



School of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Handbook for the MASTER OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

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School of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Welcome to the Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ) program at the School of Public Affairs (SPA). If you are a prospective student, this handbook will give you a sense of our program and let you know how to apply. If you have been accepted into our program, the handbook contains our program requirements and other information designed to help you be successful.

The MCJ program prepares students to become leaders in criminology and criminal justice areas, working in law enforcement, corrections, courts, and with government and nonprofit agencies to promote the common good. As an MCJ student, you will learn about practices and policy from leading scholars and practitioners in the field. Your studies will include applying both theories and skills to solve the pressing problems of our day, and you will have opportunities to work with agencies and organizations to contribute what you have learned to real-world issues. Our highly rated program ensures that your education will be top quality.

At SPA, we are passionate about the importance of public service, and we're glad you're considering joining us!

Sincerely,

Mary Dodge, PhD
MJC Program Director

Paul Teske, PhD
Dean

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1. Purpose of Handbook

Welcome to the MCJ program at the School of Public Affairs! The Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ) Handbook will acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the School of Public Affairs (SPA) and facilitate your progress toward applying for the program and earning the MCJ degree. Read this MCJ handbook carefully and consult your student services coordinator or advisor (if applicable) whenever you have questions.

Be aware that the policies and procedures described herein are subject to change and can be affected by changes in the policies of the University of Colorado. University-wide policies take priority over the policies of SPA. Check the campus catalog, SPA's website, and the Graduate Education Office for the most up-to-date information.

2. Graduate Education University of Colorado Denver

The Graduate Education of the University of Colorado Denver oversees the MCJ program. For more information, please see: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/current/Pages/resources.aspx>.

3. School of Public Affairs

The University of Colorado Denver's School of Public Affairs (SPA), established in 1973, offers six degree programs: Master of Criminal Justice, Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, Master of Public Administration, Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration, Master of Public Policy, and Ph.D. in Public Affairs.

SPA is highly ranked nationally for its criminal justice and public affairs programs. Our motto is *Lead. Solve. Change.* These ideals reflect our pride in training future leaders. Innovative MCJ and MPA concentrations in emergency management, crime analysis, and interpersonal violence; pathways from undergraduate to graduate studies; community events and social networking opportunities; highly skilled research faculty; and a dedication to teaching demonstrate our commitment to excellence.

SPA's MCJ program explores all aspects of crime, criminal behavior, and victimization from an interdisciplinary perspective informed by sociology, psychology, economics, political science, statistics, anthropology, and criminology. Coursework prepares students and professionals for careers in crime analysis, public policy, social work, victim advocacy, law enforcement at the local, state, and federal levels, corrections, and more.

4. Master of Criminal Justice Program

Criminal Justice began as an area of concentration in SPA's Master of Public Administration program in 1974. The Master of Criminal Justice program was established in 1980 as a separate degree program within SPA upon recommendation of the University of Colorado Board of Regents and approval by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

The MCJ program is designed for students interested in comprehensive professional graduate-level criminology and criminal justice education. It provides an applied education in which partnerships with local, national, and international criminal justice agencies enhance academic and professional skills.

The MCJ program explores critical aspects of crime and criminal victimization, as well as management, policy, and research issues in the administration of the criminal justice system. Coursework prepares students for careers in crime analytics, public policy, victim advocacy, policing, courts, corrections, law, and higher education. Critical thinking and decision-making are emphasized in developing, implementing, and assessing criminal justice policies and procedures.

The MCJ program serves five major categories of students: 1) students seeking entry into a criminal justice career; 2) students working in the field of criminal justice agencies and seeking graduate-level education for career development and advancement; and 3) students interested in teaching and research in criminal justice and related fields; 4) pathway undergraduates seeking a higher level degree; and 5) students preparing for Ph.D. programs.

4.1 Mission

The mission of the MCJ program is to:

- (a) provide an intellectually stimulating academic and professional environment in which students and faculty grow and develop to their full potential;
- (b) educate students preparing for a career in criminal justice or related fields by providing knowledge and skills necessary for academic, ethical, and practical success; and
- (c) contribute to understanding and excellence of practice in criminal justice and allied social and behavioral sciences through teaching, research, and service to local, state, and national constituent communities and agencies.

The program goals are designed to develop substantive knowledge and critical thinking, strong analytic and communication skills, and high ethical and professional standards.

4.2 Curriculum Objectives

Objectives for students in the MCJ program are:

- a) to provide students with a broad-based knowledge of theory and practice concerning criminal justice administration, management, and policy;
- b) to provide students with decision-making and problem-solving skills required in criminal justice administration, management, and policy;

- c) to provide students with substantive expertise required for positions in law enforcement, judicial, or correctional and in private sector organizations concerned with criminal justice administration;
- d) to provide theoretical, analytical, and research skills necessary for successful careers, or as preparation for doctoral-level graduate study; and
- e) to provide students with a comprehensive, integrated model of criminal justice administration theory and practice, stressing conceptual, methodological, and contextual knowledge development and application.

4.3 Administration

The MCJ program is administered by the Graduate Education Office at CU Denver. Forms and information are available from the SPA office or on the SPA website. The MCJ Program Director is the key administrative officer for the program. The Director serves as the central contact for questions regarding policies for the program and chairs the MCJ Criminal Justice Committee, which develops and approves overall MCJ policies. SPA's Recruiting and Admissions Coordinator provides information to prospective students regarding the program and related policies and procedures. SPA's Student Services Team serves as advisors for students concerning basic degree planning and provides information about how to apply to the program, registration, financial aid, and a range of related issues.

5. Admissions

5.1 Application Requirements

Students who wish to apply for admission to the MCJ program should consult SPA's website for [detailed information and instructions](#). All application materials, including letters of recommendation, and transcripts, should be uploaded into the application portal.

Applicants must submit the following materials:

1. The University of Colorado Graduate Admission Application.
2. One set of unofficial transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work is required. The transcript must show a baccalaureate degree from a college or university of accredited standing, preferably with a minimum grade-point average of 3.0 (where 4.0 = A). (Students admitted to a program must then arrange for official transcripts to be sent directly to CU Denver from all institutions where prior undergraduate and graduate coursework was completed.)
3. A \$50 application fee for domestic applicants. Application fees are waived for international applications to offset the cost of paying for transcript evaluations by the two approved third-party service providers, [ECE](#) or [WES](#)).

4. Three letters of reference, two of which should be from academic sources. Recommendations may come from professors, employers, or others who are acquainted with the prospective student’s scholarly abilities and/or professional work.
5. A resume.
6. A personal statement of interest and intent.

The MCJ Program Director will weigh the materials described above in making an admission decision. Admission to the MCJ program is based on the candidate’s potential for academic and career success as indicated by formal academic record (undergraduate and, if any, graduate work), and length and level of work experience.

Admission Calendar

Admission to the MCJ program is made on a rolling basis, and applicants are admitted for each semester. The calendar for submission of admission materials is as follows:

| Term | Preferred Deadline | Final Deadline | Preferred Deadline | Final Deadline |
|--------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Domestic Student | Domestic Student | International Student | International Student |
| Fall | March 15 | August 1 | March 15 | May 15 |
| Spring | October 15 | December 1 | September 15 | October 15 |
| Summer | March 15 | May 1 | January 15 | March 15 |

The MCJ Director may consider graduate applications at any time, which means files may be reviewed as soon as they are completed. Students are notified by email of the admission decision. The University processes admissions on the schedule shown above. Only students officially admitted by the University are eligible for financial aid.

5.2 Provisional Admission

In exceptional cases, students who do not meet the minimum qualifications may be admitted to the MCJ program on provisional status if elements of their graduate application show promise of success. Students admitted on provisional status are required earn at least a B in each of two required MCJ core courses taken in the first semester of enrollment. These two courses should be taken in a traditional classroom format unless the

online format is the only feasible option, or the student is planning to take all graduate courses through the online MCJ option. At the conclusion of the first semester, student performance in these graduate courses will be reviewed to determine if admission to the MCJ program will be granted. Provisionally admitted students may take no other SPA MCJ graduate courses until they have been formally admitted into the program.

5.3 Non-Degree Admission

Admission as a degree-seeking student is not a requirement to take graduate classes in the MCJ program. Students may attend graduate classes as non-degree students by completing an Application for Non-Degree Admission. These applications are available from the CU Denver Office of Admissions. Credit hours for MCJ graduate coursework taken under this status may be applied to the MCJ program if the student eventually is admitted as a degree-seeking MCJ student.

Taking MCJ graduate courses as a non-degree student does not guarantee admission to the program. Therefore, we encourage students to apply as soon as possible to the MCJ program. The non-degree status is most useful when students want to explore the field and/or when their graduate application is not complete (e.g., transcripts and/or reference letters have not been received).

5.4 Readmission of Inactive, Withdrawn, and Suspended Students

Students who have been admitted to SPA must complete their coursework within seven years. Occasionally students find it necessary to interrupt their coursework for one or more semesters. However, an extended interruption may result in the student being placed on inactive status or withdrawn.

Students who fail to enroll in any graduate classes during the semester in which they are admitted or who have not registered for graduate classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer semesters) will be placed on inactive status. Inactive graduate students who wish to continue their graduate coursework will be required to submit readmission paperwork. Contact your SPA Student Services Coordinator for more information.

Students who have not enrolled in graduate classes for more than 12 consecutive semesters (including summer semesters) will be considered to have withdrawn from the MCJ program. Readmission for these students will require repeating the full graduate application process. Readmission is not guaranteed.

A graduate student who has been suspended from the program is not allowed to register for graduate classes in the MCJ Program. Suspended graduate students may apply for readmission no sooner than one year after the suspension by submitting a new application. The decision to approve or reject this application is made jointly by the MCJ Director and Graduate School Dean.

6. Advising and Student Support

Advising at the School of Public Affairs (SPA) is the joint responsibility of faculty and Student Services Coordinators. In general, questions about program logistics are best addressed by Student Services Coordinators. International students are advised by the International Coordinator, who also assists them with other issues specific to international students, such as visa requirements.

Upon admission to the MCJ program, students should set up a meeting with their Student Services Coordinator. The Student Services Coordinators will assist with registration, understanding program requirements, preliminary degree planning, and selecting a faculty advisor.

Students may request that they be assigned a faculty advisor with expertise in a field of their interest. To secure an advisor, the student is encouraged to review faculty biographies on the SPA website and make direct contact. Students who have declared concentrations or who are enrolled in dual degree programs will be assigned a faculty advisor.

6.1 Academic Support

SPA graduate students who need academic support are encouraged to reach out to their instructors. Some graduate classes have teaching assistants who are available to tutor students. Additional support is available through SPA, the University, and the University's Writing Center.

7. Degree and Program Options

7.1 Online MCJ Degree

Graduate students may complete the MCJ degree entirely through online classes, an option which may be attractive for those living outside of the Denver metro area or who require more flexibility in scheduling. Online graduate courses are offered by SPA faculty and lecturers and are identical in rigor and content to graduate courses offered in the traditional classroom format.

7.2 Dual Degrees

A dual degree program allows a student to complete two degrees in less time and with less expense than it would take to earn each degree separately. Currently, SPA offers the following dual degree options related to the MCJ degree:

- BACJ/MCJ: This five-year pathway program allows high-performing undergraduates to begin taking graduate-level MCJ graduate classes during their senior year. See the SPA website for more information about this option.
- MCJ/MPA: This program allows a student to earn both a Master of Criminal Justice degree and a Master of Public Administration degree, both through SPA. See the SPA website for more information about this option.

7.3 Draft Proposal for Interpersonal Violence (IPV) Concentration N/A (aka GBV)

The concentration in Interpersonal Violence requires two core and two recommended elective graduate courses. These two electives may be selected from a recommended list of graduate courses or with the approval of the MCJ Director. The courses apply as graduate elective credits for the MCJ degree. Contact the MCJ Director or visit the SPA website for more information.

Please note that this concentration is still under review and is listed as Gender Based Violence.

7.4 Emergency Management and Homeland Security Concentration

The concentration in Emergency Management and Homeland Security requires students to take two core concentration graduate courses from a list of four. The remaining two concentration graduate courses may be selected from a recommended list of graduate courses or with the approval of the director of the concentration. Contact the Emergency Management and Homeland Security concentration director or visit the SPA website for more information.

7.5 Disasters, Hazards, and Emergency Management Concentration

The concentration in Disasters, Hazards, and Emergency Management requires students to take two core concentration graduate courses from a list of four. The remaining two concentration graduate courses may be selected from a recommended list of graduate courses or with the approval of the director of the concentration. Contact the Disasters, Hazards, and Emergency Management concentration director or visit the SPA website for more information.

7.6 Crime Analyst Concentration

The Crime Analyst concentration requires three core concentration graduate courses, which would apply as graduate elective credits for the MCJ degree. Visit the SPA website for more information.

8. MCJ Degree Requirements

8.1 Course Load

The normal course load for a full-time MCJ student is 6 to 9 graduate credit hours per semester; for financial aid determination, full-time status for MCJ graduate students is 5 graduate credit hours per semester. A student who is employed full-time is *strongly* advised not to carry more than 6 graduate semester hours. Students who wish to carry a graduate course load above 9 hours per semester must consult their advisor and/or student service coordinator.

8.2 General Requirements

The minimum requirements for the MCJ degree are as follows:

1. Completion of a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate work with a grade point average of B (3.0) or better. The 36 graduate credit hours include 6 required MCJ graduate courses and 6 elective graduate courses.
2. Students must receive a grade of B- or better in all graduate courses. Grades below B- (2.7) are not accepted for credit toward MCJ degree requirements. However, all earned grades are applied to the student's grade point average.
3. Pre-service students (those who have not had the equivalent of at least one year of professional practical experience in the field of criminal justice) must take three semester graduate credit hours of field study by enrolling in CRJU 6910: Field Study in Criminal Justice.

8.3 Time Requirements

Although the MCJ program requires intensive commitment, it does not require full-time study. All graduate MCJ core courses are offered either online or in person during late afternoon or evening hours each spring and fall semester. MCJ electives may be offered in the summer in either online or in-person format. Summer scheduling – number of courses and instruction mode–depends on student demand. Students should expect to complete the MCJ graduate degree in no less than one and no more than seven calendar years (the average is about two and one-half years).

With the MCJ Director's approval, students making steady progress toward the graduate degree may be allowed to extend the seven-year limit by one or two additional semesters. Such approval should be sought as far as possible before the student's planned graduation date. Approval is not guaranteed.

8.4 Coursework Requirements

Core Graduate Courses and CRJU 5361 Capstone Seminar

All MCJ students must complete the following six required MCJ core graduate courses, representing 18 credit hours:

- CRJU 5001 CJ Systems, Policies & Practices
- CRJU 5002 Criminological Theory
- CRJU 5003 Research Methods
- CRJU 5004 Statistics
- CRJU 5005 Law & Society
- CRJU 5361 Capstone OR CRJU 6950 Master's Thesis

Course descriptions can be found in the graduate course catalog. Students must earn a B- or better in all graduate courses. Students who receive a lower grade may retake the graduate class once; students who fail to receive a B- or better the second time will be dismissed from the MCJ program.

All MCJ students, except those pursuing the thesis option, are required to complete CRJU 5361: Capstone Seminar. The graduate MCJ Capstone Seminar is taken during the last semester of the student's MCJ degree program. All core graduate courses should be completed before the Capstone Seminar is taken. The graduate Capstone Seminar cannot be taken during the summer semester.

For their graduate capstone projects, students work with a client in a public, private, or nonprofit agency to identify a research area and, using knowledge and skills gained in the program, carry out a project resulting in a final paper and oral presentation. Capstone projects take many different forms, including, for example, statistical analysis, business plans, marketing plans, surveys and interviews, and salary studies. *All Capstone Seminar students must pose a research question and propose an appropriate research methodology. The Capstone Seminar professor must approve capstone topics, research questions, and methods.* The course allows students to integrate what they have learned in graduate school and apply this knowledge and skills in the field. Further, capstone projects allow faculty to evaluate students' ability to perform research and work with clients.

All students who will be taking the Capstone Seminar are required to attend a capstone orientation session in the semester before enrolling. Contact your Student Services Coordinator for more information.

Elective Graduate Courses

Students must complete a minimum of six elective graduate courses (18 semester graduate hours) in graduate CRJU courses. Students should discuss graduate elective options with their Student Services Coordinator. All elective graduate courses are three credit hours. Please consult the University of Colorado Denver Catalog for a complete description of elective graduate courses: <http://catalog.ucdenver.edu/index.php>. Given that internet links can change over time, please be

sure, this link has directed you to the “Graduate Course Catalogue.” Elective graduate courses must be taken from graduate courses within CRJU 5006-6600 (but see below).

Other Elective Graduate Courses

With *pre-approval* of the MCJ Director, a student may apply up to nine semester graduate credit hours of non-criminal justice course work at the 5000 or greater level toward the MCJ degree. Students may take these 5000 or greater level elective courses in SPA’s MPA program or other schools and colleges within the University of Colorado system.

Transfer Credits

Students who have taken graduate-level criminal justice coursework at institutions other than the University of Colorado Denver may be able to transfer some portion of that graduate work into the CU Denver SPA MCJ program. A maximum of **nine graduate level semester hours** may be transferred. Transfer of credits is not guaranteed.

Students should request a transfer of graduate credits immediately after successfully completing one semester of MCJ graduate coursework as a regularly admitted MCJ degree-seeking graduate student. To request a graduate credit transfer, students must complete the Transfer of Credit Form available through the Graduate School and attach official transcripts to the form. Following a review of this form, the Student Services Coordinator will notify the student of the acceptance or rejection of their transfer of credit request.

Independent Study

Students interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry that is not covered in regular course offerings may elect to establish a program of graduate independent study with one of the faculty. The student needs to consider the area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty supervisor. The student and faculty member will then develop a course of graduate-level study that meets the requirements of the University of Colorado Denver, SPA, and the student’s needs. The student must then complete a CU Denver Special Processing Form (available from the SPA office) and request approval by the supervising faculty member. The form must be submitted and approved by the posted add/drop period. The student will be registered for CRJU 6840 Independent Study upon completing this process.

Independent study graduate courses are subject to the following conditions. Participating students must be fully admitted to the MCJ program. Students must have completed a minimum of 12 semester graduate-level credit hours in criminal justice coursework with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0. The graduate credit hours for any one independent study course may vary from one to three for a semester; the faculty supervisor determines the exact graduate credit hours which will be commensurate with the degree of complexity and difficulty of the project. No more than six graduate credit hours of Independent Study may be applied toward the MCJ degree.

Internship

Students who have not had the equivalent of at least one year of professional experience in the field of criminal justice following the awarding of a Bachelor's degree are required to enroll in Field Study in Criminal Justice (CRJU 6910).

Students who must complete an internship will work part-time or full-time for local, state, or federal criminal justice or juvenile justice agencies. The internships may be paid or unpaid, depending upon the agency. The objectives of the internship are:

- (a) to expose MCJ students to career opportunities that exist in the criminal justice system;
- (b) to enable criminal justice agencies and organizations to attract highly-skilled MCJ students to government, thereby improving the overall quality of the criminal justice system;
- (c) to provide pre-service MCJ students with practical work experiences that allow them to link classroom training with praxis in the criminal justice system; and
- (d) to enhance MCJ students' experiences in a way that will enable them to make informed career decisions.

Internship Requirements and Procedures

In their internships, students must meet the requirements of their employing agency as well as those of the School of Public Affairs and the Graduate School. The employer's requirements are established through a written agreement before any work is begun. The work period can be for an academic semester or during the summer. Work schedules are arranged with the student's employing agency.

In addition, students must submit a final written paper describing the nature of the field experience, how they used the knowledge and skills gained through their coursework, and the knowledge and skills they gained in the internship. Portions of this paper should compare learning in the organization with learning from the scholarly literature and classroom instruction. The field study instructor will provide a course syllabus, including further details about the paper, and give the final grade for the paper and the internship.

Internships are administered through the university's Experiential Learning Center (ELC), and students should contact the ELC before searching for an internship. Criminal justice internship opportunities are often available on the university's Handshake system. Alternatively, students may contact agencies to inquire about available internship opportunities. SPA's Career Services Specialist and the ELC advisor can help with this search, and SPA faculty can also suggest options. Students are responsible for identifying internships, contacting

the agencies and arranging for interviews. The ELC and SPA can help facilitate this process, but the final responsibility lies with the student.

When the student has established an internship relationship with an agency or organization, the student and the internship supervisor will develop a learning agreement outlining the agreement between the organization and the student and the tasks in which the intern will be involved. The internship course instructor must approve the agreement before the student begins work. The ELC will assist with this paperwork.

Upon completion of the internship course, both the employer and the student will complete an evaluation of the internship experience. Required forms and other internship information are available from the ELC. All products required by the internship must be submitted to the course instructor.

[Request to Waive Internship Requirement](#)

The Director of the MCJ program examines each student's application to the program and determines whether an internship is appropriate or should be waived, and students are notified of this decision in their admission letter. Students who believe vital experiences have been overlooked may ask the MCJ Director to reconsider the decision by submitting a Request to Waive the Internship Requirement form, available from the SPA office or the SPA website.

Some graduate students who are initially required to take the graduate internship later obtain employment that would merit a waiver while still a student in the MCJ program. In such circumstances, the student can apply for a waiver of the internship requirement.

[8.5 Thesis Option](#)

The thesis option is available to MCJ students interested in undertaking a research project, pursuing research careers, or entering a Ph.D. program. Students must select a thesis advisor from the faculty to oversee their work. A thesis may be completed in one semester but often requires a two-semester, six-credit hour time frame. The student conducts a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collects original data or analyzes existing data in new ways.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include:

1. Successful completion of all core graduate courses;
2. Overall GPA of 3.50 in the MCJ program and permission of faculty advisor;
3. Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest; and
4. Agreement of two SPA faculty members to serve on the thesis committee (one as Thesis Advisor).

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through her/his faculty academic advisor to establish eligibility with respect to the above criteria and identify appropriate faculty members to serve on the thesis committee. The thesis committee consists of a major advisor who is a full-time SPA faculty member and two other full-time SPA faculty

members. The student may seek program permission to substitute an external expert in the subject area of the thesis for the third full-time SPA faculty member. This person may be from the community or another school or department. Adjunct SPA faculty members and full- or part-time faculty members in other academic units are eligible.

Thesis Process

Eligible graduate students will be expected to follow a prescribed process in completing the requirements of the thesis option. An overview of the process is provided below.

Before the MCJ student will be allowed to enroll for thesis credit, the thesis committee must formally approve a written thesis prospectus or proposal, which includes a thesis plan, a preliminary literature review, a problem statement, and a timetable for completion. Upon approval of the prospectus, the student will be allowed to enroll in CRJU 6950: Master's Thesis. The grade "In Progress" (IP) will be awarded until the thesis has been completed and approved. During this time, the student will work with the thesis committee in pursuing the thesis plan.

The thesis document will be prepared in accordance with the *Style and Policy Manual for Theses and Dissertations*, available from the SPA Student Coordinators and CU Denver Graduate School.

9. Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to support students who are unable to attend SPA without aid. The primary source of information about student financial assistance is the University's Financial Aid Office. Students interested in learning about available scholarships should contact the Scholarship Resource Office at CU Denver. Scholarship Universe is an online database listing scholarships available at CU Denver, including several scholarships available to SPA students.

A limited number of graduate research and teaching assistantships are also available, depending on faculty and staff need. Your Student Services Coordinator can help you apply for these opportunities.

SPA provides scholarships for a limited number of entering students who have served in the Peace Corps, City Year, and AmeriCorps. For information about these programs, visit the SPA website or contact the Recruiting and Admissions Coordinator.

10. Graduation

Graduate students who have completed all requirements for the MCJ degree can apply for candidacy and graduation in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. (Students who graduate in the summer may participate in graduation ceremonies in the fall. No ceremonies are held in the summer.)

In order to graduate, students must submit paperwork to SPA as directed by their Student Services Coordinator. In addition, students are required to notify the Registrar's Office of their intent to graduate by completing the *Apply for Graduation* form in the CU Denver Access portal.

Students who have completed the required paperwork and are on the graduation list but find themselves unable to complete program requirements before graduation should notify the SPA office as quickly as possible. Any questions regarding graduation procedures should be directed to the Student Service Coordinators.

11. Academic Policies

11.1 Grading Scale

Grades assigned in SPA graduate courses (except thesis) are based on an A to F scale, with each letter grade representing the following standard narrative description:

- A = Excellent performance in all aspects of the work of the graduate course; significant intellectual contributions to class based on assigned reading and personal background. (A = 4.0 grade points; A- = 3.7 grade points)
- B = Excellent performance in some aspects of the work of the graduate course, good performance in other aspects; ability to make contributions based on reading and personal background. (B+ = 3.3 grade points; B = 3.0 grade points; B- = 2.7 grade points)
- C = Good performance in some aspects of the work of the graduate course, but below the standard expected of graduate students in other aspects; identifiable weaknesses in comprehension of some of the assigned reading material. (C+ = 2.3 grade points; C = 2.0 grade points; C- = 1.7 grade points)
- D = Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the graduate course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D+ = 1.3 grade points; D = 1.0 grade point; D- = 0.7 grade point)
- F = Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication, based on performance, that the student can succeed in a graduate program. (F = 0.0 grade points)

11.2 Probation/Suspension

The calculation of cumulative graduate GPA shall be based on all graduate coursework applied to the MCJ degree, including graduate courses taken as a non-degree student. (Note: Graduate courses taken in non-degree status are not included in the overall calculation of GPA on the official transcript but are included in the overall calculation of GPA within SPA for graduation purposes.)

A graduate student who fails to maintain an overall "B" (3.0) grade-point average will be placed on academic probation.

Probationary status shall not be allowed to extend beyond two semesters (including summer session) during which the graduate student is enrolled. Failure on the part of the graduate student to remove himself/herself from probation by achieving an overall GPA of at least 3.0 during this time interval will result in automatic suspension from SPA. Students may appeal this decision. A suspended graduate student is eligible to apply for readmission after one year. The decision to approve or reject this application is made jointly by the MCJ director and Graduate School Dean.

11.3 Course Completion Policies

Retaking Graduate courses

Retaking Courses. A student may retake **no more than two** courses during the course of the degree program, regardless of whether the need for a retake results from a low grade, an incomplete, or a course withdrawal. The MPA Program Director exercises discretion for exceptional, documented circumstances (i.e., military deployment, major medical emergency).

A student who receives a letter grade for a course that is too low to qualify for credit may retake the course once. SPA staff will use both grades to calculate the student's overall GPA. To retake a course, the student must re-enroll and pay tuition and fees for the course again.

Incomplete Grades

An "Incomplete" may be granted when the student has successfully completed 75 percent or more of the graduate course and is prevented from finishing the graduate class because of extenuating circumstances. The course instructor has sole discretion as to whether or not to grant an "Incomplete." Students in online graduate courses will not have access to the course shell after the ending date of the course, so incompletes may not be available.

If the course instructor grants an Incomplete, the student must complete the remaining coursework within one year and complete an "Incomplete Contract." Once the graduate coursework is completed, the instructor will change the incomplete grade to a letter grade. The Incomplete notation will appear along with the final grade on the student's transcript. If the coursework is not completed within a year, the Incomplete will automatically change to an F unless the student and the instructor have agreed in writing to an extension.

A student may be granted no more than two Incompletes during the course of the graduate degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the Director of the MCJ program. No Incompletes are granted in capstone graduate courses.

Course Revalidation Policy

The graduate course revalidation process is required by university policy for graduate courses taken more than seven years ago. To revalidate a graduate course, the student must submit a one-page review of what they learned in the graduate class being revalidated, how the

coursework will apply (or applies) to the student's profession, and what has changed in the field of criminology and criminal justice since the student took the course (e.g., new literature, findings, issues of interest). The student must dedicate equal space to each of those three parts of the revalidation document.

The student should submit the forms to your Student Service Coordinator and the Director of the MCJ Program. The MCJ Program Director will review the documentation submitted by the student for revalidation, and a meeting between the graduate student and MCJ Program Director (perhaps including other relevant faculty) may be scheduled to discuss relevant subject matter. Following this process, the MCJ Program Director will make a determination about revalidating the course(s) and forward the request to the Graduate School for final approval. Graduate courses not revalidated must be retaken.

Drops/Withdrawals

Deadlines for dropping a graduate course are set by the Office of the Registrar and posted on the Academic Calendar each semester. *Students are responsible for knowing these deadlines.* Students can drop a course during the first week of the semester without being assessed full tuition and without having the course appear on their transcript. Graduate students who drop a course after the first week but before census date may drop in the CU Denver Access portal, but a drop charge will apply. Students in intensive format graduate classes must drop prior to the third class meeting to be eligible for a tuition adjustment.

After census date (typically the third Wednesday of the semester), the student may withdraw from the graduate course by submitting a Schedule Adjustment Form with the signature of the instructor. A "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

If the request to withdraw is made after the 10th week of graduate classes, the student must obtain special approval from the MCJ Program Director and the Graduate School Dean by filing a late drop petition and completing the Schedule Adjustment Form. Students will not be allowed to drop after the 10th week of graduate classes simply because they are failing the course; it is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to determine if the graduate course should be dropped due to failing grades prior to the 10th week of graduate classes. If a withdraw is permitted, a "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

No tuition reimbursements are available for withdrawals made after census date, and students may be required to repay financial aid. Students who believe their circumstances justify an exception to financial obligations may appeal to the University's Tuition Appeals Coordinator.

Students must initiate a drop or withdrawal and follow the appropriate procedures. Students who fail to do this and do not complete the coursework will be issued a letter grade of "F".

A student is allowed to withdraw from no more than two graduate courses during the course of the MCJ degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the MCJ Director.

Grade Changes

Students are not permitted to request grade changes for graduate courses in which they have received a final letter grade (other than an incomplete), except in cases of instructor error or as otherwise warranted through the academic grievance process. A student may not enter into an agreement with an instructor to retroactively change a final letter grade based on work completed by the student after the course has ended.

12. Academic Grievance and Appeals Process – Suspension, Termination/Dismissal, or Denial of Progression

The following Graduate School procedures address student appeals and grievances arising from suspension, termination/dismissal, or denial of progression based on unsatisfactory academic performances.

The intent of the academic appeal procedure is to assure fairness and due process to all involved parties. **Good faith efforts should always be made by students, faculty, and administration to settle all appeals, complaints, and grievances on an informal basis.** These efforts will include conferences between the persons directly involved and others whom these persons believe to be able to help in the situation.

Definitions

Students may find themselves terminated from a graduate program for a number of reasons. Sometimes the language and policies behind the termination can be confusing. These definitions are provided to shed some light on the nuances between terms.

Suspension – Removal of the student from the graduate program for a defined period of time and/or the specification that a student must fulfill certain requirements before re-admission or re-instatement will be considered. While suspended the student is not entitled to attend classes, use University facilities, participate in University activities, or be employed by the University. Special conditions may be stipulated for reinstatement at the conclusion of the period of reinstatement of the period of suspension. The student is not in good standing with the University during the term of the suspension.

Termination/dismissal – Terms used synonymously to refer to a student being withdrawn from a graduate program and Graduate School. Official notification is sent to students by email and US mail. Students terminated have the right to appeal their dismissal in writing within one week per this policy. As with a suspension, the student is no longer entitled to attend classes, use University facilities, participate in University activities, or be employed by the University as a student.

Denial of Progress – Students failing to meet program progression criteria, with course failures, too many incomplete grades, or some other programmatic issue, would fall into this category. Students in this category may be suspended or terminated/dismissed.

Graduate programs have developed programmatic handbooks to assist students through their graduate studies. Students are responsible for following the policies and procedures as outlined in the Graduate School handbooks and rules. Ignorance of the guidelines and procedures will not constitute an affirmative defense in an appeals process.

General Procedures

1. The student should be informed in writing by the relevant instructor, faculty committee, Program Director, or administrator (e.g., Dean or Assistant Dean) that they are not meeting the academic requirements to continue in the graduate program. Written notices of course failures, unsatisfactory program progress, and intent to request dismissal or suspension from the Graduate School are distributed to the involved student, the student's academic advisor, the Program Director, and the Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

2. Should the student disagree with the decision made by the faculty, committee, Program Director, or administrator regarding course failure or intent to terminate progression in the program based on unsatisfactory academic performance, the student should initiate a conference with the involved person(s) to determine if the disagreement can be resolved within two weeks.

3. If the results of the first conference are not acceptable to the student, the student informs the involved faculty within one week and requests a conference with the involved faculty and Program Director or school administrator. NOTE: This step is required only in situations in which the Program Director and/or school administrator have not already approved or concurred with the initial notice of failure or intent to terminate.

4. If the consensus of the program is still that the student should be terminated/dismissed or suspended, the Program Director or Chairperson notifies the Graduate School Assistant Dean and recommends the student's dismissal or suspension. The email or letter outlines the reason for the dismissal or suspension and steps taken to date. If suspension is recommended, the recommendation also includes specific criteria for term of the suspension and requirements for reinstatement.

5. The Assistant Dean will review the student's academic record and submitted information from the program to ensure the student has received due process. If the student's academic record and/or submitted information support termination/dismissal, the student will be dismissed from the program and the Graduate School. If suspension is recommended and supported by the academic record and submitted information, the student will be suspended per the request. The student will be notified by email and US mail. The program will be notified by email.

Written Appeal Procedures

1. Should the student wish to appeal the Assistant Dean's decision, the student should submit

a written response to the Dean within one week of receiving the written notice of suspension or termination/dismissal. The appeal should include the reason(s) for the appeal and desired outcome. After submitting written appeal, the student also may request a meeting with the Dean to discuss the situation.

2. The final decision rests with the Dean of the Graduate School. At the Dean's discretion, he/she may discuss the Assistant Dean's decision with the involved faculty and student's program, as well as any other persons affected by the recommended resolutions.

3. The Dean will notify the student of her/his decision by email and certified U.S. mail within 5 working days of submission of the appeal or interview with the student (whichever falls last). The decision of the Dean is final.

4. If the student is suspended, terminated/dismissed, or otherwise unable to continue his or her academic studies either temporarily or permanently because of disciplinary or other action, the Dean shall notify the appropriate CU Registrar of the change in the student's academic status and order the Registrar to suspend the student's registration.

13. Academic Grievance and Appeals Process – Other Academic Grievances

The following procedures address challenges to academic actions or decisions, including but not limited to actions such as an academic grade or evaluation of a student's work in a course, seminar, or other academic forum; unjust treatment by a faculty member in a class; or actions related to dissertation or capstone procedures.

This policy refers to **academic** grievances within the MCJ program in the School of Public Affairs. The University has established mechanisms for non-academic grievances such as claims of sexual harassment, complaints against university administrative employees, policies, or procedures, interpersonal conflict resolution, and issues relating to student employment. Grievances involving claims of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty are subject to the Graduate School's Discipline Policy.

General Procedures

1. *Informal Resolution.* The student is strongly encouraged to first attempt to informally resolve the grievance through discussion with the faculty member(s) involved. The student may also request that the MCJ Program Director assist with efforts to informally resolve the grievance.

2. *Filing the Grievance.* If the student is unable to resolve the dispute with the faculty member(s), they should file a written grievance with the Dean of the School of Public Affairs. Absent unusual circumstances, the grievance should be filed within 30 days after the student learns of the event giving rise to the grievance.

The written grievance may be filed via e-mail or delivered to the Dean. The grievance should clearly state the basis for the complaint and the remedy requested, and should include any

evidence that supports the grievance, such as graduate class syllabi, assignments, and statements from other graduate students.

Students should be aware that grades and other evaluations of student work are traditionally within the jurisdiction of individual instructors and are unlikely to be changed absent evidence that the faculty member (1) determined the grade based on considerations other than student performance; (2) substantially differed from previously announced criteria or procedures in determining the grade; or (3) violated university or school policy in determining the grade. The student bears the burden of proof on these allegations.

3. Investigating the Grievance. The Dean will acknowledge receipt of the grievance and forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved and a SPA Associate Dean. The Associate Dean will begin the investigation of the circumstances of the grievance. He/she may request additional information from the graduate student. The faculty member(s) involved may submit a written response to the grievance, including any evidence in opposition to the grievance, within 21 days of receipt of the grievance.

If the grievance involves the need for substantial academic expertise in a particular field in order to assess whether there is a basis for the grievance, the Associate Dean may appoint a panel of faculty members with expertise in the area to investigate the grievance.

4. Decision by the Dean. Within 30 days of the filing of the grievance, the Associate Dean shall create a written report containing recommendations for the disposition of the grievance, together with the reasons for the conclusions contained in the report. The Dean will consider this report and will notify the student, faculty member, and MCJ Director of his/her decision on the disposition of the grievance.

Appealing the Decision of the Dean. If the student is not satisfied with the Dean's decision, he or she may request that the decision be appealed. The Dean will appoint a panel of SPA faculty who will consider all evidence and recommend to the Dean whether to uphold or deny the appeal. The Dean will notify the student, faculty member(s), and MCJ Director within two weeks.

The decision of the Dean is final with respect to students in the MCJ degree program.

Any deadline in this policy may be waived with the agreement of the student and the School if needed to ensure that all relevant information is considered.

14. Academic Discipline Policy and Procedure

All MCJ students are expected to adhere to the highest expectations for academic integrity and professional conduct. Violations of the university's Honor Code are governed by the Graduate School's policies on academic integrity, found on the Graduate School website.