

# **GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

## **Master of Criminal Justice Online**

**Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies**

**School of Applied Sciences**

**University of Mississippi**

**Graduate Program Director:** Dr. Kimberly Kaiser, Assistant Professor

**Department Chair:** Dr. Wesley Jennings, Professor

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# 1. MISSION, VISION, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT

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## VISION STATEMENT

The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies aspires to be at the forefront of applied research and education to provide an unmatched educational experience for our graduate students.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies is to promote evidence-based policy and practice and to prepare future leaders in the fields of criminal justice, homeland security, and emergency management.

We work to accomplish this mission through the following educational objectives:

**Objective 1:** Graduates will be able to demonstrate comprehension of research and empirical evidence related to the fields of criminal justice, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership.

**Objectives 2:** Graduates will be able to demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge gained in the program to new problems and areas relevant to the fields of criminal justice, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership.

**Objective 3:** Graduates will be able to use their skills and knowledge to develop and/or advance their profession in the fields of criminal justice, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership or be successful in achieving advanced degrees.

**Objectives:** Graduates will become forerunners in positions to promote and advocate for effective, evidence-based policies and practices. They will become recognized experts addressing some of the challenging criminal justice, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership issues of our times.

**Objective 5:** Graduates will become leaders in their chosen profession and in related activities.

## 2. WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

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Welcome interested and admitted students to the Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ) Online program in the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies at the University of Mississippi! As you know and will soon experience, our graduate degree program options (i.e., fully online, accelerated 8 week courses) and multiple options for emphasis areas including Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) and Criminal Justice Leadership (CJL) represent one of the most flexible, accessible, and customizable MCJ Online programs in the country. Our program has been informed by extensive background and market-based research and is designed for the purpose of providing an unmatched educational experience that will directly translate to jobs, career advancement, and further career specialization. We look forward to working with you all!

Warm Regards,

Dr. Wesley Jennings, Chair & Professor

## 3. HANDBOOK INTRODUCTION

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This handbook summarizes general requirements for the Master of Criminal Justice Online program to serve as a guide for students. This handbook is intended to familiarize graduate students with the applicable policies, procedures, and requirements relating to the Master of Criminal Justice Online program and required by the Graduate School regulations.

The primary responsibility for adherence to policies, regulations, deadlines, and degree requirements rests with the student. Questions should be directed to the Graduate Program Director or their Graduate Student Advisor. Information in this handbook is intended to supplement the Graduate School policies and information, which can be obtained from the Graduate School Website at <https://gradschool.olemiss.edu/>

### PRIMARY CONTACTS:

Mr. Andy King (MCJ Online Graduate Student Advisor)..... [Andy@olemiss.edu](mailto:Andy@olemiss.edu)  
Dr. Kimberly Kaiser (Graduate Program Director) .....[Kakaise1@olemiss.edu](mailto:Kakaise1@olemiss.edu)

#### 4. GRADUATE FACULTY

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Dr. Wesley Jennings (Department Chair) ..... wgj@olemiss.edu  
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Dr. Francis Boateng ..... fboateng@olemiss.edu  
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#### 5. MCJ ONLINE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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The Master of Criminal Justice offers two online program options:

- (1) Homeland Security & Emergency Management
- (2) Criminal Justice Leadership

Both online program options are offered as accelerated courses and are designed to be completed within one year. These programs are designed to provide people with the necessary skills and knowledge to become effective decision-makers and leaders in the fields of criminal justice, homeland security, and emergency management.

## 6. ADMISSION CRITERIA

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The following admission requirements apply to the Master of Criminal Justice Online program.

### APPLICATION DEADLINES

The MCJ Online program accepts rolling admission for fall, spring, and summer admission. We ask that applicants submit their completed applications (including all letters of recommendation received) **at least 4-6 weeks** before the start of the term seeking admission.

### APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- 1) All students must complete and submit the Graduate School's on-line admission application found at <https://apply.olemiss.edu/graduate/>
- 2) Evidence of an awarded Baccalaureate Degree from an accredited college or university.
- 3) Quality of the applicant's academic record, as evidenced by cumulative grade point average. At least a 3.0 or equivalent grade point average on the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework is required.
- 4) **Three (3) letters of professional recommendation**, preferably from professors familiar with your academic qualifications or others familiar with your work ethic and ability to be successful in graduate school.
- 5) **Statement of Interest.** A 400- to 500-word statement of interest that describes your interest in pursuing the Master of Criminal Justice degree, your chosen emphasis in 1) Homeland Security & Emergency Management or 2) Criminal Justice Leadership your future career goals, and why you believe you will be successful in graduate school.
- 6) **Writing Sample.** Submit a sample of your recent written work that best showcases your skills as a writer and critical thinker. Writing samples should be in English and no more than 10 double-spaced pages in length. There are no specific formatting requirements. This could be a term paper, professional report, policy brief, or any other document that demonstrates writing and analytic skills.
- 7) **Resume or Curriculum Vitae**
- 8) International students must demonstrate compliance with the University of Mississippi's English Language Proficiency Score Requirements and Exemptions policy

Please note that the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies does NOT require the submission of GRE scores for the Master of Criminal Justice Online program.

## 7. PROGRAM CURRICULUM & REQUIREMENTS

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All students in the MCJ Online program must complete a total of 30 credit hours of graduate coursework. All Classes are offered in accelerated online sessions.

- 1) Complete all four (4) core courses with a grade of B- or above.
- 2) Complete five (5) elective courses, 3 courses of which need to be in your designated emphasis.
- 3) Complete CJ 693: Criminal Justice Capstone with a grade of B- or above.

### CORE CLASSES:

All students are required to take the following courses:

- 1) CJ 600: Criminal Justice Administration
- 2) CJ 601: Criminal Justice Statistics
- 3) CJ 602: Criminal Justice Research Methods
- 4) CJ 624: Theories of Criminal Behavior

### OPTION 1: HOMELAND SECURITY & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (HSEM) EMPHASIS

Students choose a minimum of three (3) of the following courses for the Homeland Security & Emergency Management emphasis. Each course is 3 credit hours.

- 1) CJ 630: Seminar in Homeland Security Operations
- 2) CJ 631: Seminar in Emergency Management
- 3) CJ 632: Seminar in Extremism and Terrorism
- 4) CJ 634: Emergency Response Management Policy & Planning
- 5) CJ 636: Critical Infrastructure Security
- 6) CJ 642: Cyber Crime & Cybersecurity
- 7) CJ 641: Transnational Crime
- 8) CJ 651: Special Topics in Emergency Management & Homeland Security\*
- 9) CJ 649: Independent Study\*

\* May be taken 2 times with a different topic.

### OPTION 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP (CJL) EMPHASIS

Students choose a minimum of three (3) of the following courses for the Criminal Justice Leadership emphasis. Each course is 3 credit hours.

- 1) CJ 671: Communications for Criminal Justice Leaders
- 2) CJ 672: Conflict Resolution and Decision-Making
- 3) CJ 673: Criminal Justice Evidence-Based Decision-Making
- 4) CJ 674: Budgeting & Finance
- 5) CJ 676: Principles of Leadership
- 6) CJ 678: Diversity and Inclusivity
- 7) CJ 679: Special Topics in Criminal Justice Leadership\*
- 8) CJ 680: Personnel Management
- 9) CJ 649: Independent Study\*

\* May be taken 2 times with a different topic.

## DEGREE CULMINATION: CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE

All students must complete the CJ 693: Capstone Course. This class is 3 credit hours.

### **The course:**

Students review, research, and evaluate a criminal justice, emergency management, or homeland security problem, policy, or program. As the culmination of the MCJ Online program, students will apply the skills and knowledge acquired during their time in the program to an independent project.

The capstone class requires a [white paper](#) presenting a strategic plan based on best evidence to develop a new program, policy, or strategy to address a targeted issue or problem. The white paper will require you to apply the skills and knowledge you have acquired throughout the program. For example, your capstone project may:

- Use evidence to identify a problem to target (emphasis-based)
- Use research to identify underlying causes of the problem (CJ 624)
- Create an action plan based on evidence of best-practices, including clearly articulated goals to address the underlying causes (CJ 600)
- Create an evaluation plan, including identifying measurable outcomes and study methods (CJ 601/602)
- Identify challenges and obstacles to plan implementation (CJ 600).

### **Learning Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of your capstone project, you will be able to:

1. Synthesize and integrate knowledge across multiple classes
2. Apply knowledge from the program to a specific project
3. Demonstrate depth of knowledge and expertise in their chosen area for the capstone project

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

To be eligible to enroll in the capstone class, you must have completed at least three of the four of the core classes (CJ 600, CJ 601, CJ 602, CJ 624) with a grade of B- or above and have completed 18 credit hours total of MCJ Online coursework.

Instructor approval of topic for capstone project is required before you can enroll in the class. You are encouraged to reach out to the capstone instructor at any time during your time in the program to discuss your proposed topic.

## 8. DEGREE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

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A student who expects to complete all degree requirements by the end of a particular semester must submit a degree application form to the Graduate Program Coordinator which will then be forwarded to the Graduate School. The deadline for submitting this application form is approximately one month after the beginning of Fall or Spring semester. The actual deadlines are posted on the Graduate School website at <https://gradschool.olemiss.edu/current-students/the-end-game-preparing-to-graduate/>. If a student is not able to complete the degree requirements at the end of the semester they applied to graduate, the student must resubmit their application in a future semester.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 3 credit hours during the semester they intend to graduate for Fall or Spring semesters and a minimum of one credit hour for students planning to graduate during the Summer.

## 9. ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

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### GRADUATE CATALOG

Graduate Students in the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies are advised to become familiar with the policies published by the Graduate School each year. These can be found in the Graduate Catalog, which can be found at <http://catalog.olemiss.edu/graduate-school>.

### TRANSFER OF GRADUATE CREDITS FROM ANOTHER INSTITUTION

The maximum number of credits that may be transferred in from other accredited colleges and universities is six (6) credit hours for up to two (2) courses for the Master of Criminal Justice degree. Transfer courses must be taken at the graduate level with a passing grade of B or higher; the student must have had graduate status at the time the courses were taken. Recommendations from the Department Graduate Program Coordinator and the Department Chair must be obtained, and the transfer of graduate credit hours must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Neither the Department Graduate Program Coordinator nor the Department Chair are required to recommend acceptance of graduate transfer credit. **Students may not transfer credits from another college or university for the four (4) required core courses.**

Grades from other academic institutions may not substitute for unsatisfactory grades earned at the University of Mississippi, nor may the grade of A or B earned at another academic institution be used to offset a lower grade earned at the University of Mississippi.

## MINIMUM/MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT AND DEFINITION OF FULL-TIME

The University of Mississippi calculates enrollment based on total hours for the regular, full semester, defined as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fall sessions combined or 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> spring sessions combined. A minimum enrollment of 3 hours per regular semester is required of every graduate student, meaning that students must enroll in at least one class in either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> session to be considered continuously enrolled. Students that do not enroll in at least one class for one regular, full semester will need to complete the [GS-10 Readmission Application to a Graduate Degree Program](#) to reactivate their status to enroll in future classes. Students that do not enroll in at least one class for more than two regular, full semesters (four or more sessions), must reapply to the program.

Full-time enrollment for the MCJ Online program is considered 6 credits (2 classes) per session for a total of 12 credits per regular, full semester. Taking more than 6 credits per session will be considered as an overload by the department. **Students wishing to enroll in more than 6 credits per session must seek approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator.** The maximum enrollment for a graduate student during a regular, full semester is 15 semester hours, including both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sessions combined. Maximum enrollment for the summer session is 6 credits.

## GRADES

Graduate students may receive quality grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, or F on graduate coursework, but grades of C-, D, and F are not acceptable for graduate credit. Grades of C+, C, C-, D, and F in the core classes (CJ 600, CJ 601, CJ 602, CJ 624) are not acceptable for graduate credit in the MCJ program.

In calculating grade-point average, the quality points associated with the above scale are as follows: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, D = 1.0 and F = 0. In certain specifically designated courses, the mark of Z is given to indicate that a student has received graduate credit but has been assigned no quality grade in the course; however, in courses approved for the Z mark, instructors may assign the quality grade of F. The only other marks that may be assigned in courses approved for the Z mark are I or W.

Graduate students must maintain at least a B = 3.0 average on all graduate coursework undertaken. Where a student is required to take, as part of the degree program, more than 12 hours in an area outside the field of specialization, a B = 3.0 average must be presented in both areas, computed separately. Unless specifically approved to be otherwise, no grades or marks are given for courses designated as thesis, doctoral essay, or dissertation. In any situation in which a graduate student wishes to appeal a grade, he or she should contact the Dean of the Graduate School for a copy of the Graduate School Appeal Procedure, which shall apply in this case.

## GOOD STANDING AND ACADEMIC PROBATION

To be in good standing, graduate students are expected to maintain a B average. Students must have a 3.0 GPA on coursework that is presented to satisfy requirements for a degree. Students whose grade-point average falls below 3.0 in any regular semester will be placed on probation and expected to improve their grades to an acceptable level before the end of their next period of enrollment. If the grade-point average of a graduate student for a semester or term has been unsatisfactory, the Dean of the Graduate School may refuse permission for the student to register for further work or change the student's classification.

## GRADUATE ORGANIZATIONS

There is a University of Mississippi Graduate Student Council, and the website for this organization can be found online at <http://gsc.olemiss.edu/>.

Graduate students enrolled in a graduate program in criminal justice or related field who have completed at least four graduate courses and have a minimum GPA of 3.4 on a 4.0 scale may apply to be a member of The University of Mississippi's chapter of Alpha Phi Sigma, Mu Rho. Alpha Phi Sigma is the National Criminal Justice Honor Society. To start the application process, interested students should contact the Alpha Phi Sigma advisor, Dr. Linda Keena at [ldkeena@olemiss.edu](mailto:ldkeena@olemiss.edu).

## 10. GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT & RELEVANT LINKS

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### **Financial Aid and Scholarships**

While there are no scholarships specific to our program, there are funding opportunities available both through UM and through outside funding organizations that you might use to help fund your program.

### **Military and Veterans Awards**

The University of Mississippi offers a variety of scholarships and benefits to U.S. military personnel and veterans. You can find detailed information about these awards on the [Veteran and Military Services page](#).

### **UM Graduate School Awards**

The UM Graduate School also provides a number of scholarship opportunities as well as connections to outside funding opportunities. While assistantships are not currently available for online students, students in our program would be eligible for other listed awards. The Graduate School's scholarship information can be found on the [Graduate School financial information page](#).

### **UM Staff Tuition Benefit**

Staff members at the University of Mississippi can utilize the further education benefit to enroll in up to two courses per semester. You can find detailed information about this benefit on the [Human Resources Tuition Benefit page](#).

### **Employer Tuition Assistance**

Many other employers also provide tuition for employees seeking to further their education and gain professional development in their field. Usually your supervisor or human resources department benefits coordinator can provide details specific to your workplace. If after speaking with staff at your workplace you need additional information to qualify for their assistance, you can [contact Coordinator of Advising, Recruitment, and Retention Andy King](#) and he will assist you in gathering that information.

### **Federal Grants and Loans**

Many of our students will also apply for federal need-based grants and loans to cover a portion or all of their program costs. Most of these funding opportunities will require that the student completes a FAFSA prior to the start of the semester. Details on federal aid programs and assistance in completing the FAFSA is provided by the UM [Financial Aid Office](#).

Additional Resources:

[Graduate School Website](#)  
[University Graduate Student Forms](#)  
[Graduation Preparation Information](#)  
[Tuition Cost Estimates](#)