Guide to the Master’s Essay in Criminal Justice

A master’s essay is a scholarly paper demonstrating a student’s understanding of the issues and research surrounding a particular topic in Criminology and Criminal Justice. The essay follows completion of all coursework and is guided by a faculty advisor. The finished product is an essay that displays a thorough understanding and mastery of the research topic.

After consultation with your faculty essay advisor, you should submit the “Master’s Essay” form to the Academic Services Officer, who will then complete an over-ride allowing you to register for 3 essay credit hours (CRJ 7999).

Choosing an Essay Topic and Advisor:
Students choosing the essay option should approach a faculty member regarding essay advising the semester prior to beginning work on the essay. Choose up to three areas of Criminology/Criminal Justice that you would like to investigate in-depth. You will eventually choose only one and narrow that topic in consultation with your essay advisor. Think about topics in your classes that interested you and begin reading articles and books on the topics. Knowledge of current research in the area will help you narrow your topic and present a more coherent proposal to prospective advisors. Students who wish to pursue a topic on which they have had no course work should consider working with a faculty member on the topic through a Directed Study (CRJ 7990) before beginning the essay.

Contact a faculty member whose area of specialization most closely matches your preferred topic. Describe your plans and ask if he or she would be willing to work with you on the project. If he or she accepts, you will begin negotiating the terms of the essay. After submitting your essay form you will be able to register for CRJ 7999 for 3 credits. If the faculty member declines, contact another professor, or begin the process again with a different topic. Students unsure of whom to approach should consult with the Graduate Director regarding potential faculty advisors.

The essay advisor-student relationship is an agreement between the student and the faculty member. You will negotiate the topic, scope, approximate length, due dates, and any other aspects of the essay deemed necessary.

Writing your Essay:
Researching and writing the essay typically requires students’ complete commitment without other coursework for at least one full semester. Follow the plan agreed upon with your essay advisor. Keep in contact, letting your advisor know of your progress, difficulties, and successes. Work on the essay requires intensive research and writing, revision, and refinement. Follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines for formatting your essay. The essay is complete when the essay advisor determines that the finished product displays a thorough understanding and mastery of the research topic and is of sufficient quality to warrant the awarding of a master’s degree. You must receive a grade of B- or better on the essay.
Important Deadlines/Submitting your Essay:

1) Be sure to apply for your degree at [www.pipeline.wayne.edu](http://www.pipeline.wayne.edu) by no later than the fourth week of classes in the semester you expect to complete your essay.

2) Check with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (313-577-5188) regarding their deadline for submission of the essay. Then contact your essay advisor to determine his/her deadline, allowing sufficient time for him/her to read and grade the essay by the College deadline. The deadline is usually several weeks before the end of the semester, so you must work with your advisor to plan your timeline accordingly.

3) Make sure your essay conforms to the American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines.

4) Make sure your essay’s format, binding and cover page conform to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Guidelines for the Master’s Essay. The guidelines can be found at: [http://www.clas.wayne.edu/graduate_student_files/Essay_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.clas.wayne.edu/graduate_student_files/Essay_Guidelines.pdf).

5) Submit two copies of your essay (one for the College and one for the Department) to your essay advisor.

6) Your essay advisor will grade your essay.

Other Resources:

1) If you have difficulties with your writing, you may want to work with a copy editor or visit The Writing Center:

   The Writing Center—Adamany Undergraduate Library
   2310 Undergraduate Library (313) 577-2544


3) Sample essays are available for review by arrangement with the Academic Services Officer (313-577-0772).