

CRIMINAL JUSTICE, BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.S.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN FORENSIC CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

Nancy A. Morris, Ph.D.

Associate professor and program chair

The major objective of this degree program is to prepare students for effective professional careers in criminal justice, forensic crime scene investigation, public service and other helping professions, and/or prepare them to pursue studies in law and other related graduate programs. Career opportunities are available in federal, state, local and private justice-related endeavors. These careers include law enforcement, crime scene investigation, juvenile justice, corrections and the courts.

This program also prepares students to enter law school or to pursue graduate studies in criminal justice or in several of the human services fields, usually related to justice. This program offers and encourages in-service justice employees and others to enhance their professional career development through higher education.

Students majoring in criminal justice receive a broad educational background, professionally oriented courses in their special area of interest and various skill courses designed to enhance their career opportunities. Through core courses and electives in the major, students have the opportunity to orient their course work to fit their educational objectives and career plans.

It is essential that students seek and follow the advice of an adviser in the progression of the core courses, the selection of criminal justice electives and in the identification of complementary courses in other disciplines that can benefit the student and assist in the accomplishment of career goals. Whether the student is interested in general criminal justice, policing, crime scene investigation, legal studies, juvenile justice or corrections, faculty and advisers can assist in identifying the appropriate curriculum.

This concentration is offered for those students who are interested in careers in crime scene investigation at the local, state or federal levels.

Student learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, students will how to do the following:

- Students will be able to identify and understand the structure and job functions within police organizations, models of policing, constitutional rights associated with policing, police corruption and ethics, procedural justice and its impacts on police legitimacy, and use of force. Students will develop the ability to apply these principles to actual cases and solve problems.
- Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the types and sources of law, jurisdiction, structure and functions of state and federal courts, the impact of discretion, the dynamics of courthouse justice, the role of courtroom workgroup dynamics, and steps in criminal cases, including sentencing issues and post-conviction relief. Students will develop the ability to apply knowledge to actual cases and solve problems.
- Students will develop knowledge of the history and philosophies of punishment and the influence of the Enlightenment period on

the development of the Positivist School, and identify the structure of jails and prisons, including the role of correctional officers and management, community corrections programs, probation and parole, preventive detention and bail systems, and basic inmates rights. Students will develop the ability to apply these principles to actual cases and solve problems.

Additionally, students in the forensic crime scene investigation concentration will know how to do the following:

- Clearly describe the four major crime scene processing and evaluating steps
- List applicable CSI equipment and provide a brief summary/conclusion of the overall crime scene process

Special requirements

The Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice requires a minimum of 120 credits, including 39 credits in criminal justice courses, a minimum of 60 credits in courses outside of VCU-offered criminal justice courses, and a minimum cumulative and major GPA of a 2.0. No more than half of the criminal justice courses applied to the major can be transferred from another college. Students must earn a total of 45 credits in classes at the 300-level and above, including upper-level criminal justice course work. The criminal justice curriculum includes the core and concentration requirements.

Degree requirements for Criminal Justice, Bachelor of Science (B.S.) with a concentration in forensic crime scene investigation

Course	Title	Hours
General education (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/general-education-curriculum/)		
Select 30 credits of general education courses in consultation with an adviser.		30
Major requirements		
• Major core requirements		
CRJS 181	Introduction to Criminal Justice	3
CRJS 253	Introduction to Corrections	3
CRJS 254	Introduction to Policing	3
CRJS 324	Courts and Sentencing	3
CRJS 335	Ethics and Decision-making in Criminal Justice	3
CRJS 355	Criminological Theory	3
CRJS 380	Research Methods in Criminal Justice	3
CRJS 480	Senior Seminar	3
• Concentration requirements		
CRJS 320	Principles of Criminal Investigation	3
CRJS 370	Criminalistics and Crime Analysis	3
CRJS 373	Crime Scene Evidence: Law and Trial Procedure	3
CRJS 425	Violent Crime Scene Investigation	3
• Major electives		
Select from upper-level CRJS courses, including HSEP 301, HSEP 302, HSEP 320 and/or HSEP 330.		3
Ancillary requirements		

GVPA 100	Making Policy Real: Social Problems and Policy Solutions	3
STAT 208	Statistical Thinking (satisfies general education quantitative foundations)	3
Open electives		
Select any courses.		48
Total Hours		120

The minimum number of credit hours required for this degree is 120.

Students who complete the requirements for this concentration will receive a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice.

What follows is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements within a four-year course of study at VCU. Please contact your adviser before beginning course work toward a degree.

Recommended course sequence/plan of study

Freshman year

Fall semester		Hours
CRJS 181	Introduction to Criminal Justice	3
GVPA 100	Making Policy Real: Social Problems and Policy Solutions	3
MATH 131	Introduction to Contemporary Mathematics (prerequisite for STAT 208; counts toward open electives)	3
UNIV 101	Introduction to the University	1
UNIV 111	Introduction to Focused Inquiry: Investigation and Communication (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
General education course (select BOK for social/behavioral sciences)		3
Term Hours:		16

Spring semester

CRJS 253	Introduction to Corrections	3
CRJS 254	Introduction to Policing	3
STAT 208	Statistical Thinking (satisfies general education quantitative foundations)	3
UNIV 112	Focused Inquiry II (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
General education course (select BOK for humanities/fine arts)		3
Term Hours:		15

Sophomore year

Fall semester		
CRJS 324	Courts and Sentencing	3

UNIV 200	Advanced Focused Inquiry: Literacies, Research and Communication (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
General education courses		6
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		15

Spring semester

CRJS 320	Principles of Criminal Investigation	3
General education course (select BOK for natural sciences)		3
General education course		3
Open electives		6
Term Hours:		15

Junior year

Fall semester

CRJS 370	Criminalistics and Crime Analysis	3
CRJS 373	Crime Scene Evidence: Law and Trial Procedure	3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		15

Spring semester

CRJS 355	Criminological Theory	3
CRJS 380	Research Methods in Criminal Justice	3
Major elective (must be upper-level)		3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		18

Senior year

Fall semester

CRJS 335	Ethics and Decision-making in Criminal Justice	3
CRJS 425	Violent Crime Scene Investigation	3
Open electives		6
Term Hours:		12

Spring semester

CRJS 480	Senior Seminar	3
Open electives		11
Term Hours:		14
Total Hours:		120

The minimum number of credit hours required for this degree is 120.

Accelerated B.S. and M.S.

The accelerated B.S. and M.S. program allows qualified students to earn both the B.S. and M.S. in Criminal Justice in a minimum of five years by completing approved graduate courses during the senior year of their undergraduate program. Students in the program may count up to six hours of graduate courses toward both the B.S. and M.S. degrees. Thus, the two degrees may be earned with a minimum of 144 credits rather than the 150 credits necessary if the two degrees are pursued separately.

Students holding these degrees are prepared for effective careers in criminal justice, forensic crime scene investigation, public service and other related professions by broadening and refining their understanding of criminal justice and criminological issues. Students learn to critically analyze criminal justice and criminological research, discuss criminal

justice issues and policies using evidence from empirical studies, and frame major issues related to the field in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Entrance to the accelerated program

Interested undergraduate students should consult with their adviser as early as possible to receive specific information about the accelerated program, determine academic eligibility and submit (no later than two semesters prior to graduating with a baccalaureate degree, that is, before the end of the spring semester of their junior year) an Accelerated Program Declaration Form to be approved by the graduate program director. Limited spaces may be available in the accelerated program. Academically qualified students may not receive approval if capacity has been reached.

Minimum qualifications for entrance to this accelerated program include completion of 90 undergraduate credit hours including CRJS 355 and CRJS 380, an overall minimum GPA of 3.5 and a minimum GPA of 3.5 in criminal justice course work. Additionally, one of the required reference letters must be from a criminal justice faculty member. Successful applicants would enter the program in the semester following completion of their 90th credit hour.

Once enrolled in the accelerated program, students must meet the standards of performance applicable to graduate students as described in the "Satisfactory academic progress (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/satisfactory-academic-progress/>)" section of the Graduate Bulletin, including maintaining a 3.0 GPA. Students who do not maintain a 3.0 GPA in the graduate-level classes will no longer be eligible for the accelerated program and may not take any additional graduate-level classes while pursuing the bachelor's degree. Students will not begin their first semester of only graduate courses until the bachelor's degree has been conferred. Guidance to students admitted to the accelerated program is provided by both the Wilder School undergraduate academic advisor and the senior academic adviser from Graduate Student Services and Advising.

Admission to the graduate program

Entrance to the accelerated program enables the student to take the approved shared courses that will apply to the undergraduate and graduate degrees. However, entry into an accelerated program via an approved Accelerated Program Declaration Form does not constitute application or admission into the graduate program. Admission to the graduate program requires a separate step that occurs through a formal application to the master's program, which is submitted through Graduate Admissions no later than a semester prior to graduation with the baccalaureate degree, that is, before the end of the fall semester of the senior year. In order to continue pursuing the master's degree after the baccalaureate degree is conferred, accelerated students must follow the admission to graduate study requirements outlined in the VCU Bulletin. Three reference letters are required with one of the letters coming from a criminal justice faculty member.

Degree requirements

The Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice degree will be awarded upon completion of a minimum of 120 credits and the satisfactory completion of all undergraduate degree requirements as stated in the Undergraduate Bulletin.

A maximum of six graduate credits may be taken prior to completion of the baccalaureate degree. These graduate credits substitute for the upper-level electives for the undergraduate degree. These courses are

shared credits with the graduate program, meaning that they will be applied to both undergraduate and graduate degree requirements.

The graduate criminal justice courses that may be taken as an undergraduate, once a student is admitted to the program, are a choice of two of the following:

Course	Title	Hours
CRJS 501	Principles of Criminal Justice	3
CRJS 550	Professional Ethics and Liability	3
CRJS 620	Seminar in Criminology	3

Recommended course sequence/plan of study

What follows is the recommended plan of study for students interested in the accelerated program beginning in the fall of the junior year prior to admission to the accelerated program in the senior year.

Course	Title	Hours
Junior year		
Fall semester		
CRJS 380	Research Methods in Criminal Justice	3
Criminal justice elective (upper-level)		3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		15
Spring semester		
CRJS 475	Criminal Procedure	3
Criminal justice elective (upper-level)		3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		15
Senior year		
Fall semester		
CRJS 480	Senior Seminar	3
CRJS 501	Principles of Criminal Justice	3
or CRJS 550	Professional Ethics and Liability	
or CRJS 620	Seminar in Criminology	
Electives		9
Term Hours:		15
Spring semester		
CRJS 501	Principles of Criminal Justice	3
or CRJS 550	Professional Ethics and Liability	
or CRJS 620	Seminar in Criminology	
Electives		12
Term Hours:		15
Fifth year		
Fall semester		
CRJS 617	Law and Criminal Justice Policy	3
CRJS 623	Applied Research Methods	3
Graduate criminal justice electives		6
Term Hours:		12
Spring semester		
CRJS 690	Criminal Justice Policy Analysis	3
Graduate criminal justice electives		9
Term Hours:		12