

Department of Justice Studies, Graduate

Master of Science Degree in Juvenile Justice Program Information

The Master of Science program in Juvenile Justice (MSJJ) offers a curriculum that enables students to critically evaluate and confront the humanistic, technical, and scientific aspects of criminal and juvenile justice as applicable to juvenile delinquency prevention. This program is web-based.

The primary objectives of the Master of Science in Juvenile Justice are to:

- Enhance students' knowledge, skills, and resourcefulness related to detained and institutionalized juveniles;
- Increase student's knowledge of theoretical explanations and the etiologies of delinquency and crime;
- Assure that students engage in the humanistic, technical, and scientific aspects of delinquency and related crimes;
- Increase students' knowledge concerning effective methods to intervene and prevent delinquency;
- Increase students' skills in how to conduct research and evaluate programs related to delinquency; and
- Expand students' knowledge of programs and policies related to delinquency.

Graduates will have a unique opportunity to acquire specialized competencies that should positively impact the lives of troubled youth across the state of Texas and the nation.

Admission Requirements

In addition to the general admission requirements to Graduate Studies described elsewhere in the catalog, students seeking admission to the MS degree in Juvenile Justice should meet the following requirements:

- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university;
- A minimum GPA of 2.75 with a GPA of 3.0 or higher preferred;
- Three signed letters of recommendation from persons in the field of the applicant's academic major or area of concentration. At least two of the letters must be from professors with personal knowledge of the candidate's skills and potential for master's work. Each letter must be printed on letterhead of the writer's agency or higher education institution of employment;
- Completion of liberal arts courses at the undergraduate level such as social sciences, behavioral sciences, college algebra, and statistics;
- Completion of a 1,000-word essay detailing the applicant's reasons for pursuing the degree; and
- Original transcripts for all academic work taken at the undergraduate level.
- International students from a non-English speaking country must submit official scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) unless the student has a degree from a US institution of higher education. A minimum score of 79 or higher is required for the TOEFL or a minimum score of 6.0 on the IELTS.

The MSJJ Program requires the completion of 36 semester credit hours. Two options are available for students: thesis and non-thesis. Students opting for the thesis curriculum must successfully complete 30 hours of course work in addition to 6 hours of thesis. The non-thesis option requires the successful completion of 36 hours of course work and passing a comprehensive examination. In this web-based program, students may take six credit hours during each eight-week session for the fall and spring semesters. During the summer five-week sessions, a student may take six credit hours in each summer session towards completing the degree in one year.

Transfer of Graduate Courses from Other Universities

A maximum of six (6) credits of juvenile justice-related graduate coursework may be transferred from other accredited universities. A minimum grade of "B" is required in any such courses. The transferred class must be equivalent to a course not previously taken, from the list of courses offered in the MSJJ degree program. Students should follow the process described below. Transfer course work will not be considered that will be more than six (6) years old at the time the MSJJ degree from the College of Juvenile Justice is awarded. It is suggested that students gain transfer approval from their advisor, the Department Head, and the Dean's office before taking the proposed transfer course. The following procedure is recommended.

1. The student gathers information/credentials about the course. Each desired transfer course must be from a regionally accredited graduate program. Information and credentials include; syllabus, course description in the catalog of the university in which the class was taken (or will be taken), or a letter from the professor stating the subject matter covered in the class. The more information provided the better.
2. The student provides his/her advisor with the information. The advisor reviews the information for adequacy. If the advisor concludes that enough information has not been gathered, the student is told what information is needed. If the class(es) is/are transferable in the opinion of the advisor, a university transfer form is completed by the advisor and forwarded to the Department Head for consideration by the Dean's office. The transfer form states why the course should or should not be transferred. If the advisor thinks that the course is not transferable, the student may write a letter of appeal to the Department Head.
3. The Department Head will verify the transferability of the course and recommend approval or disapproval. If disapproved, the student may appeal to the Office of the Dean of the College of Juvenile Justice.

Continuous Enrollment and Leave of Absence

Students in the MSJJ program who have not completed their formal course requirements are expected to enroll continuously in the program during all consecutive semesters after initial registration. Students who do not expect to be enrolled, should notify the Department Head in writing.

During a leave of absence, a student cannot make use of the University or College of Juvenile Justice resources, nor attempt comprehensive examination nor defend a thesis.

Good Academic Standing

Students remain in good standing when they maintain a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0 for graded coursework. An average of "B" must be maintained by the student in all graduate coursework. While one grade of "C" may be counted towards the MS degree, only grades of "B" or better (and 3.00 GPA) indicate satisfactory completion of requirements for the degree. Only grades earned in or approved by the College of Juvenile Justice will be used to calculate a student's GPA. If a student receives a total of two grades of "C" in any combination of courses (required/elective), his/her graduate status is reviewed by a committee of the graduate faculty. The committee will consider the advisability of continued enrollment in the program, termination or remedial work, i.e. repeat course(s). If the student receives three grades of "C", his/her enrollment as a graduate student is automatically terminated. Obtaining grades higher than "C" in a repeated course does not remove the original two "C" grades and will be counted against the student toward the three "C" limit. If the student receives a grade of "D" or "F" in any course, he/she is automatically dismissed from the program. In any of the above scenarios, the student may petition the graduate committee for readmission. The above requirements apply to all courses taken while enrolled in the program.

Time Limit

A student must complete all requirements for the MSJJ degree within six (6) consecutive calendar years after the first date of enrollment. Any exception must be petitioned to the Department Head, the Dean of the College and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Comprehensive Examination

Comprehensive examinations in the MSJJ program are an option for those students who choose not to complete a thesis. These examinations are employed to test the student's general knowledge and his/her ability to integrate and synthesize the wealth of information in the field. Comprehensive exams are offered three times a year which includes fall, spring and summer semesters.

Financial Aid

The University offers various forms of financial aid, from scholarships to work-student arrangements and loans. Scholarships are usually in very short supply. Those interested in financial aid are encouraged to visit the Financial Aid website (<http://www.pvamu.edu/faid/>).

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Juvenile Justice Program Information

The goal of the Ph.D. program is to provide doctoral training in juvenile justice research. General objectives include the development of new knowledge, juvenile delinquency prevention, improvement in the juvenile justice system, and dissemination of knowledge gained. The specific intent of the program is to produce scholars with three characteristics: First, graduates will have superior empirical skills. Second, they will be specialists in the subject matter of the juvenile justice field. Third, they will be generalists in the subject matter of criminal justice. The program produces scholars to teach in criminal justice and criminology departments in colleges and universities and researchers to work in federal, state, and large local agencies.

Admission Requirements

Admission criteria for the Ph.D. Program in Juvenile Justice, as established by the program faculty, are as follows:

Required elements: (In order for an application to be considered, all elements below must be present in the applicant's file by the application deadline.)

- Baccalaureate degree conferred by a regionally accredited institution;
- Master's degree, prior to entering the doctoral program, conferred by a regionally accredited institution;
- Official scores on the general component of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) which consists of verbal, analytical, and quantitative scores. An unofficial copy may be used by the Doctoral Admission Committee in the initial screening. An application without GRE scores will not be reviewed;
- Original transcripts for all academic work taken at the undergraduate and graduate levels (unofficial copies may be used by the Doctoral Admission Committee in initial screening);
- Three signed letters of recommendation on letterhead from persons in the field of the applicant's academic major or area of concentration who have personal knowledge of the candidate's skills and potential for doctoral-level work.
- Original 1000 word essay as described in the doctoral application form *and* a copy of the master's thesis or other lengthy report or paper; and
- International students from a non-English speaking country must submit official scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) unless the student has a degree from a US institution of higher education. A minimum score of 79 or higher is required for the TOEFL or a minimum score of 6.0 on the IELTS.

Preferences:

- Baccalaureate degree in juvenile justice, criminal justice, or criminology. A secondary preference is a directly related social science discipline (such as sociology) in which there is evidence of the study of crime-related phenomena;
- 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA), or higher, on a four-point scale on all completed undergraduate course work;
- Master's degree in juvenile justice, juvenile forensic psychology, criminal justice or criminology. A secondary preference is a directly related social science discipline (such as sociology) in which there is evidence of the study of crime-related phenomena;
- 3.5 GPA, or higher, on a four-point scale in all completed graduate course work;
- Graduate research methods course (if not present, stem work must be completed);
- Graduate statistics course (if not present, stem work must be completed);
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE) verbal, quantitative, and analytical scores in the higher percentiles;
- Evidence of a successfully completed master's thesis or published research paper;
- 1000 word essay demonstrating strong writing skills; an expressed desire to teach at the college level, work as a researcher in a juvenile justice agency, and/or assist in developing juvenile justice policy within a governmental environment; realistic expectation of the degree's value; evidence of commitment to completing the degree; strong rationale for wanting this specific PhD; and a rationale expressing what the applicant will add to the field; and
- Signed letters of recommendation on letterhead from faculty sufficiently acquainted with the student to be able to comment on the potential to successfully complete a doctoral program and demonstrate evidence of excellent critical thought, motivation, study skills, and writing skills. Preferred ratings would be primarily excellent in all categories with an overall rating in the top 3 to 10 percent of all graduate students

Enhancing qualities:

The committee will consider the following as information that will enhance an application:

- Three or more years of paid work experience in a juvenile justice agency (law enforcement, probation/parole, or correctional institution);
- Completion of a previous doctoral degree in any field;
- College-level teaching experience, either as a part-time or full-time instructor;
- Publication(s) in academic and/or scholarly outlets, with greatest emphasis on peer-reviewed publications;
- Paid research *work* experience (not that involved in the production of a thesis);
- Grant-writing experience; and
- Ability to attend courses as a full-time student (requires less than full-time outside employment).

Interview:

An interview with program faculty will be required for applicants with the strongest application package. That interview may be either in person or via the equivalent of a telephone conference call, depending upon the distance and hardship involved in a personal interview. The student may pass or fail the interview based on the criteria established by the faculty which will focus on professional promise and interpersonal competence. However, a positive qualifying score and interview do not automatically result in admission to the PhD program.

Applicants will be recommended to be admitted in one of two statuses: full graduate status or holistic acceptance status.

1. Doctoral-Regular graduate status is conferred on those students admitted to the program who have satisfied all admission requirements.
2. Holistic Acceptance status is used when the Doctoral Committee perceives that prerequisites have not been met, official versions of required forms have not been received, and/or there is a question of ability to perform at doctoral standards by virtue of a failure to meet specific admissions criteria. The holistic admission status may be changed when all outstanding prerequisites are met. Students who are holistically admitted must satisfy all requirements prior to being admitted to doctoral-regular status (conditions and requirements will be provided via letter to the student). In the event of a failure to meet prerequisites, deficiencies must be completed prior to beginning doctoral course work. No doctoral course work may be taken when there are prerequisite deficiencies nor may stem work be used to meet doctoral program requirements. Where stem work is assigned to rectify deficiencies, any grade lower than "B" will automatically result in a decision to deny admission. No more than 12 units of coursework may be taken in holistic acceptance status.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all conditions of admission are met in a timely fashion and to notify the Department Head when all conditions are met. Following the first semester in holistic acceptance status (non-prerequisite-deficiency cases), the Doctoral Committee will meet to consider placing the student in full doctoral status. Based on the evidence at hand, the Committee may recommend admission to full graduate status or dismiss from the program.

Students will not be accepted in courses unless they are in full doctoral status or holistic status within the Juvenile Justice doctoral program.

A recommendation for admission is made by the program faculty committee, the Department Head, and Dean of the College. The recommendation is submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies. Formal acceptance and notification comes from the Office of Graduate Studies.

Program Requirements

The program requires a minimum of 61 semester credit hours for the PhD. Of these hours, 43 are course work hours and 18 are dissertation hours. There is a common core and students may develop a specialty by structuring their choice of substantive courses, elective courses, and dissertation topic.

Courses taken during a master's degree program may not be repeated for credit at the doctoral level.

Transfer of Graduate Courses from Other Universities

A maximum of six (6) units of juvenile justice-related doctoral-level course work may be transferred from other accredited universities. A minimum grade of "B" is required in any such course. Transfer credit is granted by petition to, and approval by, the Doctoral Committee, with final approval by the Dean of the College. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the petition and justify the acceptance of the course. Courses presented for transfer credit must be the equivalent of courses in the doctoral program.

Continuous Enrollment

Continuous enrollment defines the minimal level of academic activity needed to remain enrolled in the program. A Ph.D. student is considered to be continuously enrolled when he or she is enrolled for at least one course during each of the spring and fall academic semesters. Once a Ph.D. student has been admitted to candidacy he or she must enroll for a minimum of six (6) hours during the 9-month academic year to be continuously enrolled. Students who fail to meet the continuous enrollment criteria will be withdrawn from the program and must apply for readmission. The sole exception is enrollment during comprehensive exams. Students taking comprehensive exams are not required to be enrolled in coursework.

Residency

Students must establish coursework residency before being admitted to candidacy. The residency requirement is considered to be met when a student has been continuously enrolled on campus for two consecutive semesters (excluding the summer semester).

Leave of Absence

Graduate students who have not completed their formal course requirements are expected to enroll continuously in the program during all consecutive long semesters after initial registration. Students who do not expect to be enrolled should request a leave of absence in a letter to the Department Head for Justice Studies. A leave of absence is granted at the discretion of the Dean of the College.

This provision includes students who have completed their formal course requirements and are writing the dissertation away from the campus. During a leave of absence, a student cannot make use of the University or College of Juvenile Justice resources, nor can a student attempt comprehensive exams or defend a dissertation.

Good Standing

PhD students remain in good standing when they maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 for graded courses in the doctoral program. Only grades of "B" or better count toward required course work (i.e., all but the elective courses) and dissertation hours. Only grades earned in, or approved by the College of Juvenile Justice doctoral-level courses will be used to calculate a student's GPA. Any grade lower than "B" in a required area course will require the student to retake the course and pass it with a grade of "B" or higher. While one elective grade of "C" may be counted toward the PhD, only grades of "B" or better indicate satisfactory completion of courses required for the PhD. If a student receives a total of two grades of "C," in any combination of courses (elective/required), the student will be dismissed from the program but may petition the Doctoral Committee for readmission. After reviewing the petition, the committee may allow readmission under such conditions as it deems appropriate. A third grade lower than "B" will result in permanent dismissal from the program with no recourse to petition.

Time Limit

A student must complete all requirements for the PhD degree within nine (9) consecutive years after the first date of enrollment in the program. If transfer courses are permitted, the initial enrollment date of those courses must not exceed seven years prior to the date the degree is awarded.

Comprehensive Examination

Before they may be admitted to candidacy, students must successfully complete their doctoral examinations. These examinations are employed to test the student's general knowledge, his or her ability to integrate and synthesize the wealth of information in the field, and his or her preparation for engaging in the kind of independent scholarship required to complete a doctoral dissertation. The comprehensive examination is offered in the fall and spring semesters. Students failing any portion of the comprehensive examinations must consult with the Department Head for Justice Studies to determine the steps to be taken. Two consecutive failures on any examination will result in the student's dismissal from the Ph.D. program.

Advancement to Candidacy

Following successful completion of the comprehensive examinations, it is the student's responsibility to petition for advancement to candidacy. To be advanced to candidacy, students must have completed all of the following requirements and/or procedures:

1. Achieved a cumulative grade-point average no lower than 3.0 in program course work and a minimum grade of "B" (3.0) in all required area courses.
2. Completed all program course work with no more than one grade lower than "B" (unless the student successfully petitions his or her dismissal and retakes a second "C" course with a grade of "B" or higher).
3. Successfully passed all comprehensive examinations.

Following approval of the student's application to candidacy, the student may enroll in dissertation hours.

Students admitted to candidacy are required to accumulate a minimum of six (6) credit hours during each twelve-month period following admission to candidacy and until such time as the degree is granted. Further, a student must be enrolled during any semester in which University resources are used. Assistantship students must continue to meet the enrollment criteria for maintaining their assistantship. Any exception to this policy requires the approval of the Head of the Department and the Dean of the College of Juvenile Justice. Students who fail to enroll for the appropriate number of hours following advancement to candidacy shall be placed on probation. To be removed from probation, the student must enroll for the deficient number of credits plus three additional credits in the next semester. Students who do not meet these requirements will be dismissed from the doctoral program and required to reapply for admission, subject to any new admissions criteria in effect at the time of readmission.

Dissertation

Following approval of the student's application to candidacy, the student may enroll in dissertation hours. Two attempts at passing both the dissertation prospectus defense and the dissertation defense are permitted. Having met other requirements for the degree, students who successfully defend their dissertations and complete the submission process are granted the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the commencement ceremony immediately following. Failure to pass either the dissertation prospectus defense or the dissertation defense will result in the student's dismissal from the program.

The determination of completion requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Juvenile Justice is solely the province of the program faculty.

The Dissertation Committee

Students must choose a Dissertation Committee of four faculty. Three of the members are to be chosen from the faculty of the College of Juvenile Justice, one of whom will be the chair. The Chair must be a graduate faculty member in the Justice Studies Department. A fourth committee member is chosen from faculty at Prairie View A&M University but outside the College. If special expertise is needed, the outside member may be from amongst The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) graduate faculty. Only in the rarest of cases when expertise cannot be found at Prairie View A&M University, nor within TAMUS may students select graduate faculty from another accredited institution outside of TAMUS. This is done in consultation with the Department Head and the Chair of the student's Advisory Committee. A letter requesting approval of the proposed committee must be forwarded to the Department Head. No committee may be constituted without the Department Head's formal approval. The members of the committee are normally chosen for their expertise in the proposed topic or for expertise in a particular methodology. All voting members of the committee must be on the graduate faculty. Other members may be added to the committee in a non-voting status if the committee chair and the Department Head concurs. Faculty who have not published juvenile justice or criminal justice-related materials within the past five years may only be added to the committee in a non-voting status.

Financial Assistance

The University offers various forms of financial aid, from scholarships to work-study arrangements and loans. Scholarships are usually in very short supply. Those interested in financial aid are encouraged to visit the Financial Aid website (<http://www.pvamu.edu/faid/>).

Full-time doctoral students in the College of Juvenile Justice generally have access to two forms of financial aid: (1) graduate assistantships (usually requiring 20 hours of work per week) for either research or teaching and (2) the tuition and fees scholarship from the university. All teaching and research assistantships in excess of \$1,000 carry a waiver of out-of-state tuition fees. For information on these opportunities, contact the Department Head.

Assistantships will be competitively awarded to full-time students only. Half assistantships may also be awarded at the discretion of the Doctoral Committee and the Dean. All full-time applicants admitted to the program should apply to be considered for assistantships by the Doctoral Committee. These assistantships will normally be awarded for a period of one academic year (nine months) and may be renewed twice for a maximum of three years of funding. All funded students must show exceptional potential to successfully complete the program, possessing excellent critical thought, research, and writing skills, and a commitment to the field. Assignments will likely include teaching and/or teaching support, research/research support, and/or editorial duties.

Award criteria for assistantships are similar to admission criteria. Those who are admitted under full-time status will be ranked by the Doctoral Committee based on their graduate GPA, GRE scores, and additional evidence of preparation for doctoral study. Third-year assistantships will include the above criteria and other criteria the faculty deems appropriate. Other forms of award other than student loans also will be taken into consideration in the awarding of assistantships. The Doctoral Committee will award assistantships based on ranking and the available number of assistantships.

In order to maintain an assistantship, the following are necessary:

- Continuing full-time enrollment (9–12 hours)
- Doctoral Grade Point Average above "B"
- Satisfactory evaluation by the supervising professor

- Satisfactory progress evaluation by the Doctoral Committee
- Indications of professional potential such as teaching and research

In the event of a failure to meet one of these areas, the Doctoral Committee may decide to continue the assistantship, predicated on the student's acceptance of appropriate remedial activity.

If a student receiving compensation for an assistantship of 20 hours a week decides to seek either full-time or part-time employment elsewhere, that fact shall be made known in writing to the Department Head. In general, full-time employment constitutes grounds for automatic termination of assistantship and/or scholarship awards. Part-time employment will be considered on an individual basis, but normally will be discouraged.