



Master of Science in Criminal Justice
Graduate Student Handbook
2024-2025

Welcome from the Department of Criminal Justice
The University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Welcome to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's criminal justice graduate program. We are honored that you chose this university to obtain your graduate degree. The faculty at UL work to guarantee that you receive a rigorous educational experience that prepares you for your next steps in life. The M.S. program in Criminal Justice is a 36-hour program that offers two tracks, a thesis option or a comprehensive exam option. Both tracks can be completed (under full-time guidelines) in four semesters. In this brief period of time with us, we endeavor to ensure that you gain the knowledge and skills needed to enable you to reach your academic and career goals.

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Welcome from the Department Chair

It is my pleasure to welcome you to one of the oldest and most robust criminal justice departments in the State of Louisiana. Over decades, our department has become increasingly integrated with state and local partnerships that enable us to drive reform and innovation for the public good – good that directly impacts Louisiana. We invite you to join us in these efforts to network; to brainstorm with our partners; to aid in research that gives us insight into the barriers of changing our lives for the better. Use this time not only to learn from the faculty, but our wider family. It is through this rich experience that makes our department far different from our peers.

Welcome to the family.



Dave Khey

Mission Statement

The Master of Science degree program in Criminal Justice is designed to build your individual, agency and community capacity to understand, prevent, intervene and respond innovatively to juvenile delinquency and crime, using evidence-based practices and policies, in ways that ensure justice.

The Master of Science in Criminal Justice at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette is the only master's program in the state emphasizing juvenile justice. From the legacy of Tallulah Prison to the treatment of 17-year-old offenders as adults, Louisiana continues to grapple with issues of juvenile justice. Our program benefits students looking for the tools to understand the complexity of today's youth and their entanglement within the criminal justice system.

Though our program focuses on juvenile justice, students do not necessarily need to be invested in juveniles as a main research trajectory. We also offer a variety of criminal justice courses that examine issues such as gender, restorative justice, poverty, education, and drug use and the ways in which these topics intersect with the criminal justice system. As a student in the master's in criminal justice program, you are encouraged to develop your own interests as your coursework progresses.

Through intensive study, you will be prepared for a wide range of positions requiring an advanced degree. After graduation, you will be prepared to enter leadership positions as well as facilitate program development, implementation and analysis within various government, private, for-profit and non-profit agencies that comprise the complex justice system.

The program also provides advanced theoretical knowledge and research skills and experience necessary for entering instructor-level positions in criminal justice within institutions of higher education or for entering a doctoral program.

You will demonstrate mastery of your field of study in one of two ways: The Thesis or the Comprehensive Exam. This decision should be reached prior to the beginning of the third semester of study. In either case, after twelve hours of coursework has been completed, you must choose three committee members from the Criminal Justice graduate faculty to serve on your thesis committee or comprehensive examination committee.

Program Goals

The Master's of Science Degree in Criminal Justice at UL Lafayette provides a diverse skill set for a variety of jobs, whether inside or outside the criminal justice system. Our graduate program in criminal justice can give you a competitive edge in most careers by training you to analyze policy, apply theories of criminal behavior, and gain insight into the complex issues surrounding policing, courts, and corrections. Throughout the educational experience in this program, students are taught to apply theory to programs and policies, using a real-world impact perspective.

These skills, in addition to proficiency in data gathering, analysis, and reporting, can be applied to virtually any career in the field of social sciences. Broadly speaking, this program works to prepare students for both academic and professional aspirations. This program offers student tailored programs that can accommodate the various career aspirations of students and prepare them to be active participants in criminal justice system or as researchers and educators contributing to the field. This department's primary goal is to prepare students to become leaders in their field of choice, so that we can work together to make our community safer, more compassionate, and science driven.

Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze theories relating to crime and criminal justice
2. Explain the interdisciplinary nature of the criminal justice system
3. Produce or assist with scholarly criminal justice related research
4. Identify and critically evaluate the processes and theories that shape criminal justice programs and policies
5. Summarize the key features of the juvenile justice system and related risk-factors and programs
6. Evaluate criminal justice operational and evaluation problems that affect the delivery of criminal justice related services, and
7. Employ critical thinking, advanced writing and verbal communication skills.

Degree Requirements

Graduate students in the CJUS department can choose one of two options in order to meet program requirements: The thesis or the comprehensive exam.

The following 15 hours of core courses are required for all students in the program:

- CJUS 505 - Seminar in Juvenile Prevention, Intervention & Rehabilitative Programs; 3 Credits
- CJUS 510 - Seminar in Juvenile Justice; 3 Credits
- CJUS 561 - Seminar in Theories of Crime and Delinquency; 3 Credits
- CJUS 590 - Research Methods; 3 Credits
- CJUS 591 - Program Assessment/Evaluation Research; 3 Credits

In addition to these 15 hours of core courses students can choose between one of two tracks:

Thesis option: student will take 6 hours of graduate CJUS electives, 6 hours of electives* to be chosen from among graduate courses (or “G” courses), and 6 thesis hours (599) for a total of 33 hours.

- OR -

Comprehensive exam option: student will take 15 hours of graduate CJUS electives and 6 hours of electives* to be chosen from among graduate courses (or “G” courses) for a total of 36 hours.

Students should consult with the graduate faculty committee when selecting a thesis or comprehensive exam track prior to completing their candidacy form (after completing 12 hours of graduate course work). Tracks should be selected based on academic capabilities and professional goals. Track selections must be approved by the graduate faculty committee.

*You must consult with the Graduate Coordinator before selecting electives. Permission to take electives outside the department must be approved by the graduate faculty committee and the instructor of the desired course. Comprehensive exam track students may select up to 3 hours of comprehensive exam preparation coursework.

Course Descriptions

CJUS 505 - Seminar in Juvenile Prevention, Intervention and Rehabilitative Programs; 3 Credits

This course serves as a historical overview of the programs and services used by the criminal justice system to curtail/prevent juvenile offending. This seminar, assignments, and projects will focus on the programs offered to juvenile offenders. The primary objectives of this course are to provide students with tools to analyze, understand, and critique juvenile justice programs.

CJUS 510 - Seminar in Juvenile Justice; 3 Credits

This course serves as an overview of the etiology, theoretical perspectives, judicial process, and outcomes related to juvenile delinquency. The seminar, assignments, and projects will focus on juveniles as they relate to the criminal justice system. The primary objectives of this course are to provide students with tools to analyze, understand, and critique juvenile justice issues.

CJUS 561 - Seminar in Theories of Crime and Delinquency; 3 Credits

This course introduces students to classical and contemporary criminological theory. It is designed to include broad coverage of perspectives within the discipline. The core goal of this course is to provide students with a foundation of understanding in the various ways theorists have attempted to explain criminal behavior and crime rates. A special focus will be given to the implications for criminal justice and law- and policy-making (e.g., practical theory testing). Given this focus, it will be important for students to be able to search for, read, and critically evaluate available research.

CJUS 590 - Research Methods; 3 Credits

The goal of this course is to examine the use of the scientific method as it relates to the accumulation of knowledge about crime and the criminal justice system. This course considers such topics as the logic of the scientific method, how research can inform and test criminological theories, ethics, sampling, measurement, research design, and analytical methods underlying empirical research. This course will also overview several introductory statistical analyses.

CJUS 591 - Program Assessment/Evaluation Research; 3 Credits

Public policies, programs, and attempted solutions to our crime problem are too frequently driven by media imagery and public scares, rather than empirical reality. This course will provide the tools necessary to empirically assess various programs in the field of criminal justice. We will learn to identify the target population served by a program, its aims or goals, the steps taken to meet these goals, and, ultimately, if those aims or goals are being met. This course provides advanced knowledge and skills in applying research techniques and methods to program assessment and evaluation.

CJUS 501 – Special Topics in Criminal Justice; 3 Credits

This course consists of variable topics that change from semester to semester. Topics range a variety of issues and reflect current issues/themes in criminal justice today. Faculty offer courses related to their area of expertise. Historically, courses such as: drugs and crime, feminist criminology, mental health and crime, and have been offered. This course can be repeated if varied topics are selected.

CJUS 597 – Directed Individual Studies in Criminal Justice; 3 Credits

This is an independent study course consisting of variable topics that change from semester to semester. This course serves as an intensive examination of a criminal justice/criminology related topic. The supervising faculty member oversees the creation of the goals, objectives and accompanying measurable educational outcomes. These goals, objectives, and measurable educational outcomes must be approved by the department head and a record of this document stored by the graduate coordinator. Students must obtain instructor approval prior to scheduling the course. This course may be taken twice.

Comprehensive Exam Option & Guidelines

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM-The exam is undertaken in the final semester of the program.

Written Exam

The comprehensive exam is presented as an alternative to writing a thesis. It is completed in the final semester of the program, once CJUS 561 and CJUS 590 have been completed. The comprehensive exam has both a written and oral component. The written examination will consist of thoroughly answering three questions related to the field of criminal justice, based on readings completed in the student's previous courses and, when necessary to satisfactorily answer the question, based on outside readings. There are two options for the written exam: take-home or in-person.

For the take-home test, the student will have a total of 14 calendar days to complete the exam. This exam will be "open book," meaning the student will consult scholarly works in order to address all questions. A reference section is required. Completed take-home exams should be uploaded to the CJUS Graduate Students Moodle Page by the given deadline. For the in-person exam, students will have a total of eight hours in an on-campus setting to complete the exam. The in-person exam does not allow for the consultation of any scholarly works and the exam will be completed on a stand-alone computer (i.e., no internet access). No reference section is required for the in-person exam, but APA formatted in-text citations are mandatory.

Students will be notified of exam dates at the start of each semester. Take home exam answers should be limited to 10-15 pages per answer, double spaced, not including reference pages. Only one reference section is required for all three answers. Reference style must follow APA guidelines in accordance with *Justice Quarterly* (Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences). In-person exam answers should be 6-10 pages per answer, double spaced and APA formatted with in-text citations. In-person exams will be submitted to the Moodle page at the end of the eight-hour period. All committee members will grade exams and average scores will be calculated based on a normal grading scale. Committee members will grade exams within two weeks of submission.

There are three grading options for the comprehensive exam: pass, revise and resubmit, and fail. Students may be required to revise and resubmit the written portion of their comprehensive exam, based on the score they receive. If revisions are necessary, students will have 7 days to complete all revisions and resubmit their exam. Oral exam defenses may still be scheduled even if a revise and resubmit process is necessary.

The Criminology Written Examination Rubric (available on Moodle) is used by each committee member to grade the written portion of exams. All question domains will utilize the same grading scale described below. A minimum average score (across committee members) of 16 or 80% is required for a grade of *pass*. Scores between 15 and 12 require a *revise and resubmit* grade for comprehensive exams. Scores at 11 or below require an automatic grade of fail.

Oral Exam Defense

Oral exam defense dates should be scheduled in the week following the committing grading period. Following the submission of the written exam, students should coordinate with committee members to schedule an oral defense date. The purpose of the oral defense is to successfully answer any substantive questions about the completed written exam. Students should expect to clarify answers and expand on answers, in addition to bridging any substantive gaps in the written examination. Students should also expect to demonstrate knowledgeable information about the areas in which they have written. The defense typically lasts one hour. After the oral exam defense, committee members will evaluate the defense based on a rubric and students then be notified on the successfulness of their comprehensive exam and oral defense.

The Grading Criteria Rubric for Oral Examinations (available on Moodle) is used to grade all oral exam defenses. Each committee member will submit their grade and feedback at the end of the oral defense and an average score across committee members will be calculated. Students must score at 80% or higher to successfully complete the oral exam defense component.

In the event of an unsuccessful comprehensive exam attempt, students may retake the comprehensive exam the following semester. Only one retake is allowed, per Graduate School guidelines.

Committee Selection

Students must choose a committee of three graduate faculty members to form the comprehensive exam committee as of the “Apply for Candidacy” deadline applicable to each student (the committee will sign the Candidacy form). This must be finalized prior to the beginning of the third semester. All three members should be from the CJUS graduate faculty. If three CJUS faculty members are not available, the student must contact a graduate faculty member outside the department who is familiar with the student’s work and is willing to serve on the committee.

One of the three committee members must be selected as the chair of the comprehensive exam and that chair must be CJUS graduate faculty.

Thesis Option & Guidelines

THESIS

The thesis is undertaken in the final two semesters of the program. The thesis has both a written and oral component. The thesis should be a study that uses data to understand a theme or construct. Students can choose between primary and secondary data, as well as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method approaches. All new data must be approved by the University's Institutional Review Board. As a requirement, students must have completed at least 18 hours of coursework, must have a GPA at or above 3.0, and must have completed or are currently enrolled in both Research Methods and Seminar in Theories of Crime and Delinquency before starting the thesis process. Any exceptions to this format must be approved by the graduate coordinator.

Thesis Proposal

Before submitting to the Institutional Review Board or beginning data collection, the research proposal must be approved by the thesis committee in a scheduled, formal defense in the semester before graduation (typically the 3rd semester). A research proposal is submitted as a written document, consisting of the literature review, research questions, hypotheses, theories, and specific methodology. This should be turned into the student's thesis committee two weeks prior to the proposal. The thesis proposal defense is a briefing in front of the thesis committee via formal presentation (including a PowerPoint or similar presentation method) of the working research project.

The thesis committee must approve each student's research proposal in the semester before the thesis will be defended. Proposals should be held in the fall for a spring defense; proposals should be held in the spring for a fall defense.

Thesis Writing

Students should remain in communication with the thesis chair throughout the writing process. The thesis chair, at his or her discretion, will share thesis drafts with committee members. Students may schedule their thesis defense after receiving approval from the thesis chair. All thesis writers are required to consult with The Writing Center in order to assist with the writing of the thesis. Reference style must follow APA 7th edition guidelines, in accordance with *Justice Quarterly* (Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences).

Oral Thesis Defense

The finished, written thesis should be submitted to all committee members two weeks before the scheduled oral defense of the thesis. It is best practice to bring the thesis' signature page on the required paper at the time of the defense to ensure obtaining all signatures. The purpose of the oral defense is to successfully answer any substantive questions about the thesis. Students should expect to clarify and expand on main concepts, in addition to filling any gaps in the written thesis. Students should also expect to give knowledgeable information about the area in which they have written. Thesis defenses typically last one hour. Only under extraordinary and unavoidable circumstances will a student be allowed to defend outside of fall or spring semesters and students must petition the graduate faculty committee in these rare cases. In other words, the department will not accommodate summer or between semester thesis defenses.

The thesis committee must approve the successful completion of the oral thesis defense. Students who are not successful may attempt one additional oral thesis defense during the following semester. The Graduate School does not allow more than two attempts for a student's thesis defense.

The Criminology Written Examination Rubric is utilized to grade the written component of the thesis track. The Grading Criteria Rubric for Oral Examinations is used to grade all oral exam defenses. Each committee member will submit their grade and feedback at the end of the oral defense and an average score across committee members will be calculated. Students must score at 80% or higher to successfully complete the oral exam defense component.

Committee Selection

Students must choose a committee of three graduate faculty members to form the thesis committee as of the "Apply for Candidacy" deadline applicable to each student (the committee will sign the Candidacy form). This must be finalized prior to the start of the third semester. All three members should be from the CJUS graduate faculty. If three CJUS faculty members are not available, the student must contact a graduate faculty member outside the department who is familiar with the student's work and is willing to serve on the committee. One of the three committee members must be selected as the chair of the thesis and that chair must be CJUS graduate faculty.

A timeline for the Thesis Process (for full-time students):

<p><u>1st Semester:</u> Start developing thesis ideas Meet with faculty to identify a major professor</p>	<p><u>2nd Semester:</u> Finalize thesis goals Petition a major professor to act as thesis chair</p>
<p><u>3rd Semester:</u> Propose thesis Submit IRB application</p>	<p><u>4th Semester:</u> Defend Thesis</p>

*This timeline might take longer if students choose to collect their own data.

Examples of recent student theses:

1. Diversion Programs: Measuring Recidivism Rates for First-Time Offenders In the REACH Program

[Adamson, Vanessa](#). University of Louisiana at Lafayette, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018. 13420078.

2. Spice of Life: A Qualitative Investigation of the Anecdotal Social Preference for Synthetic Cannabinoids

[Larmann, Elizabeth A](#). University of Louisiana at Lafayette, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018. 10813955.

3. The Influence of Peer Groups, Gangs, and Neighborhoods on Juvenile Delinquent Alcohol and Marijuana Use

[Molbert, Courtney L](#). University of Louisiana at Lafayette, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018. 10814507.

AI Use Policy

The writings of comprehensive exams and thesis must be your own original production. Use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate material is strictly prohibited. Submission of material generated by AI will be considered a violation of the University's academic integrity policy and will result in a failing grade. This includes AI-generated material that you have summarized or edited.

Graduate Student Assistantships

Any student enrolling full-time (9 hours per semester or more) may apply for graduate assistantships. Recipients are expected to work 20 hours per week in some capacity for the university. Recipients of graduate assistantships and fellowships receive a monthly stipend and a waiver of tuition and most fees.

The Master's in Criminal Justice program currently awards three Graduate Teaching Assistantships per academic year. Assistantships are awarded in March of each year. For more information, including the specific yearly deadline and the application process, contact the graduate coordinator.

Possible Funding Opportunities

Assistantships and fellowships can help you pay for your graduate degree while also letting you earn valuable experience for your career. Follow this link to the Graduate School website for

information about other, university-wide assistantships, fellowships, and other possible funding opportunities: <https://gradschool.louisiana.edu/assistantships-fellowships-funding>

Professional Development Opportunities

Professional Development Opportunities vary from semester to semester. Examples include attending professional conferences, assisting faculty with research projects, guest lecturing for a faculty member, and completing internships with area agencies (when available). Other opportunities to develop professionally are hosted throughout the year by the Graduate School. Examples of these opportunities include events where graduate students learn to network, practice job interviewing skills, write more efficiently, maintain a social media presence, and market oneself, to name a few. The Graduate School announces these events on Facebook, on their web page, and by sending out emails to all graduate students.

Formal Appeal Process

The Graduate Council Appeals Committee considers appeals from (1) applicants who have been denied admission to Graduate School, (2) graduate students who have become ineligible to continue (or re-enter) as a result of earning C, D, or F grades, falling below a 3.0 cumulative GPA, or failing to meet other requirements in their course of study, (3) current graduate students who wish to transfer credit from a non-U.S. institution, (4) graduate students requesting additional attempts to satisfy all or part of the comprehensive examination requirement, and (5) departments or other campus units that wish to offer an assistantship to a graduate student who has been admitted conditionally. The Appeals Committee also considers requests for (6) academic amnesty.

The Appeals Committee meets only once per semester—Spring, Summer, and Fall—on the Friday prior to the start of classes. To ensure consideration, all appeal materials must be received by the Graduate School well in advance of this meeting. Students/prospective students are encouraged to contact the Graduate School for deadlines to submit appeal materials. Appeals submitted after the committee has met may not be heard until the following semester.

*All the above information is from the UL graduate school website. If you would like more in-depth information please follow this link <https://louisiana.edu/graduateschool/current-students/appeals>.

Enrollment Process

A student applying for acceptance into the M.S. program in Criminal Justice should note the following requirements:

1. Admittance into the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's Graduate School.
2. Baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher education and a minimum GPA of 2.75 in all courses taken or a GPA of 3.0 in the last 60 hours taken.
3. Successful completion of an undergraduate research methods course within a social science discipline (criminal justice, sociology, political science, psychology or the equivalent). If admitted without this, you will be required to enroll in and complete CJUS 301 (Introduction to Research Methods) during your first semester of graduate study. This course will not be counted toward your M.S. degree.
4. Submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. Admissions will not be based solely on this score, but rather upon complete examination of all application materials. *The GRE requirement is waived for applicants who graduated from UL Lafayette with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and/or students with at least at 2.7 cumulative undergraduate GPA and at least 3 years of relevant work experience (criminology and criminal justice). The decision to waive the GRE for applicants with a 2.75 cumulative GPA and at least 3 years of relevant work experience will be based on the quality of work experience and the information provided in the letters of recommendation.
5. Provide contact information on your application for three sources who will submit letters of reference. We highly encourage applicants to seek out references who are familiar with their academic work.
6. Upload a statement of purpose to your application.
7. For applicants that English is not the native language, only applicants who hold a baccalaureate or graduate degree, with primary instruction in English, from an accredited institution on the listed locations on the graduate school's website (<https://louisiana.edu/graduateschool/admissions/international-applicants>) are not required to demonstrate English language proficiency. Otherwise, applications must achieve a minimum TOEFL score or other equivalent exams as specified by the Graduate School.

Notable Alumni

Correctional Treatment Specialist

Christina Pigott, MS 2016, Correctional Officer at Lafayette Parish Correctional Center

Juvenile Specialist

Danielle Doussan, MS 2017, Restorative Justice Facilitator with Jefferson Parish Schools

College Instructor

Jessica White, MS 2015, Instructor in the First Year Experience Program at UL Lafayette

Julie Richard, MS 2017, Adjunct Instructor of Criminal Justice at UL Lafayette

Research and Statistics Analyst

Stephen Laborde, MS 2015, Crime Statistics Analyst at Proforma Screening

Onyeka Enwesi, MS 2024, Research Compliance Administrator, PVAMU Office of Research Compliance.

Military

Dustin Edwards, MS 2017, Army

Nonprofit/Humanitarian Sector

Linsey Boudreaux, MS 2019, Regional Child and Youth Trafficking Coordinator, Hearts of Hope.

Vanessa Lasala-Adamson, MS 2018, Program Director UL Lafayette Americorp

Elizabeth Louivere, MS 2017, Assistant Director at Rebuilding Together Acadiana / Catholic Charities of Acadiana

Mental Health/Social Services Caseworker

Jude Bernard, MS 2016, Youth Support Specialist at Behavioral Services of Louisiana

Mallory LaPorte, MS 2017, Caseworker at CADENCE of Acadiana

Audrie Outlaw, MS 2022, Youth and Families Empowerment Services in Louisiana

PhD Program

Kady Rost, MS 2016, University of Denver

Romane Zingraff, MS 2022, University of Texas at Austin

Investigator

Courtney Molbert, MS 2018, HUB Enterprises, Inc.

Ciara Marlow, MS 2019, Investigative Specialist II at Louisiana State Police

Social Worker

Matilda Owusu Ansah, MS 2023, Department of Families & Children Protection,
Massachusetts.

Graduate Faculty

David Khey: Professor, Department Head: Research interests include mental health, substance use and abuse, reentry, public policy, program evaluation, mixed-methods research, and public policy

Michelle Jeanis: Associate Professor: Research interests include missing persons, runaway youth, risk factors for delinquency, and the relationship between crime and the media.

Meng Ru (Lily) Shih: Assistant Professor, Graduate Coordinator: Research interests include juvenile delinquency and life-course criminology, corrections and reentry, restorative justice, and immigration policy.

Yeonjae Park: Assistant Professor: Research interests include developmental criminology, hate crimes, juvenile justice, and cybercrimes.

Kayleigh Stanek: Assistant Professor: Research interests include criminal justice and societal responses to victims and victimization, specifically sexual assault and domestic violence, and the needs of Indigenous victims and reducing the Missing and Murder of Indigenous Peoples across the country.