CRIMINOLOGY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE, MS

This program helps highly-motivated people gain the skills and expertise they need to reach their goals, whether that’s launching or advancing their career, or preparing for a PhD program or law school. Students can expect rigorous training in the theories, methodologies, and empirical findings that help explain social deviance, criminal behavior, criminal justice, and social organizations. Students also have the opportunity to publish cutting-edge articles with faculty, travel to national conferences to present their research findings, and more.

Admissions

An applicant must hold a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. An undergraduate major in the social sciences is desirable, but students with strong undergraduate records in other fields are encouraged to apply.

It is the policy of the Criminology and Criminal Justice faculty to admit those students who demonstrate potential for successfully completing the master’s degree program.

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- A resume/CV
- 3 letters of recommendation.

The Department does not admit non-degree students into its graduate program. Non-degree students may not enroll in graduate courses in criminal justice.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

The graduate program in Criminology & Criminal Justice includes a thesis or a non-thesis option. Under both options, the student has considerable latitude to design a program to fit particular needs. All entering students must specify one of the two options during the second semester of academic work. Both options have core courses, including criminological theory, research in the criminal justice process, and applications of statistics in criminal justice.

MS in Criminology & Criminal Justice, Nonthesis Option

This option requires a total of 33 credit hours including 9 of core requirements, and 24 for elective courses. Nonthesis students must also pass a written and/or oral comprehensive examination based on the content of the degree program (ordinarily done after the completion of 18 hours of coursework).

Nonthesis Option Degree Requirements Summary

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<tr>
<th>Core Course Requirements</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tr>
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<td>CJ 584 Criminological Theory</td>
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<td>CJ 505 Gender &amp; Crime</td>
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<td>CJ 540 Sem Juvenile Delinquency</td>
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<td>CJ 550 Sem Courts Social Policy</td>
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<td>CJ 590 Special Topics</td>
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Comprehensive Exam

Total Hours 33

Transfer Credit

Up to 6 hours of approved coursework may be transferred from other universities. Up to 6 hours of approved coursework may be taken in other departments at The University of Alabama and may be applied to the degree when it is consistent with the student’s degree plan and approved by the department. The department does not accept 400-level courses toward degree requirements for the Master of Science in Criminology & Criminal Justice.

Graduate School policies on transfer credit.

Accelerated Master’s Program

Please refer to the Graduate School’s website for further information on the Accelerated Master’s Program.

Comprehensive Exam

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice requires students taking the non-thesis option to pass a written comprehensive exam. The exam cannot be taken until after the completion of 18 hours of graduate coursework, and is typically taken during the semester in which the student expects to complete the requirements for the Master’s degree. Students need to have already completed the corresponding course for
each question they answer. The exam will be given twice a year in the Spring and Fall semesters. For those students who plan to graduate in August, comprehensive examinations should be taken in the Spring semester prior to August graduation.

1. The date, time and place of the exam will be set and announced by the Graduate Director, but will take place in a campus computer lab with internet access disabled, unless otherwise announced.

2. In advance of the exam, students will be provided with a study guide, a suggested reading list, and the evaluation criteria for how exam answers will be graded.

3. At minimum, the study guide will contain 16 potential exam questions: 2 questions per course for criminological theory, research methods, statistics, and five electives recently offered by the department. The exam itself will contain at least 8 questions from the study guide: 1 question per course for criminological theory, research methods, statistics, and five electives recently offered by the department.

4. In general, answers to comprehensive exam questions will be graded based on the following PRIMARY criteria:
   a. Quality of response (how well do you answer the question?)
   b. Clarity of response (is your answer coherent and intelligible?)
   c. Application of existing scholarship and readings (do you cite the relevant literature?)
   d. Demonstration of classroom learning (do you demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the topic area?)

Some SECONDARY criteria relate to the student’s ability to:

1. Think creatively and apply the theories and concepts you learned in appropriate or novel ways
2. Apply statistical tools to evaluate social problems, policies and/or programs
3. Use critical thinking skills for analysis

Students will be encouraged to pay attention to spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and organization as they write. The Graduate Director may also provide guidelines for the minimum required length of students’ answers to exam questions.

On the day of the exam, students will not be allowed to bring notes, study guides, or books into the room. Students may bring blank paper and pen or pencil to the examination in order to draft answers, if desired, but they will type their answers to exam questions. Students may not use their cell phones or any other electronic services to obtain any information about exam questions during the testing period.

Each student’s exam will be assigned a code name or number by that student, ensuring anonymity for grading purposes.

Each exam question will be graded by at least 2 members of the graduate faculty.

Whenever possible, one of these graders will be the same faculty member who taught the course that corresponds with that question. He or she will be designated the PRIMARY GRADER. The other grader(s) may be any graduate faculty member(s). They will be selected by the Graduate Director and designated the SECONDARY GRADER and/or TERTIARY GRADER, respectively.

Each answer will be graded on a “Pass”/“Fail” basis.

• If the PRIMARY GRADER scores the answer as “Pass,” the student will pass that question regardless of the score from the SECONDARY GRADER.
• If the PRIMARY GRADER scores the answer as “Fail” and the SECONDARY GRADER scores the answer as “Fail,” the student will fail that question.
• If the PRIMARY GRADER scores the answer as “Fail” and the SECONDARY GRADER scores the answer as “Pass,” a third graduate faculty member (TERTIARY GRADER) will be asked to score the answer and break the tie.

1. Students will receive the results of the score provide by each grader, along with any supplementary feedback the graders would like to provide (be it laudatory or critical)
2. Students must pass all questions to successfully pass the comprehensive exam.

3. If a student fails any question, the PRIMARY GRADER provides written feedback to the student about what was wrong with the submitted answer, and then the student gets a chance to re-take the same exam question during the same semester, with a time limit of 100 minutes per question. Students who fail for a second time will have to re-take the entire comprehensive exam in a subsequent semester. Students who fail for a third time will be dropped from the program altogether.

Retaking the Comprehensive Examination

If a student fails one or more comprehensive exam questions on the first try, the second exam will be taken four (4) weeks from the original exam date. Students must set aside both dates in advance.

Plan I: Thesis Process Requirements

1. Thesis Committee

Each student who wishes to complete a thesis will form a master’s thesis committee. This committee will be established by the thesis chairperson and the student. The Graduate Director or Department Chair must sign an Appointment of Master’s Thesis Committee Form prior to enrollment for thesis hours.

The form will be signed on the understanding that the student has convened a thesis committee consisting of a Chairperson plus two committee members (one member will be from the department and one member will be from outside the department), presented a short prospectus that is acceptable to the committee, and has completed 18 hours of approved graduate coursework.

2. Thesis Submission

After the thesis has been completed, the student must submit an electronic copy of it to the graduate school using Committee Acceptance Form for Electronic Thesis or Dissertation.

An Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) is simply the digital (electronic) representation of your thesis or dissertation, and must meet the formatting requirements described in “A Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations”.

3. Beginning Work on a Thesis

Registration for six hours of CJ 599 Thesis generally follows completion of all coursework. A student may register for 1 to 6 thesis hours in an academic semester only after 18 hours of coursework have been completed. The academic policy of the university requires that when a student serves as a Graduate Assistant, he or she must enroll as a full-time student (9 hours). A student taking approved classes for their
program plan may register for as many additional thesis hours as needed to maintain full time status. Discuss your plans for registration with the Director of Graduate Studies in Criminal Justice and the faculty member directing your thesis.

Students are encouraged to select a thesis topic in their first semester. It is acceptable to identify a chair by the end of the first semester of study. The chair will work with the student to develop a committee and a plan for accomplishment of the project. The astute student will develop a tentative draft of his or her prospectus as the final paper in the methods course. He or she will also develop a theoretical basis for the project during a theory class. When possible, other papers will be designed to focus on specific aspects of the proposed project. The organization of the thesis follows the most current edition of the APA Manual by the American Psychological Association.

Students are encouraged to begin thinking about their topic early and discuss their ideas with faculty. The significant steps in writing a thesis include the oral defense of a student's prospectus which should occur in the semester before the degree is to be completed, data collection and writing the paper, and the oral defense of the student's product.

All thesis students must notify the Graduate Director of their thesis topic and committee membership prior to taking their hours. Thesis hours should not commence until 18 hours of coursework have been completed. A passing grade for thesis coursework indicates that sufficient written work has been completed toward one thesis.

4. The Thesis

A thesis is based on the collection and analysis of appropriate data to investigate an empirical question, describe a phenomenon of scholarly interest, test a hypothesis or theory, or examine a generalization or theoretical proposition. Methods should be appropriate to the nature of the scholarly inquiry, whether those methods are experimental, naturalistic, phenomenological, laboratory-based, field-based, or some other approach including a combination of methods.

Students select one criminal justice faculty member as the Chair of the Thesis Committee. The student and Thesis Committee Chair discuss identification of two additional committee members, one from criminal justice and one from either another department on the UA campus or from an off-campus accredited university. The outside member must be recommended for a courtesy adjunct faculty status appointment by the department to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to the Dean of the Graduate School. A copy of the person's academic resume should be requested by the department chair and submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Each semester the Graduate School publishes a schedule of deadlines for students who are writing a thesis. Students must consult the schedule and submit their thesis in accordance with the schedule. A completed copy of the thesis must be electronically submitted to the Department at least eight weeks before the date the candidate expects to receive the degree. Theses must comply with the regulations set out in the Graduate School's "A Student Guide to Preparing Theses and Dissertations." The production of an outstanding thesis is the highest level of demonstrated excellence for a master's candidate. In most cases, the thesis is empirical; however, a thesis may be theoretical. While the truly outstanding thesis will make a contribution to the literature or to practice, a well-executed empirical project that does not substantiate the hypotheses advanced will still be considered to have demonstrated competence. The following is a suggested outline that can be modified by the candidate's committee to reflect the needs of the specific line of inquiry.

Outline for the Thesis Prospectus

See the Graduate School "A Student Guide to Preparing Theses and Dissertations" for front pages and format.

- Introduction—General statement of the problem and its importance
- Literature Review
  - General Overview
  - Background of the Problem
  - Recent Research Related to the Problem
  - Theoretical Perspectives
- Discussion of Specific Research Questions
- Methodology
  - Variables
  - Hypotheses
  - Instrument
- Setting
- Population
- Sample
- Plan for Collection of Data
- Plan for Analysis of Data

For the final thesis, expand the literature review and add:

- Findings
- Discussion
- Summary and Recommendations

Plan II: Non-Thesis Process Requirements

Please see the "Comprehensive Exam" section above for detailed information on the non-thesis process requirements.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

All requirements for the master's degree must be completed during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the degree is to be awarded. However, students generally can complete degree requirements in 18-24 months. Additional information is in the Degree Requirements section of this catalog.

Student Progress Requirement

1. Suspension

Any conditionally admitted graduate student who fails to maintain a GPA of "B" or better in his/her first 12 credit hours of graduate-level work will automatically be subject to Suspension (dismissal) from the program and the Graduate School. However, a student who satisfies the condition automatically gains the status of a regularly admitted graduate student. If the 12 hours are completed in a term in which the total credits
exceed 12, the evaluation is made on the basis of all graduate-level work completed at the end of that term of enrollment.

Any student who receives two graduate course grades of “C” or lower will automatically be subject to Suspension (dismissal) from the program and the Graduate School.

Students who are suspended may not attend class or enroll in any form of distance learning courses.

2. Reinstatement

A person seeking reinstatement to the same degree program after being academically suspended from the Graduate School can initiate consideration for reinstatement by communicating with the academic department or program from which the person was dismissed. The graduate faculty of the academic unit will consider the request for reinstatement and, if the faculty request reinstatement, they will identify in a written request to the dean of the Graduate School the compelling reasons for reinstatement and the conditions required of the student if reinstatement is granted by the dean of the Graduate School.

3. Incompletes

A grade of “I” (Incomplete) is evaluated as an “F,” and must be removed within two weeks during the next term of enrollment if the student’s overall grade point average drops below a “B” as a result of the incomplete grade. Also, a student who fails to remove an incomplete grade by the end of the following semester in which it was received will not be allowed to register for additional courses toward the degree.

**Academic Misconduct Information**

Please see the Graduate School’s website for Academic Misconduct.

**Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information**

Withdrawal from a Course

A student who desires to withdraw from a course may do so, with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies in Criminal Justice, during the period allowed for dropping a class. It is the student’s responsibility to consult the semester’s schedule for the specific date by which one may drop a course. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies in Criminal Justice for additional information about withdrawing from a course.

Information on Graduate School policies regarding course withdrawal and leave of absence.

**Academic Grievances Information**

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

**Scholastic Requirements**

1. Grade Point Average: The student must have a cumulative average of not less than “B” in graduate courses undertaken at The University of Alabama. Grades below “C” are counted in computing scholastic averages, but do not carry credit toward the degree.

2. Credit Tenure: All credit toward the master’s degree must have been earned during the six years immediately preceding the date on which the degree is awarded.

3. Application for Degree: The student must file an Application for Degree.

4. Fulfillment of Degree Requirements: All coursework and degree plans expire at the end of SIX YEARS. A student must complete all degree requirements within six years from the date that he/she enrolls in graduate coursework. If degree requirements are not completed within six years, he/she may reapply to the Graduate School but all coursework taken may not be applied toward the degree (only the coursework that the Graduate School allows). If a student fails to register for 3 consecutive years, the student must reapply for admission (only the coursework that the Graduate School allows can be applied toward the degree).

Graduate School information on Scholastic Requirements.

**Graduate School Deadlines Information**

Information on Graduate School Deadlines.

**Application for Graduation Information**

Information on the Application for Graduation.