

Graduate Handbook

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of South Carolina

September 2020

Overview

This Graduate Student Handbook provides an outline of program information for prospective and current graduate students in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina and is intended to be used as a supplement to the Graduate Studies Bulletin. All graduate students must adhere to the policies and procedures set forth in the University of South Carolina Graduate Studies Bulletin and the Bulletin supersedes any information presented in this Handbook.

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1 The Department and Graduate Faculty

Originally established in 1974 as the College of Criminal Justice, the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina is one of the oldest programs in the nation. Our Columbia campus is centrally located in South Carolina's capital city, which provides graduate students access to a wide array of state and federal agencies and abundant opportunities for research. The Department's faculty contribute significantly to USC's classification as a Doctoral University of Highest Research Activity within the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. They are engaged in scholarship that spans many facets of criminal justice practice and policy as well as criminological theory. The program offers both the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in criminology and criminal justice to prepare its graduates for an exciting future in criminal justice practice, research, or higher education. The graduate program operates under the oversight of the Department's graduate faculty, a Graduate Committee comprised of a subset of the Department's graduate faculty, and the graduate program director.

The Graduate Faculty

- Geoffrey P. Alpert, Professor (Ph.D., Washington State University, 1975). Policing, applied research.
- Tia Stevens Andersen, Associate Professor (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 2013). Race and gender, juvenile justice, qualitative and mixed methods.
- Brandon Applegate, Professor and Department Chair (Ph.D., University of Cincinnati, 1997). Corrections, public opinion, juvenile justice.
- Kaitlin Boyle, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Georgia, 2016). Victimization, gender, mental health.
- Robert Brame, Professor (Ph.D., University of Maryland, 1997). Developmental criminology, victimization, crime measurement.
- John Burrow, Associate Professor (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 1998; J.D., University of Wisconsin, 2001). Law, juvenile justice, death penalty.

- Robert Kaminski, Associate Professor (Ph.D., The University at Albany, State University of New York, 2002). Policing, quantitative methods.
- Brett Klein, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 2020). School violence, terrorism and bias crime, place-based criminology, and crime prevention.
- Barbara A. Koons-Witt, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 2000). Gender and crime, sentencing, corrections.
- Ashley Mancik, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Delaware, 2018). Violence, crime clearance, communities and crime.
- Christi Metcalfe, Associate Professor (Ph.D., Florida State University, 2014). Courts, life course criminology, attitudes about crime.
- Cory Schnell, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., Rutgers University, 2017). Policing, crime and place.
- Deena Isom Scott, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., Emory University, 2015). Race, gender, criminological theory, critical perspectives.
- Hayden Smith, Associate Professor (Ph.D., University of Central Florida, 2007). Corrections, program evaluation, mental health.

2 The M.A. Degree Program

The Master of Arts degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice is designed to equip students with an understanding of the causes and societal responses to crime and deviant behavior. Students successfully completing the program will be well prepared to continue their studies at the doctoral level or to enter the field as practitioners and future leaders in criminal justice agencies.

2.1 M.A. Program Admission

Prospective students applying to the M.A. program must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. An undergraduate degree in

criminology, criminal justice, or a related social science discipline is desirable. To be considered for admission, applicants must submit the following materials directly to the Graduate School by July 1st (fall admission) and December 1st (spring admission):

- A completed application form submitted to the Graduate School including a statement of interests and study or career objectives. This 500-750 word statement should describe the applicant's interests in the criminology and criminal justice field and goals or objectives for the applicant's degree and career.
- Two letters of academic reference from faculty members or other persons qualified to evaluate the applicant's abilities to undertake graduate-level studies.
- Note, for the 2021 application cycle only (Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 application term), we are not requiring GRE or MAT scores to apply for admission to the Criminology and Criminal Justice Masters Program.
- Official grade transcripts from all institutions where academic coursework has been attempted since high school.

Admission to the M.A. program is competitive and based on the merits of the application materials. M.A. students can matriculate in either the fall or spring semester. Students should consult the [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#) for additional policies governing graduate admissions to the University of South Carolina including application fees, immunization requirements, mandatory health insurance, disability services, and policies governing international students and credentials. In addition, the Department reserves the option of making an admission offer contingent on the completion of certain conditions or remedial coursework.

2.2 Senior Privilege and Accelerated Degree

The Accelerated Bachelor's and Graduate Study and Senior Privilege programs offer students the opportunity to begin working towards a M.A. degree while completing the B.A. degree. Qualified undergraduate students can seek approval for either of these two programs but not both.

2.3 Joint M.A./J.D. Program

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, in cooperation with the University of South Carolina School of Law offers a joint degree program which permits a student to obtain both the Juris Doctor (law degree) and the M.A. degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice in approximately four years. Through the combined program, the total courseload may be reduced by as many as 18 credit hours from that required if the two degrees were earned separately, since 6 hours of electives toward the M.A. degree may be taken in law courses and 9 hours of electives toward the J.D. degree may be earned in the M.A. program. Students interested in this dual program must apply for admission to and be accepted by both programs.

2.4 M.A. Degree Requirements

The M.A. degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice requires the completion of 30 credit hours of coursework and can be completed with either a M.A. thesis or a written policy paper. All courses applied to the M.A. degree must be taken within 6 years of matriculation.

2.4.1 Core Courses

All students must complete the 15 hours of core courses in the M.A. program with a grade of B or higher. The core courses include:

- CRJU 701, Survey of Criminal Justice
- CRJU 702, Law and Justice
- CRJU 703, Research Methods in Criminal Justice
- CRJU 705, Quantitative Methods in Criminal Justice
- CRJU 741, Criminology

2.4.2 Electives

Students who decide to complete the program with a thesis must take 9 credit hours of electives. At least 3 of the 9 elective credit hours must be at or above the 700 level. Students who decide to complete the program with

a written policy paper must take 15 credit hours of electives and at least 6 of these hours must be at or above the 700 level. Graduate students must obtain the approval of the graduate director for all elective courses offered below the 700 level or outside the Department.

2.4.3 M.A. Thesis

A M.A. thesis represents an intensive study of a topic of mutual interest to the student and a thesis examining committee comprised of the chair and a reader (both must be members of the University of South Carolina's Graduate Faculty). The thesis is developed in two phases – proposal draft and final draft – each culminating in a meeting of the student and the examining committee where the student presents the work and answers questions about (i.e., orally defends) the work to the committee's satisfaction. The thesis proposal generally covers the first three chapters of a student's project and provides the committee with a clear understanding of the scope and significance of the proposed work. The completed thesis represents a work of significance to the field that meets the highest standards of quality and rigor in the judgment of the thesis examining committee.

2.4.4 M.A. Comprehensive Exam

The University requires the successful completion of a comprehensive examination for the M.A. degree. The Department's M.A. comprehensive examination tests students' knowledge of major philosophical, scientific, theoretical, and policy issues related to criminology and criminal justice. Students who fail the exam are permitted to retake it one time. Thesis-track students satisfy this requirement by a successful oral defense of the thesis proposal to the satisfaction of the thesis examining committee. Non-thesis-track students meet the exam requirement by receiving a grade of "pass" or "high pass" on the policy paper as graded by the faculty policy paper grading committee. The policy paper is written within the context of a 2-month take-home examination (usually during the last semester of coursework). Students are required to select one of three available questions to answer. Each question requires the student to review, analyze, and synthesize the literature as it pertains to a particular policy area and, in most cases, make recommendations based on their findings. To support students' preparation efforts, old exams are publicly posted.

3 The Ph.D. Degree Program

The Department offers a graduate program leading to the Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice. Faculty research and teaching interests span a wide variety of crime- and criminal justice-related topics, including policing, courts, corrections, law and policy, macro- and micro-level criminological theory, sentencing, victimization, and program evaluation. Graduates from the program are trained to enter positions in academia or the criminal justice system that will allow them to teach, research, or influence policy and practice in the fields of criminology and criminal justice.

3.1 Ph.D. Program Admission

Prospective students applying for admission to the Ph.D. program must possess a bachelor's or master's degree from an accredited college or university. An undergraduate or graduate degree in criminology, criminal justice, or a related social science discipline is desirable. Admission to the Ph.D. program is competitive and based on the merits of the application materials. Doctoral students are required to matriculate in the fall semester. In addition to meeting all the requirements of the University's Graduate School, applicants must submit the following materials directly to the Graduate School by April 15th:

- A completed application form submitted to the Graduate School including a statement of research goals and objectives. This 500-750 word statement should outline the applicant's interests in criminology and criminal justice and discuss plans for developing a research agenda during the doctoral program of study.
- A sole-authored writing sample such as a course paper or thesis chapter written during the applicant's previous degree program (please limit the sample to no more than 25 pages and include course number, date, and name of professor). Writing samples are uploaded electronically by applicants during the submission of the online application.
- Three letters of academic reference from faculty members or other persons qualified to evaluate the applicant's abilities to undertake graduate-level studies.

- Note, for the Fall 2021 application cycle only, we are not requiring GRE scores to apply for admission to the Criminology and Criminal Justice Ph.D. Program.
- Official grade transcripts from all institutions where academic coursework has been attempted since high school.

Students should consult the [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#) for additional policies governing graduate admissions to the University of South Carolina including application fees, immunization requirements, mandatory health insurance, disability services, and policies governing international students and credentials. In addition, the Department reserves the option of making an admission offer contingent on the completion of certain conditions or remedial coursework.

3.2 Ph.D. Degree Requirements

The Department and the University have established different requirements for the Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice depending on each student's previous academic training. Some students matriculate in the Ph.D. program with a master's degree or a law degree already in hand. Other students begin the Ph.D. program with only a bachelor's degree in hand. For the first group of students, the Ph.D. degree requires a minimum of 36 credit hours. Students in the second group are required to take a minimum of 60 credit hours.

3.2.1 Core Courses

All students must complete the 15 hours of core courses in the Ph.D. program with a grade of B or higher. The core courses include:

- CRJU 706: Advanced Quantitative Analysis
- CRJU 810: Crime, Law, and Public Policy
- CRJU 814: Research Design
- CRJU 821: Advanced Criminological Theory
- *Either* CRJU 816: Applied Quantitative Analysis *or* CRJU 817: Qualitative Research Methods

3.2.2 Elective Courses

Students are required to take a minimum of 9 elective credit hours. All of these hours must be at or above the 700 level. Graduate students must obtain the approval of the Graduate Director for all elective courses offered outside the Department.

3.2.3 Qualifying Examination

All students admitted to the Ph.D. program in criminology and criminal justice must successfully complete a qualifying examination prior to formal admission to candidacy. Students satisfy the qualifying examination requirement in criminology and criminal justice by completing CRJU 814 (Research Design) and CRJU 821 (Advanced Criminological Theory) with a grade of B or higher. Once these courses have been completed, the Qualifying Exam Form must be submitted to the Graduate Director.

3.2.4 Admission to Candidacy

A doctoral student is admitted to candidacy when the qualifying examination and doctoral program of study forms (see section 5.6 below) are completed and included in his/her file in the Graduate School.

3.2.5 Residency Requirement

Doctoral residency is established by meeting one of the following two options: (1) 2 consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment (9 or more credit hours per semester without an assistantship and 6 or more credit hours per semester with an assistantship); or (2) an approved program-specific alternative.

3.2.6 Foreign Language Requirement

The foreign language requirement established by the Graduate School can be satisfied by passing a reading proficiency examination in one of the foreign language areas or by completing the research methods sequence (CRJU 706, CRJU 814, and either CRJU 816 or CRJU 817) with a grade of B or higher in each course. English is accepted as satisfying this requirement for those students whose native language is not English.

3.2.7 Comprehensive Examination

Successful completion of the comprehensive examination occurs when the student receives a grade of “pass” by the student’s examining committee (3 graduate faculty members from the department and one outside member). At the time the committee is constituted, each student (and his/her committee chair) is responsible for submitting a Doctoral Committee Appointment (G-DCA) Request Form to the Graduate Director. The comprehensive examination is to be taken after the student has completed the required common core classes (CRJU 706, 810, 814, and 821) with a grade of B or better. It is designed to test broad theoretical and methodological understanding and basic competence in the general area of the student’s dissertation research through both a written and an oral component. Certification of the comprehensive examination for doctoral students remains valid for five years from the academic year taken, after which it must be revalidated (per Graduate School policy). Any student who fails the comprehensive examination is permitted to retake it one time. The comprehensive examination must be completed at least 60 days before the student receives the Ph.D. degree.

3.2.8 Dissertation Research

A minimum of 12 hours of dissertation credit must be successfully completed to earn the Ph.D. degree. The Ph.D. dissertation is an original research project that advances scientific knowledge in the student’s chosen area. The dissertation must be approved and orally defended by the student before the student’s Dissertation Examining Committee. Within five years of passing the comprehensive examination, the student must present a dissertation based on research that has been approved by the Dissertation Examining Committee. This committee is comprised of 4 members – three department graduate faculty and one approved faculty reviewer from outside the department. The Dissertation Examining Committee must be approved by both the Graduate Director and the Dean of The Graduate School. At the time the committee is constituted, each student (and his/her committee chair) is responsible for submitting a Doctoral Committee Appointment (G-DCA) Request Form to the Graduate Director.¹

¹The Dissertation Examining Committee may be comprised of the same people who oversee the comprehensive examination.

3.2.9 Baccalaureate Matriculation

Some students begin the Ph.D. program with only a bachelor's degree in hand. For these students, all of the above requirements must be met but an additional 24 credit hours of coursework are also required and include: (1) CRJU 701 (Survey of Criminal Justice); (2) CRJU 702 (Law and Justice); (3) CRJU 703 (Research Methods); (4) CRJU 705 (Quantitative Methods); (5) CRJU 741 (Criminology); and (6) 3 additional elective courses (9 credit hours), no more than two of which (6 credit hours) are below the 700 level.²

4 Thesis and Dissertation Logistics

M.A. thesis and Ph.D. dissertations are significant research projects that advance our understanding of key issues in the discipline. In an effort to ensure that the development and defense of these projects goes as smoothly as possible, we have created the following list of issues that commonly arise:

- Human research participants: Any research project that is based on data pertaining to individual persons must be carefully vetted with the thesis or dissertation committee chair to ensure that all requirements of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) have been met. Each student is required to submit an application for the conduct of research with human subjects to the IRB prior to beginning any data collection efforts. Students should always consult closely with the thesis or dissertation chair prior to submitting an IRB application.
- Credit hours: Any student who is conducting thesis or dissertation research that relies on faculty involvement or oversight during a particular semester should be registered for and taking an appropriate number of thesis or dissertation credits during that term. These credits can be taken at any point in the doctoral program after the student's core coursework is completed. The student and the committee chair should make an agreement about the number of hours to be taken in each semester. In the semester the project is defended, the student is required to take at least one credit hour of thesis or dissertation credit.

²Students admitted to the Ph.D. program with only a bachelor's degree and who complete all requirements for the Ph.D. other than the dissertation may be awarded a M.A. degree in criminology and criminal justice. Students choosing this option will not be permitted to complete the dissertation or be awarded the Ph.D. degree.

- University requirements: Any student working on a thesis or dissertation project should regularly consult the University's Thesis and Dissertation Page for important information on deadlines, formatting issues, forms, and electronic submission requirements.
- Public posting of defense meetings: Thesis and dissertation defenses are open to all interested persons. To facilitate awareness of these events, our Department has an ethic of public and advance (2 weeks) posting of the student's name, title of the project, and the date, time, and location of the defense meeting. Public posting consists of announcements placed on departmental bulletin boards and on the `crimgrad` email list. The student and the chair of the student's committee are jointly responsible for appropriate public posting of this information.
- Approval forms: Ph.D. students are required to submit a completed Dissertation Signature and Approval Form to the Graduate Director. M.A. students must submit a completed Graduate School Thesis Signature and Approval Form to the Graduate Director. In both cases, the completed forms are signed by the committee chair and readers indicating the successful oral defense of the final project.

5 Graduate Academic Policies

This section describes various academic policies and practices that affect graduate students and their progress in the Department's graduate degree programs. Any questions about these policies should be presented to the Graduate Director.

5.1 Grades and Course Repetition

Students who accumulate more than 6 hours of graduate credit below the grade of B will not be permitted to continue in the graduate degree program for which they are enrolled. No course may be repeated more than one time.

5.2 Course Audits

Core courses may not be audited in either the M.A. or the Ph.D. programs. Other courses may be audited, but students must remember that audited

courses cannot be repeated for credit at a later time. The Graduate Director and Department Chair will jointly consider on a case-by-case basis any requests by funded students for tuition waivers on audited courses.

5.3 Transfer Credit

Admitted students may request a transfer up to 6 credit hours from other programs or institutions. Any request to consider transfer credits will be considered by the Department's Graduate Committee after a student has been admitted to the program.

5.4 Independent Studies

Sometimes graduate students choose to pursue research projects that are outside the scope of a normal graduate-level course. If the student is able to reach an agreement with a graduate faculty member to oversee this work, the Graduate School's independent study contract form should be completed by the faculty member and endorsed by the faculty member, the student, and the Graduate Director.

5.5 Internships

It can be appropriate in certain instances for M.A. students to participate in an internship program. Whether an internship is reasonable and useful in any particular student's case is a matter to be considered by the student, the Department's internship coordinator, and the Graduate Director.

5.6 Graduate Advising

The Graduate Director serves as program advisor for all graduate students in the Department and will regularly post office hours to advise and consult with graduate students. The Graduate Director will also serve as the major professor for all M.A. students who are not on the thesis track. In consultation with the Department's graduate faculty, the Graduate Director advises graduate students on their programs of study and degree requirements. Once admitted to a graduate program, students are responsible for following the registration procedures set forth by the University Registrar. Newly admitted students should meet with the Graduate Director prior to registering for

courses. During advisement sessions, the Graduate Director and student will discuss the requirements for the student's degree program and will begin development of a program of study. For more information about registration procedures, students should consult the University Registrar's registration site.

5.7 Programs of Study

Graduate students are required to complete a program of study (POS) form listing the courses they intend to take as part of their graduate program. M.A. students should complete the MPOS form by the end of the first year; Ph.D. students should complete the DPOS form by the end of the second year. In completing the form, students should identify only those courses necessary to satisfy the degree requirements. Students should submit a completed form to the Graduate Director for approval and processing.

5.8 Appeal Policy

Graduate students sometimes have concerns about grades or decisions that affect their standing in the program resulting from comprehensive examinations, or circumstances surrounding thesis or dissertation assessments. Appeals of grades from these projects cannot be based on substantive grounds. Rather, any appeal of decisions related to these milestones must be based on an irregularity, adverse event, or extenuating circumstance implicating the process by which the exam was administered or the circumstances under which the exam was taken so that a reasonable doubt is cast on the validity of the decision.

To initiate an appeal of such a grade or decision, the student must submit a written statement of the grounds for the appeal, the remedy that is being requested, and the justification for that remedy to the Graduate Director. Any such appeal must be submitted within 30 days of the decision that is being appealed. The appeal will first be heard by the Graduate Committee or – at the Graduate Committee's discretion – by the Department's graduate faculty (with any interest-conflicted faculty recused). Based on either its own or the faculty's deliberations, the Graduate Committee will provide an advisory opinion (possibly accompanied by minority reports if the Graduate Committee or faculty view is not unanimous) to the Department Chair who

will make the final decision.³ The final decision will be delivered to the student who filed the appeal and accompanied by a written explanation for the decision that was made.

After this process has concluded, the student may continue to believe there are reasonable grounds for appeal to the College of Arts & Sciences, the University of South Carolina's Graduate Council, and ultimately to the Provost. Graduate students who believe they have grounds for appeal in individual courses should follow normal procedures for grade appeals. In addition, graduate students are encouraged to consult with the Graduate School Ombuds.

5.9 Graduation and Degree Applications

Formal applications for degrees must be filed with the Graduate School prior to the deadline indicated in the Master Schedule for each term. The deadline is typically near the beginning of the term in which one intends to graduate. The Graduate School regularly publishes a complete list of milestones for graduate degrees.

6 Graduate Student Funding

The Department offers financial support in the form of graduate assistantships and fellowships. Graduate assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to full-time graduate students and are dependent on available resources. Graduate assistantships are awarded for one academic year and may be renewed on a yearly basis if: (1) funds are available; (2) the student is making adequate progress toward the degree; and (3) the student is performing well in his/her assistantship duties. Normally, departmental funding for M.A. students will not extend beyond 2 academic years and funding for Ph.D. students (with a master's degree in hand) will not extend beyond 4 academic years. If funds are available, the Department will consider support requests on a case-by-case basis.

³In cases where the Department Chair believes he/she is unable to decide the case fairly, the Graduate Director will make the final decision. If both the Department Chair and the Graduate Director believe they are unable to decide the case fairly, then the Graduate Committee will identify a final decision maker from the Department's Graduate Faculty.

Students receiving a graduate assistantship are generally required to work either 10 or 20 hours per week. Full-time (20 hrs per week) graduate assistants are provided a tuition waiver (up to 15 credit hours per academic year) and a stipend during the academic year and may also receive partial health benefits. Part-time assistantships have prorated tuition and stipend awards. Because graduate assistantships are highly competitive, any applicant who wishes to be considered for an award is encouraged to complete the admission application (and check the box on the application indicating interest in an assistantship) by January 10 (for Ph.D. applicants) or March 1 (for M.A. applicants). Although the Department funds more Ph.D. students than M.A. students, some new awards in both categories are typically available each year. The Department and University will generally attach certain conditions to assistantship awards such as attending training sessions or participating in assessments of English speaking ability.⁴

The Department awards a limited number of J.P. Strom fellowships to graduate students each year. These fellowships are small awards that help defray some of the cost of tuition and fees. They are distributed on both a need and competitive basis to incoming and continuing students who are making adequate progress in the graduate program.

Prospective and current graduate students should also be mindful that there are other assistantship opportunities on the University of South Carolina campus. The Graduate School regularly posts a range of options for students to consider.

⁴The following policy applies to graduate assistants employed by the Department. Because graduate assistants typically will have access to at least some student educational records as part of their assistantship duties, it is essential that they be versed in the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Graduate assistants shall complete the FERPA Tutorial provided by the University Registrar. After completing the tutorial, graduate assistants shall complete the FERPA Quiz. At the end of the quiz, each graduate assistant shall provide his/her personal identification information in the fields provided and have an email sent to the Department's graduate director to notify him/her of completion (graduate assistants will need to provide the graduate director's email address in the appropriate field at the end of the quiz). Notification of completion should be received by the graduate director before the end of the first week of classes in the fall semester (or the spring semester if a graduate assistant begins his or her employment in January). The tutorial and quiz shall be completed every year that the graduate assistant is employed by the Department.

7 Travel Funds

Graduate students are encouraged to attend professional conferences in order to present their work and be exposed to the work of scholars from around the country. Faculty members often attend either 1 or 2 conferences each year. The American Society of Criminology (ASC) holds meetings each November and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) holds meetings each March. Students may also consider attending a regional conference such as the Southern Criminal Justice Association (SCJA) (which meets each fall). For more information, students should consult with the respective websites and discuss their interests in attending a professional conference with faculty mentor(s).

Each academic year, the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice attempts to fund travel for graduate students participating in professional conferences who are scheduled to present a paper or poster. Graduate students can request travel funding for one conference during each academic year. In truly exceptional cases, requests for additional funding for a second trip will be considered. Additional funds are available through the Graduate School. Graduate students are permitted to seek these funds two times during their tenure at the University of South Carolina.

8 Graduate Student Governance

The Department's Graduate Student Association (CCJGSA) provides assistance, activities, and advocacy for graduate students in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. Meetings and participation opportunities are publicized regularly on the Department's `crimgrad` email list and its website.