Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

Planning Your Course of Study and Selecting an Exit Options:
(Thesis, Professional Project, and 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.

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 (17 credits):

- **CJ-608** Graduate Studies Workshop
- **CJ-612** Research Methods
- **CJ-617** Criminal Justice Administration and Organizational Behavior
- **CJ-619** Ethics and Leadership in Criminal Justice
- **CJ-660** Theory and Research in Crime and Delinquency

Academic Orientation
Students must take CJ-608, “Graduate Studies Workshop,” during their first term. This one-unit course (which is offered each term) introduces students to the methods, theories, and strategies of graduate study, to the online resources available at Hamersly Library, and to our online delivery platform-Moodle. It also serves as a point of initial academic advising wherein students will decide on an exit strategy, write a preliminary exit proposal, and begin the process of selecting a graduate advisor/committee.

The professional core is your gateway to graduate study. These courses may be taken in any order. Collectively, they will provide you with a solid understanding of the methods (CJ-612) and theories (CJ-660) that are employed in social science research. In fact, concepts and
strategies that you will apply as you complete your chosen exit strategy (CJ-603 or CJ-606). You will also study how bureaucracies function (CJ-617), including the ethical standards that guide the institutions (and practitioners) of criminal justice (CJ-619).

We strongly recommend that you take CJ-612 and CJ-660 during your first or second terms in the program. You will find yourself at a distinct disadvantage if you take them later. You must have CJ-612 and 660 completed prior to taking comprehensive exams. Note that comprehensive exams are offered in the middle of your completion term, so you will need to complete these two classes before your last term in the program.

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), a professional paper (CJ-603), or comprehensive exams (CJ-606). The remainder of this document will help you select and implement your exit strategy.

Four Important Time-Sensitive Requirements

1. You should select a general area of concentration (policing, courts, or correction) during your first term. This is not essential, but it will certainly help focus your studies.
2. You should select an exit option (thesis, professional paper, or comprehensive exams) during your first term.
3. You must submit an “Exit Proposal” (a component of your CJ-603 or CJ-606 credits) that defines your chosen exit option. This document must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator before the end of your second term.
4. You must submit an “Academic Term Progress Report” (a component of your CJ-603 or CJ-606 credits) to the Graduate Coordinator and the Program Manager at the end of each term. This report must summarize your academic progress and describe your planned activities for the coming term. (See Appendix A at the end of this document.)

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 and students who elect to take comprehensive exams. Specifically, a candidate will not be considered “ready” to set for their exams until they have submitted their Exit Strategy Proposal and it is approved (this should be done during the first or second term of study) and they have completed CJ-612 and CJ-660.

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, 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, 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 Option
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 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.

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/or 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, 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 Strategy Proposal (2 to 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 Exit Strategy 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).

Exit Strategy Proposal Format (Thesis):

- Introduction
  - A general introduction to the subject area leading to a specific statement defining your particular area of interest within the subject area
  - Explain what you expect to learn.
  - Define the scope of your investigation.
- Research Strategies
  - Provide a detailed plan of how you propose to organize and conduct your research (a tentative timeline would be very helpful).
  - Provide a one sentence hypothesis statement, which predicts a relationship between two variables that proposes a possible explanation to some phenomenon or event. This is the center piece of your proposal. Remember, you must have access to your variables (data) and you must be able to measure the predicted relationship. (See sample hypothesis below.)
“If membership in a youth street gang is a predictor of high school drop-out rates, then students who were gang members will have lower graduations rates than students who were not members of a gang.”

- Brief summary (annotated bibliography) of the literature you have located to date. Of course, your literature review will grow substantially as you pursue your topic.

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.

We recommend that you review the following book (See below), which is available electronically at Hamersly library (http://library.wou.edu/record=b1358351~S9), before you begin work on your thesis and use it as a guide during your research and while writing of your thesis.

PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

Professional Project Option
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.

Exit Strategy Proposal
Students who elect to conduct a professional project must first submit an Exit Strategy Proposal (2 to 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 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).

Exit Strategy Proposal Format (Professional Paper):

- Introduction
  - A general introduction to the subject area leading to a specific statement defining your particular area of interest within the subject area
  - Explain what you expect to learn.
  - Define the scope of your investigation.
- Research Strategies
  - Provide a detailed plan of how you propose to organize and conduct your research (a tentative timeline would be very helpful).
• Brief summary (annotated bibliography) of the literature you have located to date. Of course, your literature review will grow substantially as you pursue your topic.

After the Graduate Coordinator has reviewed your proposal, he/she will help you 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 your paper should follow the guidelines offered below and not those offered in WOU Graduate Thesis Manual, which is designed for a thesis project.

We recommend that you review the following book (See below), which is available electronically at Hamersly library (http://library.wou.edu/record=b1302563~S9), before you begin work on your professional paper and use it as a general resource and guide during your research and while writing your professional paper. It is designed for authors who are writing for publication in academic journals, but it also offers great insight for professional writing.

• Murray, Rowena (2005), Writing for Academic Journals

Chapter 1

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

• Purpose
  A statement of the purpose of the project explains why it was attempted and the contributions it makes to the 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.

• Conceptual framework
  Explain how the project is related to prior work in the field, be specific. Introduce the reader to the design of the study.

• Significance
  Explain the significance of the project. Is it informational, persuasive, or instructional?

• Limitations
  If applicable, present and discuss the content limitations with regard to resources, time, and so forth.
- 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 offer an in depth description of every aspect of the project, specifically how it was conducted, compiled, or created, etc. It should be significantly detailed and describe the format and technique used in to complete the investigation. Techniques, questionnaires, interviews, study sites, and other material should be described here.

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
  Conclusions should validate both the need for the study and explain how the present study responded to that need.

- Recommendations
  Recommendations should include comments regarding content, technique, and how your project might contribute to the professional community.
References
Cite references according to the department style guide (APA is recommended), and be sure to include every source cited in the study, including material that has been adapted for use in tables and figures.

Appendices
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 drawn from 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 2 to 4 page 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.

Exit Strategy Proposal Format (Comp Exam):

- Introduction
  - A general introduction to the subject area leading to a specific statement defining your particular area of interest within the subject area
  - Explain what you expect to learn.
  - Define the scope of your investigation.
- Proposed Comp Question
  - In one sentence, state your research question (this will serve as your area of concentration comp question)
  - Example question: “Are contract police services with a county’s sheriff’s office more or less expensive than establishing a police department in a newly established city of 15,000 residents?”
- Research Strategies
  - Provide a detailed plan of how you propose to organize and conduct your research (a tentative timeline would be very helpful).
- Preliminary Literature
  - Brief summary (annotated bibliography) of the literature you have located to date. Of course, your literature review will grow substantially as you pursue your topic.
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 Answers**  
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 your choose (CJ606).

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 (http://site.ebrary.com/lib/westernoregon/docDetail.action?docID=5004104). Use it as a general resource and guide while writing your papers.


**Setting for the Exam**  
As a component of their CJ-606 coursework, and before setting for comprehensive examinations, students will be required to submit an extensive annotated bibliography of readings that were used to illuminate and explore their area of concentration.

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 Coordinator. At this point, the Criminal Justice Coordinator will take the following steps:

1. Confirm that the student has submitted the above mentioned annotated bibliography.

2. Send (email) the student the final comprehensive exam questions (they will closely parallel the questions you received in CJ-660, CJ-612, and CJ-606). This will include one question for criminological theory (CJ-660), one for research methods class (CJ-612), and one question that illuminate the student’s area of concentration (CJ-606).

**Submitting the Answers to Your Comp Questions**  
Students will answer the comprehensive exam questions and submit (email) them to the Criminal Justice Coordinator as three separate Microsoft Word documents before 12:00pm on the final day of Comprehensive Exams. 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.
MASTER OF ARTS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
(Appendix A) 
“Academic Term Progress Report”

Instructions
At the end of each Academic Term, please complete all sections of this form. Make a copy of your report, which should be titled “Progress Report…” (For example – Progress Report, Fall12, Smith), and email it to the Graduate Coordinator (gingert@wou.edu) and the Criminal Justice Program Manager (menearc@wou.edu).

Progress Report for Term:
Check the appropriate box, fill in the year, and delete the others
[ ] Fall 20--
[ ] Winter 20--
[ ] Spring 20--
[ ] Summer 20--

Name:

V-number:

Email address (you must use your WOU email):

Phone number:

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<tr>
<th>Exit Strategy Coursework</th>
<th>In the appropriate box below, offer a brief statement about your academic progress and describe your planned activities for the coming</th>
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13 Revised: August 12, 2014
**Thesis (CJ-603)** You must take at least one credit per term, to be consider enrolled, if you are not taking another course.

**Professional Paper (CJ-603)** You must take at least one credit per term, to be consider enrolled, if you are not taking another course.

**Comprehensive exam (CJ-606)** You must take at least one credit per term, to be consider enrolled, if you are not taking another course.

**Electives (Select 6)** Remember, only 50% of your coursework may be taken at the 500 level. See the Course Catalog for complete course descriptions. Check the courses you have taken to date.

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