



**Graduate Student Handbook
Master of Science in Criminal Justice
Department of Criminal Justice and Social Work
University of Houston - Downtown**

2021

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Master of Science in Criminal Justice

INTRODUCTION

This *Handbook* is intended to serve as a guide to successful completion of the MSCJ degree at the University of Houston - Downtown. This guide contains information about degree requirements, transfer credit, academic standards, and planning for and registering for classes. This degree-specific handbook is intended as a supplement to the UHD [Graduate Catalog](#) and the general [UHD Student Handbook](#), which is a resource for addressing numerous academic issues, financial issues, policies, and also outlines various services available to the UHD student body.

The topics below should answer many of your questions about the MSCJ program and the various policies and procedures that guide this program. Should any discussion in this guide conflict with the University Graduate Catalog requirements, the Catalog supersedes this information. However, be aware that the program may be changed or policies may be modified by the Departmental Graduate Committee or the Graduate Program Director. In that event, students will have the option of selecting the new program. In cases where the information provided here builds upon, or adds to, the University Graduate Catalog requirements, the information herein represents binding departmental and program policy.

It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the rules, policies, and requirements of the MSCJ program, the Department of Criminal Justice and Social Work, and the University of Houston – Downtown. **It is the responsibility of the student to know and follow all policies, timelines, and deadlines to allow for successful completion of the program and a timely graduation.**

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Science in Criminal Justice is a 36-hour degree. Both thesis and non-thesis options require that you complete the following core for a total of 18 credit hours:

CJ 6310	Issues in Criminal Justice
CJ 6320	Research Design and Methods
CJ 6321	Quantitative Analysis in Criminal Justice
CJ 6330	Advanced Criminology
CJ 6340	Administration in Criminal Justice
CJ 6322	Program Evaluation
OR	
CJ 6324	Policy Analysis

Thesis Option

Students who elect the thesis option must take 18 credit hours of core courses, 12 credit hours of elective courses, 3 hours of Thesis I (CJ 6390) and 3 hours of Thesis II (CJ 6391). All 18 core credits must be successfully completed before requesting enrollment in Thesis I. Thesis students must follow the requirements outlined in the Master's Thesis Guide that is available on the MSCJ website.

Project Option

Students who select the project option must take 18 credit hours of core requirements, 15 credit hours of electives, and 3 hours of the Criminal Justice Project Course (CJ 6301). All 18 core credits must be successfully completed before a student will be allowed to enroll in CJ 6301. A Project Guide is provided and available on the MSCJ website.

ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

All admitted students must complete the Academic Honesty Commitment form and receive academic advising prior to registering for their first semester.

Students granted conditional admission to the MSCJ degree program must earn grades of B or better in their first 9 credit hours, or they will be dismissed from the program. During those first 9 credit hours, conditionally admitted students are limited to core courses and must seek academic advising each semester until their conditional status is removed.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Students must submit official transcripts from all colleges or universities attended as a part of the admission process. An evaluation will be performed upon acceptance to the university. Course work transferred or accepted for credit toward a graduate degree must represent collegiate course work relevant to the MSCJ degree, with course content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least equivalent to those students enrolled in the MSCJ degree program.

Acceptance of Transfer Credit

Six semester hours of master's level credit from another regionally accredited institution may be transferred into the MSCJ degree plan, subject to petition to, and approval from, the Graduate Program Director. A minimum grade of "B" is required in any such courses for transfer credit. Transfer credit will not be granted for courses in which grades of C or lower have been earned. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the petition and justify the acceptance of the courses. Please keep in mind that transfer credit is by permission only and is not a right of the student.

Transferring Credits from Other Countries

Students applying for admission with college credits from other countries must submit an evaluated transcript from a credential evaluation service recognized by the university. The Graduate Program Director will consider granting transfer credit based on the recommendations of the evaluating service.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

A minimum of 3.0 cumulative grade point average is required to graduate. In order to remain in good academic standing graduate students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average. Grades earned at other institutions and transferred into the UHD graduate degree program are not calculated when determining a student's academic standing.

A student may enroll for a course a second or subsequent time and have it counted toward that semester's load. All credit hours attempted as part of a graduate degree will be calculated in the GPA and used in determining academic standing. If a student repeats a course as a student enrolled in a graduate program, both grades are calculated in the GPA.

Grades Resulting in Dismissal from the Program

Students who receive a grade of C or lower in 9 cumulative semester hours, or who receive a single grade of "D" or "F" in a graduate class, are ineligible for a master's degree and will be dismissed from the program. Dismissed students are not permitted to re-enroll.

Academic Probation & Suspension

Failure to maintain a 3.0 average will result in academic probation. Students who are on academic probation must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA on course work each subsequent semester until the grade point deficiency is removed. Failure to earn a 3.0 GPA while on academic probation will result in suspension from the university. Academic suspension is noted permanently on a student's academic record. Suspended students may not enroll in or audit classes at the university.

Reinstatement

Students who have been suspended may apply for reinstatement after one year of non-enrollment. Graduate courses completed at another university during a period of suspension at UHD will not be counted for credit at UHD. Students permitted to re-enroll remain on academic probation under the same conditions as previously described.

Reinstatement is not automatic. Petitioners must submit a written petition to the Graduate Program Director explaining the reasons they believe they can successfully meet the requirements of the degree.

Incomplete Grades

As stated in the [UHD Student Handbook](#), a grade of Incomplete is given only when students have completed a significant portion of the course requirements and have a documented emergency prevents the student from completing the remaining course requirements.

The student and the instructor must enter into a contract that lays out the work to be accomplished and makes note of the timetable for the grade conversion process.

A grade of “Incomplete” must be completed no later than the end of the long semester immediately following the semester in which the grade of Incomplete was given. An Incomplete grade that is not removed by this deadline is automatically converted to an F. If you are enrolled in your final semester, a grade of Incomplete will have the effect of an F and will prevent your graduation.

In Progress Grades

Students who register for the CJ 6301 Criminal Justice Project or CJ 6391 Thesis II, but do not complete the written manuscript as agreed upon by the student and chair or committee, may be issued a grade of “in progress” (IP). If a student receives an IP, they must reenroll in the CJ 6301 or CJ 6391 until course requirements are completed. Students are limited to only one IP while working on the project course (see below for Thesis). Students must be enrolled in order to receive a grade.

Leave of Absence

Students may request a leave of absence for one or two semesters for any reason by submitting a written request to the Asst. Director of Graduate Studies.

Inactive Students

Students who are inactive (not enrolled in MSCJ courses) for two long (fall or spring) consecutive semesters will be required to reapply to the University to be considered

for readmission. Application files will be reviewed by the MSCJ Admissions Committee.

ADVISEMENT

The MSCJ Program Director and/or Assistant Director of Graduate Studies can assist graduate students in selecting courses and advise them on their progress toward degree completion. New graduate students must meet with the Program Director before beginning course work to establish an academic plan. The Graduate Program Director will review graduate transfer hours and address undergraduate preparation work for students who do not hold an undergraduate Criminal Justice degree.

After completing the first semester, graduate students may request advisement from the Graduate Program Director or Assistant Director of Graduate Studies as necessary. Students are responsible for regularly tracking their progress toward degree completion through the Degree Progress Report available in [MyUHD 2.0](#).

COURSE LOADS

A full course load at the graduate level is considered 3 classes (9 semester credit hours). The university generally recommends a 6-hour course load for part-time graduate students, and due to university financial aid restrictions, MSCJ students seeking financial aid must take a minimum of six semester hours. Full-time or part-time graduate status does not exist during the summer, although the university imposes limits on summer enrollment.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MAKING COURSE ENROLLMENT DECISIONS

Students may enroll in up to four courses during any regular semester. The table below, outlining the general course rotation, can help you plan out your coursework. Core classes are offered each semester, though they are rotated between online and face-to-face modalities.

Electives are also offered each semester, however, elective topics change frequently and may not be announced until registration begins, therefore they are not included in the course rotation calendar below.

Students are able to register in either online or face-to-face modalities, or in a combination of both. Students are encouraged to take at least a portion of their courses face-to-face, when feasible. In some cases, scholarships and other tuition funding restrictions, such as students receiving 100 Club scholarships or utilizing veteran benefits, mandate that at least some of their courses be taken face-to-face. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any requirements regarding course modality and plan their course map accordingly.

COURSE ROTATION

There are no MSCJ courses offered over the winter or May mini-mesters.

Fall 2020	Face-to-Face	CJ6310	Fall 2021	Face-to-Face	CJ6310
		CJ6320			CJ6320
		CJ6330			CJ6324
		Elective(s)			Elective(s)
	Online	CJ6321		Online	CJ6321
		CJ6340			CJ6330
		CJ6324			CJ6340
		Elective(s)			Elective(s)
Spring 2021	Face-to-Face	CJ6321	Spring 2022	Face-to-Face	CJ6321
		CJ6340			CJ6330
		CJ6322			CJ6340
		Elective(s)			Elective(s)
	Online	CJ6310		Online	CJ6310
		CJ6320			CJ6320
		CJ6330			CJ6322
		Elective(s)			Elective(s)
Summer 2021	Online	Elective(s)	Summer 2022	Online	Elective(s)
	Face-to-Face	Elective(s)		Face-to-Face	Elective(s)

Additional considerations for planning your courses:

1. CJ6320 (Research Design and Methods) **must** be taken before CJ6321 (Quantitative Analysis in Criminal Justice)
2. You must complete your core courses **before** registering for your project or thesis courses.
3. Summer courses are not guaranteed.
4. Should you miss a core class in your preferred modality, you may have to wait a year for it to be offered again.

It is recommended that you consult with the Program Director or the CPS Assistant Director of Graduate Studies prior to registration.

Thesis Option

Students electing the thesis option are required to register for a minimum of three hours per long semester (Fall and Spring) including the semester in which the thesis is submitted and accepted by the university. Therefore, a student who has completed their coursework and already taken Thesis I (CJ 6390) and Thesis II (CJ 6391), is required to continuously enroll in Thesis II (CJ 6391) until they successfully defend the thesis. “Thesis in progress” is shown

without a grade for each semester until the semester in which the thesis is graded. A final grade of B or better is required on the completed thesis.

A maximum of 6 semester hours may be applied to the degree plan, although a student may enroll in Thesis II (CJ 6391) a number of times until the degree is granted.

ACADEMIC MODIFICATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws concerning reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student with a disability should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) to file the necessary forms to make arrangements for modification to existing academic requirements, such as modifying the maximum time allowed for graded assignments, incorporating necessary adaptive technology, etc.

UNIVERSITY WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Voluntary Withdrawal from a Course

1. Students may drop a course until the official day of record without having the course appear on their permanent record. That date, which is approximately 2 weeks after the start of the semester, appears on the University Academic Calendar. **No course drops will be allowed after that point.**
2. Withdrawal from a course with a grade of “W” is possible after the official day of record until the last day to withdraw from a course. That date, which is in approximately the 10th week of a semester, appears on the University Academic Calendar. The grade of “W” will appear on the student’s official record but will not be calculated in the GPA.

Drops and withdrawals from courses may affect assistantships, scholarships, graduation, financial aid, membership in organizations, or other opportunities.

APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

Students who plan to graduate from the University of Houston-Downtown must submit a graduation application the semester before their anticipated graduation. Students apply for graduation online through their [MyUHD 2.0](#) account. A graduation fee is charged to the student’s account at the time of submitting the application. If the student does not complete the requirements for the degree within that semester, the application will be denied and application procedures must be repeated. There is no refund of the graduation fee for denied applications. Graduation application deadlines are found in the University Academic Calendar.

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Once you have successfully completed all of the requirements for the MSCJ degree and have applied for graduation, students should order their academic regalia (cap, gown, and hood) to wear at the commencement ceremony. Arrangements for obtaining the appropriate academic regalia may be made through the university bookstore. Deadlines for ordering and paying for regalia are announced for each commencement.