

THE PROJECT OPTION

The Project Option represents a middle ground between the Thesis and Focused Coursework options and is intended to meet the needs of students who want to engage in advanced research but not at the level of detail required by a thesis project. The Project Option requires a minimum of ten (10) graduate courses (30 credit hours): the five required core classes, a minimum of two (2) CJ graduate courses (6 credit hours), and three (3) additional graduate courses (9 credit hours) that may be from the CJ curriculum or any other department across NMSU. In addition each student must complete a minimum of three (3) credits of CJ 592 Independent Research.

All students pursuing the Project Option must develop and present a proposal for the project research, and prepare and orally defend the written report of the completed Project before the Project Committee.

Is a Project Committee Required for the Project Option?

Yes! A student selecting the Project Option must constitute a faculty committee composed of two CJ faculty members and one of those selected is to be designated as the **Chair**.

Can I Select Any Member of the CJ Faculty to be the Chair of My Project Committee?

Although all Criminal Justice faculty members are willing to serve as **Chair** of a Project Committee, a variety of circumstances may prevent an individual faculty member from agreeing to serve as **Chair**.

1. The faculty member must be designated by the Graduate School as a member of the Graduate Faculty. A complete list of faculty members approved by the Graduate School as members of the Graduate Faculty is available at <http://www.nmsu.edu/~gradcolg/gradfac/gradfacindex.htm>.
2. A faculty member may have too many commitments to be able to serve as **Chair** of a Project Committee. Faculty members working on grants or other extended research projects may feel they would not be able to devote the time and effort necessary to serve as **Chair**. In addition, the Criminal Justice faculty policy is that a faculty member may not serve as the **Chair** of more than **two** active theses or **two** Projects.
3. A faculty member may be eligible for sabbatical leave during the time period of the Project.
4. A faculty member may have other research commitments.

5. A faculty member, based upon prior experience with a student, may not feel that student is sufficiently skilled to conduct the project research.

May I Select Any Member of the CJ Faculty to Serve as the Second Member of My Project Committee?

While it is true that all Criminal Justice faculty members can, and are happy to, serve as members of a Project Committee, a variety of circumstances may prevent an individual faculty member from agreeing to serve.

1. A faculty member may have too many commitments to be able to serve on a Project Committee. Faculty members working on grants or other extended research projects may feel they would not be able to devote the time and effort necessary to serve. In addition, the Criminal Justice faculty policy is that a faculty member may not serve as the **Chair** of more than **two** active theses or **two** Projects, and may be the secondary member on no more than **four** active theses or Projects.
2. A faculty member may be eligible for sabbatical leave during the time period of the Project.
3. A faculty member may have other research commitments.
4. A faculty member, based upon prior experience with a student, may not feel that student is sufficiently skilled to conduct the Project research.

Am I Required to Take the Comprehensive Examination if I Choose the Project Option?

No! But, I am required to defend an oral presentation of my project that may include questions related to the core curriculum.

Am I Required to Prepare a Project Proposal?

Each Project student is required to prepare, in close consultation with the **Chair** of the Project Committee, and present/submit a project proposal to the Project Committee. Project proposals will vary according to the specifics of an individual Project and the stylistic recommendations of the **Chair** of the Project Committee.

If the Project Committee determines that demonstration of mastery of the core curriculum material is insufficient, several options may be exercised including, but not limited to the following:

1. The student may be required to rewrite the proposal and present it until the committee is satisfied;
2. The committee may decide that the student's mastery of the core curriculum material is deficient to the point that a decision is made that the student may not pursue the Project Option.

What Types of Projects Qualify for the Project Option?

The focus of the Project Option may take a variety of forms.

1. A student working within a criminal justice related agency may be aware of a problem/dilemma/issue within the agency that might be better resolved as the result of systematic research. In this case the student would negotiate with the employer/supervisor at the agency and the **Chair** of the Project Committee to engage in a research project that culminates in a formal written report and presentation of the research.
2. During an Internship experience (CJ 593) a student may become aware of a problem/dilemma/issue within the internship placement agency that might be better resolved as the result of systematic research. In this case the student would negotiate with the employer/supervisor at the agency and the **Chair** of the Project Committee to engage in a research project that culminates in a formal written report and presentation of the research.
3. A student may be interested in a particular subject area of criminal justice and would like to engage in systematic inquiry into that subject area. In this case the student would select a **Chair** and negotiate the parameters of the focus of inquiry for the Project research and then complete all project requirements.

Can I Begin and End the Project When I Want?

A student may not formally begin working on the Project until the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. Completion of all five required core curriculum courses; and
2. Securing a commitment from a Criminal Justice faculty member to serve as chair.

The Project research may end under the following conditions:

1. The student decides to abandon the Project Option; or
2. The Project Committee determines that the Project is complete.

Are the Professors On My Project Committee Available to Guide Me the Entire Year?

Professors at New Mexico State University work on nine month contracts. During the summer months professors are working on various scholarly projects of importance to research, teaching, and service. Most generally, professors are in and out of town in an irregular pattern. In addition, professors become eligible for sabbatical leave every six years and may not be available for consultation during the sabbatical leave. Students need to make every effort to conclude a project within the Fall/Spring semester academic schedule and to determine if every professor on the Project Committee will be available for the final oral defense. ***Do not assume that all members of your Project Committee will be available to assist your Project during the summer months.***

What is an Appropriate Length for the Final Written Report?

It is difficult to specify a precise length as each written report of a Project one will vary somewhat based upon the type of project and the organizational and stylistic preferences of the **Chair** of your Project Committee. A reasonable estimate is that the completed written report will average around 40 – 45 pages in length.

Do I Need University Approval Prior to Beginning My Project?

Social science research in the field of Criminal Justice frequently involves the systematic analysis of human behavior(s). As such, a Project frequently falls within the category of “Human Subjects Research” that must satisfy criterion established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of New Mexico State University. The process required by the IRB can potentially require a great deal of time, and a student’s Project research may not proceed until formal IRB approval is granted. Information about the IRB process and requirements can be found at <http://research.nmsu.edu/docs/human/human.html>.