PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND POLICIES

FOR THE

PH.D. IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

OFFERED BY

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

2016-2017
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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 procedures 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 also will 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 Doctoral Program Director.

C. Academic Calendar:
Students 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 http://www.usm.edu/registrar/graduate-bulletins 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 use only the university email account. As such, all graduate students must activate their usm.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 their email address to the Doctoral Program Director and the School of Criminal Justice’s Office Manager.

F. Graduate Advisement:
The Doctoral Program Director serves as the primary academic advisor for doctoral students. The Director of the Doctoral Program is available to meet with graduate students regarding their program of study, coursework, dissertation committees, and other academic matters which relate to their course of study at USM. All doctoral students must schedule an appointment with the Doctoral Program Director for advisement during the fall and spring advisement periods.

II. Admission Criteria and Policies

Submission of Application Materials:
Students apply for admission online through the Graduate School website. The materials listed below are to be included as attachments with the online application. All materials must be submitted and received by the Graduate School before an application is considered complete; only then will the application be sent to the School for consideration / evaluation. The materials to be included are:

1. 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 Record Examination (GRE);
5. 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.

**Important Note:** In addition to the foregoing materials, applicants also may 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.

Admission to the Doctoral Program in Criminal Justice is of two types - regular and conditional.

**A. Regular Admission:**
1. Competitive score on the verbal and quantitative sections of the GRE.
2. Grade point average of 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 M.A. degree in Criminal Justice, namely Applied Research Methods for Criminal Justice (CJ 620).
4. Successful prior coursework in the theory of justice or criminology at least equivalent to that required by the USM M.A. degree in Criminal Justice, namely Seminar in Theory of Criminal Justice (CJ 600).
5. Regular admission generally requires no coursework above the semester-hour minimum for the master’s degree.

**B. Conditional Admission:** Conditional admission is granted when an applicant's credentials suggest aptitude for successful doctoral study but are deficient in one or more of the five areas outlined immediately above. Hence, conditional admission may require a variable amount of preliminary coursework above the minimal semester-hour requirement for the doctoral degree, as outlined below, as a condition of regular admission. The School of Criminal Justice’s Graduate Admissions Committee will determine the amount of such coursework. **Students must earn a grade of B or better for each of the specified courses taken during the first semester of graduate coursework.**

**Credit Hour Limitations:**
1. Transfer of credit for graduate work completed at other institutions must be approved by the school director, college dean, and graduate school dean. Final evaluation/acceptance of transfer credit will not be made until the student has been in residence for one semester. Coursework accepted for transfer must carry with it a letter grade of B or better (or numeric grade equivalent to a B), cannot have been graded pass/fail, and may not have counted toward another graduate degree. Transfer of credit for the doctoral program is limited to not more than six (6) semester hours or nine (9) quarter hours beyond the master’s degree.
2. Credit earned as a non-degree graduate student cannot be applied toward a doctoral degree.

**III. Degree Requirements**

1. Minimal requirement for the Ph.D. in Criminal Justice is fifty four (54) semester hours above a master's degree, law degree, or doctorate in another academic discipline, inclusive of the
University's "research tools" requirement addressed below. Additional semester hours may be required as a condition of admission and/or a result of a student's performance on the qualifying examination.

2. Minimum grade of B is required for each course credited toward the degree. A 3.0 GPA is required for graduation.

3. Qualifying examination administered by the CJ graduate faculty upon successful completion of CJ 720 and CJ 730.

4. Combination of coursework which may include proficiency in statistics or research methods as determined by the school.

5. Written comprehensive examination.

6. Presentation and oral defense of dissertation (12 hours of CJ 898 required). Students should consult the Human Subjects Committee (IRB) prior to defending their dissertation proposal.

7. Students must meet the residency requirements specified in the USM Graduate Bulletin.

8. Students must meet the continuous enrollment requirement specified in the USM Graduate Bulletin.

9. Other requirements as specified in the USM Graduate Bulletin.

**Time Limitation:** The student must complete the doctoral degree within eight (8) calendar years from the date of initial enrollment in the doctoral program. Six years is the maximum age allowed for coursework and the comprehensive exam (excluding dissertation and research hours toward a graduate degree). The Dean of the Graduate School, under extenuating circumstances and special petition, may approve revalidation of some over-age credit hours if the original credit was earned at The University of Southern Mississippi and if the Director of the School of Criminal Justice approves the revalidation. The revalidation is secured by the student’s successfully passing a special examination on the course. However, any student who fails to complete the doctoral degree program within the eight-year time period becomes subject to any changes in degree requirements made at any date eight years prior to graduation. The fee charged for the special revalidation examination is to be paid before the revalidation examination is taken. Over-age extension courses cannot be revalidated. Revalidation forms are available in The Graduate School.

**Continuous Enrollment Policy:** Students must be enrolled continuously (each fall and spring semester) after completing required coursework and passing the comprehensive examination through the completion of the degree program. Students must enroll as stipulated below:

1. Students must enroll for a minimum of one (1) hour each fall and spring semester to maintain continuous enrollment.

2. Students must enroll for one hour of dissertation (CJ 898) during the semester they expect to take the comprehensive exam or defend the dissertation. The final version of the document, approved by both the graduate committee and Reviewer, must be deposited in The Graduate School no later than the specified deadline. If a student fails to meet the deadline for submission, he/she must register for one (1) hour of dissertation (CJ 898) until graduation.

3. Failure to enroll for at least one (1) hour during the fall and spring semesters will result in discontinuation from the university. A student who has been discontinued and seeks readmission must apply for readmission, pay an application fee, and remit payment for one hour of tuition, at the current tuition rate, for each fall and spring semester not enrolled.

**Student Responsibility Statement:** It is the student's responsibility to know and comply with all prerequisites and requirements for the degree being sought.
Residency: The purpose of academic residency is to provide doctoral students with significant time for extensive involvement with faculty, professional colleagues and peers, and to provide a period of time for concentrated study and coursework. It is structured as a full-time experience. The following are options for satisfying the residency requirements: (a) two consecutive terms of twelve (12) hours each, (b) two consecutive summer terms of twelve (12) hours each with continuous enrollment during intervening terms, or (c) three consecutive terms of nine (9) hours each. Students must consult with individual departments regarding which of these options are approved, and whether online or off-campus courses can be used to establish residency. This policy differs from Mississippi residency for in-state tuition purposes.

IV. Program of Study

Required Courses: (36 semester hours)
CJ 630 Seminar in Civil Liberties and Criminal Law, 3 hrs.
CJ 640 Seminar in Policing, 3 hrs.
CJ 650 Seminar in Corrections, 3 hrs.
CJ 670 Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy, 3 hrs.
CJ 700 Qualitative Research and Analysis, 3 hrs.
CJ 710 Research and Analysis in Legal Inquiry, 3 hrs.
CJ 720 Quantitative Research and Analysis, 3 hrs.
CJ 721 Applied Regression Analysis in Justice Administration, 3 hrs.
CJ 730 Advanced Criminal Justice Theory I, 3 hrs.
CJ 731 Advanced Criminal Justice Theory II, 3 hrs.
CJ 740 Administration of Justice, 3 hrs.
CJ 750 Professional Development in Criminal Justice, 3 hrs.

Elective Courses: (6 semester hours; approval by Doctoral Program Director required)

Dissertation: (12 semester hours) CJ 898

Plan of Study Form: A plan of study is a list of courses a student must take to complete the coursework portion of the degree program. It is designed with advisement by the student's committee chair and graduate committee, following the curricular requirements of the degree program. In coordination with the Doctoral Program Director, students must submit a Plan of Study form to The Graduate School by the end of the first semester of enrollment. See also https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/plans-study-doctoral-programs

The Qualifying Examination: At or near the beginning of the student's work, the School of Criminal Justice may require a preliminary examination to determine the student's qualification to pursue a doctoral degree and to assist the student's advisory committee in planning the degree program. The expectations for the qualifying examination are determined by the School, and thus information should be obtained from those units. The Form(s) for the results of the Comprehensive and/or Qualifying Exams should be submitted to The Graduate School immediately after the exam is graded.

The Comprehensive Examination: A comprehensive examination is required of all doctoral students to assess knowledge of the major field of study, and thus must be taken after all coursework has been completed. The School of Criminal Justice requires a written comprehensive exam, which will be prepared, administered, and assessed by the student's graduate committee. If an oral examination is required, the chair of the student's committee will notify the Graduate School of the time and place of the examination. A student who fails the comprehensive examination may retake the examination no
sooner than three (3) months after the first attempt, and may repeat the examination only once. A student being examined as part of a cohort or group may repeat the comprehensive examination at the next scheduled administration if at least three (3) months have passed since the first attempt. Failure to complete the comprehensive examination successfully on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program. Students must register for a minimum of one (1) credit hour the semester the comprehensive exam is taken. Doctoral candidates must complete the comprehensive examination at least one (1) semester prior to the defense of the dissertation.

V. Academic Standards, Dismissal, Appeals, Grading & Retention Policies

The Doctoral Program Director will audit the academic records of all doctoral 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:

a) Student's cumulative grade point average in criminal justice graduate courses falls below 3.25.
b) Student receives a grade of "C" or below in any course.
c) Student receives an incomplete "I" in any course.
d) Pattern of incomplete grades is reflected on the student's transcript or academic history.
e) Pattern of withdrawal from courses is reflected on the student's transcript or academic history.
f) Pattern of enrollment followed by non-enrollment is reflected on the student's transcript or academic history.

Dismissal of a Student from a Graduate Program:

Reasons for Dismissal:
1. Student did not return to good academic standing following probationary semester(s).
2. GPA of 3.0 was not achieved. (Some programs have more rigorous standards).
3. Student did not earn the required improved grade on a retaken course.
4. Student failed to meet other remediation criteria.
5. Student earned grades that made it impossible to return to good academic standing, thus rendering graduation impossible.
6. Student earned a grade of C- or below that could not be retaken because the one allowable retake was used to replace a prior low grade.
7. Student earned the 7th hour of C+ or below that could not be retaken because the one allowable retake was used to replace a prior low grade.
8. Student failed to show acceptable improvement in research/scholarly progress after a probationary semester.
9. Student exceeded the time limit for the degree program without completing the degree.
10. Student was proven to have committed academic/research misconduct or other ethical violation.
11. Student violated the Code of Student Conduct and required disciplinary action. (In this case, dismissal follows review by the Dean of Students).
12. Student failed to demonstrate professional competency and/or exhibited conduct inappropriate to the profession.
13. Student twice failed a qualifying exam, comprehensive exam, or a dissertation defense.
14. Students with conditional status who do not achieve the minimal 3.50 GPA on the first 9 hours of graduate-level coursework will be automatically dismissed by the Graduate School. Dismissal of these students requires no action by the department.

Dismissals will normally be initiated at the end of a semester following the posting of grades unless the dismissal is a result of academic misconduct or unethical/unprofessional behavior.

**Protocol for Dismissal:**

1) The student’s advisor and/or School Director will schedule a termination review with the student. The purpose of this meeting is to communicate the justification for dismissal with the student and to allow the student to provide written documentation of any extenuating circumstances that should be considered in a decision to dismiss. This meeting should be conducted face to face if possible. If the student cannot meet face to face, the meeting should take place via telephone, videoconference, or conference call. Email is acceptable but should be used only if personal communication is not possible.

2) If the School of Criminal Justice chooses to move forward with a dismissal following a termination review, the following items must be submitted to the dean of the Graduate School either electronically as a pdf with electronic signatures or as a hard copy with original signatures:
   i. A letter addressed to the student articulating the reason(s) for dismissal.
   ii. A completed dismissal form indicating the reason(s) for dismissal and signed by the advisor, school director, and the college dean.

3) Upon receiving notice of the dismissal, the dean of the Graduate School will send the student a formal letter of dismissal along with a copy of the letter of rationale from the department as an attachment. The dean’s letter will inform the student of the following:
   i. That scheduled classes (including current semester classes and future classes for which the student is pre-registered) must be dropped using the withdrawal process within seven (7) working days of receiving the dismissal letter from the dean of the Graduate School, and that if he/she does not withdraw from classes, the Graduate School will initiate the withdrawal.
   ii. The impact of dismissal on a graduate assistantship, insurance, and tuition.
   iii. The student’s right to appeal the dismissal and instructions for filing an appeal.

4) The letter will be sent to the student by certified mail through the U.S. Postal Service and by email using the student’s official USM email address.

**Permission to Repeat a Course:** 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 Doctoral Program Director 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 the beginning of the semester subsequent to the one in which the grade was awarded.

**University Graduate Appeals and Grievance Process:**

If the student chooses to appeal a dismissal, the following protocol will be applied. If the appeal concerns the chair, director, or college dean, the student should appeal to the next level. This procedure follows the Grievance and Appeals Procedures included in the Graduate Bulletin.

1. **School Level.** The student will submit a signed letter to the school director within fifteen (15) working days of notification of dismissal from the Dean of the Graduate School or other action that prompts a grievance or appeal. The letter must state the action for which the student is filing an appeal or grievance, and explain the basis of the appeal or grievance. The director will review all pertinent material, interview the student and relevant faculty member(s), and render a decision on the appeal/grievance, normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal/grievance. The decision of the director will be submitted to the student via certified mail and the student’s official USM email account. This correspondence will also be copied to the dean of the Graduate School.

2. **Dean of the College Level.** If the student chooses to appeal the departmental decision, he/she must submit a written appeal within ten (10) working days of the emailed notification of the school decision to the dean of the college. The dean will review the appeal and render a decision on the appeal, normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the college dean will be submitted to the student via certified mail and the student’s official USM email account. This correspondence will also be copied to the Dean of the Graduate School.

3. **Dean of the Graduate School Level.** If the student chooses to appeal the academic dean’s decision, he/she must submit a written appeal within ten (10) working days of the emailed notification of the academic dean’s decision to the dean of the Graduate School. The graduate dean will convene a Graduate School Appeals Committee (made up of faculty who are members of the Graduate Council and one graduate student) which will review all pertinent materials and hold an official hearing on the appeal. Normally, the hearing will be held within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the written appeal 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 school may also attend the hearing or respond to the appeal in writing. The Appeals Committee will submit a letter detailing their decision to the dean of the Graduate School. The dean will send the student a letter indicating the Committee’s decision via certified mail and the student’s official USM email account.

4. **Provost Level.** If the student chooses to appeal the Graduate School Appeals Committee’s decision, he/she must submit a written appeal within ten (10) working days of the emailed notification of the committee’s decision to the Provost. The Provost will review all appeal
materials and render a decision on the appeal, normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the Provost will be submitted to the student via certified mail and the student’s official USM email account. This correspondence will also be copied to the dean of the Graduate School.

5. President Level. If the student chooses to appeal the Provost’s decision, he/she must submit a written appeal within ten (10) working days of the emailed notification of the Provost’s decision to the President. The President will review all appeal materials and render a final decision on the appeal, normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the President will be submitted to the student via certified mail and the student’s official USM email account. This correspondence will also be copied to the dean of the Graduate School. The decision of the President is final.

VI. Research and Scholarly Integrity Education (RSIE)

All graduate students must complete Research & Scholarly Integrity Education 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.

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. All students included as researchers, research associates, or student assistants on research projects will complete RCR training prior to their inclusion on any submitted IRB or IACUC application.

VII. Academic Integrity

All students at the University of Southern Mississippi are expected to demonstrate the highest levels of academic integrity in all that they do. Forms of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

1. Cheating (including copying from others’ work)
2. Plagiarism (representing another person’s words or ideas as your own; failure to properly cite the source of your information, argument, or concepts)
3. Falsification of documents
4. Disclosure of test or other assignment content to another student
5. Submission of the same paper or other assignment to more than one class without the explicit approval of all faculty members involved
6. Unauthorized academic collaboration with others
7. Conspiracy to engage in academic misconduct

Engaging in any of these behaviors or supporting others who do so will result in academic penalties and/or other sanctions. If a faculty member determines that a student has violated our Academic Integrity Policy, sanctions ranging from resubmission of work to course failure may occur, including the possibility of receiving a grade of “XF” for the course, which will be on the student’s transcript with the notation “Failure due to academic misconduct.” For more details, please see the University’s Academic Integrity Policy. Note that repeated acts of academic misconduct will lead to expulsion from the University.

VIII. The Qualifying and Comprehensive Examinations
**Qualifying Exam:** The purpose of this exam is to determine a student’s ability to read, process, and assess scholarly research and convey that information succinctly in writing. To that end, the student will be required to identify and summarize one journal article to test knowledge of theory using data analysis. The summary will require no more than four pages. The summary should include statements regarding relevant theory, methodology, findings and discussion. A copy of the article must be attached to the summary. The article should come from recent editions of the following journals: Criminology, Journal of Research and Criminology, Justice Quarterly, Police Quarterly, The Prison Journal, or Theoretical Criminology. Assessment of performance on this task will be measured by the following criteria: Clarity of writing, appropriate use of grammar, appropriate summarization of the article’s findings (in “own” words), appropriate identification of theoretical concepts, appropriate specification of hypotheses/research questions, and appropriate interpretation of results and conclusions.

**Comprehensive Examination:** At the completion of specified required coursework and other examinations, the doctoral student is required to take a written comprehensive examination. A student who does unsatisfactory work on the comprehensive examination may be granted a second examination at the next regularly scheduled time or later. The student’s doctoral committee will recommend the conditions to be met before the examination may be repeated. The comprehensive examinations may be retaken only once. The comprehensive examination should be successfully completed either before the first formal prospectus meeting or before substantial research is completed for the dissertation, and within six years from initial enrollment. Students may enroll for no more than 6 hours of CJ 898 before their comprehensive exam. The student’s committee chair should submit the comprehensive exam results form to The Graduate School. Students must register for 3 hours the semester they take their comprehensive exam.

1. **Prerequisites:**
   a) Students become eligible to take the comprehensive exam during the semester in which scheduled to complete all coursework required for the degree.
   
   b) Students must register for three hours of academic credit the semester they take comprehensive exams unless otherwise authorized by the director of the doctoral program.

2. **Format:**
   a) The exam will cover three (3) substantive areas: Statistics/Methods; Theory; Criminal Justice Systems.
   
   b) Students must take all three substantive areas of the exam at the first administration.
   
   c) Each section will be administered independently so that all questions in a given substantive area must be completed and submitted before taking another.
   
   d) Students will be required to complete two questions, one of which may be mandatory, for each substantive area of the exam.
   
   e) The student will have from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to answer the two questions required for each substantive area.
   
   f) In order to successfully complete the comprehensive exam process, a student must pass all three (3) sections. (see evaluative scale below)

3. **Evaluative Process:**
   a) Two graders will independently evaluate the response to each question.
   
   b) The identity of the student will remain anonymous to the evaluators and no identifying information may be noted upon or included within the response.
c) A minimum of eight (8) points is required to pass any substantive area. The maximum number of points for each section possible is twelve (12).
d) Points acquired in excess of those required to pass a given substantive area may not be applied/transferred to another substantive area in which the numerical score is deficient.

4. **Evaluative Scale:**
   0 = Unacceptable
   1 = Marginal
   2 = Meets Expectation
   3 = Exceeds Expectations

5. **Registration:** Students who intend to sit for the exam must register for the comprehensive exam by notifying the Doctoral Program Director in writing by the following dates:
   - **Fall exam** – No later than the last day of final exams for the preceding spring semester.
   - **Spring exam** – No later than the last day of final exams for the preceding fall semester.

6. **Dates and times of administration:**
   a) The exam will be administered twice annually – once during the fall semester and once during the spring semester.
   b) The exam will take place over three days – Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In no case will a student be allowed to take the test if s/he is more than 30 minutes late to any session.
   c) Exams will be given as follows, unless otherwise determined by the doctoral program director: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
      - Monday – Statistics/Methods
      - Wednesday – Theory
      - Friday – Criminal Justice Systems

7. **Testing implementation:**
   a) A student may only take the exam, in whole or in part, twice.
   b) Students will be notified of the location of the exam as soon as possible prior to the exam.
   c) Students may bring only writing utensils to the exam room. Paper will be provided.
   d) All students are expected to take the exam on computers. PCs/Non-Apple-Mac will be provided.
   e) Do not talk to other students for any reason during the exam.
   f) In no event should two or more students take a restroom break at the same time.
   g) You may take a 30 minute lunch break, but must remain in the building and may not talk to anyone during that time.
   h) Students are strongly encouraged to often save their exam responses on the computer to ensure work is not lost. Your work will be saved onto a thumb/flash drive at the end of each day.
   i) 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.
   j) Students will be notified of the test results by mail.
   k) Students must read, sign, and date a statement of academic honesty, as well as a form indicating agreement with the terms of administration prior to beginning the exam.
   l) Ear plugs are acceptable. However, no music listening devices are allowed. Remember to respect your fellow examinees.
8. **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 three (3) 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 Doctoral Program Director under the guidelines outlined above. Students who are being re-tested need only attend the relevant sessions in coordination with the Director.

9. **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. 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.

10. **Cancellations:**
   a) Students are strongly discouraged from last minute cancellations, as valuable time and effort are expended in the construction and collection of exam questions. No cancellations will be permitted within 30 days of the scheduled exam date without authorization of the Director of the Doctoral Program. Failure to provide written notice of cancellation within 30 days of the scheduled exam will count as a “take” for the exam.

   b) When a student arrives on the first day of the exam administration, it is assumed that s/he will complete the process in its entirety. That is, a student may not begin a substantive area of the exam and then, in the absence of an 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.

11. **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.

**IX. Graduate Assistants**

A. **Orientation:** In addition to the orientation sessions for graduate students, the School of Criminal Justice will hold an orientation session for all graduate assistants, both incoming and returning, at the beginning of each semester. Orientation for graduate assistants also will 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 Doctoral Program Director.
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 their offer letter may be terminated and/or not renewed for a subsequent year.

C. **Duration of Assistantship Funding**: Duration of funding will be determined by the Director of the School of Criminal Justice in consultation with the Doctoral Program Director.

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 and routine manner. 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 13 credit hours each semester (excluding summers). The tuition waiver will cover up to 13 credit hours per full semester. Due to budgetary considerations, students should consult with the Doctoral Program Director 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 go to https://studentcenter.uhcsr.com/usm to complete and submit a Waiver Request. At the end of the online waiver request process, you will have the opportunity to print a copy of your request.

**X. Admission to Candidacy**

A student is admitted to candidacy for the degree once the following criteria are satisfied:

1. completed all coursework with a G.P.A. of at least 3.25;
2. successfully passed all three (3) substantive areas of the written comprehensive examination;
3. successfully defended a dissertation prospectus.

Once admitted to candidacy, the student must complete the entire dissertation process within three years, or s/he will be required to retake the comprehensive exams.

**XI. The Dissertation**

**Minimum Time to Completion**: The School of Criminal Justice 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 dissertation within this short time frame. Generally speaking, a quality dissertation will take a minimum of one year to complete.

**Quality of the Dissertation**: The dissertation 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 doctoral 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 dissertation 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 dissertation 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 and 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 dissertation committee once all comprehensive exams have been successfully completed. 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.

Constitution of the Dissertation Committee: The dissertation 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 dissertation committee will be composed of a minimum of three additional members who are jointly selected by the student and Chair of the dissertation committee. Three members of the committee must be selected from within the School of Criminal Justice. The fourth member may be selected from another academic unit at The University of Southern Mississippi. 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 a 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. All outside committee members must meet The University of Southern Mississippi’s requirements to serve as a dissertation committee member.

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

Dissertation Pre-proposal: In order to balance the need for meaningful guidance and feedback regarding a proposed dissertation topic against the principle that one must first be admitted to candidacy before a dissertation committee can be formally constituted, it is suggested that the student develop what
is commonly referred to as a "pre-proposal." The major professor (chair of the dissertation) will determine if a pre-proposal is warranted.

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 dissertation topic.

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

**Dissertation Pre-proposal Presentation Protocol:** The pre-proposal presentation should be scheduled in coordination with the student's major professor and the Doctoral Program Director. 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 presentation 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 also will 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 and methodology.

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

1. **Approve** – must receive unanimous endorsement.
2. **Reject** – proposed topic is unacceptable for one or more reasons.

**Dissertation Prospectus:** The prospectus is a formal written presentation of the proposed topic and methodology. A dissertation prospectus should include the first three chapters of the dissertation: Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology.

**Scheduling of the Prospectus Defense:** The prospectus defense should be scheduled in coordination with the student's major professor and Director of the Doctoral Program. 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 the Doctoral Program. 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 pre-proposal process:

1. **Approve** – must receive unanimous endorsement.
2. **Reject** – proposed topic is unacceptable for one or more reasons.

**Important Note:** Students may not proceed with data collection until the following have occurred:
1. Student has successfully defended a dissertation prospectus by way of oral presentation.
2. Prospectus must include the first three chapters (introduction, literature review, methodology).
3. Dissertation prospectus defense form is filed with the Office of Graduate Studies.
4. Written approval is obtained from the Institutional Review Board.

**Scheduling of the Final Defense:**
Students should consult the timeline for final defenses and graduation established each year on the Graduate School website.

Students must arrange a date and time for the final defense in coordination with the dissertation Chair, and the Doctoral Program Director. This request must be submitted in writing to both parties.

The dissertation Chair and Director of the Doctoral Program will notify the student in writing that the request for scheduling a final defense has been approved.

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

1. No final defense may be scheduled or occur until the next full semester following successful completion of graduate coursework.
2. No final defense may be scheduled or occur until the next full semester following successful completion of the prospectus defense.
3. Deadlines established by the Office of Graduate Studies will be strictly enforced.
4. 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 the final defense is scheduled, the following rules also shall apply without exception:

5. No final defense may occur with less than 30 days notice to all committee members.
6. No final defense may occur where any committee member receives a final draft of the dissertation within 30 days of the scheduled defense.
7. No substitutions or changes to committee membership may occur within 30 days of the proposed date of defense.
8. No final defense may occur unless all members of the committee are present. (Phone conferencing is permissible when a member’s physical presence is not possible)

**XII. Procedures for Policy Revision & Clarification**

The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook are subject to change upon approval of the Graduate Admissions Committee with approval of the School Director. The Doctoral Program Director 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 Doctoral Program Director.