



## Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

### **Planning Your Course of Study and Selecting an Exit Option: (Thesis, Professional Project, or Comprehensive Exam)**

The Master of Arts in Criminal Justice program offers three exit options: thesis, professional project, or comprehensive examination. Each option requires about the same amount of scholarly effort, but allows students some flexibility depending on their educational interests and professional goals. However, because thesis and professional projects are often influenced by conditions beyond the student's control, for example the IRB approval process, data collection, source availability, and agency agreements, completion usually takes substantially longer than the comprehensive exam option. In any case, working with the Graduate Coordinator, students will decide on an exit option during their first Term, when they take the introductory one-unit CJ-608 Workshop.

#### Learning Outcomes

The goal of this program is help you:

- Develop an advanced and comprehensive understanding of the criminal justice field.
- Master advanced theories and practices in criminal justice and related fields.
- Implement and apply criminal theory and research to practice within the criminal justice environment.

#### Planning Your Course of Study

All students must complete the professional core (21 credits):

- CJ-603/606 Professional Project or Special Individual Study (SIS) (4)
- CJ-608 Workshop (1)
- CJ-612 Research Methods (4)
- CJ-617 Criminal Justice Administration and Organizational Behavior (4)
- CJ-619 Ethics and Leadership in Criminal Justice (4)
- CJ-660 Theory and Research in Crime and Delinquency (4)

The professional core is your gateway to graduate study. Except for CJ-608, these courses may be taken in any order. CJ-608, on the other hand, must be taken your first term; it provides an introduction to graduate study and helps you select an exit option. The professional core classes will help you develop a practical understanding of research methods (CJ-612) and the theories (CJ-660) that are employed in social science research. In fact, you will employ the knowledge and skills you learn from these courses as you complete your chosen exit strategy (CJ-603 – thesis or professional project; or CJ-606-comprehensive exams). You will also study how bureaucracies function (CJ-617) and how ethical and leadership philosophies guide practitioners within the criminal justice system (CJ-619).

During the introductory workshop (CJ-608), all students must select an area of concentration and an exit strategy. The area of concentration is usually defined by six elective courses (24 credits). Consequently, we urge you to choose electives that coincide with your educational interest. Your studies will culminate with one of three exit strategies – a thesis (CJ-603, worth 4 credits), a professional project (CJ-603, worth 4 credits), or comprehensive exams (CJ-606, worth 4 credits). The remainder of this document will help you select and implement your exit strategy.

Tentative Course Calendars

CRIMINAL JUSTICE MASTER'S PROGRAM COURSE CALENDAR 2015/2016 (Subject to Change)						
		2015	2016			
CORE COUSES		FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	Instructor
CJ-603/606 (1-4)	Professional Paper or SIS	*	*	*	*	Gingerich
CJ-608 (1)	Workshop	*	*	*	*	Gingerich
CJ-612 (4)	Research in C.J.	*				Weitzel
CJ-617 (4)	C.J Admin. Org. Behavior		*			White
CJ-619 (4)	Ethics & Leadership		*			Gingerich
CJ-660 (4)	Theories of Research	*				White
ELECTIVES						
CJ-609 (4-9)	Practicum					
CJ-616 (4)	Community Corrections					
CJ-618 (4)	Theory of Criminal Law			*		Brown
CJ-620 (4)	Offender Treatment			*		Brown
CJ-621 (4)	H/R Management	*				Gingerich
CJ-622 (4)	Strategic Planning	*				Tighe
CJ-656 (4)	Contemporary Issues		*	*		Gingerich
See Course Calendar for 500-level courses being offered each Term						

CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM MASTER CALENDAR 2016/2017 (Subject to Change)						
		2016	2017			
CORE COUSES		FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	Instructor
CJ-603/606 (1-4)	Professional Paper or SIS	*	*	*	*	Gingerich
CJ-608 (1)	Workshop	*	*	*	*	Gingerich
CJ-612 (4)	Research in C.J.	*				Weitzel
CJ-617 (4)	C.J Admin. Org. Behavior		*			White
CJ-619 (4)	Ethics & Leadership		*			Gingerich
CJ-660 (4)	Theories of Research	*				Gibbons
ELECTIVES						
CJ-609 (4-9)	Practicum					
CJ-616 (4)	Community Corrections					
CJ-618 (4)	Theory of Criminal Law			*		Brown
CJ-620 (4)	Offender Treatment			*		Brown
CJ-621 (4)	H/R Management	*				Gingerich
CJ-622 (4)	Strategic Planning	*				Tighe
CJ-656 (4)	Contemporary Issues		*	*		Gingerich
See Course Calendar for 500-level courses being offered each Term						

Important Time-Sensitive Requirements

1. You must selection an area of concentration and an exit option (thesis, professional project, or comprehensive exams) during CJ-608 of your first term.
2. You must submit an “Exit Proposal” that defines your chosen exit option during CJ-608 of your first term.
3. You should visit the *Graduate Calendar* (See Graduate Homepage) each term and check for important “due dates” that may affect you as you move through the program.
4. Students must file an “Application for Completion of Master's Degree” with the graduate office at least one term prior to completion.

We should note that the *Graduate Catalog* states, a “candidate is eligible to complete final evaluations only after all coursework has been completed or the candidate is in the final term of enrollment.” However, this is somewhat misleading with regard to the Criminal Justice Master’s Program. Specifically, a candidate will not be considered “ready” to set for their comprehensive exams or submit a thesis or professional project until they have completed their professional core courses and they are in their final term.

A brief summary of each exit option is offered below. This is followed by sections that offer specific instructions for completing each exit strategy.

### Thesis Option

Following the traditional model of graduate study, the thesis option introduces students to the practices, concepts, and methods of social science research. Students electing to complete a thesis will develop a research question (during CJ-608), analyze and synthesize prior research, collect data, statistically evaluate and analyze data, and then present their findings using the guidelines offered in the *WOU Graduate Thesis Manual*.

Students pursuing this option should expect to spend a minimum of 24-months (often longer) completing their coursework, their research and analysis, and writing the thesis. A rigorously proofread and edited “draft” of your thesis must be submitted chapter-by-chapter, starting with chapter 1, 2, 3, etc. We strongly recommend that after you proofread and edit your thesis, you have it professionally edited before submitting the final draft to your Graduate Chair.

### Professional Project/Scholarly Publication Option

#### *Professional Project Option*

The Professional Project Option is only available to students who are currently working in a professional capacity within an agency of the criminal justice system and whose agency is willing to support their project. Professional projects (all of which end with a professional paper) introduce students to the practices, concepts, and methods of applied research combined with the techniques of technical writing, specifically conveying unambiguous information to the criminal justice community in the form of a professional paper. Students who elect this option will learn to plan, research, organize, interpret, and objectively report on specific elements of the criminal justice system based on the findings of their investigation. Examples of professional projects may include, but are not limited to, in-depth examinations of criminal justice programs, policies, or procedures.

Students pursuing this option should expect to spend a minimum of 18-24-months (often longer) completing their coursework, their investigation, and writing their professional paper. A rigorously proofread and edited “draft” of your professional paper must be submitted chapter-by-chapter, starting with chapter 1, 2, 3, etc. We strongly recommend that after you personally proofread and edit your professional paper, you have it professionally edited before submitting the final draft to your Graduate Chair.

#### *Scholarly Publication Option*

The Scholarly Publication Option is available to a limited number of students who are invited to work with a member of the faculty on a research project that will be submitted to a scholarly journal or a book publisher. Students who are invited to participate in this option may receive financial assistance as Teaching/Research Assistants. They will also be cited as a coauthor on the publication.

Students invited to participate in this option should expect to spend a minimum of 24-months (often longer) completing their coursework and working with faculty on the article or manuscript.

#### Comprehensive Exams

The purpose of comprehensive exams is somewhat different from a thesis or professional project. Building on the professional core, comprehensive exams allow students to tailor their studies by taking coursework in three academic areas: criminological theory (CJ-660), research methods (CJ-612), and a combination of electives (see course catalog) and individual study courses (CJ-606) in an area of individualized concentration. It is designed for students who wish to structure their studies but also establish a definite timeline for completion.

This option follows a scheduled course of study that can usually be completed in 15 to 18 months (depending on the student’s motivation and efforts).

## THESIS

### Thesis Option

Following the traditional model of graduate study, the thesis option introduces students to the practices, concepts, and methods of social science research. Students electing to complete a thesis will develop a research question, analyze and synthesize prior research, collect data, statistically evaluate and analyze data, and then present their findings using the guidelines offered in the *WOU Graduate Thesis Manual*. By the time a thesis is completed the student can often claim to have mastered some aspect of criminological knowledge while gaining a significant awareness of the processes of social science research.

Students pursuing this option should expect to spend a minimum of 24-months (often longer) completing their coursework, their research and analysis, and writing the thesis. A rigorously proofread and edited “draft” of your thesis must be submitted by chapter-by-chapter, starting with chapter 1, 2, 3, etc. We strongly recommend that after you personally proofread and edit your thesis, you have it professionally edited before submitting the final draft to your Graduate Chair.

### Exit Strategy Proposal

Students who elect to write a thesis must first submit an Exit Proposal (CJ-608), not to exceed 4 pages in length (see Guidelines below) that gives the Graduate Coordinator (and other concerned faculty) a clear idea of your research question and how you plan to conduct your research. It should be a compelling and concise statement of your intended project or thesis. Thorough planning and conceptualization at the initial stages of your investigation will help you avoid common pitfalls later in the process.

Your Exit Proposal (CJ-608) must be attached to a “Request to Conduct Graduate Thesis, Field Study, Professional Study, or Action Research Project Pre-Approval” form, which is available at: ([http://www.wou.edu/provost/graduate/documents/Website/FPP\\_ThesisPreApproval.pdf](http://www.wou.edu/provost/graduate/documents/Website/FPP_ThesisPreApproval.pdf)).

### Guideline for Thesis Proposal (CJ-608)

Your thesis proposal is very important. It is your investigative game plan and warrants a great deal of contemplation. Careful planning will save you time and effort later. The biggest mistake graduate students make is trying to tackle too big a problem (i.e. investigative question). Think about your problem and then reduce it to its component parts. Then take one of the components and address that issue. You will find this makes your project more educational and something that can be accomplished in a reasonable timeframe.

A social science researcher is a detached and objective investigator. Evaluate your bias. A preconceived notion about what you are about to investigate may influence your methodology, outcomes, and analysis of findings. Remember, while you may have an intuitive idea about what you will find, you are not an advocate; you are simply looking for the truth regarding a specific topic.

The structure of your proposal should not exceed four pages in length and must conform to the following format using paragraph headers. Remember, the purpose of your proposal is to introduce your topic and convince the reader (i.e. the graduate coordinator and potential members of your committee) that your project is academically sound and will add to the social science literature.

Students who intend to use human subjects in their research (i.e. conduct interviews or surveys, etc.) are required to secure Instructional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to beginning work on their research project. If you intend to use human subjects in your project you must explain how your plan to interact with them in your proposal. Contact the graduate coordinator if you are uncertain or have questions.

## GUIDELINES THESIS PROPOSAL

### Title Page

Your name  
“V”

Date

Title of Your Research Project

### Introduction

The introduction is a broad overview of the problem to be studied. It should acquaint the reader with the nature of the subject and briefly point toward the scope and dimension of the topic to be discussed. In fact, the first sentence should concisely state the essence of the study.

### Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem should be a concise statement that identifies the problem to be studied. It serves as the basis from which the *purpose of the study* is drawn.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework should support the statement of the problem through a brief discussion of the various theories proposed by others related to the research topic. Cite your sources; at this point in your research, you should have identified several.

### Purpose of the Study

The statement of purpose should tell the reader the reason for the study. In other words, it should tell the reader exactly what is to be achieved. You should be able to accomplish this in one concise paragraph.

### Research Question and Research Hypothesis

Your research question must be stated in one concise sentence. Often it is stated as a research hypothesis.

### Research Question

A research question proposes a relationship between two or more variables. Just as the title states, it is structured in the form of a question. There are three types of research questions:

- A *descriptive* research question seeks to identify and describe some phenomenon.  
*An example: What is the ethnic breakdown of patients seen in the emergency room for non-emergency conditions?*
- A *differences* research question asks if there are differences between groups on some phenomenon.  
*For example: Do patients who receive deep muscle massage experience more relief from sore muscle pain than patients who take a hot bath?*
- A *relationship* question asks if two or more phenomena are related in some systematic manner.  
*For example: If an athlete increases his level of physical exercise does muscle mass also increase?*

### Research Hypothesis

If you are conducting an experimental study, you will need a declaration regarding relationships that the study is testing (i.e. an hypothesis). Your hypothesis should provide a statement of the relationship to be tested. At the end of the paragraph that discusses your hypothesis, you should provide a specific prediction of the expected outcome of the study.

In other words, a hypothesis represents a declarative statement, a sentence instead of a question, of the cause-effect relationship between two or more variables. Make a clear and careful distinction between the dependent and independent variables and be certain they are clear to the reader. *Be very consistent in your use of terms.* If appropriate, use the same pattern of wording and word order in all hypotheses.

Hypotheses can be created as two kinds of statements.

1. *Literary null*—a “no difference” forms in terms of theoretical constructs.  
For example, “There is no relationship between support services and academic persistence of nontraditional-aged college women.” Or, “There is no difference in school achievement for high and low self-regulated students.”
2. *Operational null*—a “no difference” forms in terms of the operation required to test the hypothesis.

For example, “There is no relationship between the number of hours spent studying in the library and academic success after the freshman year.” Or, “There is no difference between the mean grade point averages achieved by students in the upper and lower quartiles of the distribution of the Self-regulated Inventory.” The operational null is the most used form for hypothesis-writing.

Regardless of which is selected, research questions or hypotheses, this element of the research proposal needs to be as specific as possible in whatever field of study you are investigating. It should be realistic and feasible, and be formulated with time and resource constraints in mind. If you are conducting historical research you must ask a question that will be resolved by the results of the study.

If you are conducting a descriptive study you may or may not need a hypothesis statement.

### Literature Review

Your initial literature review should summarize pertinent problems, methods, and findings of other investigations. It might also analysis the strengths, weakness, agreements or disagreements with other findings.

### Other Information

After the Graduate Coordinator has reviewed your proposal, he/she will help you select a Thesis Committee Chair and two additional members with expertise in the area of your thesis work. Collective, they will serve as your writing committee. The *WOU Thesis Manual* provides additional information about the format and content of your thesis. You should study and adhere to this document very closely.

A rigorously proofread and edited “draft” of your thesis must be submitted by chapter, starting with chapter 1, 2, 3, etc. We strongly recommend that after you personally proofread and edit your thesis, you have it professionally edited before submitting the final draft to your Graduate Chair.

### Recommended Reference Books:

Bhattacharjee, Anol (2012), *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*, University of South Florida, Tampa Library Open Access Collections (This book is available free on the CJ-608 Moodle Course Page or via the Tampa Library Open Access Collections.)

Galvan, Jose L. (2006), *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Pycszak Publishing, Glendale, CA.



## PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

### Professional Project Option

Professional Projects are only available to students who are currently working in a professional capacity within an agency of the criminal justice system and whose agency is willing to receive (and hopefully collaborate in) their projects. Professional projects (all of which end with a professional paper) introduce students to the practices, concepts, and methods of applied research combined with the techniques of technical writing, specifically conveying unambiguous information to the criminal justice community in the form of a professional paper. Students who elect this option will learn to plan, research, organize, interpret, and objectively report on specific elements of the criminal justice system based on the findings of their investigation. Examples of professional projects may include, but are not limited to, in-depth examinations of criminal justice programs, policies, or procedures with the goal of systematically evaluating one or more of the following topics:

- program needs
- program theory
- program processes
- program outcomes
- program effects or efficiency
- program development from an historical or organizational perspective

Students pursuing this option should expect to spend a minimum of 24-months (often longer) completing their coursework and the professional report.

### Recommended Reference Books:

Bhattacharjee, Anol (2012), *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*, University of South Florida, Tampa Library Open Access Collections (This book is available free on the CJ-608 Moodle Course Page or via the Tampa Library Open Access Collections.)

Galvan, Jose L. (2006), *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Pycszak Publishing, Glendale, CA.

### Project Proposal

Students who elect to conduct a professional project must submit a Project Proposal (no more than 4 pages in length) that gives the Graduate Coordinator (and other concerned faculty) a clear idea of your research question and how you plan to conduct your research. It should be a compelling and concise statement of your intended project or thesis. Thorough planning and conceptualization at the initial stages of your investigation will help you avoid common pitfalls later in the process.

Your Project Proposal must be attached to a “Request to Conduct Graduate Thesis, Field Study, Professional Study, or Action Research Project Pre-Approval” form, which is available at: [http://www.wou.edu/provost/graduate/documents/Website/FPP\\_ThesisPreApproval.pdf](http://www.wou.edu/provost/graduate/documents/Website/FPP_ThesisPreApproval.pdf)

## GUIDELINES PROFESSIONAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

### Title Page

Your name

“V”

Date

Title of Your Research Project

### Introduction

The introduction is a broad overview of the problem to be studied. It should acquaint the reader with the nature of the subject and briefly point toward the scope and dimension of the topic to be discussed. In fact, the first sentence should concisely state the essence of the study. You should be able to accomplish this in one or two paragraphs.

### Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem should contain a concise sentence, which identifies the goal of the study and sets the direction for the study. The statement of the problem serves as the basis from which the purpose of the study is drawn. You should be able to accomplish this in one paragraph.

### Purpose of the Study

The section should concisely explain the reason for the study and exactly what is to be achieved. You should be able to accomplish this in one paragraph.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework should support the statement of the problem through a brief discussion of the various theories, ideas, concepts, or situations proposed by other scholars concerned with the topic. At this point in your research, you should have identified at least 10 or more articles specific to your problem. In other words, professional papers, policy statements, theories, ideas, concepts, or situations that you intend to replicate, expand on, illuminate, or challenge, etc. You should be able to accomplish this in one or two paragraphs.

### Research Question

Many professional projects are structured to report on, explore, illuminate, and/or address a phenomenon within an agency of the criminal justice system. Consequently they do not warrant a “research question.” In this case, the *statement of the problem* and the *purpose of the study* are sufficient. However, if there is a research question to be answered, it should be identified. There are four types of research questions.

- A *descriptive* research question seeks to identify and describe some phenomenon.  
*An example: What is the ethnic breakdown of patients seen in the emergency room for non-emergency conditions?*
- A *differences* research question asks if there are differences between groups on some phenomenon.

*For example: Do patients who receive deep muscle massage experience more relief from sore muscle pain than patients who take a hot bath?*

- A *relationship* question asks if two or more phenomena are related in some systematic manner.

*For example: If an athlete increase his/her level of physical exercise does muscle mass also increase?*

- *Historical research* is similar to descriptive research but asks a question about historical events that will be resolved by the results of the study.

*For example: Did San Francisco's vigilant committees of the 1850s lead to a more civil society or a more lawless society?*

### Literature Review

The initial literature review summarizes pertinent problems, methods, and findings of other investigations. A good proposal should contain at least ten sources in your initial literature review; of course, your final paper will contain many more sources when it is completed. It should analysis the strengths, weakness, agreements or disagreements with other findings.

### Sources Cited

List all sources that you had cited in your proposal. Of course, as you begin work on your paper you will continue to add to this list.

### Other Information

Visit the Hamersly Library Homepage for style and citation guides.

Your proposal must be attached to a "Request to Conduct Graduate Thesis, Field Study, Professional Study, or Action Research Project Pre-Approval" form, which is available at: ([http://www.wou.edu/provost/graduate/documents/Website/FPP\\_ThesisPreApproval.pdf](http://www.wou.edu/provost/graduate/documents/Website/FPP_ThesisPreApproval.pdf)).

After the Graduate Coordinator has reviewed your proposal, they will help your select a Committee Chair and two additional members with expertise in the area of your professional project. Collective, they will serve as your writing committee.

## WRITING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PAPER

Because professional projects are unique, the structure of their reports (papers) will vary from project to project. However, all professional papers must include the following academic sections (The actual professional paper that you submit to your agency will be attached as an appendix):

### Title Page

### Table of Contents

Use standard formatting to cite contents and page numbers.

List of Figures

List of Appendixes  
Abstract

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The primary function of this initial section is to provide a comprehensive overview of the project.

- Purpose  
A statement of the purpose of the project explains why it was attempted and the contributions it makes to your profession, agency, or professional literature.
- Scope  
Define the scope of the professional project. Include specific information regarding the subject matter, the intended audience, how the project is to be used, and other pertinent information.
- Significance  
Explain the significance of the project to your agency, professional community, or the professional literature.
- Definition of Terms  
Define any special terms and establish standard abbreviations that will be used throughout the text.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This section constitutes a major component of the professional project. It places your project into the context of existing information in the field. In other words, it is a history of what has occurred in the field and provides a foundation for your contemporary work. All social science research demands this introductory stage. You should review a significant body of relevant literature, and (1) discuss their strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the purpose of your project, (2) discuss the theories or techniques that have been used to examine the subject of your study, and (3) discuss their respective implications for the present study. Finally, summarize the literature and tie it to your project. This section ultimately justifies the need for the professional project.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This chapter should describe how the project was conceived and the methods that were used to complete the investigation. For example, did you review historical documents, question colleagues, distribute questionnaires, review department records, consult professional organizations or their literature, etc.

## Chapter 4

### Results

There may or may not be a results section, depending on the type of project undertaken. If there are findings to report, they should be synthesized for inclusion in this section. Material too detailed to be included in the body of the text should be presented in the appendices.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

- **Summary**  
Present an overview of the previous sections. Explain how the final professional project addresses issues that have been raised. Reacquaint the reader with the conceptual framework and the design of the study. This section summarizes the entire professional project effort.
- **Conclusions**  
Offer conclusions if warranted.
- **Recommendations**  
Offer recommendations if warranted.

### References

Cite references using APA or MLA citation format

### Appendices

If you have produced a “stand-alone paper” that will be distributed to your agency attach it as an appendix. Material too detailed for inclusion in the body of the text, or material that cannot be effectively presented due to its length or size may be included in the appendices. Tables and graphs that have been introduced in the main body of the thesis are required to be included in the text immediately following the first reference. They should not be placed in the appendices. Appendices might include such things as questionnaires, raw data, maps, photos, artwork, letters of permission to reproduce material, and personal correspondence.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

### Comprehensive Exams

The purpose of comprehensive exams is somewhat different from a thesis or professional project. Building on the professional core, comprehensive exams allow students to tailor their studies by taking coursework in three academic areas: criminological theory (CJ-660), research methods (CJ-612), and a combination of electives (see course catalog) and individual study courses (CJ-606) in an area of individualized concentration. This option follows a scheduled course of study that can be completed in 15 to 18 months (depending on the student's motivation and efforts).

Students who choose this option will be provided with a "draft study question" during their criminological theory class (CJ-660) and their research methods class (CJ-612). Additionally, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and eventually their Comprehensive Exam Chair (See below), they will develop a third question focusing on an area of individual concentration (which they will work on in their CJ-606 classes). Collectively, these questions will serve as a study guide for the comprehensive exam.

### Area of Concentration Proposal

After students have chosen an area of individual concentration, they should conduct a preliminary literature review (approximately 10 to 12 journal articles) that illuminates and helps define their subject area. Using this information as a beginning point, students must draft a research proposal that gives the Graduate Coordinator (and other concerned faculty) a clear picture of your area of concentration and how you propose to explore the topic. Students will work on and submit their proposal in CJ-608.

Your proposal is very important for several reasons: It helps you organize and focus your research activity (CJ-606 coursework). It provides the Graduate Coordinator and potential members of your committee with a global view of the project and affords an opportunity to counsel and guide you through the process. It is your investigative game plan and warrants a great deal of contemplation. Consequently, time spent planning it now will save you time and effort later.

### Recommended Reference Books:

Bhattacharjee, Anol (2012), *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*, University of South Florida, Tampa Library Open Access Collections (This book is available free on the CJ-608 Moodle Course Page or via the Tampa Library Open Access Collections.)

Galvan, Jose L. (2006), *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Pycszak Publishing, Glendale, CA.

### Issues and Pitfalls

As you begin drafting your proposal there are several issues and pitfalls to consider:

#### Issue 1

The biggest mistake graduate students make is trying to tackle too big a problem (i.e. investigative question). Think about your problem and then reduce it to its components parts.

Then take one of the components and address that issue. You will find this makes your project more educational and something you can accomplish in a reasonable timeframe. Consider that you will have to look at a chosen problem, conduct an initial review of the appropriate literature, and then scrutinize that information looking for relationships, consistencies, and/or discrepancies.

#### Issue 2

Remember, a social science researcher is a detached and objective investigator. Evaluate your bias. An open and inquisitive mind is essential to a successful investigation. While you may have an intuitive idea about what you will discover, you are not an advocate out to confirm your point of view; you are simply looking for the truth regarding a specific topic. We all hold opinions about selected topics, but your proposal is not a place to voice them. In place of your opinion, you should cite the work of other investigators and build an argument justifying your investigation based on their scholarly opinions and findings.

#### Issue 3

In reality, your proposal is the initial stage of one component of your comprehensive exam. While it is not graded, a poorly written proposal tells the reader that you not yet working at the graduate level. Consequently, closely proof read and edit your proposal.

#### Issue 4

Students taking comprehensive exams may not use human subjects in their research. You may only use secondary source material (i.e. scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles, government publications, or professional publications) to investigate and answering your question.

#### Issue 5

The structure of your proposal should not exceed four pages in length and must conform to the following format using paragraph headers.

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## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

### Title Page

Your name

“V”

Date

Title of Your Research Project

### Introduction

The introduction is a broad overview of the problem. It should acquaint the reader with the nature of the subject and briefly point toward the scope and dimension of the topic. In fact, the first sentence should concisely state the essence of the study. You should be able to accomplish this in one or two paragraphs. Remember; do not insert your opinion. Simply introduce the problem citing the work of scholars in the field. Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I provided a broad overview of the problem?
- Is the essence of the study clearly and concisely stated?
- Have I summarized the work of relevant scholars who have contributed to the topic (at this initial point you should have about 10 citations)?
- Is it free of my bias and opinion?

### Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem should contain a concise sentence within a paragraph (See Research Question below), which identifies the goal of the study and sets the direction for the study. The statement of the problem serves as the basis from which the purpose of the study is drawn. You should be able to accomplish this in one concise paragraph. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the problem clearly and concisely stated in one sentence?
- Is the problem, as stated, researchable?
- Is it free of my bias and opinion?

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose statement should tell the reader the reason for the study. In other words, it should tell the reader exactly what is to be achieved. You should be able to accomplish this in one concise paragraph. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the problem significant enough to warrant a formal research effort?
- Does it clearly and concisely state what you hope to achieve?
- Is it free of my bias and opinion?

### Theoretical Framework

The contents of the theoretical framework should support the statement of the problem through a brief discussion of the various theories, ideas, concepts, or situations proposed by other researchers related to the research topic. At this point in your research, you should have identified at least ten articles specific to your problem. In other words, theories, ideas, concepts, or situations that you intend to replicate, expand on, challenge, etc. You should be able to accomplish this in one or two paragraphs. Ask yourself this question:

- Is the relationship of the problem to previous research clearly stated?
- Have I concisely framed my research within the theories, ideas, concepts, or situations proposed by other who have investigated the same problem?
- Again, have I summarized the work of relevant scholars who have contributed to the topic (at this initial point you should have about 10 citations)?

### Research Design

Describe how you intend to conduct your research. Specifically, describe how you will secure and analyze your data. You should be able to accomplish this in one or two paragraphs.

### Research Question

Please restate the research question in one concise sentence that you introduced in the *Statement of the Problem Section*. Explain if it is a descriptive, differentiation, relationship, or historical



research question (See below). A “research question” proposes a relationship between two or more variables or describes some phenomenon. Just as the title states, it is structured in the form of a question. There are four types of research questions:

- A *descriptive* research question seeks to identify and describe some phenomenon.  
*An example: What is the ethnic breakdown of patients seen in the emergency room for non-emergency conditions?*
- A *differentiation* research question asks if there are differences between groups on some phenomenon.  
*For example: Do patients who receive massage experience more relief from sore muscle pain than patients who take a hot bath?*
- A *relationship* question asks if two or more phenomena are related in some systematic manner.  
*For example: If an individual increases his level of physical exercise does muscle mass also increase?*
- *Historical research* is similar to descriptive research but asks a question about historical events that will be explored, explained, and illuminated by your investigation.  
*For example: Did the activities of San Francisco’s vigilante committees of the 1850s lead to a more civil society or a more lawless society?*

### Literature Review

The initial literature review summarizes pertinent problems, methods, and findings of other investigations. A good proposal should contain at least ten sources in your initial literature review; of course, your final paper will contain many more sources when it is completed. Importantly, it should analyze the strengths, weakness, agreements or disagreements with other findings. Review Galvan’s (2006), very informative book –*Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

### Sources Cited

You should have at least ten initial sources (i.e. referred journal articles, government documents, or professional publications) cited in your proposal. Of course, as you explore your topic you will certainly assemble many more sources. Use APA citation format.

Visit the Hamersly Library Homepage for style and citation guides.

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After the Graduate Coordinator has reviewed the student’s proposal, he/she will help them select a faculty member with expertise in their chosen area of concentration, who will serve as the Comprehensive Exam Chair and mentor the student through the exam process.

## WRITING YOUR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Your comprehensive exams are essentially three “term papers” (for lack of a better description), one that answers a question about social science research methods (CJ-660), one that answers a question about theories of crime and delinquency, and one that answers a question in an area of concentration, which you choose (CJ-606).

There are a number of books available on how to write term papers or essays. We recommend that you review the following book (See below), which is available electronically at Hamersly library. Use it as a general resource and guide while writing your papers.

Turley, Richard (2000), *Writing Essays: A Guide for Students in English and the Humanities*

### Setting for the Exam

Students must file an Application for Completion of Master's Degree with the Graduate Office at least one term prior to completion. After the Graduate Office receives this request and verifies that the student has enough credits, they will notify the Criminal Justice Graduate Coordinator. At this point, the Criminal Justice Graduate Coordinator will take the following steps:

1. Confirm that the student has submitted his/her research proposal (CJ-608) and it was approved.
2. Email the student the final comprehensive exam questions (they will closely parallel the questions you received in CJ-612 and CJ-660). This will include one question for criminological theory (CJ-660), one for research methods class (CJ-612).

### Submitting the Answers to Your Comp Questions

Students will answer the comprehensive exam questions and submit (email) them to the Criminal Justice Graduate Coordinator as three separate Microsoft Word documents before 5:00pm on the final day of Comprehensive Exams. Comprehensive exams are held three times each year –Fall, Winter, and Spring Terms. See the Graduate Calendar for exact dates. Comprehensive exams are not held Summer Term. Each document must have page numbers, be double spaced, typed in #12 fonts, and conform to the following format:

#### *Title page*

- Your name
- “V” number
- A contact phone number
- Date
- Exam topic, (i.e. Criminological Theory CJ-660, Research Methods CJ-612, or Area of Concentration, CJ-606)

#### *Section One*

- Restate the question

#### *Section Two*

- Answer the question in the form of a Term Paper.
- While there is no minimum page number requirement, most papers in the past have averaged 20 to 30 pages in length.
- Use extensive citations to support your observations and conclusions. In fact, almost every paragraph should end with a citation that supports its content.

#### *Section Three*

- References

## Grading

Grading for the exam (each answer) will be based on the following criteria:

- Grammar (syntax, sentence structure, and language rules) 10%
- Presentation (clear and logical writing style) 10%
- Content (answer the question(s) completely) 60%
- Paraphrased (use a minimum of direct quotations) 10%
- Cite sources using APA or MLA citation format 10%

Students who receive a grade of 80/100, or less, on an exam will be given a program of self-study. After this course of study, they may retake the area(s) failed at another regularly scheduled examination date. Students may retake the written comprehensive examinations only once.