

California State University, Stanislaus
Criminal Justice (MA)
Graduate Annual Assessment Report 2008-09 AND Assessment Plan 2009-10

As noted in the Academic Program Review procedures, each graduate program is required to provide an assessment of student learning. Assessment reports will be submitted annually and with the seven-year Academic Program Review.

Mission, Goals, Objectives

For items 1-5, please indicate any changes made during AY 2008-09. If no changes were made, please continue on to the assessment report and plan.

1. Mission

The Master's degree in Criminal Justice builds upon the strong preparatory undergraduate Criminal Justice Program with its blending of liberal arts, sciences, and applied components. Further, the relationship between the criminal justice undergraduate and graduate programs is integral in serving the educational goals of the region and the state of California and in contributing in complementary ways to building an excellent, comprehensive university. Building upon its commitment to excellence of teaching and learning in the undergraduate program, the primary responsibilities of the master's program in Criminal Justice include, but are not limited to, the advancement of scholarly research and preparation for students to teach in higher education.

2. Six Graduate Learning Goals

- a. Advanced knowledge, skills, and values appropriate to the discipline.
- b. Ability to be creative, analytical, critical thinkers.
- c. Ability to work as individual researchers/scholars as well as in collaboration with others in contributing to the scholarship of their disciplines, as appropriate.
- d. Relevant knowledge of the global perspectives appropriate to the discipline.
- e. Knowledge of new and various methods and technologies as appropriate to the discipline.
- f. Advanced oral and written communication skills, complemented, as appropriate to the discipline, by the ability to access and analyze the information from a myriad of primary, print, and technological sources.

3. Program Goals

In accordance with the philosophical underpinning and institutional commitments, the primary goals of the graduate program in criminal justice are to:

- Meet the public and private demand for academically prepared and professionally competent criminal justice practitioners;
- Provide academic emphases in research and data analysis as well as criminology while adding a unique emphasis on teaching criminal justice at the post-secondary level;
- Increase cultural, linguistic, and gender diversity among criminal justice practitioners in order to address the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse community;
- Advance the University's mission by expanding students' intellectual horizons, helping them reach their potentials, and encouraging a passion for lifelong learning.

4. **Program Student Learning Objectives**

Knowledge and Skills:

- Acquired advanced knowledge, skills, and values associated with the discipline of criminal justice and characteristic of learned individuals possessing a master's degree
- Demonstrated enhanced oral and written communication skills, complemented by the ability to access and analyze information for a myriad of print and mediated-technological sources
- Demonstrated ability to be analytical and integrative, capable of critical thought, and creative in the exploration of the discipline of criminal justice
- Demonstrated advanced knowledge of the global world, multiple perspective, and intercultural competence as applied to criminal justice professions
- Enhanced understanding of pedagogy for teaching and learning at a community college or university

Values

- Demonstrated adherence to standards of professional ethics for criminal justice professions

5. **Curriculum Map** (Alignment of Program Core Courses, Graduate Learning Goals, Program Student Learning Objectives, Assessment Methods, Instructional Emphasis, and Primary Assessment Methods)

Assessment Report/Update for AY 2008-09

❖ **What measures were used this year to determine that graduates have achieved the stated program learning objectives?**

In the spring AY 2007-2008 the MACJ Program first implemented a major change in the way it assesses graduate student learning. In prior years all MACJ students were required to complete a thesis as their culminating experience. While a number of students successfully demonstrated achievement of the program's learning objectives by successfully completing a thesis, the criminal justice faculty determined that more completion options should be offered to our students. We added the options of a "Project" and a "Comprehensive Examination." During AY 2007-08 the criminal justice faculty designed a comprehensive examination model and accompanying policies. Faculty developed a set of broad essay-type study questions for each core course and students were examined on a subset of those questions. The questions were designed to determine the extent to which students had achieved the MACJ learning objectives relevant to each course.

In May Of 2008 seventeen MACJ students took the "comps." Eight passed outright, eight students failed one or two sections, and one student failed the comps by failing five sections. Eight students retook at least one section (after a one month preparation period) and seven of them passed. The test on each course was graded (when possible) by the faculty member who taught the course. If the judgment was that a student had failed the test on a particular course, the test was read by another faculty member to ensure reliability.

After our experience with the first comprehensive examination in our program, the graduate faculty reviewed and discussed the results. We were mostly satisfied that we had developed a good test and testing process. However, we began to think about grouping the courses/tests into broader related areas (e.g., methods, evaluation and statistics as one area and history and theory as another area) that might be covered by more integrative questions. We decided not to make the change immediately, but to use the existing model for one more year (2008-09).

In spring 2009 nine students took the comprehensive examination (one was a retake from the prior year). Five passed all sections and four had to retake at least one section. All the retakes passed. The same grading procedure was employed as the year before. Again, the faculty reviewed and discussed the results. We have decided to proceed this year with a redesign of the comprehensive examination to group courses and the examinations together in a more integrative way. We believe this model will help us better assess the extent we are achieving our learning objectives in our courses and curriculum.

➤ **Identify direct measures of student learning (e.g., assessments that are based on actual student work - tests, essays, thesis, and presentations).**

In addition to the examination procedure described above, graduate faculty in criminal justice employ the usual array of tests, essays, and presentations to measure student learning.

The MACJ program had two theses completed during AY 2008-09.

- **Identify indirect measures of student learning (e.g., assessments that are based on perceptions of student learning - surveys, interviews, focus groups, and course or program student evaluations).**

IDEA student evaluations were administered in at least two graduate courses during AY 2008-09.

- ❖ **How did the program interpret the evidence found from each of the measures listed above? What was the process for interpreting the evidence?**

Graduate faculty discussed the comprehensive examination results among themselves and they were discussed at a department meeting.

IDEA results are used by individual faculty, and are not shared.

- ❖ **Describe successful outcomes and any changes the program faculty have made or plan to make for improving student learning, curriculum, instruction delivery, and other elements of program effectiveness.**

As discussed above, we intend to modify our approach to the comprehensive examination to make it more integrative. Aligned with this idea, we intend to examine the extent to which we can make the courses themselves more integrative.

- ❖ **If changes for improving the program or student learning were recommended, what resources will be needed to implement those changes effectively? What other challenges, if any, will impact the program's ability to effectively implement those changes?**

The change we intend to implement will not require additional resources. The only challenge will be in gathering and coordinating graduate faculty in the direction of more integrated core courses and examination questions.

Assessment Plan for AY 2009-10

- ❖ Describe the program assessment plan including its design and implementation.
 - **Identify the program student learning objectives that will be assessed in the current plan and the rationale for assessing those objectives.**

Our principal assessment project for 2009-10 will be redesigning the comprehensive examination. Since the comp relates to all of our learning objectives, we will be focusing on all of them during the process.

- **Identify and describe the indirect measures (e.g., assessments that are based on perceptions of student learning - surveys, interviews, focus groups, course or program student evaluations) and direct measures (e.g., assessments of actual student learning - tests, essays, thesis, and presentations) that will be used to assess the program student learning objectives.**

We will continue to use the same indirect and direct measures we have used in the past, both as individual instructors and as a program.

- **Identify how and when these measures will be implemented and the parties responsible for collecting and analyzing the data.**

Direct assessment of student learning in the context of an individual course is the responsibility of the faculty member teaching that course. The decision of whether to select a particular graduate course for IDEA evaluation is also an individual faculty member's prerogative.

At the programmatic level, coordination of assessment is the responsibility of the program director in consultation with the graduate faculty and the other members of the department.

Faculty meet regularly informally and at department meetings to discuss program improvement. For example, with the elimination of the thesis requirement and the redesign of comprehensive exams, faculty met in April to discuss grading standards for the exams.

- **Identify any other assessment activities that will be carried out to assess the program student learning objectives (e.g., meetings, workshops, consultation, funding requests).**

None.