



M.A. in Criminal Justice

Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Arts in Criminal Justice program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This program improves a student's understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of crime and crime control. Based on the tradition of the liberal arts, the program emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between crime and the structure of society and the interplay between criminal justice theory and practice. These relationships are explored through course work in criminological theory, law and social control, the administration of justice, and crime and public policy. Courses offer students advanced knowledge concerning the nature of crime, criminal justice institutions and processes, current criminal justice policy and training in research methods, statistics, and program evaluation. Upon completion of the program, students will have furthered their understanding of crime and the criminal justice system. Graduates will be prepared for career advancement and to conduct evaluations of policies and programs within various agencies in the justice system, teach at the community college level, and pursue doctoral study in criminology and criminal justice.

Our Criminal Justice M.A. program capitalizes upon the strengths of our faculty and the unique opportunities that our dynamic city and region provide. We offer a variety of exciting electives and educational opportunities, including mentorship and training in unique areas such as crowd management, surveillance studies, human trafficking, forensic testimony, and comparative criminal justice. We also offer research opportunities and studies in more traditional areas of criminology and criminal justice, including policing, corrections, juvenile delinquency, gender and crime, and white collar/corporate crime.

Our program provides exceptional mentorship and instruction. We are committed to assisting you with your academic and career goals and look forward to your future success.

Lee Bernick, Ph.D., Chair
Seong Park, Ph.D. Graduate Coordinator

Mission Statement(s)

The mission of the Master of Arts in Criminal Justice program is to prepare students for career advancement and to conduct evaluations of policies and programs within various agencies in the justice system, teach at the community college level, and pursue doctoral study in criminology and criminal justice.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or gradassociatedean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Program Information

[Master of Arts - Criminal Justice](#)

Contact Information

[Department of Criminal Justice](#)

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Program Requirements for Master of Arts – Criminal Justice

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework, and culminating experience](#) are found in the [graduate catalog](#).

The Master of Arts in Criminal Justice program is a 36-credit program that requires students to complete course work and a culminating experience – either a thesis or comprehensive examination. The program requires the completion of seven core courses (21 credit hours), 9-12 credit hours of elective credits (typically three-to-four, three-credit courses), and either six master's thesis credits or three comprehensive examination credits. A full listing of courses and program description are available on the Master of Arts in Criminal Justice program page in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Degree Program Benchmarks

Master's Thesis. Students choosing to complete a master's thesis to fulfill their culminating experience requirement should register for three credits of CRJ 797 in both the first and second semesters of their second year of study only if they have successfully passed their thesis proposal defense. Please note that students are only permitted to enroll in CRJ 797 (thesis) after they have completed all other courses in the program and have passed their thesis proposal defense.

During the first semester of pre-thesis work, students will form their thesis advisory committee (see Advisory Committee Guidelines below) and produce and orally defend a proposal that outlines the nature, related literature, questions/hypotheses, methods, and significance of the project. Following a successful proposal defense, the *Prospectus Approval* form must be completed through the **Grad Rebel Gateway portal**. Only after a Prospectus Approval has been completed and approved, can students be eligible to enroll in CIRJ 797 (thesis credits).

During the second semester of thesis work, the complete thesis must be orally defended no less than three weeks prior to the last day of instruction. The defense must be announced to the Graduate College at least two weeks prior to the defense date (announcement instructions can be found [here](#)). Thesis defenses are open to the public, but any non-committee members will be asked to leave prior to committee-candidate discussions. A copy of the thesis **iThenticate** similarity check report must be submitted to the student's advisory committee prior to the final defense, and will be considered when determining the outcome of the defense. If the defense is successfully passed, and following the completion of any revisions/additions requested by the committee, the student must complete the *Culminating Experience Results* form in the **Grad Rebel Gateway portal** before submitting the thesis to the Graduate College to initiate the format review. Criminology and Criminal Justice Masters students should follow the format of *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (most current edition) and refer to the Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines when writing a thesis. If the defense is not successfully passed, the student will be recommended to be placed on probation to the Graduate College. See the [Catalog](#) for defense policies and processes.

Comprehensive Examination. Students choosing to complete a comprehensive examination to fulfill their culminating experience requirement should register for three credits of CRJ 796 in the second semester of their second year of study.

The comprehensive examination is administered on the second Friday of the third month of each semester (October and March) in person and on UNLV's campus. The closed-book examination is composed of two sections: (1) criminal justice topics and theory and (2) methods of evaluation and analysis. Students are required to provide essay-style answers to a set of questions (3 to 4) for each section. Although the examination is closed-book, the students are provided with a reading list at the beginning of the semester that they will use to guide their preparation for the examination. A hard copy of that reading list – without any markings on it – can be used during the exam. All cell phones, backpacks, bags, laptops, etc. will be kept in a secure location outside of the exam room during the exam periods unless a student has an accommodation from the Disability Resource Center.

The examination is administered in two, three-hour blocks – one 3-hour block for each section plus one hour for a lunch break. After completing the examination, the faculty members who serve on the comprehensive examination committee independently assess the degree to which each response directly answers the question posed and critically synthesizes a wide body of knowledge stemming from course curriculum, drawing heavily from content presented in CRJ 701, CRJ 702, CRJ 703, CRJ 705, and CRJ 715. Each answer is graded as either a “pass” or “fail.” In the absence of extenuating circumstances, students are notified of the committee’s decision within four weeks of the examination date. Students are provided a written statement on whether they passed or failed each section of the examination and the overall examination. For students who pass the overall examination, no feedback or general comments are provided, and their examinations are not returned. Students who fail any section of the examination are provided comments and given an “Incomplete” for that semester. They may retake the failed section – students do not need to retake the entire examination. Students who do not pass the examination will be recommended to be placed on probation to the Graduate College. As with all “Incompletes,” students have one year to resolve it. A student who fails any section should make an appointment with the chair of the examination committee to discuss their examination, future study habits, and the timeline for retaking the examination. There is a limit of one retake for any examination section. See the [Catalog](#) for policies and processes. Once notified of successful completion, students must complete the Culminating Experience Results form in the [Grad Rebel Gateway portal](#).

Advisory Committee Guidelines for Culminating Experience – Thesis

A formal advisory committee (thesis committee) is required for students who choose to complete a thesis as their culminating experience.

Thesis Advisory Committee. For thesis advisory committee guidelines, please refer to [the Graduate Catalog](#) for specific requirements and information. Four graduate faculty members comprise the thesis advisory committee. These faculty members include a chair and two committee members from the Criminal Justice Department and a committee member with appropriately approved graduate faculty status privileges from another UNLV department to serve as the Graduate College representative (GCR). If approved by the committee chair, a fifth faculty member with UNLV graduate faculty status may serve on the committee. Once a full thesis advisory committee is assembled, students are required to complete the Appointment of Advisory Committee Form through the Grad Rebel Gateway portal. It is the student’s responsibility to fully complete the form and ensure that all required signatures are obtained. The University does not recognize an advisory committee as being formalized without a fully executed Appointment of Advisory Committee Form. Any subsequent changes to the committee should be made in consultation with the dissertation chair and the Graduate Coordinator. Students requesting a change must submit a Change of Advisory Committee Form through the Grad Rebel Gateway portal. Thesis/dissertation advisory committee changes will not be recognized by the University without a completed Change of Advisory Committee Form.

Advisory Committee Guidelines for Culminating Experience – Comprehensive Examination

A formal advisory committee is not required for students who choose to complete a comprehensive examination as their culminating experience.

Sample Program Timeline for Master of Arts – Criminal Justice

- Year 1: complete required courses prior to completing elective credits
- Year 2: complete all required courses, complete elective credits, successfully complete a culminating experience (thesis or comprehensive examination)

Students are encouraged to submit a Plan of Study Form (Parts I and II) through the Graduate Rebel Gateway portal, during the first semester of their second year of study.

Thesis Guidelines and Deadlines

In consultation with their thesis Chair, students should develop a projected timeline for thesis completion, including deadlines for draft reviews and revisions. Drafts and established timelines must adhere to the posted Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation Format and Submission Guidelines, as well as Graduation Deadlines.

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines for all M.A. in Criminal Justice Students

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding [academic integrity](#) can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

Annual Review Procedures

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan: Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form [Formerly known as the

Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead. Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each student's submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP. Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

Probation and Separation

Academic Probation

Academic probation aims to guide students to successful program completion. While being placed on academic probation may not impact students' current graduate assistantship, the department can decline the new employment of students on academic probation until they successfully meet the conditions of their probation. Students will be placed on academic probation if any of the following conditions apply:

1. Any student who earns a cumulative GPA below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. The student will have one semester to raise this average at or above 3.0 or be separated from the program.
2. A student who receives one grade below a "B" (B- or lower) for any core courses will be placed on probation. The CRJ Graduate Committee will determine the criteria by which the student will be removed from academic probation on a case-by-case basis. Failure to fulfill the prescribed requirements will result in separation from the program.
3. Failure to make adequate progress toward degree requirements will also result in probation. This includes but is not limited to failure to complete six credits per semester except those under the ABD status, failure to file appropriate forms with the Graduate College in a timely manner, failure to meet with their advisor upon request, unsatisfactory grades, unsatisfactory academic/professional evaluation, or withdrawal from any core courses.
4. Failure in the comprehensive examination, prospectus, or final thesis/dissertation defense on the first try will result in probation.
5. Failure to meet the successful degree program progression conditions in the Graduate Student

Handbook. 6. Additional conditions are outlined in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Separation

A student may be separated from the program for any of the following reasons:

1. The student who receives two or more grades below a "B-" (C+ or lower) during their degree program will be separated from the program only after being placed on probation via the Graduate College process.
2. The student receives a "B-" or lower grade when repeating any core course. Core courses may only be repeated once. Students may be separated only after being placed on probation via the Graduate College process.
3. Any student receiving two-semester GPAs below 3.0 will be separated from the program only after being placed on probation via the Graduate College process.
4. Any student who fails the comprehensive examination, prospectus, or final thesis defense on the second try will be separated from the program only after being placed on probation via the Graduate College process.
5. Plagiarism on any assignment, paper, prospectus, or thesis will not be tolerated. In cases involving plagiarism, students will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further action.

Please see the [Catalog](#) for all the information concerning Probation and Separation.

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

Institutional Engagement and Experience

The vision of the [Institutional Engagement and Experience](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's engagement mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office is housed under the Division of Human Resources and also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Graduate Appeals and Issue Resolution

The Office of Graduate Student Services at the Graduate College assists graduate and professional students with addressing concerns and overcoming personal, academic, or financial challenges that might hinder their ability to be successful in their program. The office also provides information and student-centered issue-resolution services and offers guidance, information, and assistance when regular channels have failed to provide graduate students with the information they need to solve problems. Please see website for more information: <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/appeals-issue-resolution>

UNLV Global and the Office of International Student and Scholar Compliance

[International Student and Scholar Compliance \(ISSC\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The [Care Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

[The Intersection](#) is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

[UNLV Libraries](#) has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#) serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility is a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The [Military and Veteran Service Center](#) is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active-duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The [Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#) supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
3/31/2022	Melissa Rorie	Updated links; MA Comprehensive Examination Information updated to clarify the examination procedures (votes: 3/30/2022 5-0-0)
3/31/2024	Seong Park	Update the contact information of the Department Chair (votes: 3/15/2024 5-0-0)
3/24/2025	Seong Park	Delete the Discipline Resources and insert clear guidelines for academic probation and separation. (votes: 3/28/2025 11-0-0)