Note: This Handbook is the governing document for your program. Where the University Catalog expressly refers to the Master of Criminal Justice Program, differences between the Catalog and this Handbook should be resolved by the Catalog superseding the conflicting materials. The Handbook is likely to be updated more frequently than the Catalog and each version of the Handbook is dated on the cover. Your official program is established by the version of the Catalog and Handbook current at the time of your enrollment or, in the event of a break in enrollment, your re-enrollment in the Program. If changes are made to the Handbook, you may elect to be held to that subsequent version of the handbook by signing a waiver of your original program and expressly choosing the version to which you wish to change. Such waivers must also be agreed to, and signed, by the Graduate Coordinator.
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Master of Criminal Justice

PROGRAM OVERVIEW
Welcome to the Masters of Science in Criminal Justice Degree Program. This degree combines both practical and theoretical components to support students’ skill development and intellectual growth. The degree program is designed to prepare students with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and leadership skills in the areas of criminological theory, criminal justice planning and administration, and program evaluation and implementation. These skills and knowledge will prepare students to help build a criminal justice system that is effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of the community.

The program requires that all students complete a minimum of 36 semester hours. After the core curriculum of 18 hours is completed, students choose between a thesis or project option.

The Department of Criminal Justice offers degree programs that are unique for their cooperative partnerships with the local criminal justice community. Due in part to University of Houston - Downtown’s (UHD) ideal location near Houston’s courts and other criminal justice facilities, students’ experiences extend beyond the classroom to include internships, research projects, mentoring and networking opportunities that help students succeed in the field of criminal justice.

The Master of Science in Criminal Justice Degree Online is designed to prepare students to become future leaders in the criminal justice system. It integrates the theoretical and practical aspects of crime control as they relate to the adult and juvenile justice systems. The MSCJ degree prepares students for careers in policing, courts, corrections, and a variety of other agencies related to the field. For students already working in the criminal justice field, the degree is designed to lead to career advancement. MSCJ Online courses are offered in eight-week blocks. Admission and degree requirements are the same as those listed for the traditional face-to-face program with the exception that all online students must complete 15 hours of electives and CJ 6301 Criminal Justice Project. Thesis is not an option for online students. MSCJ applicants must indicate whether they intend to complete the program through traditional face-to-face courses for fully online.

The MSCJ faculty are a key strength to the success of the program. They are scholars in the field with extensive publishing records. Additionally, they all have extensive experience in law enforcement, corrections, and the law. MSCJ faculty especially enjoy developing mentoring relationships with students that continue long after graduation. Students are strongly encouraged to join with faculty to learn the research process. Students should consult with the program director and/or discuss possible joint efforts with individual faculty members. One of our goals is to present students the opportunity to participate meaningfully in research and gain experience in generating reports prior to receiving the MSCJ degree.

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 Coordinator. 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.
THE COLLEGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE
The College of Public Service is a community based center for higher learning dedicated to preparing students to enter professional careers in criminal justice and education. It believes that an educated society creates thoughtful policy and humanistic practices for the betterment of its diverse constituents. The College seeks to instill critical thinking skills that nurture in students an appreciation of the use of scientific inquiry to solve the problems of our time and encourages creativity and the development of new ideas. It embraces the professional and personal growth of its faculty, staff and students by promoting intellectual collaboration within the school, university and community at large. The College of Public Service strives to engage in dynamic research that will improve the quality of our area schools and justice institutions, and instill scholarship, integrity and responsibility in tomorrow’s leaders.

GRADUATE EDUCATION
Graduate education is a substantially more challenging level of education than the baccalaureate. Moreover, the MSCJ is a professional degree. You must think critically, think on your own, and have writing skills superior to the average student. Graduate education, in general, is less about the accumulation of information, than it is about learning and developing critical thinking and problem-solving so that the skill-sets and knowledge level of the field are enhanced. This process is what you will take with you as a graduate degree holder and what you will put into practice in your future employment.

The faculty collectively believe that the best graduate program is one that “pushes” its students as much as possible. If we fail to do this, you will not learn as much as you otherwise would have. Expect critical comments to be written on virtually everything you turn in — this is our method of giving you feedback and pushing you to do better. Also expect a great deal of writing; it is this “practice” that develops the skills you need as someone who will hold the MSCJ degree.

A word about grading at the graduate level: Your colleagues in the MSCJ program are all capable of doing work at the "B" (3.0), or higher, grade level in undergraduate-level education. We sincerely hope that remains the case in your graduate work. However, you need to know that our expectations of the quality of your work reflect your graduate status. We expect the average grade to be a "B" (3.0), but we will give you the grade that you earn — this may be an "A" or it may be a "C," "D," or an "F." We do not relish giving the latter grades, but we do give them. The most important element in grading your work is not what you write and contribute to discussions, but the quality of your thought as you do so.

One other thing is important for you to know. The assignments made on course outlines and the readings in the textbooks are considered minimal work. A good student will be searching for corollary materials in the library, and elsewhere, and adding to the breadth of his or her information. (Perhaps you might interpret this as saying that your graded work might reflect such outside work?) Most of you will go on to work in management-level criminal justice positions and this is your chance to prepare yourself with a foundation in the field. Be serious about your education and make the most of this opportunity.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES
Although preferences for admission are individually important, a “holistic” assessment of the applicant will be used in making admission decisions. The agreed-upon definition of “holistic” is
that a composite evaluation of the preferences listed below will be used to admit. No single item
failing to meet an expressed preference will be treated as a disqualifying factor. Admissions will
be competitive and based on the number of students expected to be enrolled for the admissions
period.

Regardless of preference and interpretation, the essential character of the committee’s decisions
will be focused on a determination that there is strong evidence that the applicant will
successfully complete the MSCJ Degree.

Admission Criteria:

Required elements: no application will be considered without the presence of the following
items.

1. Baccalaureate degree conferred by a regionally-accredited institution.
2. Official transcripts, submitted to the Office of Admissions, of all academic work at all
   academic institutions previously undertaken.
3. Three letters of recommendation from individuals acquainted with your academic work
   and academic potential.
4. A personal statement describing why the applicant desires this particular degree.
5. For graduates of universities where English is not the native language: minimum TOEFL
   scores of 550 with section scores of 50 or higher on the paper test. A score of 80 with
   minimums of 20 for each section will be required on the Internet based test.

Preferences:

1. Major or minor in criminal justice or another social science discipline such as sociology
   or psychology. Otherwise, additional preparatory course work will be needed.
2. Undergraduate GPA of 3.0, or higher, on a 4-point scale for final 60 undergraduate
   semester hours.
3. Evidence of scores in the higher percentiles on any of the acceptable standardized
   tests.
4. Letter should demonstrate: strong writing skills; expressed desire to work in the criminal
   justice system at the management level and/or assist in developing criminal justice
   policy; commitment to completing the degree; and strong rationale for wanting this
   specific degree.
5. Letters of recommendation from faculty sufficiently acquainted with the student to be
   able to comment on the potential to successfully complete a graduate program and
   providing evidence of excellent critical thought, motivation, study and writing skills, and
   strong overall faculty recommendation.
6. Completion of a previous master’s degree in any field, from an accredited institution.
8. Authoring of publication(s), either technical, professional or academic.
10. Grant-writing experience.

Prerequisite courses, specifically undergraduate criminology, statistics and research methods
course requirements, are expected to be met prior to beginning coursework.
POST BACCALAUREATE STATUS
A student with a post-baccalaureate status is not a candidate for a graduate degree, nor can he/she enroll in a graduate class without the permission of the graduate coordinator with a recommendation from the graduate admissions committee. Students seeking post-baccalaureate status must apply to the Office of Admissions to be admitted in that capacity. Anyone wishing to change from the post-baccalaureate status to the degree-seeking status must apply for admission into the graduate program. At the discretion of the Admissions Committee, the hours taken as post-baccalaureate may be counted toward the degree.

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 6350 Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation

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 Practicum (CJ 6390) and 3 hours of Thesis (CJ 6391). If you choose the thesis option, you must follow the requirements outlined in the Master’s Thesis Guide section of this Handbook.

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). The Criminal Justice Project requirements are outlined in a later section of this handbook.

Time Limit
The time limit for completion of the degree is seven (7) years from the beginning of the first semester in which credit was earned toward the degree.

TRANSFER CREDIT
Acceptance of 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.

Six semester hours of master’s level credit from another accredited institution may be transferred into the MSCJ degree plan, subject to petition to, and approval from, the Department of Criminal Justice Graduate Coordinator. 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.

After being admitted into the MSCJ program, students should obtain approval from the Graduate Coordinator before taking any courses, with the intent to transfer. Students may take up to 9 graduate hours with post-baccalaureate status. However, these courses will be evaluated by the Graduate Coordinator, and may be limited to 6 hours.

**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 Coordinator will consider granting transfer credit based on the recommendations of the evaluating service.

**ADVISEMENT**

The Graduate Coordinator assists graduate students select courses and advises them on their progress toward degree completion. Majors must meet with the Coordinator before beginning course work to establish an academic plan. The Graduate Coordinator 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 must meet with the Coordinator at least once an academic year to review their academic progress.

A student who elects to take the thesis option will eventually have to select a criminal justice faculty advisor who will serve as the chair of his/her thesis committee. During the first few months as a graduate student, it is important for individuals to become familiar with the faculty. Students should select thesis committee chairs that are interested in the same types of issues as the students are.

**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 grade of “A” is earned when you demonstrate exceptional scholarship
- A grade of “B” is earned when you demonstrate competent scholarship
- A grade of “C” is earned when your work is merely acceptable

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. If you are on academic probation and earn less than a 3.0 semester GPA you will be suspended 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. 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 Coordinator explaining the reasons they believe they can successfully meet the requirements of the degree.

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.

If a student receives a grade of C or lower in 9 cumulative semester hours of credit he/she becomes ineligible for a master’s degree and will not be permitted to re-enroll. Students who receive a grade of “D” or “F” in a graduate class will also become ineligible for a master’s degree and will not be permitted to re-enroll.

The university awards no credit toward the degree for courses in which a student receives a grade below C.

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 the graduating semester, a grade of Incomplete will have the effect of an F.

A grade of Incomplete is given at the instructor’s discretion to students who have been progressing satisfactorily in the course. Incomplete grades are generally given after the withdrawal date but prior to the end of the semester when unusual circumstances prevent students from finishing the course on time.

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. Students on academic probation who have outstanding incomplete grades will remain on probation until the incomplete grades are resolved.

**COURSE LOADS**

The normal full-time course load is 9 to 12 semester hours during regular academic semesters. The minimum number of hours for full-time status is 9. The university generally recommends a 6 hour course load for part-time graduate students. 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**

It is possible for students to be enrolled in the program for 1 to 5 courses during any regular semester. Some general considerations are necessary to ensure that courses are taken in a proper order:

1. Courses will normally be offered once a year. A few exceptions will exist.
2. Some courses are best taken after having had other courses as preparation (e.g., statistics and methods lead to a better understanding of policy analysis and program evaluation).
3. Summer courses cannot be anticipated. Because of normal summer funding limitations, it is possible that any “scheduled” summer course may be cancelled. Further, summer course offerings are designed to maximize enrollment and minimize effect on enrollment in Fall semester classes.

4. Should you miss a course, you may have to wait a year for it to be taught again.

5. It is possible for a scheduled course to be cancelled for various compelling reasons. If this should happen, see the Graduate Coordinator for a possible substitution. Subsequent semester course schedules may be adjusted to minimize harm to enrollment planning.

Always consult with the Graduate Coordinator 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 course-work and already taken Thesis I (CJ 6390) and Thesis II (CJ 6391), is required to continuously enroll in Thesis II (CJ 6391) until he/she has successfully defended 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 Disabled Student Services Office to file an A.D.A. petition form to make arrangements for modification to existing academic requirements (reduced course load, extension of amount of time to graduate, etc.). Modifications that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the program and are not unduly burdensome will be considered.

**UNIVERSITY WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

**Voluntary Withdrawal from a Course**

1. A student may drop a course before the last day to drop courses without having the course recorded on his/her permanent record.

2. Dropping a course will be allowed until approximately 2 weeks after the start of a semester. That date will appear on the University Calendar and will also normally appear on class syllabi. **No course drops will be allowed after that point.**

3. Withdrawal from classes with a grade of “W” is possible until approximately the 10th week of a semester. That date will appear on the University Calendar and will also normally appear on class syllabi. The “W” 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.

**MASTER’S THESIS GUIDE**
What is a Thesis?

A thesis provides master’s students with the opportunity to engage in research and to conduct an in-depth study in a specific area of scholarship. Through the thesis process students should be able to:

- critically read the literature,
- extract principal ideas and concepts,
- integrate and synthesize information from various sources,
- be creative in the development of hypotheses and ideas,
- conduct research using appropriate methodologies and sources,
- appropriately describe research findings,
- draw appropriate inferences from the research, and
- effectively communicate ideas in written and oral form.

There are a variety of acceptable research approaches, including:

- historical or archival research,
- descriptive research,
- program evaluations,
- developmental research,
- case study and field study research,
- qualitative,
- correlational research,
- causal - comparative research,
- experimental & quasi-experimental research,
- empirical research,
- theoretical research, and
- literary & rhetorical research.

Chronology of Events Leading to the Successful Completion of a Thesis
There are a number of steps in the thesis process. The following is a chronological summary of how a thesis develops:

1. The student generates a general idea for a topic.
2. Student meets with various members of the faculty to review the idea and obtain suggestions.
3. Based on these suggestions, the student approaches one of the members of the graduate faculty inviting them to serve as the chair of their thesis committee.
4. In consultation with the thesis chair, the student selects two additional committee members.
5. The student meets with these faculty members and invites them to serve on the committee.
6. The student completes the Thesis Committee Appointment form and submits it to the department chair.
7. The chair and members of a student’s Thesis Committee must be approved by the Criminal Justice Department chair and the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.
8. The student works with the thesis chair to develop a thesis proposal.
9. Once a draft is completed, the thesis proposal is submitted to the committee members for review and feedback.
10. After the feedback has been incorporated into the thesis, the student arranges a date and time with each of the committee members for an oral proposal defense.
11. Student defends the thesis proposal.
12. Upon successful defense of the thesis proposal, the student begins collecting data (if applicable) and prepares a final thesis draft.
13. Upon approval of the thesis chair, the student distributes the final thesis draft to the members of the committee to receive feedback.
14. Once revisions have been completed the student schedules a final thesis defense with members of the committee.
15. The student notifies the Dean of the college as to the date and time of the final defense 14 days prior to the defense.
16. The student orally defends the thesis.

The following pages review the specific elements of the thesis process as well as the policies and procedures associated with the process. Questions related to the process should be directed to your thesis chair.

**THESIS PROCESS AND PROCEDURES**

**Selection of a Topic**
In attempting to identify a topic for a thesis, first and foremost select an area of scholarship that is of interest to you. In addition, it is important to reflect on your personal future career and professional goals. By considering these two issues in the selection of your thesis topic it is more likely you will remain highly motivated and maintain the stamina required for a successful thesis completion.

You are highly encouraged to seek faculty guidance in the formulation of a thesis topic. Faculty members will be able to assist you brainstorming not only the general topic, but also how you will be able to organize and implement your research methodology. Further, members of the faculty may be able to provide direction in the search for relevant literature in the area of your topic.

When you are formulating your topic, you may feel overwhelmed by the endless options available for study. This is not unusual. Keep an open mind. After meeting with a faculty member you may feel that you have yet another great idea. It is alright to change your mind – you will probably change your mind a number of times in trying to find the right topic. The best student is the one that allows themselves to consider all the possible options before making a final decision.
**Thesis Committees**
The thesis committee is responsible for providing feedback and guidance through all phases of the thesis process from topic selection to final oral defense. From the student’s perspective, perhaps the most important function of the thesis committee is to determine what constitutes successful defense of the thesis. Basically, the committee members must decide if the student has demonstrated the highest research standards in the completion of the thesis. With this in mind, it is important to select committee members that can assist you in meeting this standard in the planning and execution phases of the thesis.

**How Do You Invite Faculty to Serve on a Thesis Committee?**

First and foremost, a student must consider whom to select as the chair of their committee. The chair should be a graduate faculty member who has some background in the topic area of interest to the student. Once the chair has been identified and they have agreed to serve, they can assist you in selecting faculty members to fill the remaining seats on your committee.

The thesis is YOUR scholarly work and as such YOU ultimately decide, in consultation with your chair, which faculty will serve on your committee.

**Appointment of the Thesis Committee**

Each thesis committee in the department is composed of three members. The following positions formulate a thesis committee:

- committee chair
- department graduate faculty member*
- department graduate faculty member or faculty member from outside the department*

* it is customary for one of these faculty members to be designated a methodologist/statistician

In rare instances, faculty from another university may serve on your thesis committee. These individuals MUST possess a doctoral degree in order to serve in this capacity and be approved in writing by the chair of the department.

The thesis committee is formally appointed by the Dean of the College of Public Service. In order to officiate the appointment of a committee, the student must complete and acquire the signatures of the proposed members on a Thesis Committee Appointment form (see Appendix A). Starting with the committee chair, each faculty member invited to serve on the committee must sign the form. The form is then routed to the Chair of the department for approval who will in turn forward the form to the Dean of the college for approval.

Any changes to the structure of the committee must be documented on a new Thesis Committee Appointment form and signed by all the members of the committee.
Thesis Hours
Students working on a thesis are allowed to enroll in two thesis courses: CJ 6390 (Thesis I) and CJ 6391 (Thesis II). Students should enroll in CJ 6390 (Thesis I) while working on their thesis proposal and CJ 6391 (Thesis II) while working on the final thesis. Each course is worth 3 credit hours toward your degree.

Thesis Format
There are many different writing formats (MLA, APA, etc.). It is important to establish consistency in format so that all departmental theses appear consistent. In addition, it is beneficial to have one universal style so that students have to learn only one format. The faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice has adopted the format of the most recent version of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Should students find any contradictions between the APA manual and this guide, they should allow this guide to serve as the final authority.

Guidelines for the format of the thesis may vary based on the type of thesis conducted. However, a thesis proposal generally contains the following using the basic American Psychological Association format, the proposal must contain the following elements:

Chapter I- Problem Statement
Discuss the broad problem under which your specific topic lies and narrow the discussion down to your topic. A review of the literature on the general problem is appropriate here. If hypotheses or research questions are appropriate for your thesis, they should be stated here. Explain why this particular piece of research needs to be done. Tell the reader why the thesis needs to be done.

Chapter II- Literature Review
This is the area in which you thoroughly review the literature directly pertinent to your own topic. Your literature review should encompass the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical research on the topic. You should emphasize how your topic and proposal relates to the literature you are reviewing. Your literature review should demonstrate that you are cognizant of the issues and problems surrounding the topic.

Chapter III- Methodology
Discuss the way in which you plan to pursue your study. Begin by describing the research situation such as your method of gathering data and the location of your sample. Enumerate and describe your variables. Explain how they are operationalized. Describe and justify your choice of research method. Determine the limitations of your research design and assess the impact on your study. Describe and justify your choice of analytical tools (statistical methods).

Chapter IV- Results
Introduce the purpose of your research again at this stage. Examine the frequency distribution of your variables. Present the other findings in tables and describe them in the text. You should present the findings that address your first hypothesis or research question, then your second, and so on. Make sure your tables are clear to the reader and follow APA Guidelines. End by summarizing your overall findings, especially in relation to your hypotheses or research questions.
Chapter V - Discussion and Conclusions
In this chapter you write about the results and your conclusions in detail. Interpret the meaning of your results and specify the conclusions you draw from them. Consider the implications of your findings for your problem. Discuss the limitations of your research and its impact on the results. Provide recommendations for future research in this area and policy areas that may be impacted by the results.

Thesis Proposal
A formal written thesis proposal must be prepared and defended before the research study is conducted. Your proposal is written under the guidance of your thesis chair and committee members.

Once the draft proposal is complete, the student distributes a copy of the thesis proposal to each of their committee members. It is customary to provide members of the committee ten days to review and comment on the draft thesis proposal. Once you have received feedback from all committee members, you should incorporate their suggestions into the proposal.

As you are writing the thesis proposal, understand that a well-written proposal will SIGNIFICANTLY aid in the completion of a final manuscript. Invest time early on in organizing and developing your ideas before you write. As you begin to write, pay particular attention not only to the salient points, but the flow and conciseness of the information. There is nothing wrong with requesting a review of a paragraph or a few pages from one of your committee members as long as you do not abuse their time.

Appendix B of this guide provides detailed examples of thesis cover sheets, abstract pages, etc.. These examples should be followed EXACTLY to provide for consistency among theses.

Thesis I Grade
Once the student has successfully defended the proposal, it is the thesis chair’s responsibility to notify the Graduate Coordinator of the defense. The Graduate Coordinator will be responsible for assigning a grade to the student. If the student had received a grade of IP (in Progress) for Thesis I and completes the thesis proposal in a subsequent semester, the thesis chair has the responsibility to notify the Graduate Coordinator of the successful proposal defense. The Graduate Coordinator will complete the Change of Grade Form for CJ 6390.

Oral Defense of Thesis Proposal
Proposals are approved by a unanimous vote of the committee after an oral defense. At an oral defense the student formally presents the thesis proposal to the members of the committee.

Scheduling the Oral Defense
In consultation with the thesis chair, the student schedules a date, time and location for the defense. The student is responsible for contacting each member of the thesis committee to assure the date and time is acceptable. Further, the student is responsible for notifying the Dean of the College Public Service in writing of the date, time, and location of the proposal defense. An example of a written notification can be found in Appendix A. The notice and abstract will be posted as an open invitation to attend the defense by additional faculty and other interested parties in the college.
Additionally, the student is required to complete a Thesis Proposal Defense form (see Appendix A). This form should be completed and presented to the thesis chair at the beginning of the proposal defense. This form serves to notify the Dean that the defense was held and record the outcome of the proposal defense.

**How an Oral Defense Proceeds**

Generally, the chair of the thesis committee opens the defense with a welcome and some comments about the thesis proposal. The student and guests are asked to leave the room to allow the committee members to discuss any issues they have with the proposal prior to the defense. This action allows the committee members to converse collectively for the first time and resolve individual concerns among themselves.

The student and guests are invited back into the room and the student begins to present the thesis proposal. The presentation usually follows the format of the thesis proposal. Students are encouraged to utilize visual aids in their presentations. However, students should not read from the text of the thesis proposal or the visual aids. Many students use outlines or note cards to assist in their presentation. The presentation phase is usually about 30-35 minutes – although this can vary significantly.

Once the student has completed the presentation, they should ask the committee members whether they have any questions. Usually, the chair of the committee recognizes each faculty member that has a question. This allows for a smooth flow of communication. Further, the chair often keeps notes of the questions asked as well as comments or suggestions members of the committee have made regarding modifications to the proposal. This type of assistance by the chair allows the student to remain focused on the questions posed by the committee members. Once the committee members’ questions have been exhausted, the chair of the committee takes questions from the invited quests. The thesis chair will close the defense and ask that the student and guests clear the room. The thesis committee will meet in closed session to evaluate the thesis proposal and the student’s performance during the proposal defense. The committee must reach a unanimous vote on one of three outcomes: failed, passed with modifications, or passed without modification.

Most students pass the proposal defense, but have to make minor modifications. The chair of the committee is responsible for documenting the required changes and communicating these changes in writing to the student. Further, it is the chair’s responsibility to ensure the changes requested by the committee are incorporated into the final copy of the thesis proposal.

Students who fail the proposal defense may be required by the thesis committee to take additional coursework, including directed study, to improve the content of the thesis proposal. A student may only defend a proposal twice. The student may not reschedule a second defense for at least 45 days. When the student is ready to defend the proposal again, they must follow the preceding procedure regarding scheduling and notification.

**Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects Committee)**

Before data is collected from any human subject, the student MUST obtain approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB). Collection of data that requires the active participation of others requires their consent and the approval of the university Institutional Review Board (IRB). Research methods that involve interview(s), surveys (mailed or personally administered), or
experiments involving people fall under IRB guidelines. The University of Houston – Downtown has a Human Subjects Committee or IRB that reviews and considers the ethical treatment of human subjects. Students should consult with the chair of their thesis committee to determine whether or not their research must go before the university IRB and how to expedite this process.

The process includes the submission of the following documents:

- a Human Subjects Request for Review form
- a copy of the final thesis proposal together with any questionnaires or interview schedules
- a copy of the subject’s informed consent from your study

Working with special populations often requires specific safeguards and additional methodological considerations. The human subjects committee will review the proposed research paying particular attention to: 1) vulnerable populations (for example, minors and institutionalized persons, etc.) and 2) sensitive subjects (violations of law, sexuality, "deviant" behaviors, etc.). Further, many students collect data through an institution, school, physician, corporation, agency, etc. In this case, you will need a letter from the person or organization granting you permission to conduct your study. This permission letter must be submitted as part of your request for approval by the IRB. Not providing a letter of permission is one sure way of having your IRB request delayed. Be sure to allow enough time for this aspect of your research.

An advantage of this particular bureaucratic process is that the University of Houston – Downtown would provide for legal defense if you have complaints about your research process by one of your subjects. If you collect human subjects data without University IRB approval, you are on your own legally in what could be a serious matter.

*No student is allowed to begin collecting human subjects data until receiving IRB approval.*

**Writing the Final Thesis**

Once you have collected all of your data, you must begin reporting your findings through an analysis of the data and a discussion of how this data fits with your research question. Keep in mind that a thesis should reflect one’s best scholarship as well as a logical approach to the topic being researched. In this phase of the preparation of the thesis you will focus mostly on the results and discussion sections of your thesis as your proposal has already introduced the problem, reviewed the relevant literature, and outlined your intended methodology (although you must now report what actually happened in relation to the administration of your study).

Converting the proposal to a final manuscript finds the student changing from future tense to past tense and reporting exactly what transpired rather than what they planned on happening. When it comes to research, these are two very different things! The vast majority of work at this point in the process is in preparing the results and discussion sections.

The results and discussion sections must thoroughly and directly address the purpose of the research and the stated research questions. More than any other time, it is important to take advantage of the expertise of your committee members in preparing these sections.
The most difficult issue for a student at this phase in the process is the failure to fully integrate the various components of the thesis, including: the purpose of the study, review of the literature, research questions/hypothesis(es), method, statistical analysis, and conclusions of the study. Always keep consistency and integration in the forefront of your mind.

Once you have a draft of your final thesis, you should meet with your committee chair to review its contents. Your committee chair will advise you as to when you should disseminate your draft to the remaining members of the committee. Upon recommendation from the chair of your committee, you can provide review copies to your committee members. You should allow committee members 14 days to review and provide feedback on your final thesis draft.

The process of writing, receiving feedback, and rewriting may go back and forth a few times. Although it can be very frustrating, it is very common and ensures a quality product when it means the most – at the final defense.

After incorporating the comments and feedback from your committee, you should meet with your committee chair to arrange for a final defense day, time, and location.

**Final Thesis Defense**
You may refer to the preceding section on *Oral Defense of a Thesis Proposal* to guide you on the steps required in organizing and preparing for a final thesis defense. The only difference in policy and procedure is the form you are required to complete for your committee chair – the Final Thesis Defense form (see Appendix A).

**Final Thesis Grade**
Once the student has successfully defended the thesis, it is the thesis chair’s responsibility to notify the Graduate Coordinator of the defense and to assign a letter grade for the thesis. The Graduate Coordinator will be responsible for assigning the grade to the student. If the student had received a grade of IP (in Progress) for Thesis I and completes the thesis defense in a subsequent semester, the thesis chair has the responsibility to notify the Graduate Coordinator of the successful thesis defense. The Graduate Coordinator will complete the Change of Grade Form and instruct the student to apply for graduation.

**Preparation of the Final Thesis**
The following format rules and procedures for theses and their proposals were adopted by the Faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice on October 11, 2001. None of the rules in this guide supersede any University of Houston – Downtown catalogs or other bulletins.

**Deadlines**
Consult the Academic Calendar published in the University class schedule for deadline dates related to completion of a thesis. Failure to meet these deadlines will result in delayed graduation. Also, check with your thesis advisor prior to beginning the thesis for any additional requirements.

Any questions not answered by this guide or the current Master’s Student Handbook should be referred to your advisor, research committee chairperson, or the Graduate Coordinator.
Submission for Binding
The original and two copies of the thesis are required. Two (2) copies (a total of three (3) complete manuscripts) and three (3) original signed approval pages (four (4) if you want an original approval page as your own copy) must be submitted to the College of Public Service.

The original and one copy of the thesis is kept by the University for purposes of reference (one of which is a permanent library copy). The third copy is kept by the College of Public Service. Students who wish to have extra copies must contract with a private vendor at the time copies are submitted for binding. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator for information.

Paper and Number of Copies
Use at least 20-pound, 8-1/2 x 11 white bond paper of 100% rag content for the original and one copy. The third copy should be prepared on at least 20-pound paper. In general, laser print, electrostatic copy (such as Xerox quality duplication), multilith, and permaprint are acceptable means of duplication for the required copies. Not acceptable are ozalid, mimeograph, hectographing, or any other fluid processes.

Accompanying Pages
All theses must be accompanied by:

1. One extra copy of Abstract Title Page and an abstract of no more than 150 words.
2. Two extra copies of the thesis Title Page.

Abstracts
Abstracts should not exceed 150 words. An example of the format of an abstract can be found in Appendix B of this guide.

Clarification of APA Style Guidelines for Theses

Margins
Left, 1-1/2"; Right, 1"; Bottom, 1”; Top, 1” (you must have a 1-1/2” left margin for binding)

Pagination

There are two sets of page numbers in the thesis or dissertation. The preliminary pages (the title page, up to the body of the paper) should be numbered with small (lower case) Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page. The second set of numbers, Arabic numerals, begin with the first page of Chapter I (introduction) and continue throughout the paper, references and appendices.

Every page of the paper (except a blank cover page) is assigned a number, although that number may not be typed on the face of every page.
For example in the set of Roman numerals, the title and approval pages are given numbers, but do not appear on the pages. Thereafter, any division (i.e., abstract, table of contents, etc.) that has only one page must show a number on that page.

Any division of two or more pages should show numbers beginning with the second page. In the event that a page showing a figure lacks space for a legend, a facing page may be utilized.

In the set of Arabic numerals, the first page of any major division (e.g., the first page of Chapter I, the first page of Chapter II, the first page of the references, etc.) does not have the number typed on it, but the page is included in the numbering. The pages are numbered consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, using Arabic numerals. NO ARABIC NUMERALS SHOULD EVER APPEAR AT THE BOTTOM OF A PAGE BEYOND THE PRELIMINARY PAGES.

Tables and Figures

Tables and figures are to appear in the text. Each table may appear on a separate page or within the paragraphs of the text. The form of the table is to follow the specifications in the APA Manual. Each table is to be listed as follows in the "List of Tables." The List of Tables begins on a new page following the Table of Contents.

LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics for ITBS Scores ........................................... 47</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>… etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each Figure is to be listed as follows in the "List of Figures" (or Illustrations). The List of Figures follows the List of Tables on a new page.

LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Flowchart of Multivariate Analysis Decisions ................................. 34</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Diagram of Hypothesized Factor Structure ..................................... 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>… etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

The list of references follows the form suggested in the APA Publications Manual and appears at the end of the text. Use the appropriate title - "References." See APA Manual for further details. A list of reference notes is not generally a part of a thesis.

Appendix (dices)

Each appendix should be identified with a capital letter of the alphabet, beginning with "A." A cover sheet should be provided for each appendix with the appendix letter and title centered in the middle of the page. For example:

APPENDIX A

INTERCORRELATION MATRIX OF VARIABLES

(Note: the cover page to the appendix does not have a page number typed on it, although it does have a page number assigned to it. This assigned number appears in the Table of Contents. The list of appendices appears at the end of the Table of Contents. See sample Table of Contents, for specific form.)

Thesis Page Order

The following page order should be maintained:

Cover Page (one blank sheet of paper)

Copyright Page (Optional) (Copyright by _____, show month and year of graduation)

Title Page (show month and year of graduation as date)

Signature Page (original and copies must have the ORIGINAL signatures of the committee and the Dean) (show month and year of graduation)

Acknowledgment (Optional)

Abstract Title Page (show month and year of graduation)

Abstract

Table of Contents
List of Tables

List of Figures (or Illustrations)

Text (Chapters)

References

Appendix (dices) (if applicable)

Final page (one blank sheet of paper)

Unless otherwise instructed, dates should be recorded as the month and year you will graduate. For example, if you graduate in December of 2010 then you would record the date as “December, 2010”.

Page Samples

Appendix B provides examples for the construction of the required pages in a master’s thesis:

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROJECT**

Under the direction of a faculty supervisor, the student will design a project to address a criminal justice agency problem or criminal justice system issue. Project requirements include a written document incorporating a problem analysis, a comprehensive literature review, and recommendations knowledge gained in the professional seminar hours. Students may receive only one “In Progress” grade. Students must complete the project in the subsequent term. The form of the project is expected to be negotiated as a product of the student’s interests, the technical format outlined by the Project supervisor, and the expectations of any outside constituencies participating in the project. The project is not intended to be comparable to a thesis. The written length of a project would be expected to reflect the size required for a thorough exploration of a problem, with proposed solutions. The content would normally encompass the presentation of the problem, a review of existing literature on similar problems, analysis of how that literature applies to the instant problem, and proposed solutions.

**Purpose of the Project Course**

The purpose of this course is to provide MSCJ students with an opportunity to complete a significant product that serves as the culminating experience to the student’s graduate program of study. The student will accomplish one of the following learning objectives: 1) Apply the skills and knowledge developed in the MSCJ program to analyze a legal issue and propose recommendations to address the issue; or 2) apply the skills and knowledge developed in the MSCJ program to analyze criminal justice policies and propose recommendations to modify the policy; or 3) apply the skills and knowledge developed in the MSCJ program to develop plans, programs, or policies in criminal justice agencies; or 4) apply the skills and knowledge developed in the MSCJ curriculum to develop solutions to the specific problems of criminal justice agencies.
Project Requirements
Successful completion of the Criminal Justice Project requires completion of the following steps:

1. **Selection of Project Supervisor:** The student will choose or request a project supervisor from the graduate faculty in the department of criminal justice.

2. **Project Proposal:** Students must write and submit a five-page project proposal. The proposal should outline the purpose of the project, discuss the methods to collect information, and describe the potential benefit to the criminal justice system or to specific criminal justice agencies. The proposal must be approved by the project supervisor and the Graduate Coordinator of the MSCJ degree program.

3. **Written Project Document:** Students must produce a written project document. The document must conform to the American Psychological Association style requirements.

4. **Final Approval:** Successful completion of the Criminal Justice Project requires the approval of the project supervisor.

5. **Project Grades:** Students who enroll in the Project Course will receive a grade of “A”, “B”, “C”, “D” or an “F” if students receive a grade of In Progress (IP), they must reenroll in the project course.

Written Project Document
In order to develop uniformity in project reports, the following criteria are to be followed:

1. Paper must be a high cotton content bond paper, at minimum a 20-pound rag bond.
2. Margins should be 1 and a half inches on all sides (top and sides).
3. Font should be Times Roman or an equivalent.
4. Point size should be 12.
5. Tables and figures may have smaller font sizes, but must remain legible.
6. Citation format to be followed is APA.

Cover page should include:
- Title of project
- Name of candidate/author
- Statement that the project is “In fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Security Management”
- Date of completion (date of project supervisor approval)
- Name and signature line for the Dean, College of Public Service
- Executive summary of no more than 2 pages should follow the Title page.

Examples of Criminal Justice Projects
Criminal Justice Projects might encompass the development of a policy and procedure manual for agencies (minor revision of an existing manual would not qualify); an organizational or personnel analysis that includes important written components; being principal author on a major final report for an externally funded grant; a legal analysis of an issue or policy with potential to impact the criminal justice system; and a policy analysis not involving original research; or other endeavors that will yield a comparable product.
APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION
Students who plan to graduate from the University of Houston-Downtown must file an application for graduation with the College of Public Service. Students should apply for graduation within the semester they plan to graduate. The Application for Graduation Form may be obtained from the College of Public Service Office of Advisement. Deadlines for filing applications are announced in the academic calendar published in each class schedule. A graduation fee is required at the time of filing the application. If the student does not complete the requirements for the degree within that semester, application procedures must be repeated.

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES
Only those MSCJ students who complete all degree requirements and file an application for graduation on time, within the College of Public Service, may participate in commencement exercises. The final decision on eligibility for graduation and participation in commencement exercises rests with the Dean of the College of Public Service.

Students participating in commencement must wear academic regalia. 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.
Appendix A

Forms Associated with the Administration of a Thesis

The following forms should be completed using a word processor using 12 point Times Roman font with one-inch margins on all four sides.
Thesis Committee Appointments

[Insert “New Appointment” or “Revised Appointment”]

TO: Dr. _____________________________
    Dean of the College of Public Service

FROM: Members of the Faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice

RE: [Insert Your Name as it Appears on Student Records]
    Student Identification Number: [Insert Your Student ID Number]

We, the undersigned members of the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice, agree to serve as members of the thesis committee of the above referenced graduate student.

The topic for the thesis is [insert a descriptive topic here].

Signed:

[Insert Committee Chair Name Here, Ph.D.] Signature Date

[Insert Committee Member Name, Ph.D.] Signature Date

[Insert Committee Member Name, Ph.D.] Signature Date

I recommend the appointment of the above thesis committee:

[Department Chair] Signature Date

Approved:

Dr. _____________________________ Signature Date
    Dean of the College of Public Service

TO: Dr. ____________________
Dean of the College of Public Service

FROM: [Insert Committee Chair’s Name, Ph.D.]
Department of Criminal Justice

[Insert Student Name as it Appears on University Records]

TITLE: [Insert Title of Thesis]

This is to advise you of the upcoming [Insert “Thesis Proposal Defense” or “Final Thesis Defense”] of the above referenced graduate student. Please find attached a copy of the student’s thesis abstract for posting.

DATE OF DEFENSE: [Insert date using Day of Week, Month, Day, and Year]

TIME OF DEFENSE: [Insert time of defense with a.m. or p.m.]

LOCATION OF DEFENSE: [Insert the room number of the conference room used]

Signed:

[Insert Name of Committee Chair, Ph.D.] Signature Date

TO: Dr. ___________________
Dean of the College of Public Service

FROM: [Insert Committee Chair’s Name, Ph.D.]
Department of Criminal Justice

[Insert Student Name as it Appears on University Records]

TITLE: [Insert Title of Thesis]

On [Insert date using Day of Week, Month, Day, and Year], the thesis committee met to evaluate the [Insert “thesis proposal” or “thesis”] of the above referenced student. The following conclusion was reached by a unanimous vote of the committee:

_____  Passed

_____  Passed with Minor Modifications

_____  Failed

Signed:

[Insert Committee Chair Name Here, Ph.D.]  Signature  Date

[Insert Committee Member Name, Ph.D.]  Signature  Date

[Insert Committee Member Name, Ph.D.]  Signature  Date

I have reviewed and approve of the findings of the thesis committee:

[Chair of CJ department, Ph.D.]  Signature  Date
Appendix B

Sample Pages for the Preparation of a Master’s Thesis
Copyright

by

[Student Name:  First Middle Initial Last]

December, 2000
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author wishes to acknowledge the members of his thesis committee…
# Sample Table of Contents

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(NOTE: The number of chapters and chapter titles above are for illustrative purposes only. Most theses will have different subheadings and the titles to the subheadings may change as well.)
THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE MIND OF THE SERIAL KILLER

A Thesis Proposal Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Public Service
University of Houston – Downtown

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

[Student Name]

Approved by Thesis Committee:

_______________________________________
Ronald C. Kline, Ph.D., Chairperson

_______________________________________
Marilyn R. Poplar, Ph.D., Committee Member

_______________________________________
Ralph L. Smith, Ph.D., Committee Member

_______________________________________
Ralph L. Smith, Ph.D., Department Chair

December, 2000
SAMPLE THESIS TITLE PAGE

THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE MIND OF THE SERIAL KILLER

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Public Service
University of Houston - Downtown

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by

[Student Name]

December, 2005
THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE MIND OF THE SERIAL KILLER

A Thesis for the Degree

Master of Science

by

[Student Name]

Approved by Thesis Committee:

____________________________________
Ronald C. Kline, Ph.D., Chairperson

____________________________________
Marilyn R. Poplar, Ph.D., Committee Member

____________________________________
Ralph L. Smith, Ph.D., Committee Member

____________________________________
Ralph L. Smith, Ph.D., Department Chair

December, 2005
THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIND OF THE SERIAL KILLER

An Abstract of a Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the College of Public Service University of Houston - Downtown

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

[Student Name]

December, 2005
The abstract of your thesis should begin like this and continue . . . (like this, but should not include more than 150 words.)
MSCJ PROJECT COMPLETION

TO: Beth Pelz, Ph.D.
    Dean, College of Public Service

FROM: [Insert Name of Professor], Ph.D.
      Project Supervisor, CJ 6301 CJ Project

RE: (Student name), (Student No.)

TITLE: (Student name) successfully completed the course requirements for CJ 6360 CJ Project.

Signed:

(Faculty name), Project Supervisor

Barbara Belbot, Ph.D.,
Chair, Criminal Justice Department

Cc: Dean, Chair, Project Supervisor, Student file, Graduate coordinator, Student