PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND POLICIES

FOR THE

M.S. OR M.A. IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

M.S. OR M.A. IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

M.S. IN FORENSIC SCIENCE

AND

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

OFFERED BY

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

2015-2016
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I. Administrative Matters

A. USM Graduate Bulletin

The USM Graduate Bulletin is the primary source of graduate policy at the University of Southern Mississippi. This handbook relates only to graduate education in the School of Criminal Justice. No provision in this handbook should be in conflict with
the Graduate Bulletin. For matters not addressed in this handbook, please refer to the policies and procedures in the Graduate Bulletin. It is the responsibility of each graduate student to be familiar with the policies and procedure in this Handbook and the USM Graduate Bulletin.

B. Orientation

At the beginning of the fall semester, the School of Criminal Justice will hold an orientation session for all incoming and returning graduate students. Orientation sessions will also be conducted by the USM Graduate School. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory. Students will be notified of the dates of these sessions by the Director of Master’s Studies.

C. Academic Calendar

Student’s should consult both the Academic Calendar which is available on the University Registrar’s website as well as the Graduate School calendar for important deadlines regarding graduate degree applications, theses and dissertation deadlines and other matters.

D. Residency

Please refer to the Graduate Bulletin for information on residency requirements. Students are strongly encouraged to apply for Mississippi resident status.
E. Email Addresses

For purposes of conducting university business, faculty and staff are authorized to only use the university email account. As such, all graduate students should activate their usm.eagles.edu account. Faculty and staff in the School of Criminal Justice will utilize these accounts to communicate with students. To establish the university account, students should contact iTech. Once this account is established, students must provide the email address to the Director of Master’s Studies and the administrative assistant.

F. Graduate Advisement

The Director of Master’s Studies serves as the primary academic advisor for master’s students. The Director of Master’s Studies is available to meet with graduate students regarding their program of study, coursework, thesis committees and other academic matters which relate to their course of study at USM. All master’s students must schedule an appointment with the Director of Master’s Studies for advisement during the fall and spring advisement periods.

II. Graduate Assistants

A. Orientation

In addition to the orientation sessions for graduate students, at the beginning of the fall semester, the School of Criminal Justice will hold an orientation session for all graduate assistants, both incoming and returning. Orientation for graduate assistants will also be conducted by the USM Graduate School. Attendance at
these sessions is mandatory. Students will be notified of the dates of these sessions by the Director of Master’s Studies.

B. Assistantship Awards

Assistantships are competitive and awarded on an annual basis. Students who do not satisfactorily meet the terms and conditions of the assistantship as set forth in this Handbook and/or the offer letter may be terminated and/or not renewed for a subsequent year.

C. Duration of Assistantship Funding

Funding for master’s students may not exceed two years.

D. Mailboxes and Office Space

All graduate assistants in the School of Criminal Justice will be assigned a mailbox in Arthell Kelley Hall. It is the responsibility of the graduate assistant to check their mailboxes in a timely manner and on a regular basis. Office space is extremely limited. As such, Ph.D. students on an assistantship with a teaching assignment are given first priority for office space.

E. Course Load

As a condition of the assistantship, graduate assistants are required to be enrolled in 9 credit hours each semester (excluding summers). The tuition waiver will cover up to 13 credit hours per
semester (excluding summers). Due to budgetary considerations, students should consult with the Director of Master’s Studies during spring advisement regarding the number of credit hours which may be covered by the tuition waiver during the summer semester.

F. Health Insurance

Health insurance coverage is available for graduate assistants. If a student has existing health coverage and wishes to decline the coverage, a waiver must be completed and submitted to the USM Graduate School. Please see the USM Graduate School website for further information.

III. Admission Policies and Procedures

The USM Graduate Bulletin outlines application procedures and the minimal requirements for admission to the several master’s degree programs of the University. The first step for interested parties is therefore to consult the Graduate Bulletin which is available at www.usm.edu/graduate-school. No policies or procedures contained in this handbook are intended to conflict with those set forth in the Graduate Bulletin.

While the basic application procedures and minimal requirements for admission to all master’s degree programs are established by the USM Graduate School, degree-granting academic entities may require additional application materials and procedures, and may mandate admission requirements exceeding those specified in the Graduate Bulletin.
Submission of Application Materials:

Students apply for admission online through the Graduate School website. The materials listed below are to be included as attachments to the online application. All materials must be submitted and received by the Graduate School before an application is considered complete. Once complete, an application may be evaluated by the admissions committee. The materials to be included are as follows:

1. A completed application form;

2. Application fee;

3. Copies of official transcripts from all institutions attended;

4. A competitive score on verbal and quantitative sections of the GRE;

5. A full resume (curriculum vita) detailing educational and professional experiences;

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.

**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.

**IV. Admission Criteria and Policies**

**Criminal Justice Degree Programs:**

Admission to the master’s program in Criminal Justice is of two types - regular and conditional.

*Regular Admission:*

1. A competitive score on the verbal and quantitative sections of the GRE.

2. A GPA of 3.0 or greater on the last 60 hours of 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 Criminal Justice, namely Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning (CJ 420).
4. Successful prior coursework in the theory of justice or criminology at least equivalent to that required by the USM B.A. degree in Criminal Justice, namely Criminal Justice Theory (CJ 325).

5. Successful prior coursework or professional experience confirming expertise in substantive and procedural criminal law and justice at least equivalent to that required by the USM B.A. in Criminal Justice, namely Criminal Law (CJ 330), Criminal Procedure (CJ 430), Evidence, Search and Seizure (CJ 433), Introduction to Modern Corrections (CJ 352), and Introduction to Juvenile Justice (CJ 360).

Regular admission generally requires no coursework above the semester-hour minimum for the master’s degree.

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 justice. Students who possess degrees other than criminal justice will be admitted conditionally until after the completion of twelve (12) hours of undergraduate criminal justice courses with a grade of B or better in each course. These courses are as follows: CJ 325, CJ 330, CJ 352 and either CJ 341 or CJ 360. Hence, conditional admission requires a variable amount of preliminary coursework above the minimal semester-hour requirement for the master’s degree as outlined below as a condition of regular admission. Students who possess a degree in criminal justice, but are granted
conditional admission for other reasons may be required to satisfy other conditions including, but not limited to, earning a B average on the first nine hours of graduate coursework.

Graduate Certificate in Criminal Justice (15 hours)

Admission to the Graduate Certificate in Criminal Justice requires the following:

1. Earned undergraduate degree in criminal justice, criminology or closely-related discipline from an accredited institution of higher learning.

2. Being in good academic standing at the last institution attended.

M.S. in Forensic Science:

Admission to the master’s program in Forensic Science is of two types - regular and conditional.

Regular Admission:

1. A competitive score on verbal and quantitative sections of the GRE.

2. A GPA of 3.0 or greater on last 60 hours of undergraduate course work; or a 3.0 or greater on prior graduate work.
3. Candidates must have a BS degree or a minor (18 hrs) in a pure science discipline (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics)

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

*Conditional Admission:*

Conditional admission to the forensic science master’s program may be granted when an applicant's credentials suggest aptitude for successful graduate study but are deficient in one or more of the areas outlined above under “Regular Admissions Requirements for Forensic MS program.”

**Important Note:**

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

**V. Programs of Study**

The School of Criminal Justice currently offers the following master’s degrees and certificate programs:

1. Master of Science (M.S.) in Criminal Justice
2. Master of Arts (M.A.) in Criminal 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 Forensic Science
6. Certificate in Criminal Justice (15 hours)
*In all master’s 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 Criminal Justice

The minimal requirement for the M.S. in Criminal Justice is thirty three (33) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (33 semester hours):

CJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice


CJ 625: Applied Statistical Methods for Criminal Justice

CJ 630: Seminar in Civil Liberties & Criminal Law

CJ 640: Seminar in Policing

CJ 650: Seminar in Corrections

CJ 660: Seminar in Juvenile Law

CJ 670: Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy
Electives: 9 hours @ 500/600 level

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

The minimal requirement for the M.A. in Criminal Justice is thirty three (33) semester hours above an undergraduate degree, a law degree, or a doctorate in another academic discipline.

Required Courses (33 semester hours):

- CJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice
- CJ 625: Applied Statistical Methods for Criminal Justice
- CJ 630: Seminar in Civil Liberties & Criminal Law
- CJ 640: Seminar in Policing
- CJ 650: Seminar in Corrections
- CJ 660: Seminar in Juvenile Law
- CJ 670: Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy

Electives: 3 hours @ 500/600 level
CJ 698: Thesis (6 hours)

The Graduate School stipulates that all graduate students must successfully complete a comprehensive examination as part of the degree requirements. For those students pursuing the M.A. in Criminal Justice, the comprehensive examination requirement is incorporated as a component of the final thesis defense.

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

The minimal requirement for the M.S. in Criminal Justice, with a 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):

- CJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning
- CJ 530: Criminal Procedure
- CJ 533: Evidence, Search, and Seizure
- CJ 535: Organization and Management of Criminal Justice
- CJ 560: Juvenile Justice Systems
- CJ 561: Juvenile Corrections
- CJ 563: Family Law
- CJ 564: Family Violence, Investigation, and Deterrence
- CJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics
- CJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice
- CJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning
- CJ 660: Seminar in Juvenile Law
Specialty: 18 hrs. (Select from approved CJ, Psychology, Social Work or Sociology classes).

Electives: 6 hours @ 500/600 level

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

The minimal requirement for the M.A. in Criminal 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):

CJ 520: Methods of Criminal Justice Research and Planning
CJ 530: Criminal Procedure
CJ 533: Evidence, Search and Seizure
CJ 560: Juvenile Justice Systems
CJ 561: Juvenile Corrections
CJ 563: Family Law
CJ 564: Family Violence, Investigation, and Deterrence
CJ 582: Criminal Justice Ethics
CJ 600: Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice
CJ 625: Seminar in Criminal Justice Planning
CJ 660: Seminar in Juvenile Law
CJ 698: Thesis
Specialty: 21 hrs. (Select from approved CJ, Psychology, Social Work or Sociology classes).

The Graduate School stipulates that all graduate students must successfully complete a comprehensive examination as part of the degree requirements. For those students pursuing the M.A. in Juvenile Justice, the comprehensive examination requirement is incorporated as a component of the final thesis defense.

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

Students must complete at least 18 hours of research based coursework at the 600 level or above to include 6 hours of FSC 698 Thesis.

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

The minimal requirements for the M.S. in Forensic Science are 1) thirty (30) semester hours, 2) a thesis, and; 3) 3.0 GPA.

Courses Offered

FSC 530/L: Survey in Forensic Toxicology

FSC 540/L: Drug Identification.
FSC 580: Seminar in Forensic Science

FSC 601/L: Forensic Serology

FSC 621/L: Forensic DNA Technology
FSC 691: Research **Required**

FSC 698: Thesis **Required**

*Graduate coursework in other scientific disciplines may be taken with permission of the student’s committee chair.

**Transfer Credit:**

The Director of Master’s Studies has the discretion to request 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 "B." Courses which were graded as pass/fail may not be transferred into the program. This policy does not apply to the transfer of courses into the Graduate Certificate program.

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 master’s degree must be completed within five (5) years from the date of first enrollment.

**6. Graduate Certificate in Criminal Justice (15 hours)**

The graduate certificate in criminal justice requires the completion of the following courses with a grade of B or better:
CJ 630 Seminar in Civil Liberties and Criminal Law
CJ 640 Seminar in Policing
CJ 650 Seminar in Corrections
CJ 660 Seminar in Juvenile Justice
CJ 692 Special Problems/Capstone Course

Courses may be repeated only one time. Certificate requirements must be completed within five (5) years from the semester of first enrollment.

A maximum of three (3) hours of graduate credit may be transferred into the certificate program with prior approval from the Graduate Admissions Committee.

VI. Academic Standards, Grading, Appeals & Retention Policies

The Director of Master’s Studies will audit the academic records of all graduate 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 converted to 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 in this policy manual (See Graduate Bulletin page 38).

**Student Responsibility Statement:**
It is the student's responsibility to know and comply with all prerequisites and requirements for the degree being sought as well as all policies of the University, the Graduate School and the School of Criminal Justice.

**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 Graduate School.

**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 School Director and, if appropriate, follow the university procedures to appeal the grade.

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.

University Graduate Appeals and Grievance Process

The right of each student to appeal decisions of the graduate academic units is affirmed and specific appeal procedures are hereby established to ensure timely and appropriate consideration of each appeal to the Graduate Appeals Committee.

Specifically, the Graduate Appeals Committee reviews decisions on the following issues: admission decisions, revocation of admission, comprehensive exams, thesis and dissertation prospectus, dismissal from a program, and any other issues the Dean of the Graduate School deems appropriate. This committee does not review grade appeals or disciplinary actions taken by the Dean of Students. The University Grade Review Committee
handles all matters related to the appeal of a grade received in a course. The grade appeals process is set forth in the University Bulletin.

The Appeals/Grievance Process has five steps:*

Step 1: Department or School Level.** The chair or director receives a written signed letter from the student within ten (10) working days that states what action the student is appealing, reviews the pertinent materials, meets with the student and faculty if appropriate, and resolution of the appeal is sought at the department or school level.

Step 2: Dean of the College Level.** An appeal of the department or school decision must be made in writing within ten (10) working days to the dean of the college that has jurisdiction over the department or school. The dean will review the appeal and render a decision on the appeal in writing.

Step 3: Dean of the Graduate School Level. Should the student desire to make further appeal, the written appeal should be sent within five working days to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean will confer with the student and refer the matter to the Graduate Appeals Committee which will hold an official hearing on the appeal. The hearing will be held within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written appeal letter as long as the university is in session or within ten (10) working days of the university beginning a session. The student may attend the hearing and a representative of the department or school may also attend the
hearing or respond to the appeal in writing. The Dean of the Graduate School will send the student a letter indicating the Committee’s decision.

Step 4: Provost Level. Should the student desire to make further appeal, the written appeal should be sent within ten (10) working days to the Provost. The Provost will review all appeal materials and render a decision in the appeal normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal.

Step 5: President Level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Provost, he or she may appeal to the President of the University in writing. The President will render a final decision in the appeal normally within ten (10) days of receipt of the appeal.

**If the appeal concerns the chair, director, or college dean, the student should appeal to the next level.

**Academic Honesty:**

The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action.

The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.
“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to the following: 1) copying from another student’s test paper, laboratory report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs; 2) using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; 3) collaborating, without authorization, with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; 4) knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of an un-administered test; 5) substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, to take a test; 6) bribing another person to obtain an un-administered test or information about an un-administered test, and; 7) purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one’s own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. This section does not apply to the typing of the rough and/or final versions of an assignment by a professional typist.

“Plagiarism” generally refers to the appropriation of another’s work or idea and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work into one’s own work offered for credit. For a complete definition of plagiarism, see the Graduate School Handbook, page 38. Those policies and definitions will be utilized if an allegation of plagiarism is raised.

“Collusion” means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit.

“Abuse of Resource Materials” means the mutilation, destruction, concealment, theft or alteration of materials provided to assist students in the mastery of course material.
Students are referred to sections on “Academic Honesty” and “Procedures for Discipline,” for information regarding the penalties for violation of these provisions.

Students suspected of engaging in any of the above behaviors will be subject to the University’s disciplinary procedures (up to and including expulsion from the graduate program and the University and may also receive a final grade of “F” for the course.

All written projects including but not limited to, research papers, term papers, course exams, qualifying exams, comprehensive exams, theses and dissertation pre-proposals, proposals, prospectus and final theses and dissertations are subject to verification for original thought through, but not limited to, committee review, online systems such as Turnitin.com or other plagiarism-detection systems.

VII. Research & Scholarly Integrity Education

Purpose & Scope:

As a Doctoral / Research-Extensive Institution, the University of Southern Mississippi is committed to promoting, supporting, and educating relative to the ethical and responsible conduct of research on our campuses. Training will be made available and minimally include: Authorship and Publication, Collaborative Research, Data Acquisition and Management, Conflict of Interest, Mentoring, Research Misconduct, and Peer Review. Modules concerning research with Lab Animals and Human Subjects will be included as appropriate to the discipline of interest. The purpose of this policy is to set forth minimum training requirements for Research & Scholarly Integrity Education.
All faculty, including regular, research, clinical, part-time and adjunct faculty, should receive Research & Scholarly Integrity Education training.

All research staff should receive Research & Scholarly Integrity Education training. This includes research staff at all levels, i.e. research scientists, project/lab directors/managers, technicians, assistants.

Students: all graduate students must complete Research & Scholarly Integrity Education training. All undergraduate students involved in research should also complete training. Involvement in research does not include enrolling in research courses, but does include participating in any aspect of research or a research project, including research conceptualization, design, implementation or experimentation, data handling, or data analyses.

Postdoctoral fellows who are involved in research should receive Research & Scholarly Integrity Education training whether or not they receive support from internal or external research funding.

Federal funding agencies require that institutions certify that a formal training program in Research & Scholarly Integrity Education is in place for students and postdoctoral fellows supported by grant funds.

Policy:

The Office of the Vice Provost for Research (VPR) is responsible for providing access to training modules that address the ethical and responsible conduct of research. The Offices of the Provost and the Vice Provost for Research will identify a training coordinator who will monitor compliance. This coordinator will
minimally oversee successful completion of training modules and serve as the repository for records of completion. Optimally the training coordinator would also facilitate participation of university personnel in training by fielding questions, orienting faculty, staff and students to this resource.

For students, documentation of completion of required research training is administered through the following mechanisms:

a) Graduate School adds completion of Research & Scholarly Integrity Education training to Degree Requirements and to milestones on Plan of Study forms.

b) Honors College requires completion of research training as part of Honors Thesis requirements (or possibly includes as an Honors College requirement earlier in the student’s progress)

c) All students included as researchers, research associates, or student assistants on research projects will complete Research & Scholarly Integrity Education training prior to their inclusion on any submitted IRB or IACUC application

Procedure:

Individuals will access, online, the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program from the University of Miami. He/she will choose at least one of the appropriate set of modules from among the following disciplines: Biological/Biomedical Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Humanities, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Research Administration. The criterion for passing is set by CITI and is typically 85%. Upon successfully completing the course (set of modules), a certificate of completion
is generated and sent to the training coordinator. Additional attendance at face to face training sessions may also be required.

In order to ensure compliance with this policy, faculty, research staff, students and postdoctoral fellows who have not completed the modules will be prohibited from receiving approval for items outlined above.

VIII. The Comprehensive Examination

Comprehensive Examination – Criminal Justice

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 two days.

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. Students must register for three (3) hours of academic credit during the semester they take comprehensive exams.

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 four (4) substantive areas. These include: 1) Criminal Justice Theory; 2) Research Methods and Statistics; 3) Criminal Justice Systems; and 4) Legal Issues, Law and Procedure.

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:

0 = Unacceptable
1 = Marginal
2 = Meets Expectations
3 = Exceed Expectations

A minimum of four (4) points is required to pass any substantive area. The maximum number of points for each section is six (6). Points in excess of six (6) earned in any area may not be transferred to another area.
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 of Master’s Studies 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.

**Comprehensive Examination – Forensic Science**

The Graduate School stipulates that all graduate students must successfully complete a comprehensive examination as part of the degree requirements. For those students pursuing the M.S. in
Forensic Science, the comprehensive examination requirement is incorporated as a component of the final thesis defense.

IX. The Thesis

Minimum Time to Completion:

The School 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 a shorter time frame.

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 master’s 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 CJ 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.

Thesis Writing Style:

The School of Criminal Justice requires students to comply with formatting requirements as specified by the USM Graduate School. Please visit the USM Graduate School website for guidelines. (www.usm.edu/graduate-school). The School of Criminal Justice has adopted the style set forth in the American Psychological Association Publication Manual.

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 Master’s 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 School. All members of the committee must have regular status as graduate faculty. In limited 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 a memorandum issued by the Director of Master’s 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 student has successfully defended a thesis prospectus by way of oral presentation. A prospectus must include the first three chapters (introduction, literature review, methodology), and;
2. A thesis proposal defense form is filed with the USM Graduate School, and;
3. Written approval is obtained from the Institutional Review Board.
4. Responsible Conduct of Research training is completed.

**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 Master’s Studies.

This request must be submitted in writing to both parties.

The thesis Chair and Director of Master’s 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 USM Graduate School will be strictly enforced.

No final defense may be scheduled or occur within 30 days of the deadline established by the USM Graduate School 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 School members through memorandum issued by the Director of Masters Studies.

The final defense is a public proceeding and 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.

X. Disability Services Statement:

If a student has a disability which qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by the ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies. Mailing address: 118 College Drive, # 8586, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001; Telephone: (601) 266-5024; TTY: (601) 266-6837; Fax: (601) 266-6035.

XI. 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 School Director.
The Director of Master’s 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 Master’s Studies.