



Master of Science in Criminal Justice Comprehensive Exam Guide

**Department of Criminal Justice
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**

2021 - 2022

Master of Science in CRIMINAL JUSTICE

MSCJ COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

What is a MSCJ Comprehensive Examination?

This is an essay exam which serves as an evaluation that measures a student's competency and mastery of the primary concepts in the Master of Science in Criminal Justice (MSCJ) at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and academically housed in the Department of Criminal Justice. Through the administering of the MSCJ Comprehensive Exam, graduate faculty are verifying that students grasp the key elements of the academic program.

What does the MSCJ Comprehensive Exam Involve?

The MSCJ Comprehensive Exam consists of four (4) essay questions. Three (3) will focus on each of the required Core Courses that all MSCJ students must take during their degree program (CRIJ 6308 and 6309 will be combined into one comprehensive question). The fourth course will be from one of the program Alternative Core/Electives and chosen by each student when they prepare for and take the comprehensive exam.

These questions are developed and graded each term by graduate faculty in the department who specialize and teach the courses. These faculty members will also prepare a review sheet to serve

as a study aid for those preparing for the exam. Students are encouraged to meet with each listed faculty member to discuss their expectations and guidance.

The required courses are as follows:

CRIJ 6301 Theories of Criminal Justice: Historical overview of the philosophies and theories of justice that have impacted the American mind, the Constitution, and criminal law; federal and state criminal justice systems, and the processing of the accused and the convicted leading to correctional placement and punishment; critical examination of the criminal justice system in the context of justice needs and reforms.

CRIJ 6302 Advanced Criminology: A comprehensive overview of the classical and contemporary theories in criminology; theory construction and testing; the nature of criminological research; the impact of ideology, politics and social structure on criminological thought; extent, volume, distribution, types and trends of crime in America.

CRIJ 6308 Criminal Justice Research Methods: Basic qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques; research ethics; identifying variables; research design, structuring criminal justice inquiry; participant observation/ethnography; overview of basic statistics; introduction to SPSS; writing the research paper. Should be taken in sequence, before CRIJ 6309.

CRIJ 6309 Criminal Justice Research Methods and Statistics: Advanced criminal justice research and statistics; probability sampling and hypothesis testing; parametric and non-parametric statistical techniques; multivariate statistics; experiment and quasi experiment; survey research; survey research project and paper involving data collections, entry, and analysis using SPSS; use of data from documentary and historical records; evaluative and predictive research. Prerequisite CRIJ 6308.

The Student Chosen Question will come from one of the following Alternative Core and/or Electives (Question chosen must be from a course which the student had completed in the last 2 years of taking the comprehensive exam):

- CRIJ 6303: Policing in a Democracy**
- CRIJ 6304: Criminal Procedure**
- CRIJ 6305: Correctional Theories and Issues**
- CRIJ 6306: Criminal Justice Policy Analysis**
- CRIJ 6307: CJ Organizations: Theory and Behavior**
- CRIJ 6310: Theories of Juvenile Delinquency & Justice**
- CRIJ 6311: World CJ Systems & International Crimes**
- CRIJ 6314: Courts & Correctional Issues**
- CRIJ 6315: Victimology**
- CRIJ 6316: Environmental Crime & Justice**
- CRIJ 6318: Law in Culture & Society**
- CRIJ 6319: Women, Law and Justice**
- CRIJ 6322: Terrorism**
- CRIJ 6323: Advanced Restorative and Community Justice**

CRIJ 6325: Social Justice and Human Rights

**AOP track limits the selection of Alternative Core/Elective Courses*

How is the MSCJ Comprehensive Exam administered?

The exam consists of four (4) comprehensive essay questions based on each of the core required classes in the MSCJ program. Each term new questions will be generated by the assigned graduate faculty for each course and the same faculty will grade the questions that they developed. The date and location of the exam will be announced within the first 2 weeks of each term.

The examination will be conducted in two (2) sessions: a morning session 9:00 to 11:45am and an afternoon session 12:15 to 2:30pm. Students will have one (1) hour to complete each essay question. Responses will be collected at the end of each exam period by the proctor or, if online, the system will force end completion and submission of a response.

Activity	Start	End	Format	Comments
Overview of Exam Day and Process	9:00am	9:30am	Zoom Group Meeting with all exam students	This is to discuss the activities of the day and answer any questions
Question 1 CRIJ 6301	9:30am	10:30am	Online/ Blackboard	Core Required Class
Break	10:30am	10:45am		
Question 2 CRIJ 6302	10:45am	11:45am	Online/ Blackboard	Core Required Class
Lunch Break	11:45am	12:15pm		
Question 3 CRIJ 6308/6309	12:15pm	1:15pm	Online/ Blackboard	Core Required Class
Break	1:15pm	1:30pm		
Question 4 Alt Core/Elective Question	1:30pm	2:30pm	Online/ Blackboard	Alternative/Elective Course
Wrap-up and Next Steps	2:00pm	2:30pm	Zoom Group Meeting with all exam students	This is to discuss grading process, notification to students, and next steps

**After COVID-19 lockdown, this will return to a seated in person exam/AOP track will remain online*

How is the MSCJ Comprehensive Exam graded?

Each exam question is scored by at least two (2) graduate faculty members who have offered each course in the preceding two (2) years. For a question to be “passed,” it needs at least 2 “passes” (*i.e.*, P or P/E). The scores are compared and calculated by the Appropriate Graduate Coordinator (AGC) (*i.e.*, traditional or AOP). If there are any discrepancies or serious differences, the appropriate Graduate Coordinator will score the exam for final decision (*i.e.*, serve as “tiebreaker”). This will occur within three (3) weeks of the occurrence of the exam.

F = Failed

P = Passed
P/E = Pass Exceeds

For an exam to be “passed” it needs 3 out of 4 questions to be “passed” by grading graduate faculty.

Question 1 (CRIJ 6301)

Reader 1:	F	P	P/E
Reader 2:	F	P	P/E
AGC:	F	P	P/E (if needed)

Question 2 (CRIJ 6302)

Reader 1:	F	P	P/E
Reader 2:	F	P	P/E
AGC:	F	P	P/E (if needed)

Question 3 (CRIJ 6308/6309)

Reader 1:	F	P	P/E
Reader 2:	F	P	P/E
AGC:	F	P	P/E (if needed)

Question 4 (Alternative Core/Elective Course Chosen by Student)

Reader 1:	F	P	P/E
Reader 2:	F	P	P/E
AGC:	F	P	P/E (if needed)

Results of these exam are expected to be completed within 30 days of their occurrence. If a student does not “pass” the exam, they will have one more attempt allowed. This second attempt will occur at the next scheduled MSCJ Comprehensive Exam.

When can one sit for the MSCJ Comprehensive Exam?

Students should plan to take the MSCJ Comprehensive Exam during the final semester of their academic program.