

# **A Handbook for Earning the Master of Criminal Justice Degree**

**Fall 2011 - Present**

The faculty members of the Department of Criminal Justice welcome you to the Master of Criminal Justice Program/Degree (MCJ) at New Mexico State University (NMSU). We sincerely hope you find your experience with us to be of value in attaining your academic and professional goals.

This Handbook is intended to provide you with an orientation and some answers to frequently asked questions about the MCJ.

## **THE GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

All students pursuing the MCJ are required to complete a set of Core/Required courses. MCJ students must assume far greater responsibility in pursuing an individual program of study best suited to their particular needs, and pursue the option for earning the MCJ most congruent with those needs.

You are embarking on an incredible opportunity to dramatically expand your knowledge and ability to embrace and work with the complexity of the interrelated social problems and policies around which the criminal justice system is organized. We encourage you to take full advantage of the depth and breadth of knowledge and experience your accomplished research professors will expose you to as well as the knowledge you will acquire from your peers and colleagues in the MCJ.

Graduate students must adopt an orientation toward scholarship considerably different from the undergraduate experience. That new orientation includes:

- a commitment to reading and being prepared for discussion prior to each class, active substantive contribution to class discussions reflecting familiarity with the assigned reading material,
- a commitment to submitting the best possible example of written work on each assignment,
- a commitment to moving beyond “conventional wisdom” about criminological policy issues,
- a commitment to embracing diversity, and
- a commitment to maintaining an open, inquiring, and critical mind.

Graduate students are expected to exceed minimum standards and requirements of all kinds, to view a difficult assignment as a challenge and an opportunity to learn more about a particular subject. Graduate students should set as a goal to be masters of subjects rather than to simply pass courses or comply with formal requirements.

I encourage each of you to familiarize yourself with policies of the Graduate School related to your grade point average. The *Graduate Catalog* states:

One of the more important skills acquired while earning the MCJ is the ability to work independently and in groups to solve complex and often abstract problems and assignments. Graduate students -- unlike their undergraduate cohort -- should not expect to obtain a degree merely by passing courses. Group and individual research plays an integral and valuable role in graduate education and is an integral characteristic separating the Master degree from the Baccalaureate degree. Development of research skills requires a student to perform an open-minded, systematic, critical analysis of all available information in an attempt to synthesize new patterns

of meaning and to arrive at a level of understanding beyond that commonly reflected in so-called conventional wisdom. It is our goal that through constant and prolonged association with research-oriented professors and peers, as well as personal involvement with research, you will expand and enhance your abilities to think clearly, critically, independently, and develop a zeal for pursuing new and alternative explanations and solutions for persistent social problems.

## **IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE MCJ**

Some features of the MCJ are often confusing for new students. I strongly encourage students to become intimately familiar with the MCJ information on the Department's web page, <http://crimjust.nmsu.edu>. The information there is very helpful in navigating the MCJ program. The following information discusses and clarifies frequently asked questions.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Graduate students are considered to be in good standing and making satisfactory academic progress if they earn at least a 3.0 cumulative average on all graduate work and at least a 3.0 semester average on all course work and/or if they earn a grade of "S" (satisfactory) or "PR" (progress reported) in the required research credit associated with the *Thesis* option for earning the MCJ.

The *Graduate Catalog* policy on Academic Performance is followed by the Department of Criminal Justice. The *Graduate Catalog* states:

“Graduate students are expected to apply themselves intensively to the study of the material covered by the courses in which they are enrolled. Accordingly, a high level of performance is required. The student must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 in all graduate courses taken as a graduate student at NMSU. Courses transferred from the undeclared program at NMSU or from other institutions will be included in determining grade-point averages.”

“Although C grades earned at New Mexico State University may be counted toward the requirements for an advanced degree, this is not considered acceptable graduate-level performance.”

“Courses in which a student earns only a D or F may never be counted toward a graduate degree, although such grades are calculated in determining the grade-point average. Therefore, any grades of D or F must be compensated for by the necessary hours of A if the student is to have the 3.0 grade-point average required before awarding of the degree.”

“Academic records of all graduate students are reviewed at the end of each semester. A student whose cumulative grade-point average at the end of any semester is less than 3.0 will be so informed and will be placed on probation. If, during the next enrollment period, a student fails to achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or to show substantial improvement in the quality of work (as determined by the graduate dean in consultation with the student's primary department), the student will be suspended for one semester from the Graduate School. Students on suspension are barred from enrolling in graduate level courses at NMSU. Students on suspension who wish to continue Graduate School after suspension must re-apply to the Graduate School and the department of interest. Subsequent suspensions will be for one calendar year and the student must petition the graduate dean for re-admission. No NMSU graduate level

course credit will be granted for courses taken at NMSU or other institutions while under suspension from NMSU.”

Students are expected to follow the University's Student Code of Conduct. Faculty take the issue of academic dishonesty in all of its forms very seriously. It is important for each student to be familiar with the definitions and procedures outlined in the section of the *NMSU Graduate Catalog* titled “Disciplinary Issues for Graduate Students”. Of specific note in the C.J. Department: while we encourage students to use a single topic area as the basis for papers in different classes, the papers must be substantially different for each class. If a student is preparing or has prepared papers on the same general topic area in other courses, he or she must inform the instructor of this fact when he or she submits a paper. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the student to be certain that work turned in for a class assignment is appropriate for that assignment.

### **The Online vs. Campus-Based Graduate Courses**

The MCJ can be earned through an Online and Campus-Based program within the following parameters.

1. Students desiring to pursue the MCJ Online must declare that intent in writing with the Director of the MCJ and be accepted into the Online program.
2. Students accepted into the MCJ Online program are only allowed to enroll in online courses.
3. Students desiring to pursue the MCJ Campus-Based program must declare that intent in writing with the Director of the MCJ and be accepted into the Campus-Based program.
4. Students accepted into the MCJ Campus-Based program are only allowed to enroll in campus-based courses.
5. Students may switch between the Online and Campus-Based program upon written request and approval of the Director of the MCJ. Once admitted into either the Online or Campus-Based program the student must remain in that program for one academic year. Students may switch between programs, based upon availability of openings between the Spring and Fall semesters and prior to the Fall semester.
6. Exceptions to the Online versus Campus-Based course restrictions are during the Summer sessions when all MCJ students may enroll in Online courses and when an announcement is made by the Director of the MCJ Program that a particular course offered during the Fall or Spring semester is open to Online and Campus-Based students.
7. The *Thesis Option* for completing the MCJ is only available to Campus-Based students.
8. All Online students may only complete the MCJ via the *Focused-Coursework Option*.
9. The degree designation on the final transcript is a Master of Criminal Justice from NMSU. There is no designation indicating Online or Campus-Based program.

## **Directed Readings (CJ 591) and Internship (CJ 593)**

Graduate students enrolled in the MCJ are allowed to include a limited number of directed readings and/or internship credit hours toward their degree. The limits vary by your choice of degree plan option. The details of those limits can be found in the **Tracking Guides** at the end of this Handbook.

If you are interested in taking a directed readings/independent study course (CJ 591) you must go through the following steps:

1. identify a topic or issue of interest to you;
2. find a professor willing to supervise you (faculty members receive no credit for engaging in this activity and are under no obligation to supervise a CJ 591 course);
3. work out mutually agreeable expectations for successful completion of the course with the professor and keep a written record of that agreement;
4. register for CJ 591 (this requires the signatures of the professor, yourself, and the Department Head and can be facilitated by the Director of the MCJ for an Online student);

If you are interested in a graduate internship (CJ 593) you must go through the following steps:

1. locate a criminal justice-related agency willing to accept you as an intern;
2. discuss your internship idea with the Director of the MCJ and/or Department Internship Coordinator who will provide you with a form for an agency representative to complete and sign;
3. register for CJ 593 with the assistance of the Department Internship Coordinator (this requires the signatures of the Department Internship Coordinator (currently Dr. Dana Greene – [dverde@nmsu.edu](mailto:dverde@nmsu.edu)), yourself and the Department Head).

An **FAQ** for CJ 593 and a copy of a required contract form are available at the end of this Handbook and on the Department web page.

## IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW WHILE EARNING YOUR MCJ

During the first semester in the MCJ the Director of the MCJ serves as each student's faculty advisor. There are two options for earning the MCJ, *Thesis*, and *Focused Coursework*. The *Thesis Option* is only available to campus-based students. Online students may only complete the MCJ using the *Focused Coursework Option*. Campus Students should decide upon one of the two degree completion options by the end of the first 18 credit hours. The Director of the MCJ serves as the advisor for all students pursuing the *Focused Coursework* option. Students pursuing the *Thesis* option must ultimately choose a *major faculty advisor*.

### 1. Pursuing the *Thesis Option*

All campus-based students pursuing the *Thesis* option for earning the MCJ must choose a major faculty advisor who will serve as the *Chair* of your *Thesis* committee.

It is important to note that a student is not guaranteed the opportunity to complete the MCJ utilizing the *Thesis Option*. That choice is a function of successfully acquiring the commitment of a faculty member to serve as chair, your cumulative classroom performance, and an ongoing demonstration of the ability and level of commitment to complete the MCJ utilizing the *Thesis Option* throughout the process. An FAQ outlining faculty expectations of student performance for the *Thesis Option* is available at the end of this Handbook and on the Department's web page.

Students deciding to pursue the *Thesis Option* should begin the process of selecting a topic area of specialization during the first year. Ideally, the topic area of specialization overlaps with one or more of the specialty areas of the faculty in the Department of Criminal Justice. The faculty member(s) sharing the same interest area as you might make an excellent choice as chair of your *Thesis* committee. Faculty biographies and curriculum vita are available online on the Department's web page to assist you in choosing a major faculty advisor. The Director of the MCJ or any faculty member in the Department of Criminal Justice will be very happy to assist you in selecting a major faculty advisor.

Many students do not realize faculty members at NMSU work on nine-month contracts. This means faculty members may not be available to work closely with you during the summer months. When selecting a chair for your *Thesis* committee it is very important to identify any scheduling conflicts that might occur so you can organize your work to graduate when you need to graduate. *Please respect the time and schedules of your chair and committee members.*

Some students in the past have chosen the *Thesis Option* based upon the **false assumption** that this option represents the quickest route to earning the MCJ. All of these students have been disappointed to find out the *Thesis Option* did not lead to the MCJ degree any quicker than the *Focused Coursework* option, and in many cases the *Thesis Option* may have taken longer to complete than the *Focused Coursework* option.

It is very important for you to understand that your *Thesis* is finished when, and only when, your chair and committee say that the *Thesis* is complete. The *Thesis Option* requires a great deal of self-discipline on the part of the student. Your chair and committee are there to provide advice and assistance while guiding and helping you learn the research process, not to do the project for you. Usually the chair of your committee serves as the primary guide for your research until a draft of your *Thesis* is complete and your chair recommends you provide a copy to the other committee members for consideration of scheduling a **Defense**.

The *Thesis Defense* is often considered the final step in a long process. Unfortunately, the Graduate College has additional expectations of those writing a *Thesis* that includes satisfying the format review requirements of

the Graduate College Editor, turning the completed thesis in for publication binding, and delivering a finished bound copy to the library. The point I am making is that even though you have **Defended** the *Thesis* you are not finished until the Graduate College says you have satisfied all of their requirements. Information relevant to the **Thesis Review Requirements** of the Graduate School and other tips can be viewed on the Graduate College link of the NMSU web page at <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Guidelines/>.

Finally, there are numerous deadlines specified each semester by the Graduate College for graduating within a specific semester. These deadlines are non-negotiable and are available for your inspection on the Graduate College link of the NMSU web page at <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/deadlines/index.htm>.

Students choosing the *Thesis Option* must complete 6 credits of **CJ 599** (an independent research course directed by the chair of your thesis committee for the purpose of working toward completion of your thesis). The required credits of **CJ 599** are registered for in the same manner as **CJ 591**.

## 2. Pursuing the Focused Coursework Option

Only those students choosing the *Focused Coursework* option are required to pass a formal written comprehensive examination. Only those students who have completed all **core/required** courses are eligible to take the written comprehensive examination.

Students choosing either the *Thesis Option* must demonstrate their mastery of the material contained in the **core/required** core courses at the *Proposal Hearing* and at the *Defense* of their *Thesis*.

The comprehensive examination is given electronically once each semester and is typically scheduled in October of the Fall semester and March of the Spring semester. Students are individually responsible for being aware of the formal announcement of the comprehensive examination, applying to take the comprehensive examination, and successfully completing the comprehensive examination. Once you have applied to take the comprehensive examination you will receive instructions outlining tips for preparing, exam date(s), expectations for a passing grade, and other information relative to that particular examination.

Each semester the date and time of the comprehensive examination is posted in various areas within the Department of Criminal Justice, and each professor for both campus-based and web-based graduate courses is asked to announce the comprehensive exam in their classes. All students taking the examination at a scheduled date will answer the same questions. Student answers to the questions are blind-graded by two professors for each exam component. Exams are graded as either pass with distinction; pass; or not pass.

A student receiving a grade of *not pass* on any component of the examination is required to retake that portion of the exam at the next regularly scheduled comprehensive examination.

As a point of reference, a *passing* grade requires a “**B**” or better effort. An effort of “**C**” or lower receives a grade of *not passing*.

### **3. Approved Program of Study**

The Approved Program of Study for all three options of the MCJ is part of the NMSU STAR Degree Audit system. This system collates your Graduate Academic History with the MCJ Degree Option you are working with. You need your NMSU User Name and Password to access this system, the link to which is found at the following NMSU web link: <https://www.nmsu.edu/online/>. Deviations, transfer of graduate course work earned at a different university or different program at NMSU may only occur with the approval of the Director of the MCJ. It is the responsibility of the individual student to initiate a request for any deviation from the formal program of study.

### **4. Deadlines, Forms, and Graduation Requirements of the Graduate School**

There are many details relevant to receiving your MCJ degree required by the Graduate School. The Department of Criminal Justice oversees the substantive course content of your graduate experience. The Graduate School supervises all other aspects of the graduate experience related to graduation. All Graduate School requirements including Graduation Deadlines, Forms, Thesis Review Requirements, the Process of receiving your diploma, and other items of interest can be found at <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/deadlines/index.htm>.

### **5. Graduate Assistantships**

NMSU provides the Department of Criminal Justice with a small number of graduate assistantships each year. These graduate assistantships are awarded to students on a competitive basis. If you wish to be considered for a graduate assistantship award you must indicate in writing your desire to be considered for a graduate assistantship to the Director of the MCJ. For full consideration, the Director of the MCJ must be in receipt of all materials for admission, including your written request to be considered for a graduate assistantship, by April 1. The formal allocation of graduate assistantships occurs after the Department of Criminal Justice receives formal notification of its number of graduate assistantship allocations.

We certainly hope you find this information helpful to you as you navigate your way through the MCJ. Please do not hesitate to consult with the Director of the MCJ or any of the faculty members when you find yourself confrustrated (defined as: the state of being simultaneously confused and frustrated by an incomprehensible series of stressful events).

Please know faculty share the goal that every student entering the MCJ program leaves with the MCJ degree.

**GOOD LUCK!!!**

# Master of Criminal Justice

## Core Requirements for All Students Fall 2007 - Present

Core Courses	Semester Taken	Course Grade
<b>Analysis: Methods &amp; Policy Sequence (6 credits)</b>		
<i>Take one of the following courses:</i>		
CJ 501 – Research Methods in Criminal Justice, 3 credits, or		
CJ 502 – Criminal Justice Statistics, 3 credits or		
CJ 503 – Seminar in Criminal Justice Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
CJ 555 – Feminist Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 502 – Research Methods in Government, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 503 – Qualitative Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
MSW 560 – Social Work Research, 3 credits, or		
SOC 553 – Seminar in Sociological Research, 3 credits, or		
WS 555 – Advanced Feminist Research Methods, 3 credits	_____	_____
<i>Take one of the following courses:</i>		
CJ 510 – Advanced Criminal Justice Administrative Systems, 3 credits, or		
CJ 541 – Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy Analysis and Planning, 3 credits, or		
CJ 542 – Seminar in Applied Criminal Justice Analysis, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 530 – Seminar in Public Policy, 3 credits, or		
MSW 500 – Social Problems and Social Welfare Policy, 3 credits	_____	_____
<b>Theory: Criminology, Diversity &amp; Ethics (9 credits)</b>		
<i>Take one of the following two courses:</i>		
CJ 511 – Nature of Crime, 3 credits, or		
SOC 491 – Criminological Theory	_____	_____
<i>Take one of the following two courses:</i>		
CJ 514 – Race, Crime and Justice, 3 credits, or		
CJ 521 – Law & Social Control, 3 credits	_____	_____
<i>Complete the following course:</i>		
CJ 525 – Issues in Ethics, Law and Criminal Justice, 3 credits	_____	_____

**Master of Criminal Justice  
 Focused Coursework Option – 36 Total Credits  
 Fall 2011 - Present**

<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>Semester Taken</b>	<b>Course Grade</b>
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**Analysis: Methods & Policy Sequence (6 credits)**

*Take one of the following courses:*

CJ 501 – Research Methods in Criminal Justice, 3 credits, or		
CJ 502 – Criminal Justice Statistics, 3 credits or		
CJ 503 – Seminar in Criminal Justice Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
CJ 555 – Feminist Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 502 – Research Methods in Government, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 503 – Qualitative Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
MSW 560 – Social Work Research, 3 credits, or		
SOC 553 – Seminar in Sociological Research, 3 credits, or		
WS 555 – Advanced Feminist Research Methods, 3 credits	_____	_____

*Take one of the following courses:*

CJ 510 – Advanced Criminal Justice Administrative Systems, 3 credits, or		
CJ 541 – Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy Analysis and Planning, 3 credits, or		
CJ 542 – Seminar in Applied Criminal Justice Analysis, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 530 – Seminar in Public Policy, 3 credits, or		
MSW 500 – Social Problems and Social Welfare Policy, 3 credits	_____	_____

**Theory: Criminology, Diversity & Ethics (9 credits)**

*Take one of the following two courses:*

CJ 511 – Nature of Crime, 3 credits, or		
SOC 491 – Criminological Theory	_____	_____

*Take one of the following two courses:*

CJ 514 – Race, Crime and Justice, 3 credits, or		
CJ 521 – Law & Social Control, 3 credits	_____	_____

*Complete the following course:*

CJ 525 – Issues in Ethics, Law and Criminal Justice, 3 credits		
	_____	_____

**CJ Electives - Total Credits Required = 12**

*No more than three (3) credits of Directed Readings (CJ 591), Internship (CJ 593), or Independent Research (CJ 592) may be used as CJ electives.*

	<b>Semester Taken</b>	<b>Course Grade</b>
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____

**General Electives/Minor - Total Credits Required = 9;**

These credits may be selected entirely from the Criminal Justice curriculum or may be selected from the graduate curriculum of any other department at NMSU.

*No more than three (3) credits of Directed Readings (CJ 591), Internship (CJ 593), or Independent Research (CJ 592) may be used as general electives.*

*A minor is optional and is earned by completing nine credit hours in any one department outside of Criminal Justice that offers a minor at the graduate level. Information about the availability and requirements of a specific minor can be obtained by inquiring with the academic department where you are interested in pursuing a minor.*

	<b>Semester Taken</b>	<b>Course Grade</b>
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____

**Minor Designation (Optional):** \_\_\_\_\_

## Comprehensive Examination

Students choosing the ***focused coursework*** option are required to pass a formal written comprehensive examination. Only those students who have completed all five of the required core courses are eligible to take the written comprehensive examination.

The comprehensive examination is given electronically once each semester. The comprehensive examination is typically scheduled during October and March.

The comprehensive examination has two components reflecting the primary areas of the core curriculum; **Analysis** and **Theory**. Each student must write a passing answer to the provided examination component from each core curriculum area in order to pass the comprehensive examination.

Each semester the date and time of the comprehensive examination is posted in various areas within the Department of Criminal Justice and on the student listserv, and announced in graduate classes. All students taking the examination at a scheduled date will answer the same component questions. Student answers to the questions are blind-graded by two professors for each exam component. Exams are graded as either (1) pass with distinction; (2) pass; (3) not pass.

A student receiving a grade of ***not pass*** on any component of the examination is required to retake that component of the examination. A student receiving a grade of ***not pass*** two times on the same component must meet with a panel of faculty members for an oral examination over the exam component that was not passed. If after the oral examination the student's performance does not receive a ***passing*** grade, that student will be required to wait until the next regularly scheduled comprehensive examination to retake the exam component receiving a ***not pass*** grade.

As a point of reference, a ***passing*** grade requires a "**B**" or better effort. An effort of "**C**" or lower is considered ***not passing***.

# Master of Criminal Justice Thesis Option – 33 credits

**Fall 2011 - Present**

<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>Semester Taken</b>	<b>Course Grade</b>
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**Analysis: Methods & Policy Sequence (6 credits)**

*Take one of the following courses:*

CJ 501 – Research Methods in Criminal Justice, 3 credits, or		
CJ 502 – Criminal Justice Statistics, 3 credits or		
CJ 503 – Seminar in Criminal Justice Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
CJ 555 – Feminist Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 502 – Research Methods in Government, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 503 – Qualitative Research Methods, 3 credits, or		
MSW 560 – Social Work Research, 3 credits, or		
SOC 553 – Seminar in Sociological Research, 3 credits, or		
WS 555 – Advanced Feminist Research Methods, 3 credits	_____	_____

*Take one of the following courses:*

CJ 510 – Advanced Criminal Justice Administrative Systems, 3 credits, or		
CJ 541 – Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy Analysis and Planning, 3 credits, or		
CJ 542 – Seminar in Applied Criminal Justice Analysis, 3 credits, or		
GOVT 530 – Seminar in Public Policy, 3 credits, or		
MSW 500 – Social Problems and Social Welfare Policy, 3 credits	_____	_____

**Theory: Criminology, Diversity & Ethics (9 credits)**

*Take one of the following two courses:*

CJ 511 – Nature of Crime, 3 credits, or		
SOC 491 – Criminological Theory	_____	_____

*Take one of the following two courses:*

CJ 514 – Race, Crime and Justice, 3 credits, or		
CJ 521 – Law & Social Control, 3 credits	_____	_____

*Complete the following course:*

CJ 525 – Issues in Ethics, Law and Criminal Justice, 3 credits		
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**General Electives - Total Credits Required = 12;**

**At least three credits of the 12 credit elective requirement must be from the Criminal Justice Curriculum.**

*Students may NOT count internship credit (CJ 593) or Independent Research (CJ 592) toward their Criminal Justice elective requirements. No more than three (3) credits of Directed Readings (CJ 591) or Independent Research (CJ 592) may be used to satisfy the remaining 9 credits of general electives.*

*A minor is optional and is earned by completing nine credit hours (although specific requirements may vary based upon academic department) in any one department outside of Criminal Justice that offers a minor at the graduate level. Information about the availability of a specific minor and its specific requirements can be obtained by inquiring with the academic department where you are interested in pursuing a minor.*

	<b>Semester Taken</b>	<b>Course Grade</b>
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____
Course: _____	_____	_____

**Minor Designation (Optional):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thesis Credit CJ 599(minimum of 6 credits) Semester** \_\_\_\_\_ **Credits** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester** \_\_\_\_\_ **Credits** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thesis Topic: -**

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**Thesis Committee** - *A thesis committee has a minimum of three faculty members. Two of those members*

*must be selected from the Criminal Justice faculty who are part of the Graduate Faculty of NMSU. One of the members selected from the Criminal Justice faculty must serve as the Chair of the thesis committee. A third member must be selected from a department other than Criminal Justice. That person must also be a member of the Graduate Faculty of NMSU.*

**Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CJ Faculty Member:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Outside Member:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Thesis Defense**

Thesis students must submit a thesis proposal to their faculty committee for approval and subsequently complete the approved thesis project. An approved thesis proposal is one wherein the faculty committee determines that the student demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the nexus of theory, method, and policy as it applies to the proposed thesis project. At the discretion of the faculty committee the proposal may be considered inadequate and the student will be required to revise and resubmit the thesis proposal until the committee determines the proposal is satisfactory. The final examination will minimally include a defense of the completed thesis, but may also include a general examination based upon the candidate's program of study. Students must be enrolled in 1 credit hour or pay an examination fee to the Graduate School during the semester or summer session you wish to graduate.

*Students may not schedule a formal thesis defense without the permission of the Chair of the Thesis Committee.*

The official Graduate School process and form for applying to defend the thesis can be found at <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/deadlines/index.htm>. A thesis defense cannot be scheduled without the permission of the Chair of your thesis committee. There are additional deadlines related to the editing, binding, and depositing of a final copy of the thesis in the Library. Information about the process and all deadlines for each semester, can be found at <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Guidelines/>.

**Thesis Defense Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Myths and Misconceptions About the Thesis Option

MCJ students frequently wonder if the Thesis Option is a good idea. The following discussion is intended to be of assistance in determining if the Thesis Option is workable for you.

## *Myth & Misconception #1*

### *The Thesis Option is the Quickest Route to Earning an MCJ*

While it is true that the *Thesis Option* requires fewer classroom credits than the *Focused Coursework Option*, students average a **minimum of six months** from the beginning to completion of the written thesis. Six months is the equivalent of 1 ½ semesters. Many theses require a year's work.

The thesis project requires that a student be able to work independently and in consultation with the **Chair** of the thesis committee who must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. The thesis project is conducted and completed entirely by the student. The project is neither implemented nor completed by the **Chair** of the thesis committee.

The thesis project is not allowed to proceed to a final defense until the **Chair** of the thesis committee determines that the quality of the project is sufficient. The student typically must go through several cycles of the "revise and resubmit" process for each chapter of the thesis in order to bring the entire project to a stage sufficient for a final defense.

Once the student completes the final defense of the thesis there are typically additional revisions requested by the thesis committee before the student is allowed to submit the final thesis project to the Graduate School Editor for format review.

Once the student submits the final thesis project to the Graduate School Editor for format review there is typically some revision required of the thesis student before final approval of the completed thesis project. These revisions are the sole responsibility of the thesis student. All Graduate School forms and timeline requirements for the thesis can be found on the Graduate School web page, <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu>.

## ***Myth & Misconception #2***

### ***The Thesis Option is Preferable Because I Do Not Need to Take the Comprehensive Examination.***

While it is true that there is no formal requirement to take written comprehensive examination under the ***Thesis Option***, thesis students are required to demonstrate mastery of the material covered in the required core curriculum courses of the MCJ Program. The format for demonstrating mastery of that material is different from the focused coursework option. Each thesis student is required to prepare, in close consultation with the **Chair** of the thesis committee, and present, to all three members of the thesis committee, a formal thesis proposal.

Although all thesis proposals vary according to the specifics of an individual thesis project and the stylistic recommendations of the **Chair** of the thesis committee, the proposal will typically reflect the organizational style found on the “Thesis Proposal Guidelines” link. In addition, the thesis committee uses the thesis proposal document and presentation to evaluate a student’s mastery of the core curriculum course material.

If the thesis 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:

- a. The student may be required to rewrite the proposal and present it until the committee is satisfied;
- b. The thesis committee may decide to require the student to take a written comprehensive examination;
- c. The thesis 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 thesis option

## ***Myth & Misconception #3***

### ***Any Student May Use the Thesis Option to Complete the MCJ Program.***

First, only students admitted into the **MCJ Campus-Based** program may pursue the ***Thesis Option***. While the ***Thesis Option*** is available to all students admitted into the MCJ **Campus** Program, ***utilizing that option is not an entitlement***. There are a variety of reasons why the Department of Criminal Justice faculty may determine that a student may not pursue the thesis option. Those reasons include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. A thesis involves research in a specialized area within the broad field of Criminal Justice conducted in close consultation with the **Chair** of the thesis committee. Faculty members within the Department of Criminal Justice have various specialization areas within the field of Criminal Justice that may not complement a student’s desired thesis topic. In this situation a student may not be able to find a faculty member willing to serve as **Chair** of the thesis committee and the student will either need to choose a different thesis topic or abandon the thesis option.
- b. Past performance in the classroom as an MCJ student is a major indication to faculty members of a student’s ability to successfully complete a thesis project. Students not performing well in the

classroom, as determined by one or more faculty members, may not be allowed to pursue the thesis project.

- c. Students failing to demonstrate satisfactory mastery of the core curriculum material may not be allowed to pursue the thesis project.

### ***Myth & Misconception #4***

#### ***Thesis Research May Start and End Any Time the Student Feels Ready***

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

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

Thesis research may end under the following conditions:

- c. The student decides to abandon the Thesis Option; or
- d. The faculty thesis committee determines that the thesis project is complete.

### ***Myth & Misconception #5***

#### ***I May Select Any Criminal Justice Professor as the Chair of My Thesis Committee.***

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

- a. The faculty member may not 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 on the Graduate School web page, <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu>.
- b. A faculty member may have too many commitments to be able to serve as **Chair** of a thesis 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 (for students pursuing the Project Option).
- c. A faculty member may not feel sufficiently familiar with the research of a particular proposed thesis topic.
- d. A faculty member, based upon prior experience with a student, may not feel that student is sufficiently skilled to conduct thesis research.
- e. A faculty member may be eligible for sabbatical leave during the time period of the thesis project.
- f. A faculty member may have other research commitments.

## ***Myth & Misconception #6***

### ***I May Select Any Criminal Justice Professor as a Secondary Member of My Thesis Committee***

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

- a. A faculty member may have too many commitments to be able to serve on a thesis 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 Projects, and may be the secondary member on no more than **four** active theses or Projects.
- b. A faculty member, based upon prior experience with a student, may not feel that student is sufficiently skilled to conduct thesis research.

## ***Myth & Misconception #7***

### ***I May Select Any Professor Outside the Department of Criminal Justice as the Outside Member of My Thesis Committee***

Important factors in selecting the Outside Member of your thesis committee are familiarity with your thesis topic, completing prior course(s) with the professor, as well as a member of the [Graduate Faculty](#). The **Chair** of your thesis committee will assist you in selecting the Outside Member of your thesis committee. As with Criminal Justice faculty members, there are circumstances that may prevent a professor from serving as the Outside Member of your thesis committee.

- a. faculty member may have too many commitments to be able to serve on a thesis 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.
- b. A faculty member, based upon prior experience with a student, may not feel that student is sufficiently skilled to conduct thesis research.

## ***Myth & Misconception #8***

### ***Professors are Available to Guide a Thesis All Year Long***

Professors at New Mexico State University work on nine-month contracts. During the summer months professors are working on various scholarly projects or 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 the thesis 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 thesis committee will be available to assist your thesis project during the summer months.*

## ***Myth & Misconception #9***

### ***The Thesis Chair Will Provide the Student with Data for the Thesis Project***

Over the years some thesis students have had the good fortune of being able to conduct secondary data analysis on data sets collected by a professor for the thesis project. This situation is the exception, not the norm.

Secondary data sets are available from the University of Michigan Interuniversity Consortium of Political and Social Research (ICPSR) that may be appropriate for students seeking to do a thesis project. A student seeking to pursue this option for acquiring a data set for secondary data analysis should consult with her/his thesis **Chair**.

Ultimately, a student considering the Thesis Option should assume that she/he will need to gather and analyze all data necessary to complete the thesis project.

## ***Myth & Misconception #10***

### ***A Thesis is Just a Longer Research Paper***

A thesis is an extended in-depth analysis that ultimately contributes to the body of research knowledge about the chosen thesis topic. A common organization of a written thesis involves several chapters that may include some combination of the following topics: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Method, Analysis, Discussion, and Conclusion. Each one of these chapter topics may effectively constitute a large research paper, with the added dimension that the various chapters of a thesis are thematically related and build to a conclusion communicating the significance of the entire project to the scholarly understanding about the thesis topic. There is no clearly definable upper limit on the number of pages that might be necessary to satisfactorily achieve this goal. In the past, completed theses have ranged in length from 80 to 150 pages.

## ***Myth & Misconception #11***

### ***Thesis Research Does Not Require Prior University Approval***

Social science research in the field of Criminal Justice frequently involves the systematic analysis of human behavior(s). As such, a thesis 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 thesis 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/compliance.html> under the section titled “IRB”.

## **FAQs About the MCJ Internship (CJ 593)**

### ***Who is eligible for a CJ internship?***

Any MCJ Graduate student with a 3.00 GPA or better.

### ***How do I register for an internship?***

Plan your internship experience well in advance of the beginning of the semester. Do not wait until the last minute to attempt to register for internship credit as there may not be enough time for you to complete the registration process.

Official course registration requires two forms that are signed by the student, Department Head, and Department Internship Coordinator, an ADD form and a SPECIAL STUDIES form. These are available to you only after you have secured the internship site and have completed the internship contract (the contract must be signed by you, your internship supervisor, and the Department Internship Coordinator – see below).

If you are a web-based student you will need to make arrangements with the Department Internship Coordinator to assist you in the completing the forms needed for course registration.

### ***How do I find a place to do my internship?***

The Department Internship Coordinator can provide you with information as to which agencies in the local Las Cruces area typically accept MCJ interns. You can also consult other students, other faculty, CJ career guides, the WWW, etc. for ideas about possible internship opportunities in your area of interest. It is also possible to organize an internship placement at your current place of employment providing that the internship experience is above and beyond your normal workplace activities and responsibilities. Once you have an idea of a place or places to contact, you are responsible for making the contact, securing the agreement, and getting the contract signed by your internship supervisor.

### ***What does the internship involve?***

To earn three credits of CJ 593 an intern must be on site and involved in your internship for 10 hours per week for 14 weeks of the 16-week semester, or for 20 hours per week during a summer session. Each intern must also create an internship log where you regularly record your hours, days, and activities. You are also required to write a reflective paper at the end of the semester describing your experiences, what you learned, and integrating your coursework with your “real world” experience in the internship. These materials must be submitted to the Department Internship Coordinator by the due date specified by the Coordinator.

### ***How many hours per week do I have to be at the internship site?***

During the regular semesters, you must be on site for 10 hours per week for 14 weeks of a sixteen week regular academic semester and 20 hours per week for each week of a six week summer session.

You may repeat the internship for additional credits at the same site or a different site.

### ***Can I get paid for being an intern?***

There are very few paid internships in the local area. Some students have sought internship opportunities through the coop office in Garcia Annex and have completed paid internships out of state. You may complete your internship anywhere, as long as it is a criminal justice or related agency approved by the Department Internship Coordinator.

***Can I do an internship where I work?***

Generally, no. But if the organization you work with is large enough that you can be assigned to another unit or program for internship purposes, you may discuss this possibility with the Department Internship Coordinator.

***Does the internship count as an MCJ Criminal Justice elective?***

Yes. Remember that there are three options for completing the MCJ program.

The *thesis option* requires you to complete 12 additional elective credits beyond the 15 credit core course requirement, of which 3 credits must be graduate Criminal Justice courses. Three of those credits may be selected from CJ 591\* Directed Readings, CJ 592 Independent Research, or CJ 593 Internship. Remember that only one of these courses (3 credits) will count toward completion of our MCJ program curriculum and CJ 593 may be one of those courses.

The *research project option* requires you to complete 15 additional elective credits beyond the 15 credit core course requirement. Six of those credits must be graduate Criminal Justice courses and 9 credits may come from any academic department, including Criminal Justice. Up to 6 credits of CJ 591\*, CJ 592, or CJ 593 may be used to satisfy the elective credit requirement. So, under this option a student may earn up to 6 credit hours of Internship credit.

The *focused coursework option* requires you to complete 21 additional elective credits beyond the 15 credit core course requirement. Twelve of those credits must be graduate Criminal Justice courses and 12 credits may come from any academic department, including Criminal Justice. Up to 6 credits of CJ 591\*, CJ 592, or CJ 593 may be used to satisfy the elective credit requirement. So, under this option a student may earn up to 6 credit hours of Internship credit.

\*Remember a student may enroll in a maximum of three credits of CJ 591. Additional credits of CJ 591 will not be counted toward your graduate curriculum.

***Who should do an internship?***

Any student who meets the requirements, would like to explore some aspect of the criminal justice system in more depth and receive on-the-job experience, and who can fit the internship into her/his schedule.

**Steps to Seeking an Internship:**

- 1. Determine whether the internship fits with your chosen degree plan option.**
- 2. Determine whether an internship fits in your schedule for a given semester.**
- 3. Determine what kind of work-related experience you'd like to have and the kind of agency in which you'd like to be placed.**
- 4. Locate an agency willing to work with you.**
- 5. Meet with the agency representative, discuss the parameters of the internship, go through their process for becoming an intern (some agencies may require a background check), and have them sign the contract.**
- 6. Forward the signed contract to the Department Internship Coordinator and register for the course.**

**APPLICATION FOR MCJ CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIP  
DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester, Year \_\_\_\_\_

ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Address:

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Eligibility**

Earned Student Credit Hours: \_\_\_\_\_ Overall Graduate GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CJ GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a prior juvenile record or adult criminal conviction? [  ] Yes [  ] No

If yes, please explain.

Do you have any known disorder or disability that would affect your performance in the activities required at your internship placement agency? [  ] Yes [  ] No

If yes, please explain.

Do you have a program from the students for disabilities office describing the accommodations that would facilitate your participation in NMSU or internship activities? [  ] Yes [  ] No

If yes, please describe the accommodations that would facilitate your participation. Include any accommodations that might be useful in the field, even if they are not needed in the classroom situation. Attach any relevant documentation. Note that accommodations should be worked out with the internship site prior to registration.

### **Termination or Modification of Placement**

I understand that an agency that provides a criminal justice internship may conduct a background check to determine the appropriateness of my participation in their program. I further understand that the internship may be modified or terminated if it is established that the modification or termination is in the best interest of the student, the agency, the department or the university. The modification or termination will be determined by the internship advisor, in consultation with the student, the Academic Head of the Department of Criminal Justice, and the agency supervisor. I certify that all of the information I have given in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

### **Ethical and Professional Standards**

I understand that as a field experience student, I will be representing my university the Department of Criminal Justice, and the field experience organization in a professional role. I will adhere to professional standards of conduct and ethics for my field and my organization.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

### **Understanding of Liability**

In agreeing to participate in an internship with \_\_\_\_\_ (organization), I agree to release and discharge, for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, the Department of Criminal Justice and \_\_\_\_\_ (organization) and its employees of from any injuries resulting, or which may result, in the course of this internship. I further agree that I will not bring any claims, demand action, or cause of action, nor will I allow such to be brought in my behalf against the Department of Criminal Justice and \_\_\_\_\_ (organization) or its employees.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

