

Graduate Student Manual

Master of Arts in Criminology



University of West Georgia

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Introduction

This manual covers information specific to the graduate major in Criminology. For more general policies, procedures, requirements, and other information see the College of Social Sciences (COSS) Graduate Studies Handbook: [CLICK](#) and UWG Graduate Studies website: [CLICK](#).

The MA in Criminology program at UWG is designed to provide the background necessary for criminal justice practice and/or to prepare students for doctoral study and work in academic settings. It is offered with two tracks. The Criminal Justice Administration track addresses issues of crime and criminal justice within a framework that emphasizes theory and research and their implications for criminal justice policy and practice. The Crime and Social Justice track trains students in understanding and applying theory and research in academic settings. Both curricula are grounded in the social, behavioral, and natural sciences. Students admitted to the program choose a plan of study that best matches their practical and academic interests.

The MA in Criminology program is the only master's program of its kind in the state of Georgia. It is conceived widely to include the study of crime, justice, law, and society. The Department of Criminology recognizes the value of diverse methodological and theoretical approaches and encourages their complementary use and integration. Its faculty members represent broad and varied backgrounds in working with the criminal justice system, dealing with offenders and victims, and conducting research on a wide range of issues.

The faculty of the Criminology Graduate Program is committed to providing students with an educational experience that will enable them to live, learn, and work in a culturally diverse world. Our goal is to assist students in the development of criminological knowledge, skills, and abilities that not only enrich students but optimizes their ability to successfully function within evolving professional fields. Our program provides high quality instruction that encourages faculty-student collaboration and facilitates opportunities for student research. Our mission is to prepare students for a variety of professional careers, further academic study, and lives of active citizenship.

Financial Opportunities

Financial opportunities are available through Graduate Research Assistantships, student loans, and campus employment (usually part-time). For information on Graduate Research Assistantships, contact the Department of Criminology Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). For information on student loans, visit the Office of Financial Aid: [CLICK](#). For information on employment opportunities, visit Human Resources: [CLICK](#).

Degree Requirements

Both tracks require a core of four courses: CRIM 6000: Principles of Criminology, CRIM 6003: Applied Statistics in Criminology, CRIM 6010: Theories of Crime & Justice, and CRIM 6013: Social Research. (For a full listing of courses, see the Graduate Catalog: [CLICK](#)). Both tracks have a list of approved courses for completion of the degree. Students accepted into the program may choose either the Thesis or Comprehensive Exam option. Under the thesis option, a student must complete a minimum of 30 hours of coursework and 6 hours of thesis. Under the comprehensive exam option, a student must complete a minimum of 36 hours of coursework and a comprehensive exam is required.

Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam option is available for students pursuing an M.A. in Criminology who do not select the thesis option. The purpose of this examination is to ensure that all graduates demonstrate competence in criminological theory, methodology and their substantive track.

What is the comprehensive exam? The comprehensive exam is a six hour written examination that consists of three sections: criminological theory, methodology and either social justice or criminal justice administration. Each section shall offer a choice between two broad questions. The answers to these questions should reflect the student's knowledge of the criminological comprehensive exam reading lists (see below). Computerized word processing shall be used.

What is the reading list? At the beginning of each academic year, a list of suggested readings to help prepare for the exam will be available in the department at the student's request. The lists contain foundational readings in all three areas for students at the master's level.

When is the exam offered? It is to be taken at the student's discretion after completing a minimum of 18 credit hours in the major. The exam will be administered shortly after the midpoint in the semester at least three weeks prior to the last day to complete all requirements for commencement participation. The exact date of the exam will be announced at the beginning of each semester. The exam will not be offered during the summer semester. The student must be registered for at least one unit during the semester in which the final examination is administered and degree requirements are completed.

What is the procedure for taking the exam? Students who wish to take the exam must notify the DGS in writing of their intent to sit for the exam. This notification must take place no later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to take the exam. In the event that the student decides not to take the exam after submitting written notification of the intent to take the exam, the student must notify the DGS in writing of the circumstances preventing her or him from sitting for the exam. Except in the case of an emergency, this notification must take place no later than two weeks before the exam date. The exact date of the exam will be announced at the beginning of each semester. A student who does

not arrive to sit for an exam without proper notification to withdraw will receive a Fail for the exam.

How is the test graded? The written examinations will be evaluated by a committee of criminologists selected by the criminology faculty. The grade options for each question are “Pass: The answer was satisfactory” or “Fail: The answer was unsatisfactory.” Answers will be graded according to high standards. The quality of writing will be evaluated (in the context of impromptu writing) as well as the quality of information provided. Further, answers must provide the information demanded by the question (the question must truly be answered) and all parts of questions must be addressed, and the sources from the reading list must be adequately referenced.

Students receiving the “Fail” designation for one of three questions will be given the choice to take the failed question again within three weeks of receiving their grade. The student may also opt to take the question again the following semester during normal comprehensive exam administration. Students receiving the “Fail” designation for two of three questions will be given another opportunity to take the failed sections the following semester. Students receiving the “Fail” designation for all three questions will be given another opportunity to take the entire test the following semester.

An answer must receive a pass vote from two of the three exam committee members to receive a “Pass” designation. Students receiving Fail designations will receive feedback from the Director of Graduate Studies, including on how the question could have been better answered (regarding missing or incorrect information, problems with writing quality, etc.). Grading by the exam committee is confidential and its decisions are collective decisions.

Thesis

Students wishing to complete a thesis must submit a full research proposal to a prospective Major Professor (aka Thesis Chair) prior to acquiring the professor’s signature on the Thesis Committee and credit (registration) forms. (The student must obtain these forms from the DGS.) The proposal must be a minimum of ten (10) full pages but the professor may require more. The professor will judge the suitability of the proposal and may require revisions prior to signing. Several sources offer guidelines for writing a social science research proposal (e.g. methods textbooks and online APA Style guides).

In addition to a Major Professor/Thesis Chair, the student must complete her/his Thesis Committee with two more members: a Graduate Professor in the Criminology Department and a Graduate Professor outside of the Criminology Department (totaling three committee members). As a requirement for graduation, the student completing a thesis must successfully defend her/his thesis to the Thesis Committee (i.e. the Committee must pass the thesis and defense). The student will arrange a defense with her/his Major Professor.

Graduate Student Review Policy

Department of Criminology, University of West Georgia

PURPOSE

The purpose of the graduate student review policy is to set forth the guidelines for reviewing students in the Criminology Graduate Program at the University of West Georgia. The goal of the policy is to maintain the quality of students who are enrolled in and graduate from the program. Consistent with the General Principles stated in the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Code of Ethics, the graduate program strives to produce graduates who commit to enhancing the well-being of individuals, groups, and society; respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people; are honest and open in professional behavior; and strive to be highly competent in their work (<http://www.acjs.org/>). The department recognizes that most conflicts involving graduate students and their interaction with staff, faculty, and peers are best resolved on an informal basis. However, it is also recognized that a more formal intervention may be necessary under certain conditions in order to guide a student toward the resolution of a conflict or recommend the removal of a student from the program.

REVIEW PROCESS

In order to meet the above stated goal, a list of all students currently enrolled in the program will be provided to each full-time faculty member once per semester. This list should be made available one week prior to a scheduled faculty meeting. The agenda of this meeting will be to discuss the progress of all full-time graduate students and to allow faculty members to compare their observations of and recommendations for these students. At this meeting proposals and rationale for a formal review may be presented verbally and should be followed by a written statement that will be placed in the student's permanent file. The faculty may then vote to recommend a formal review process.

Additionally, any member of the faculty may refer a student to the director of graduate studies (DGS) for review at any time during the academic year. The referral should be made in writing to the DGS who, after consultation with the faculty member making the referral, shall have the right to decline the request, retain it for discussion at the next regular faculty meeting, or initiate a formal review process.

FORMAL REVIEW

If conflicts involving graduate students cannot be resolved by way of informal procedures, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) may initiate a formal review by the Graduate Student Review Committee (GSRC) which shall consist of three (3) full-time faculty members including the DGS, who shall serve as a standing member of the committee. The student under review may

also request that one (1) additional faculty member of their choosing serve on the committee. The purpose of the GSRC is to ensure due process and equitable application of department policies.

Students under review shall be notified by mail that they are under review and will be given the specific reason(s) for the review. They shall also be notified of the proper procedures whereby they may respond to the charges of the GSRC. The student shall be given two weeks to respond to the notification and shall have the option to respond to the GSRC in writing or in person where they may present testimony and evidence in support of their position. After the student has responded, the GSRC shall vote on a recommended course of action and present their recommendation to the DGS. The DGS shall review the recommendation of the committee and may accept, reject, or modify the recommendation.

The actions that the GSRC may recommend are as follows:

- 1) No action;
- 2) A verbal warning;
- 3) Development of an improvement plan governing the student's continued enrollment;
- 4) A written warning to be placed in the student's file;
- 5) Suspension from the program for a set period of time;
- 6) Permanent removal from the program.

Upon review of the GSRC's recommendation and determination of a course of action, the DGS shall notify the student in writing of the proposed plan of action. The student shall be given one week to respond to the DGS before the final implementation of the proposed action. After the student has been given time to respond, the DGS will notify all parties involved to put the plan into action in accordance with UWG policies and procedures.