

Juvenile Forensic Psychology, MSJFP

Master of Science in Juvenile Forensic Psychology Program Information *

The primary objectives of the Master of Science degree in Juvenile Forensic Psychology are to:

- Enhance students' knowledge of how psychology interacts with the law and the legal system;
- Increase students' knowledge of theoretical explanations of juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime, and juvenile aggression, especially from the viewpoint of psychological theories;
- Provide students with skills in research methodology and statistics;
- Enhance students' knowledge of the cognitive and personality development of youth especially as it pertains to aggression in various stages;
- Enhance students' knowledge of the psychological dynamics of family violence such as child abuse, spouse abuse, incest, and other forms of inter-familial violence;
- Provide students with knowledge and skills pertaining to the assessment, classification, and treatment of juvenile offenders; and
- Provide students with skills in psychological assessment and evaluation.

The MSJFP Program requires the completion of 36 semester credit hours. Two options are available: thesis and externship. The thesis option is designed for students interested in research and a Ph.D. The externship option is designed for students who desire to work in the field of forensic psychology.

*** This program is currently on moratorium and not accepting applicants.**

Admission Requirements

In addition to the general admission requirements to Graduate Studies described elsewhere in the catalog, students seeking admission to the Master of Science (MS) degrees in Juvenile Forensic Psychology 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 the letterhead of the writer's agency or higher education institution of employment;
- 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 Master's Admission Committee in initial screening;
- Completion of liberal arts courses at the undergraduate level such as social sciences, behavioral sciences, college algebra, and statistics;
- Completion of a 1000 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 U.S.A. institution of higher education.

Program areas may establish additional admission requirements, for example, required prerequisites for Juvenile Forensic Psychology are General Psychology, Personality, Abnormal Psychology, Statistics, Developmental and Research Methods.

Transfer of Graduate Courses from Other Universities

A maximum of six (6) credits of psychology-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 MSJFP degree program. Transfer course work will not be considered that is more than six (6) years old at the time the MSJFP degree from the College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology is awarded. The student must gain transfer approval from their advisor, the Department Head, and the Dean's office before taking the proposed transfer course. To transfer courses from the MSJJ program to the MSJFP, please refer to the MSJFP handbook.

The following procedure is recommended:

1. Gather all information and 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 where 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 feels 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 will be completed by the advisor and forwarded to the Department Head for consideration by the Dean's office. The transfer from states why the course should or should not be transferred. If the advisor feels 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 to the Dean of College. If disapproved, the student may appeal to the Graduate School.

Leave of Absence

Students in the MSJFP program 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 notify the Department Head in writing.

During a leave of absence, a student cannot make use of the University or College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology resources, nor can a student attempt comprehensive exams or 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. Only grades earned in the College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology 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, 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. Any grade lower than "B" in a required core course will require the student to retake the course and pass it with a grade of "B" or higher. If the student receives three grades of "C", his/her work 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 appeal to Department Head for a review. Although appeals are handled in a timely manner it is likely that a final decision on an appeal may occur during a subsequent semester. The above requirements apply to all courses taken while enrolled.

Time Limit

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

Professional Externship

Students are required to complete 400 hours of professional externship. The process of validation of the externship hours requires the completion of a Master of Science in Juvenile Forensic Psychology Externship form. The Externship Coordinator will ensure the externship is at an acceptable site.

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/>).

Graduate Assistantships

The College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology offers a limited number of graduate assistantships to eligible students. Research assistants are required to work with faculty a member or members on ongoing research projects for 20 hours per week. Responsibilities will vary but may include data input, questionnaire distribution, and data analysis. Student's work may be incorporated into a Master's thesis or a Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center project.

Thesis

A thesis is an empirically driven investigation of a substantive issue in the field of psychology. As an original research project, the thesis is expected to contribute to the base of knowledge in the field of psychology. Students that choose the thesis option must select a thesis committee of three among the faculty of the College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology. The members of the committee are normally chosen for their expertise in the proposed topic. Committee chairs may be chosen among any full-time graduate faculty in the College of Juvenile Justice & Psychology. A thesis packet should be obtained from the Graduate Secretary. Where a student is unable to assemble a complete committee, the Master's Program Coordinator shall appoint members as needed from the faculty.

The thesis committee may be changed at the student's discretion. The student should consult the Master's Program Coordinator about such changes as soon as possible, and forward a new letter requesting approval of the new committee. Students are cautioned, however, that changes to the committee may also result in changes to the thesis with a corresponding extension of writing time. Faculty members may also elect to withdraw from a committee. Before doing so, the faculty must meet with the student and the Master's Program Coordinator to discuss reasons for withdrawing. In the event that the Chair of the Thesis Committee is the Master's Program Coordinator, the student and the Coordinator should meet with the Dean.

After selecting a committee, the student should consult with the Chair and determine the process to be followed in completing the thesis. Formal requirements include IRB approval, an oral defense of the prospectus, and an oral defense of the thesis. Beyond these requirements, individual chairs and committees may determine how and when chapters are to be submitted and approved, and the procedure to be used in the defense. A successful defense of the thesis requires that two of the three committee members vote to pass.

Field Work Externship Experience

The externship experience is critical in providing students opportunities to apply classroom knowledge of relevant theory, intervention models, psychological assessment, and professional and ethical behaviors in various clinical settings with diverse clinical, ethnic, and age populations. Enrollment in the initial Field Work externship can begin the semester after completion of appropriate clinical coursework and both psychological assessment courses have been completed with a passing grade of 'B'. The externship course is taught by the Clinical Training Director, who can identify proper externship sites to which prospective externship students can apply before the beginning of the semester they are allowed to start this training experience. Application to externship includes sending a curriculum vita (CV), approved by the Director of Clinical Training or Externship Coordinator to various externship site supervisors who are requested by the student to review the CV and consider the student for an interview. Following an invited interview, the student will receive notification from the Externship site supervisor regarding approval for training at the site. Subsequently, the student must provide the supervisor with proof of student liability insurance obtained by the student who is expected to apply (at www.apait.org or call Trust at 800-477-1200) and other documentation required by externship site supervisors (i.e., proof of recent TB test results, agreement to submit to the state public safety department to determine possible criminal record). Finally, the student and externship site supervisor will discuss training activities in which she or he will participate and negotiate an agreement regarding specified training activities and the work schedule (i.e., days and number of weekly hours). Typically, master's level externship supervisors require a minimum of 20 hours of work per week at the externship site. Enrollment at the externship will be made official with the completion of an externship contract in which identified training activities, along with work days and hours of attendance are stipulated. The contract is signed by the student, the primary externship training supervisor, and other supervisors who participate in the student's training. The primary supervisor for master's externship training must be a licensed psychologist who has expertise in a variety of clinical services provided at the site. The contract is the responsibility of the student to complete and turn in to the Director of Clinical Training or Externship Coordinator.

Using a weekly work activity log, the student is expected to maintain a detailed account of his or her training experiences with documentation of hours spent in each training-related activity for each day of attendance at externship training. The primary externship site supervisor will review and sign each weekly work activity log. The student is required to keep copies of each work activity log and submit copies of the same to the Director of Clinical Training. Typically, a student works at an externship site for at least two semesters. The externship site supervisor will complete a student performance evaluation form and submit it to the Director of Clinical Training at the mid-point and near the end of the externship training experience. The student, in turn, is required to complete an evaluation form near the end of the externship training experience in which feedback is provided to their externship supervisor regarding his/her training experience at the externship site. The externship site supervisor will review the evaluations with the student and areas of strengths and weaknesses are discussed. A remediation plan and contract are explored and implemented by the externship site supervisor or Externship Coordinator for persistent areas of weakness. Questions are addressed and both parties sign the documents. At the final evaluation, the primary externship site supervisor will assign a letter grade related to the student's overall performance. The primary externship site supervisor will fax the mid-year and end-of-year completed evaluation forms to the Director of Clinical Training; submission of these forms by the student is not acceptable.

The Externship Coordinator coordinates all externship training placements and maintains regularly scheduled externship class meetings with all externship students for purposes of providing supplementary clinical training. The students will participate in class discussions regarding psychological assessments, individual therapy cases, as well as address questions related to the quality of training, professional ethics, and other work-related concerns. The externship site supervisor and Externship Coordinator will maintain regular contacts regarding each student's progress and/or problem areas. The externship site supervisor is expected to alert the Externship Coordinator about persistent areas of difficulty exhibited by the student (i.e., in areas of professional, ethical, and interpersonal behavior problems, or expected progress in the development of specific skills) due to unsatisfactory change through the typical supervision process. Subsequently, the site supervisor will develop a remediation plan and contract (detailing a description of the target behaviors, the responsibilities of the supervisor and the student, the specific remediation strategy to be used, and the time interval in which the positive outcomes of the plan are expected to be demonstrated by the student). A copy of the plan will be submitted to the student and Externship Coordinator. If the student is unable to respond appropriately to the remediation plan, the externship supervisor can choose to terminate externship training with the student.