

Criminal Justice and Criminology MA  
Assessment Plan Summary

Criminal Justice and Criminology MA

Methodological and Statistical Competency

Goal Description:

Enhance and develop student's methodological and statistical abilities.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS - - - - -

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Competency In Employing Elements Of Qualitative And/or Quantitative Research Methods

Learning Objective Description:

Competency in employing elements of qualitative and/or quantitative research methods to design scientific-based projects in the field of criminal justice and criminology.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Successful Execution Of Study And Statistics

Indicator Description:

Students will successfully execute the methodology and statistical analyses needed for their thesis. They will also recognize the assumptions and limitations underlying the research methods and statistical techniques used and accurately interpret the results.

Criterion Description:

Students will score at least an 80% on each section of the methodological and statistical sections of the thesis rubric. These include 1. mode of inquiry, 2. execution of study, 3. interpretation of results, and 4. analysis.

Findings Description:

Overall, the majority of students achieved a working mastery of social science research methods techniques including an understanding of statistics as measured by the 4 criteria outlined in the thesis rubric. The findings reveal that the majority of students (88%; 7/8) excelled (as measured by a score of 5/5) at selecting their mode of inquiry, the execution of their study, and the interpretation of their results. Furthermore, 88% (7/8) scored a 4/5 or better on their analyses, which is the minimum standard, with only 1 student falling below that threshold.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Strengthening Methodological and Statistical Skills

Action Description:

In the upcoming year, the Department will focus on strengthening students' methodological and statistical skills. This will be accomplished by 1. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, 2. offering a Statistics II elective course for 2nd year MA students who are beginning to work on their thesis, and 3. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Research Competence

Goal Description:

Enhance and develop student's ability to conceptualize and deliver an original research paper.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS - - - - -

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Competency In Conducting Original Criminal Justice And Criminology Research

Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate integration of knowledge, skills and abilities needed to conduct original research in criminal justice and criminology.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Conceptualization And Delivery Of The Thesis

Indicator Description:

Successful conceptualization and delivery of an original research study as demonstrated by the defense of a Thesis using a faculty-developed rubric. The rubric uses a 1 (insignificant) to 5 (critically significant) rating of specific criteria pertaining to conceptualization

and delivery of an original research paper. These elements include: choice of problem, theoretical framework, written presentation, originality of idea and/or approach, and contribution to the field.

**Criterion Description:**

Students will demonstrate their ability to conceptualize and write an original research study within the field of criminal justice or criminology by completing a thesis.

Students will score at least an 80% on each of the related elements of the facultydeveloped rubric.

**Findings Description:**

Overall, students demonstrated competency in conducting original criminal justice and criminological research. When assessing the conceptualization and writing elements of the thesis, 1 students did not achieve the 80% threshold for "theoretical framework" with only 38% of the students scoring a 5/5 on that element. Furthermore, 88% (7/8), 75% (6/8), and 88% (7/8) of students scored a 5/5 on the criteria of choice of problem, written presentation, and contribution to the field, respectively. The area that students seem to excel at most is originality of idea with 100% of the students scoring 5/5 on this element.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Strengthen Student Ability to Conceptualize and Deliver Original Research**

**Action Description:**

The Department will focus on strengthening students' abilities to conceptualize and write original research in criminal justice or criminology. This may be accomplished by 1. providing a workshop on how to identify criminological problems to study that make a significant contribution to the field, 2. offering more theory-based elective courses to further develop their theoretical knowledge base, and 3. allow MA students to register for Ph.D. electives.

## Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

**Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):**

For the 2015-2016 academic year, continued emphasis will be placed on strengthening student research and statistical skills with an overall goal of preparing our MA students for the PhD program. This will be accomplished by 1. providing a workshop on how to identify criminological problems to study that have the potential to make a significant contribution to the field , 2. encouraging students to use the University's writing center, 3. offering more theory-based elective courses to further develop their theoretical knowledge base, 4. providing a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, 5. offering a Statistics II elective course for 2nd year MA students who are beginning to work on their thesis, and 6. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Students will also be encouraged to publish their research findings in peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty assistance as well as present their research at national conferences and University-sponsored events.

The development of our MA students statistical and research skills is contingent on 1. access to the latest versions of various statistical software programs used in the social sciences (e.g., STATA, MPlus, HLM, etc.), 2. student travel and professional development funds, and 3. summer research scholarships.

**Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

This academic year, faculty in the department focused on teaching students how to identify criminological problems to study and to strengthen their writing skills. We also provided a faculty led 1/2 day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, offered a Statistics II elective course for 2nd year MA students who are beginning to work on their thesis, and provided additional mandatory statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Several students worked on publications for peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty assistance as well as presented their research at national conferences (e.g., ASC and ACJS) and University-sponsored events (e.g., Graduate Research Exchange, Woodlands Symposium).

## Closing Summary

**Closing Summary:**

For the 2016-2017 academic year, continued emphasis will be placed on strengthening student research and statistical skills with an overall goal of preparing our MA students for the PhD program. The Graduate Standards and Admissions Committee will discuss:1. continuing to provide a faculty led ½ day workshop on basic statistics and research methods the summer prior to starting the MA program, 2. adding Statistics II as part of the core requirements, 3. allowing MA students to register for Ph.D. electives, and 4. providing additional statistical and methodological workshops throughout the semester to further develop specific skills and abilities.

Students will also be encouraged to publish their research findings in peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty assistance as well as present their research at national conferences and University-sponsored events. The Department will also seek ways to better keep track of graduate student publications.

The development of our MA students statistical and research skills is contingent on 1. access to the latest versions of various statistical software programs used in the social sciences (e.g., STATA, MPlus, HLM, etc.), 2. student travel and professional development funds, and 3. summer research scholarships.