

Masters of Science in Criminal Justice

Thesis Option FAQ:

1. Why should I pursue the thesis option?

You might choose to write a thesis for several reasons:

- (1) A thesis provides a learning experience that uniquely furthers the development of research skills;
- (2) It creates an opportunity to conduct a more in-depth investigation of a topic of personal or professional interest than is usually possible in a course, and finally;
- (3) Successfully completing a thesis often enhances your chances for admission to and performance in a doctoral program or law school.

The master's program consists of **three** components:

1. Required Coursework (all students must take these courses);
2. Elective Coursework;
3. A Capstone Requirement which may be satisfied by either the Research Seminar combined with the Comprehensive Examination OR the Thesis.

Sample Course Sequence for students opting for the Thesis:

Full-time Students (approximately 1 1/2 yrs.)

Semester 1	Credit Hours	Semester 2	Credit Hours
CRJU 500 Foundations of Scholarship	1	CRJU 510 Research in Criminal Justice	3
CRJU 504 Crime, Justice, & Society	3		
CRJU 505 Seminar in Criminology	3		3
CRJU 5-- Elective	3	CRJU 5-- Elective	3
	10	CRJU 5-- Elective	9
Semester 3			
CRJU 511 Analyzing Criminal Jus. Data	3		
CRJU 512 Ethics & Policy in CJ	3		
CRJU 502* Research (Thesis)	3		
CRJU 502* Research (Thesis)	3		
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* Students pursuing the thesis option must, at the appropriate time, and after consultation with their faculty advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator, register for CJ 502 instead of the last two electives. The master's thesis consists of 6 credit hours.

2. When should I begin to consider the thesis option?

As you complete your electives, you should begin to consider the thesis option. Meet with your advisor or the Graduate Program Coordinator to discuss the option. You may have a topic in mind before you decide to do a thesis, or once you've decided to pursue the thesis, you could begin to consider possible research topics.

3. Who should be on my thesis committee?

In keeping with graduate school policy, thesis committees include three faculty members. All three members can be from the department however, you may have the third member from outside of the department. You should work with your adviser and/or the Graduate Program Coordinator to choose the thesis committee.

4. How do I decide who should be my committee chairperson?

You select the committee chairperson after consulting with your committee members and considering their areas of expertise and overall availability.

5. What course should I register for while I am working on my thesis?

You must be enrolled in CJ 502 Research during the period in which a faculty member is directing the thesis. This course may be taken over two semesters. The maximum credit hours allowed for CJ 502 is six (6). Unfinished work will be graded Incomplete (I). Incompletes must be resolved by the last day of the following semester. In addition, you must also file appropriate paperwork with the Graduate Program Coordinator regarding your proposed thesis work.

6. I have heard about the Institutional Review Board. What is that and what does it have to do with my research?

The Bridgewater State College Institutional Review Board examines the research proposals of faculty, staff, and students that involve human subjects. Researchers are required to comply with standards modeled after the Code of Federal Regulations for Protection of Human Subjects. These regulations are meant to ensure that the participation of subjects will be voluntary and that no harm will be done to them during the study. Essentially it is the job of all IRBs to ensure that uniform ethical standards in research are being applied. The IRB will determine if your proposal will receive an expedited review, a full review, or will be exempt from review. You can get more information about IRB policies, forms, and contact information by visiting the following website: http://www.bridgew.edu/sponproj/human_subj.cfm

7. Will I need to request approval for my thesis research from the Institutional Review Board?

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) may need to review and approve your project. Generally speaking, studies that involve any interaction with human subjects must be approved by the IRB. This can be time consuming, so you should file the appropriate paperwork with the IRB as soon as your thesis committee approves your research proposal.

8. As I work on my thesis, what else should I be doing? How will I know I am making real progress on my thesis work?

It is your responsibility to communicate regularly with the committee chair and other members. Successful completion of the thesis is frequently the result of establishing a clear research objective; a specified plan of action; and developing an effective collaboration between student and committee. You should expect to revise and modify your work for various reasons. For example, sometimes research plans are amended when unanticipated developments occur. Or analysis of the issue may require some additional work to strengthen an area. Your committee will direct and support your work. They will determine when your work meets appropriate standards and is complete. You and your committee want you to produce a thesis that demonstrates and strengthens your research skills and scholarly competencies.

9. What happens when the committee accepts my thesis?

You are to complete three title pages, each with the signatures of your committee members. Additionally, you should:

- Provide three unbound copies of the approved thesis; with a title page attached as the first page for each of the three copies;
- Have an abstract of the thesis as the second page attached to each of the three copies.
- Submit the total package of three unbounded copies, with signed title and abstract pages to the graduate office not later than the completion of all other degree requirements. The Graduate School arranges for the binding of the thesis.

10. What are the costs involved?

There is a fee of \$12 per copy. Usually three copies are submitted, one each for the department, Maxwell Library, and the student. You can write out a check for \$36 payable to Bridgewater State College and submit it to the Graduate School with the complete package of thesis materials. You may also use a credit card for payment.