emphasis areas.

1. Master of Science (M.S.) in Administration of Justice.
2. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Administration of Justice.
3. Master of Science (M.S.) in Juvenile Justice.

4. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Juvenile Justice.
5. Master of Science (M.S.) in Administration of Justice, Corrections Emphasis.
6. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Administration of Justice, Corrections Emphasis.
7. Master of Science (M.S.) in Forensic Science.

*In all degree programs, students must complete at least 18 hours of coursework at the 600 level of above.

*Students may not repeat courses at the 500 level if they have previously received a B or better in the course at the 400 level.

*Students are expected to submit a Plan of Study to the Office of Graduate Study during their second semester of coursework.

1. Master of Science (M.S.) in Administration of Justice.

The minimal requirement for the M.S. in Administration of Justice is thirty nine (39) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (39 semester hours):

M.S. in Administration of Justice (39 semester hours):

AJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning, 3 hrs.

AJ 530: Criminal Procedure, 3 hrs.

AJ 533: Evidence, Search, and Seizure, 3 hrs.

AJ 535: Organization and Management of Criminal Justice, 3 hrs.

AJ 550: Administration of Criminal Corrections, 3 hrs.

AJ 560: Juvenile Justice Systems, 3hrs.

AJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics, 3hrs.

AJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice,
3hrs.

AJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning, 3hrs.

Minor or Electives: 12 Hours.

2. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Administration of Justice.

The minimal requirement for the M.A. in Administration of Justice is thirty nine (39) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (39 semester hours):

M.A. in Administration of Justice (39 semester hours):

AJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and
Planning, 3 hrs.

AJ 530: Criminal Procedure, 3 hrs.

AJ 533: Evidence, Search, and Seizure, 3 hrs.

AJ 535: Organization and Management of Criminal
Justice, 3 hrs.

AJ 550: Administration of Criminal Corrections,3
hrs.

AJ 560: Juvenile Justice Systems, 3hrs.

AJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics, 3hrs.

AJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice,
3hrs.

AJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning, 3hrs.

AJ 698: Thesis, 6 hrs.

3. Master of Science (M.S.) in Juvenile Justice Emphasis.

The minimal requirement for the M.S. in Administration of Justice, juvenile justice emphasis is sixty (60) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (60 semester hours):

M.S. in Administration of Justice, Juvenile Justice Emphasis (60 semester hours):

AJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning, 3 hrs.

AJ 530: Criminal Procedure, 3 hrs.

AJ 533: Evidence, Search, and Seizure, 3 hrs.

AJ 535: Organization and Management of Criminal Justice, 3 hrs.

AJ 560: Juvenile Justice Systems, 3hrs.

AJ 561: Juvenile Corrections, 3hrs.

AJ 563: Family Law, 3 hrs.

AJ 564: Family Violence, Investigation, and Deterrence, 3 hrs.

AJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics, 3hrs.

AJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice, 3hrs.

AJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning, 3hrs.

AJ 660: Seminar in Juvenile Law, 3 hrs.

Specialty: 18 hrs. (Select from approved AJ, Psychology, Social Work or Sociology classes).

Electives: 6 hrs.

4. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Juvenile Justice.

The minimal requirement for the M.A. in Administration of Justice, juvenile justice emphasis is sixty (60) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (60 semester hours):

M.A. in Juvenile Justice. (60 semester hours):

AJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning, 3 hrs.

AJ 530: Criminal Procedure, 3 hrs.

AJ 533: Evidence, Search and Seizure, 3 hrs.

AJ 560: Juvenile Justice Systems, 3hrs.

AJ 561: Juvenile Corrections, 3hrs.

AJ 563: Family Law, 3 hrs.

AJ 564: Family Violence, Investigation, and Deterrence, 3 hrs.

AJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics, 3 hrs.

AJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice, 3hrs.

AJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning, 3hrs.

AJ 660: Seminar in Juvenile Law, 3 hrs.

AJ 698: Thesis, 6 hrs.

Minor or Electives: 21 hours. Suggested Coursework in Psychology, Social Work or Child and Family Studies.

5. Master of Science (M.S.) in Administration of Justice, Corrections Emphasis.

The minimal requirement for the M.S. in Administration of Justice, corrections emphasis is thirty-nine (39) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (39 semester hours):

M.S. in Administration of Justice, Corrections Emphasis (39 semester hours):

AJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning, 3 hrs.

AJ 530: Criminal Procedure, 3 hrs.

AJ 535: Organization and Management of Criminal

Justice, 3 hrs.

AJ 550: Administration of Criminal Corrections,
3hrs.

AJ 561: Juvenile Corrections, 3hrs.

AJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics, 3hrs.

AJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice,
3hrs.

AJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning, 3hrs.

AJ 630: Proseminar in Police Administration, 3hrs.

AJ 650: Proseminar in Corrections, 3 hrs.

Minor: 9 hrs. (Select from approved Psychology, Social Work or Sociology classes).

6. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Administration of Justice, Corrections Emphasis.

The minimal requirement for the M.A. in Administration of Justice, corrections emphasis is thirty-nine (39) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (39 semester hours):

M.A. in Administration of Justice, Corrections Emphasis (39 semester hours):

AJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and
Planning, 3 hrs.

AJ 535: Organization and Management of Criminal
Justice, 3hrs .

AJ 550: Administration of Criminal Corrections,
3hrs.

AJ 561: Juvenile Corrections, 3 hrs.

AJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics, 3hrs.

AJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice,
3hrs.

AJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning, 3hrs.

AJ 630: Seminar in Civil Liberties and Criminal
Law, 3 hrs.

AJ 650: Proseminar in Corrections, 3 hrs.

AJ 698: Thesis, 6 hrs.

7. Master of Science (M.S.) in Forensic Science.

The minimal requirement for the M.S. in Administration of Justice, forensic emphasis is thirty nine (39) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (39 semester hours):

M.S. in Forensic Science (39 semester hours):

FSC 530: Survey in Forensic Toxicology, 3 hrs.

FSC 540: Drug Identification, 3 hrs.

FSC 542/ 542L: Arson and Explosives and Lab, 4 hrs.

FSC 545/ 545L: Crime Scene Documentation and Lab, 4 hrs.

FSC 580: Seminar in Forensic Science, 3 hrs.

FSC 691: Research, 16 hrs.

FSC 698: Thesis, 6 hrs.

Transfer Credit:

The Director of Masters Studies has the discretion to allow the transfer of a maximum of six (6) semester hours of graduate course work earned by the student at an accredited institution of higher learning (including USM) where the assigned grade is no lower than an "A."

Credit earned for courses more than six (6) years before the student has been admitted to the program and courses which were utilized towards another degree are not eligible for transfer.

Duration of Study:

All course work applied toward satisfying the requirements of the degree must be completed within six (6) years from the date of the first course taken for masters' credit.

III. Academic Standards, Grading & Retention Policies

The Director of Masters Studies will audit the academic records of all masters' students at the end of each semester for evidence of satisfactory academic progress.

Academic Probation:

Where a student's academic performance is unsatisfactory, s/he will be placed on academic probation.

Students will be placed on academic probation – a condition that prohibits registration until cleared by the Director - if one or more of the following conditions are found to exist:

The student's cumulative grade point average falls below 3.25.

The student receives a grade of "C" or below in any course.

The student receives an incomplete "I" in any course.

A pattern of incomplete grades is reflected on the student's transcript or academic history.

A pattern of withdrawal from courses is reflected on the student's transcript or academic history.

A pattern of enrollment followed by non-enrollment is reflected on the student's transcript or academic history.

Summary Dismissal and Retake Policy:

A student may be summarily dismissed from the program if one or more of the following conditions are found to exist:

The student fails to resolve a grade of incomplete by the end of the following semester and said grade has automatically reverted to that of an "F".

The student receives a grade of "C" or below in more than one course. In the event that a student earns a grade of "C" or below in any course, he/she must retake the class the next semester that it is offered.

The student receives a grade of "F" in any course

The student is found guilty of academic dishonesty by a preponderance of the evidence, as such behavior is defined by the University or this policy manual

Student Responsibility Statement:

It is the student's responsibility to know and comply with all prerequisites and requirements for the degree being sought.

Credit Toward the Degree:

No grade of "C" or below counts toward the degree.

Permission to Repeat:

Consistent with University policy, students are allowed to repeat a course only once during their graduate career. However, permission to do so must first be obtained from the Director of Masters Studies and the Office of Graduate Studies.

Incomplete Work:

A grade of incomplete (I) will only be assigned where extenuating circumstances preclude the completion of course requirements by the final exam date for a given course.

In the event that a student receives an incomplete (I) in any course, s/he must promptly meet with the Director and course instructor for the purpose of developing a plan to resolve the grade. Consistent with University policy, an incomplete (I) that is not resolved by the end of the following semester automatically results in a grade of "F" being recorded on the student's transcript.

Grade Review:

The instructor of record has the authority over all matters affecting the conduct of the class including the assignment of grades to all work including, but not limited to, examinations and final grades.

Student performance should be evaluated according to academic criteria made available to all students within the first two weeks of the semester. In the event that a student disagrees with the final grade assigned for a course s/he should first try to resolve the issue with the instructor. Where this fails, the student should express her/his concern to the Department chair.

In no event will a request for change of grade be entertained if more than 30 school days (exclusive of weekends and official University holidays) have elapsed since beginning of the semester subsequent to the one in which the grade was awarded.

IV. The Comprehensive Examination

Date(s) and time(s) of administration:

The exam will be administered twice annually – once in the fall and spring.

The exam will take place over the course of one day.

Testing will be conducted from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

In no case will a student be allowed to take the test if s/he is more than 30 minutes late.

Prerequisites:

A student becomes eligible to take the comprehensive exam during the semester in which they are scheduled to complete all coursework required for the degree. However, students are strongly encouraged to take the comprehensive exams the semester following completion of all coursework.

Registration:

Students who intend to sit for the exam must obtain a registration form, which must be submitted to the Director of Master's Studies by the following dates:

Fall exam – Students must register no later than September 15.

Spring exam – Students must register no later than February 15.

Cancellations:

Students are strongly discouraged from making last-minute cancellations as valuable time and effort are expended in the construction and collection of exam questions.

When a student arrives on the first day of exam administration, it is assumed that s/he will complete the process in its entirety. Once testing for the first substantive area has begun, all remaining substantive sections must also be completed. That is, a student may not begin a substantive area of the exam and then, in the absence of extenuating circumstance, simply decide to complete the remaining portions during a subsequent semester. In other words, once the exam has begun the student is obligated to complete all substantive areas during the same testing session.

Format:

The exam will cover six (6) substantive areas. These include: 1) Criminal Justice Theory; 2) Criminal Law and Procedure; 3) Corrections Theory and Law; 4) Research Methods; 5) Juvenile Law and Policy, and 6) Police Operations and Leadership.

In order to successfully complete the comprehensive exam process, a student must pass all sections.

The student will be required to complete one (1) question within each substantive area.

Each section will be administered independently so that all questions in a given substantive area must be completed and submitted before undertaking another.

Evaluative Process:

The identity of the student will remain anonymous to evaluators and no identifying information may be noted upon or included within the response.

Evaluative Scale:

Answers to the exam questions will be graded on a 100 point grading scale ranging from A to F where:

F = Unacceptable
D = Below Average
C = Average
B = Above Average
A = Excellent

To pass the examination, a student must successfully answer one question in each topic area with a grade of “C” or better, and must achieve an overall average of “B” or better on the entire examination. Those who fail must retake only the sections failed at the next regularly scheduled date.

Re-testing:

In order to successfully complete the comprehensive exam process, a student must pass all sections. Where a student does not acquire the minimum number of points required to pass all seven substantive areas, s/he will be allowed a second opportunity to sit for the relevant portion(s) of the exam during the next full semester for which exams are regularly scheduled.

In no case will a student be allowed to take the exam, either in whole or part, more than twice.

Students who must be re-tested in one or more substantive areas are required to register with the Director under the guidelines outlined above.

Students who are being re-tested need only attend the relevant sessions in coordination with the Director.

Materials:

No outside materials (purses, book bags, notebooks, etc.) are allowed in the room where testing is being conducted.

Appropriate Test-Taking Behavior:

Prior to beginning the exam, either in whole or part, students must read, sign and date a statement of academic honesty as well as a form indicating agreement with the terms of test administration.

Conversation among students regarding material relevant to the test is prohibited.

Restroom breaks may be taken on the student’s time. In no event shall two or more students take a restroom break at the same time.

Students who are aware of cheating or other inappropriate test-taking behaviors and do not report such activity to the Director or exam proctor are themselves subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

Notification of Results:

Students will be notified of test results by mail. In no case will the results of an exam, either in whole or part, be given in-person, over the telephone, by email, or any other means.

Caveat Emptor:

Successful completion of required and elective coursework does not imply or otherwise guarantee that a student will successfully pass comprehensive examinations. In other words, just because a student has earned a passing grade in a given course does not mean that s/he will know everything that may reasonably appear on a comprehensive exam or that the quality of one's coursework will pass muster for purposes of later competency tests.

VI. The Thesis

Minimum Time to Completion:

The Department requires a minimum period of six months between admission to candidacy and granting of the degree. In nearly every case, it would be unrealistic for a student to think that s/he could complete a quality thesis within this short time frame. Generally speaking, a quality thesis will take a minimum of one year to complete.

Quality of the Thesis:

The thesis is a scholarly work investigating a problem of significance and should constitute a meaningful contribution to the body of existing knowledge regarding matters of criminal justice policy or practice. It is the culmination of a program of advanced study leading to a masters degree and, as such, is expected to demonstrate a high degree of scholarly competence. It must show that the candidate is capable of conceptualizing and

conducting sophisticated original research, analysis and reporting on an approved topic related to crime and justice by use of accepted scientific methods.

Suggestions / Considerations for Topic Selection:

Often times, a student enters the program with a general area of interest – for example, police or corrections administration. While it is indeed desirable for students early in the course of study to begin thinking about a possible thesis topic, it is important to understand that there are numerous criteria that must first be satisfied before one begins to invest large amounts of time and effort into this culminating endeavor.

In order to develop a cogent and meaningful topic, students are encouraged to first expend considerable effort researching the area of interest. This involves developing a comprehensive familiarity with the related literature, narrowing the focus of inquiry and thinking through the methodological issues.

A thesis is not the type of endeavor that a student can fully embrace or appreciate during the first few semesters of graduate study. Although a student may think that s/he has selected the best possible topic, it is often later discovered that the idea is not as methodologically feasible or academically acceptable as once thought. For this reason, students are encouraged to let the natural progression of degree-related coursework serve as a guide in sharpening their understanding of how to best select an appropriate topic, synthesize the related literature and theoretical issues, frame a workable methodology, analyze the data, and relate the relevant findings. Using this approach, students are far less likely to invest valuable time and effort that may only be wasted in the long term once it is discovered that the topic is benign, impractical, untimely, or poorly conceptualized.

Suggestions / Considerations for Committee Selection:

Students are encouraged early on to identify a major professor who shares similar interests and is perhaps willing to serve as Chair of the thesis committee. In making this selection, students must remain mindful that it is their responsibility to present the idea in an understandable and well-articulated fashion rather than expecting the faculty member to carry this burden. Generally speaking a faculty member will be more receptive to a student who has done their homework as compared to one that has not. All thesis committees must include one full-time member of the AJ faculty who is proficient in research methods and statistics.

Format:

In all instances, the final draft of the thesis must conform to the University's specifications for printing and publication.

Departmental Writing Style:

The Department of Administration of Justice has adopted the APA writing manual for all thesis and dissertation projects. Please visit the Office of Graduate Studies website for the University writing guide for theses.

Thesis Pre-proposal:

In order to balance the need for meaningful guidance and feedback regarding a proposed thesis topic against the principle that one must first be admitted to candidacy before a thesis committee can be formally constituted, it is suggested that the student develop what is commonly referred to as a "pre-proposal."

A pre-proposal allows the student an opportunity to communicate in written form to members of the faculty who may serve as potential committee members the general idea / conception underlying a proposed thesis topic.

While the pre-proposal need not meet the same formal requirements as a prospectus (described below) or final thesis (described below), it should nonetheless be well-researched and include such elements as an abstract, a comprehensive review of the literature, an annotated bibliography, and a tentative research methodology.

Pre-proposal Presentation Protocol:

The pre-proposal presentation should be scheduled in coordination with the student's major professor and the Director of Masters Studies.

This request must be submitted in writing to both parties.

Each faculty member who is asked to participate in the pre-proposal presentation must be provided with a copy of all relevant materials at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date.

The major professor directs all proceedings, retaining the authority to acknowledge participating faculty members in a fair and orderly fashion.

The student will be allowed a reasonable and adequate amount of time to present and justify the proposed topic.

A reasonable and adequate amount of time will also be allotted to discussion and questions regarding the proposed topic.

Once the presentation has concluded, the major professor will dismiss the student so that participating faculty members may discuss and vote upon the practicality and acceptability of the proposed topic.

There are two possible outcomes to this pre-proposal process:

Approve– must receive unanimous endorsement.

Reject – the proposed topic is unacceptable for one or more reasons.

Constitution of the Thesis Committee:

The thesis committee shall consist of a single chair occupying director status on the University's graduate faculty. S/he must have expertise in the proposed topic and be knowledgeable of the accepted data collection and analytical methodologies. The student's major professor may serve in this capacity.

The thesis committee will be composed of two additional members who are jointly selected by the student *and* Chair. Members must be selected from within the Department. All members of the committee must have regular status as graduate faculty. In certain instances it may be acceptable to invite an individual from outside the University to occupy the fourth seat on the committee. This selection must first be approved by the student's Chair and is contingent upon the individual's qualifications relative to the subject matter at hand.

Thesis Prospectus:

The prospectus is a more formal presentation of the proposed thesis topic than the pre-proposal defense.

Scheduling of the Prospectus Defense:

The prospectus defense should be scheduled in coordination with the student's major professor and Director of Masters Studies.

This request must be submitted in writing to both parties.

Each faculty member who is asked to participate in the prospectus defense must be provided with a copy of all relevant materials at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date.

Prospectus Defense Protocol:

Once scheduled, the prospectus defense will be announced to all committee members through memorandum issued by the Director of Masters Studies.

The Chair of the Committee directs all proceedings, retaining the authority to acknowledge members and participants in a fair and orderly fashion.

The student will be allowed a reasonable and adequate amount of time to present and justify the proposed topic.

A reasonable and adequate amount of time will also be allotted to discussion and questions regarding the proposed topic.

Once the prospectus defense has concluded, the Chair will dismiss the student so that committee members may discuss and vote upon the practicality and acceptability of the proposed topic.

There are two possible outcomes to this process:

Approve– must receive unanimous endorsement.

Reject – the proposed topic is unacceptable for one or more reasons.

Important Note: Students may not proceed with data collection until the following events have occurred:

1. The thesis committee approves the thesis topic and methodology following a thesis proposal defense and a thesis proposal defense form is filed with the Office of Graduate Studies; and
2. Written approval is obtained from the Institutional Review Board.

Scheduling of the Final Defense:

Students must arrange a date and time for the final defense in coordination with the thesis Chair and Director of Masters Studies.

This request must be submitted in writing to both parties.

The thesis Chair and Director of Masters Studies will notify the student in writing that the request for scheduling of a final defense has been approved.

In all instances, the following rules shall apply without exception:

No final defense may be scheduled or occur until the next full semester following successful completion of graduate coursework.

No final defense may be scheduled to occur until the next full semester following successful completion of the prospectus defense.

Deadlines established by the Office of Graduate Studies will be strictly enforced.

No final defense may be scheduled or occur within 30 days of the deadline established by the Office of Graduate Studies for the semester during which graduation is expected.

Once scheduled, the following rules also apply without exception:

No final defense may occur with less than 30 days notice to all committee members.

No final defense may occur where any committee member receives a final draft of the thesis with less than 30 days notice.

The last day to provide all members of the committee with a final draft of the thesis for graduation during the fall semester is September 5.
The last day to provide all members of the committee with a final draft of the thesis for graduation during the spring semester is February 10.

No substitutions or changes to committee membership may occur within 30 days of the proposed date of defense.

No final defense may occur unless all members of the committee are present.

Final Defense Protocol:

Once scheduled, the final defense will be announced to all Department members through memorandum issued by the Director of Masters Studies.

The final defense is open to all faculty, staff and students of the University.

The Chair of the Committee directs all proceedings, retaining the authority to acknowledge members and participants in a fair and orderly fashion.

The student will be allowed a reasonable and adequate amount of time to present relevant findings.

A reasonable and adequate amount of time will also be allotted to discussion and questions regarding the student's work.

Once the presentation has concluded, the Chair will dismiss the student so that committee members may discuss and vote upon the acceptability of the final product.

There are three possible outcomes to this process:

Accept without revision – must receive unanimous endorsement.

Accept with revision – required changes must be made and approved by the thesis Chair within 14 calendar days.

Reject – final product is unacceptable and needs considerable work in order to be approved.

In instances where the committee accepts the final product pending revision, only the Chair shall determine if it is appropriate for members to endorse the approval sheet or, instead, this should be done at a later date. In other words, it is inappropriate for a student to make this request.

In no instance will a committee member be required to sign the approval sheet where any voting member of the committee suggests changes.

VII. Procedures for Policy Revision & Clarification

The policies and procedures outlined in this manual are subject to change upon approval of the Graduate Admissions Committee with approval of the Department Chair.

The Director of Masters Studies will collectively notify students affected by changes to this manual in a timely fashion by memorandum posted in a conspicuous and accessible location.

Requests for policy or procedural clarifications should be submitted to the Director of Masters Studies.