

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
Standards for College/University
Criminal Justice/Criminology Master's Degree Programs

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Introduction

These standards acknowledge the accreditation process conducted by each of the regional associations of colleges and schools. These regional agencies accredit the total institution and evaluate the work of criminal justice/criminology programs within those institutions. It is the intent of ACJS through the standards¹ set forth in this document to supplement the regional accreditation process by providing guidance for the internal and external evaluation of criminal justice/criminology programs.

Throughout the standards, ‘program’ refers to criminal justice/criminology degree programs. Following each section of standards is a list of *selected indicators* that should be used by an institution to demonstrate that it meets the standard. The bracket at the end of each indicator denotes the sub-standard(s) it addresses. Institutions may provide evidence of compliance through appropriate indicators not listed in this document.

¹ These standards are a modification of the standards created and adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (MBHE) in 2003. The ACJS thanks Dr. Lynette Robinson-Weening, Associate Vice Chancellor of the MBHE for her assistance and generosity in authorizing ACJS to use and modify the MBHE standards.

Quality Standards for the Master's Degree in Criminal Justice/Criminology

Section A: Program Mission and History

Standards:

- A.1 The program has a stated mission and set of purposes derived from and consistent with the overall mission and purposes of the institution of higher education.

Selected Indicators:

- I-A.a. Statement of program mission and purposes [A.1]
- I-A.b. Statement of institutional mission and purposes [A.1]
- I-A.c. Statement demonstrating how program mission and purpose derived from and is consistent with institution's mission and purpose [A.1]

Section B: Program Structure and Curriculum

Standards:

- B.1 The program clearly specifies and publishes program goals, objectives, and requirements. The institution's mission and purposes are reflected in the specific educational objectives of the program. Requirements for the program are based upon clearly defined and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, methods of inquiry, and intellectual skills pertinent to the study of the causes, consequences, and responses to crime and its interrelatedness to other areas of inquiry.
- B.2 The program design is characterized by sufficient content, breadth, depth, coherence, and rigor appropriate to its higher education level. Individual courses and programs are dynamic and responsive to new developments in the field and modes of inquiry.
- B.3 The program and courses provide an opportunity for reflection and for analysis of the subject matter. Programs and courses offered on other than the usual semester/quarter hour basis or through distance learning modalities (internet, television, video-conferencing, or other means) or through different divisions of the institution (e.g., day division, evening division, continuing education division) demonstrate that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities.
- B.4 The methods of evaluation of student performance are appropriate and consistent with established institutional and academic standards and are comparable to other programs throughout the institution.

- B.5 The broad scope of the field of criminal justice/criminology is reflected in the graduate curriculum and is a balanced presentation of the issues of the field. All master's degree programs must demonstrate that the content areas below are substantively addressed in the curriculum. Individual courses may address multiple content areas.

Table 1: Required Content Areas and Related Topics

Content Area	Related content topics include but are not limited to:
Administration of Justice	Contemporary criminal justice/criminology system, major systems of social control and their policies and practices; victimology; juvenile justice; comparative criminal justice
Corrections	History, theory, practice and legal environment, development of correctional philosophy, incarceration, diversions, community-based corrections, treatment of offenders
Criminological Theory	The nature and causes of crime, typologies, offenders, and victims
Law Adjudication	Criminal law, criminal procedures, prosecution, defense, and court procedures and decision-making
Law Enforcement	History, theory, practice and legal environment, police organization, discretion, and subculture
Research and Analytic Methods	Quantitative-including statistics-and qualitative, methods for conducting and analyzing criminal justice/criminology research in a manner appropriate for graduate students

- B.6 In addition to the content areas above, a graduate program in criminal justice/criminology includes a systematic examination of the issues of diversity in criminal justice/criminology through either specific required courses and/or the integration of these issues within the program's curriculum. Further, programs should provide evidence that students are taught to employ ethical perspectives and judgments in applying this knowledge to related problems and changing fact situations.
- B.7 A variety of criminal justice/criminology electives are available consistent with faculty, resources, and program objectives. Some degree programs will offer

concentrations in specific areas, depending upon the composition of the student body and faculty expertise.

- B.8 Programs may have elective internship opportunities available to graduate students. Measures are taken to ensure that internships are integrated into the academic component of the program and related to educational objectives.
- B.9 The graduate program objectives reflect a high level of complexity, specialization, and generalization. The program has cohesive curricula and requires activities designed to advance the student substantially beyond the levels of knowledge, competence, and educational accomplishments of a baccalaureate degree program. In addition, all students completing graduate degrees in criminal justice have, at a minimum, graduate level courses in criminal justice and/or criminological theory, research methods, and statistics.
- B.10 A master's level criminal justice program requires a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent in graduate level criminal justice and related cognate credits.
- B.11 The graduate program is not offered unless resources and expectations exceed those required for an undergraduate program in criminal justice.

Selected Indicators:

- I-B.a. Statement of program goals and objectives, including those for concentrations and options [B.1]
- I-B.b. Statement of all places where program goals and objectives are published including page numbers, if applicable, and copies of relevant pages of these publications [B.1]
- I-B.c. Indication that the institution's mission and purposes are reflected in the specific educational objectives of the program [B.1]
- I-B.d. Expected learning outcomes for each course [B.1; B.8]
- I-B.e. Demonstration that students' mastery of the program's stated learning objectives and outcomes are formally and systematically assessed prior to completion of the program with documentation of methods and measures utilized [B.1]
- I-B.f. Indication of where objectives of all criminal justice programs are taught in curriculum and how measured, including the development of critical thinking; communication, technology and computing skills; quantitative reasoning; ethical decision-making; and an understanding of diversity [B.1; B.3; B.6]
- I-B.g. Comparison of the mean grade point average of criminal justice students with the mean grade point average institution-wide [B.2; B.4]
- I-B.h. Statement regarding method used to ensure programs and courses are dynamic and responsive to new developments in the field and new modes of inquiry [B.2]

- I-B.i. Outline of curriculum, including required courses and number of semester/quarter hours in criminal justice, cognate areas, and elective courses [B.2; B.7; B.8; B.9; B.10]
- I-B.j. Course syllabi and copies of final exams for each criminal justice course [B.2; B.3; B.4; B.8]
- I-B.k. Program objectives reflecting a high level of complexity, specialization, and generalization that challenges students beyond the levels of knowledge and competence acquired at the baccalaureate level [B.2; B.9]
- I-B.l. Comprehensive evaluation or capstone experience [B.3]
- I-B.m. Evidence, when applicable, that students taught on other than the usual semester/quarter hour basis, through distance learning modalities, or through different divisions of the institution acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities [B.3]
- I-B.n. Statement of methods used to evaluate student performance. Evidence that methods of evaluating student performance are comparable to other programs throughout the institution and that the methods are appropriate and consistent with institutional and academic standards [B.4]
- I-B.o. Indication of course(s) in which specific content areas are found in the core curriculum [B.5; B.9]
- I-B.p. Evidence that available criminal justice/criminology electives are consistent with faculty, resources, and program objectives [B.7]
- I-B.q. When degree programs offer concentrations, evidence that these concentrations are supported by student body composition and faculty expertise [B.7]
- I-B.r. Evidence that elective internships are integrated into the academic component of the program and related to educational objectives [B.8]
- I-B.s. Explanation of rationale behind sequencing of courses [B.9]
- I-B.t. Evidence that the graduate program has resources and expectations exceeding those required for an undergraduate program in criminal justice [B.11]

Section C: Faculty for Graduate Degree Programs

Standards:

- C.1 Criminal Justice/criminology faculty credentials, number, diversity of educational and professional experience, time commitment and performance are sufficient to accomplish the program's mission and objectives. Faculty specializations and status (full-time, part-time, emeritus, or other faculty holding a terminal degree in her or his discipline) are considered in recruitment and hiring decisions.
- C.2 Faculty holding terminal degrees in the field of criminal justice/criminology or fields appropriate to criminal justice/criminology are actively sought. Institutions do not have undue dependence on faculty who are graduates of their own programs.

- C.3 The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing faculty. Criminal justice/criminology program faculty members direct the search process for new program faculty members.
- C.4 Two-thirds of all full-time faculty in master's degree programs must hold an earned doctorate (PhD) in criminal justice/criminology or a closely related discipline. When a faculty member holds a Ph.D. degree in a closely related discipline, there should be evidence of experience, scholarship, and professional involvement, demonstrating a clear commitment to and identification with the field of criminal justice/criminology.
- C.5 All graduate degree programs should strive to have all faculty members with terminal degrees.
- C.6 A program's faculty FTE to student ratio must comply with the standards of that region's institutional accrediting body (e.g. Middle States Association).
- C.7 Faculty assignments and workloads allow adequate time to provide effective instruction, advise and evaluate students, continue professional growth, and participate in scholarship, research, and service compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution and program.
- C.8 Graduate teaching assistants are qualified in terms of education, experience, and training in the field of criminal justice and are usually engaged in teaching only lower-level undergraduate courses. Where graduate teaching assistants are employed, the program carefully selects, trains, supervises and evaluates them.
- C.9 Faculty categories (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct) are clearly defined, as is the role of each category in fulfilling both the program's and the institution's mission and purposes. Orientation, oversight, evaluation, and professional development opportunities are provided for all faculty, including part-time and adjunct faculty. Criminal justice/criminology faculty members take advantage of these opportunities and take initiative in ensuring their continued competence and growth as teachers and scholars.
- C.10 Faculty members are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. The institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of faculty appointments, performance, and retention.
- C.11 At least two-thirds of the core required courses for the degree are taught by full-time faculty.

Selected Indicators:

- I-C.a. Faculty vitae or Faculty Profile Form, including recent professional contributions [C.1; C.2; C.4; C.5; C.7; C.9]

- I-C.b. Documentation of faculty recruitment efforts (newspaper advertisements, professional journal announcements, etc.) [C.1; C.2; C.5]
- I-C.c. Description of process for recruiting and appointing criminal justice/criminology faculty including all personnel involved at each step [C.3]
- I-C.d. Table of all faculty currently teaching in the graduate program by full- and part-time status. Indicate the course number, and name of courses taught by semester or quarter for the past two years. For each course, indicate the time, day, credit hour, location and whether the course is graduate or undergraduate level. Also indicate whether the course fulfills day, evening, or off-campus program requirements, if applicable [C.4; C.7; C.8; C.11]
- I-C.e. Indication that the number of FTE students and majors complies with the standards of that region's institutional accrediting body (e.g., Middle States Association); provide the standards and formula [C.6]
- I-C.f. Graduate teaching load for all faculty [C.7]
- I-C.g. Vitae of graduate teaching assistants, if applicable [C.8]
- I-C.h. Description of selection, training, supervision and evaluation of graduate teaching assistants, if applicable [C.8]
- I-C.i. Evidence that the role of each faculty category is clearly defined in fulfilling the program and institution's mission and purposes [C.9]
- I-C.j. Description of orientation program for new faculty [C.9]
- I-C.k. Institution funds spent on professional development [C.9]
- I-C.l. Evidence of faculty effectiveness [C.10]
- I-C.m. Samples of performance evaluation forms [C.10]
- I-C.n. Faculty awards, recognitions [C.10]
- I-C.o. Indication of full-time and part-time, and FTE instructional faculty, by program [C.11]
- I-C.p. Full-time/part-time faculty ratio [C.11]

Other Supporting Materials:

- I-C.q. Institutional policy on hiring of faculty [C.3]
- I-C.r. Faculty handbook [C.9]
- I-C.s. Institution's faculty development policy [C.9]
- I-C.t. Faculty evaluation policy and process [C.10]
- I-C.u. Collective bargaining agreements, where appropriate [C.10]

Section D: Admission and Articulation

Standards:

- D.1 The institution specifies and publishes requirements for admission into, continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to its criminal justice/criminology program(s), which are compatible with its educational purposes. Graduation requirements are clearly stated in appropriate publications

and are consistently applied in the process for awarding degrees. Degrees awarded accurately reflect student attainments.

- D.2 No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study.
- D.3 Only credit from institutions that are accredited by their regional higher education accrediting body is accepted for transfer into a graduate criminal justice program and only on a strictly limited basis. No more than six hours of acceptable transfer credit are awarded at the Master's degree level. There are no waivers of credit. No academic credit for criminal justice courses counting in the degree program is awarded by the criminal justice/criminology program for life experience or for military, police academy, or other professional training, except for internship and service learning courses that originated from accredited academic institutions rather than a training academy, the military, or continuing education credits.
- D.4 Two-year and four-year colleges and universities enter into articulation and joint admission agreements whenever possible to clarify curricular issues and academic expectations for both parties. These agreements reflect discussion of how best to advise and prepare students at two-year schools who are considering four-year degrees.
- D.5 No more than 10 percent of the criminal justice/criminology major credits are completed through knowledge-based examinations (e.g., CLEP). All credit earned through examination is clearly documented on the student's official transcript by specific course designations and numbers, including the source of the credit. Awarding blanket credit for criminal justice/criminology courses in a "block" is not allowed (e.g., "12 hours criminal justice credit").
- D.6 The institution awards degrees only to those students who have earned at least 50 percent of the credit hours in the criminal justice/criminology program through instruction offered by that institution.

Selected Indicators:

- I-D.a. Graduate Catalog [D.1; D.2; D.3; D.5; D.6]
- I-D.b. Admission requirements and policies for the program and for the institution as a whole [D.1]
- I-D.c. Statement of all places where program admission requirements and policies are published and copies of relevant pages of such publication(s) [D.1]
- I-D.d. Enrollment and retention reports [D.1]
- I-D.e. Transcripts of current students and recent graduates [D.1; D.2; D.3; D.5; D.6]
- I-D.f. Transfer policy including policy on credit for non-academic learning [D.3]
- I-D.g. Agreements leading to the award or waiver of credit or payments for credits earned outside of the institution [D.3]

- I-D.h. Signed articulation agreements [D.4]
- I.D.i. Report of credits awarded through knowledge-based examinations [D.5]

Section E: Resources

Standards:

- E.1 The program has sufficient facilities, equipment (including classrooms, laboratories, information and computer technology), and budgetary resources to meet program objectives and the needs of faculty and students.
- E.2 Students have access to library and information resources, collections and services that are sufficient in quality level, diversity, quantity, and currency to support and enrich the criminal justice/criminology program's offerings.
- E.3 Library facilities are adequate to house the collection and equipment so as to foster an atmosphere conducive to inquiry, study, and learning among program students, faculty, and staff.
- E.4 A program's resources must be in compliance with the standards of that region's institutional accrediting body (e.g., Middle States Association).

Selected Indicators:

- I-E.a. Budget for criminal justice/criminology program(s) for past three years [E.1]
- I-E.b. List and location of facilities and equipment available to students [E.1]
- I-E.c. List and location of facilities and equipment available to faculty [E.1]
- I-E.d. Vitae of librarians and support personnel [E.2]
- I-E.e. Library collection in criminal justice/criminology and related fields (number of books, monographs, journals and electronic resources) [E.2]
- I-E.f. Student use and technology policy, on and off-campus [E.2]
- I-E.g. Materials for locating and obtaining electronic information [E.2]
- I-E.h. Bibliographic instruction and library orientation for criminal justice/criminology students [E.2]
- I-E.i. Assessment results of use of library and information resources and facilities by criminal justice/criminology students and faculty [E.2; E.3]
- I-E.j. Indication that the program's resources comply with the standards of that region's institutional accrediting body (e.g., Middle States Association); provide the standards and formula [E.4]

Section F: Student Services

Standards:

- F.1 The program provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its graduate students, consistent with its mission and purposes.

- F.2 All students in the criminal justice/criminology graduate program have access to appropriate and effective orientation, academic advisement, career development, and placement counseling.
- F.3 The institution systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its criminal justice/criminology graduate student population and makes provision for responding to them.

Selected Indicators:

- I-F.a. Graduate student handbook [F.1]
- I-F.b. Satisfaction survey results of students, graduates, alumni, and employers [F.1]
- I-F.c. Summary of academic support services provided [F.2]
- I-F.d. American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements [F.2; F.3]
- I-F.e. Demographic profile of admitted students [F.3]
- I-F.f. Evidence of method to assess graduate student learning needs and provision for responding to them [F.3]

Section G: Integrity

Standards:

- G.1 The criminal justice/criminology graduate program exemplifies high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. The program must be in compliance and in congruence with the *ACJS Code of Ethics*.
- G.2 The graduate program presents itself to students and other members of the interested public by providing information that is clear, complete, and accurate.
- G.3 Appropriate publications, print or electronic, contain the graduate criminal justice/criminology program's mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; student fees, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the program; courses currently offered; academic policies, procedures and requirements for the criminal justice/criminology degree or other relevant forms of academic recognition.
- G.4 Relevant publications, print or electronic, also include a list of all current faculty, indicating departmental or program affiliation/status (for example, full or part-time, graduate faculty, emeritus), and showing degrees held and the institutions granting them.
- G.5 The criminal justice/criminology graduate program clearly indicates whether any offerings, courses, services, or personnel are not available during a given

academic year. It does not list as current any courses not taught for two consecutive years, which will not be taught during the third consecutive year.

- G.6 The graduate criminal justice/criminology program has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.

Selected Indicators:

- I-G.a. Evidence of high ethical standards in management of the program and in dealings with students, faculty, staff, external agencies and organizations, and the general public [G.1]
- I-G.b. Grievance/complaints and appeals procedures [G.1]
- I-G.c. Program copy of the *ACJS Code of Ethics* [G.1]
- I-G.d. Evidence of compliance and congruence with *ACJS Code of Ethics* [G.1]
- I-G.e. Graduate catalog [G.2; G.3; G.4; G.5; G.6]
- I-G.f. Program publications, including brochures, posters, web pages [G.2; G.3; G.4; G.5; G.6]
- I-G.g. List of courses taught for previous three years [G.5]
- I-G.h. Documentation for statements regarding program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, etc. [G.6]

Section H: Program Quality and Effectiveness

Standards:

- H.1 The graduate program undergoes systematic evaluation of all program components and uses the results for program improvement.
- H.2 The graduate program demonstrates that its graduates have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program's objectives and student learning outcomes.
- H.3 The graduate program demonstrates that students completing courses in non-traditional time periods and modalities, in different divisions, and at satellite or branch campuses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods, modalities and locations.
- H.4 The institution periodically reviews the program under established, clearly defined institutional policies and uses the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness. The review includes an assessment of effectiveness, currency, and continued need.

Selected Indicators:

- I-H.a. Written graduate program assessment plan [H.1]

- I-H.b. Indication of where graduate program objectives are taught in curriculum, how learning outcomes are measured prior to graduation, and the results of such assessment [H.2]
- I-H.c. Evidence demonstrating that the graduate program is achieving its mission, goals, objectives and outcomes [H.2]
- I-H.d. Results of graduate program evaluation including graduate satisfaction with program, employer satisfaction with graduates; retention and graduation rates; placement rates [H.2]
- I-H.e. Analysis of student evaluations of teaching [H.3]
- I-H.f. Evidence that students completing courses in non-traditional time periods and modalities, in different divisions, and at satellite or branch campuses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods, modalities and locations [H.3]
- I-H.g. Reports from institution's program reviews, indicating cycle of reviews, findings, and related graduate program improvements [H.4]

Other Supporting Material:

- I-H.h. Institution's policy on graduate academic program review [H.4]
- I-H.i. Institution's graduate program assessment policy [H.4]

Section I: Branch Campuses, Additional Locations, and Other Instructional Sites

In addition to Standards A-H above, Standards I.1-I.4 are applicable to courses and programs offered off-campus.

Standards:

- I.1 Criminal justice/criminology graduate courses and graduate programs offered at branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites must meet the standards and educational objectives of the home institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on-campus or in more traditional formats.
- I.2 Students have ready access to appropriate learning resources. Sufficient library and information resources and services are readily accessible to students wherever the graduate program is located or however it is delivered, and sufficient and appropriate orientation and training are provided for their use. The facilities foster an atmosphere conducive to inquiry, study, and learning among program students, faculty and staff.
- I.3 The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of the program. On-campus faculty has a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus programs.
- I.4 If there are graduate programs available to students via distance technology or other means, off-site instruction is conducted in a manner that maximizes student-

faculty interactions and ensures quality. Standards for all programs (residential, non-residential, face-to-face, and distance education) should be comparable.

Selected Indicators:

- I-I.a. Description of all instructional sites where graduate courses are taught [I.1]
- I-I.b. Table of all faculty currently teaching in the program by full and part-time status and by site where courses are taught. Indicate the course number, and name of courses taught by semester or quarter for the past two years. For each course, indicate the time, day, credit hour, and whether the course is graduate or undergraduate level. Also indicate whether the course fulfills day or evening program requirements, if applicable, and whether distance technology is used [I.1; I.4]
- I-I.c. Evidence that courses and programs at off-campus sites meet the standards and educational objectives of the home institution [I.1]
- I-I.d. Graduate program enrollment data by instructional site [I.1]
- I-I.e. Summary of graduate academic support services and learning resources available at each location [I.2]
- I-I.f. Description of facilities available at each location [I.2]
- I-I.g. Description of who designs, maintains, and directs each off-campus program [I.3]
- I-I.h. Organizational charts [I.3]
- I-I.i. Access to graduate programs via distance technology [I.4]
- I-I.j. Evidence that off-site instruction maximizes student-faculty interactions and is high quality [I.4]