

# graduate COMMITTEE curriculum PROPOSAL FORM

## A. Cover page (rover over text for more instructions- please delete red instructions)

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| A.1[. Course or program](#_acknowledge) | M.A in Justice Studies |  |
| Academic Unit | | Faculty of Arts & Sciences |  |  |
| A.2. [Proposal type](#type) | Program[:](#creation) Revision |  |
| A.3. [Originator](#Originator) | Carse Ramos | [Home department](#home_dept) | Sociology |
| A.4. [Rationale](#Rationale)Additional Information for [new programs](#type) | The purpose of this request is for a change in modality to allow students across our Master of Justice Studies the ability to participate in greater than 50% of courses remotely while providing an ideal balance between flexibility, socialization, infrastructure, and support. These changes are essential to improving equitable access to our graduate Justice Studies coursework, and for optimizing recruitment and retention efforts. In addition, the ability to participate remotely increases access to our programs across a broader geographic region, and increases the nimbleness of programs, enhancing programmatic adaptability during times of disruption.The Justice Studies MA program at Rhode Island College aims to retain and further capitalize on the hybrid model originally approved in 2016 and marketed to students. We do not currently intend for the program to be fully online. Indeed, a hallmark of our program remains that our students—often “non-traditional” and working in full-time positions—can still have some of the campus experience. Rather, we propose to offer a blend of synchronous, asynchronous, and in-person course options. The MA in Justice Studies was designed as a hybrid program and marketed to potential students as a way to earn a master’s degree while only being physically on campus one or (at most) two days per week. This has been a strong selling point of our program. We did not employ a strict definition of “hybrid” at the time of the program’s creation, but the idea was that it would be roughly 50% online and 50% in person.Our program, like so many others, has been impacted by COVID. However, having to transition to different teaching modalities allowed us to experiment with different formats together with our students. We were able to get and incorporate their feedback along the way. There were a couple of surprising findings. We realized, for example, the pedagogical benefits of synchronous sessions in our small seminar courses (usually between five and nine students). Meeting over Zoom actually facilitated, rather than hindered, class discussion, and, in many cases, attendance improved. We also learned that our graduate quantitative methods course works surprisingly well when taught in asynchronous format—and that students generally preferred this mode—something none of us anticipated. As a result, several of our faculty who teach in the MA program developed, tested, and fine-tuned online courses with great success and we want to keep these options available for students. Our current NECHE accreditation status does not permit us to offer degrees in which 50% or more of the credits are offered “through technologically mediated instruction.” This means that in order to incorporate any of these synchronous or asynchronous options, we would have to offset the online time with fully in-person courses, and that is not what our students sign up for. Being granted status as an approved distance education provider from NECHE will allow us more flexibility in our course offerings. This new model is student-driven—it will allow more flexibility to be creative in how we can best serve our students and recruit more applicants. The designation of course format is based on best practices in relation to course content, ensuring alignment with the facilitation of expected student learning outcomes. This model will allow students to participate in the way that aligns with their own learning style preferences and scheduling requirements, increasing accessibility for students who may not be able to attend classes on campus more than once per week or earlier than 6pm.The purpose of this proposal is to change the potential mode of delivery for the courses within the Justice Studies MA program—for which we will seek NECHE certification as a distance education program in the Fall. No other changes to program goals or curriculum are anticipated. This change is intended to provide more flexibility in the way we design and run courses, so that students are able to complete more than 50% of their degree online. This flexibility will promote equitable access to graduate education in justice studies, increase flexibility for our students and faculty, and hopefully enhance recruitment and retention efforts and increase accessibility to students across a wider geographic region.  |
| A.5. [Student impact](#student_impact) | Improves flexibility, provides more equitable access to our Justice Studies MA program. Allows for a larger variety in course modes and tailoring program to suit student needs. Enhances recruitment and retention efforts and guarantees our compliance with NECHE guidelines. |
| A.6. [Impact on other programs](#impact) | None |
| A.7. [Resource impact](#Resource) | [Faculty PT & FT](#faculty" \o "Need to hire new full-time or part-time faculty? This is where you indicate if this proposal will be affecting FLH in your department/program.):  | None |
|  | [Library:](#library) | None |
|  | [Technology](#technology) | None (Relevant technology resources are already available to facility these modalities, e.g. the LMS, Zoom, webcams in faculty offices & our department conference room)  |
|  | [Facilities](#facilities): | None |
| A.8. [Semester effective](#Semester_effective) | Fall 2024 (pending approval of OPC and NECHE) | A.9. [Rationale if sooner than next Fall](#Semester_effective) |  |
| A.10 [Changes to the website](#Signature_2) | None |

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| A.10. INSTRUCTIONS FOR CATALOG COPY: This single file copy must include all relevant pages from the college catalog, and show how the catalog will be revised. (1) Go to the “Forms and Information” on the graduate committee’s website <https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/graduate-curriculum-committee/forms-and-information>Scroll down until you see the Word files for the current catalog. (2) Download ALL catalog sections relevant for this proposal, including course descriptions and/or other affected programs. (3) Place ALL relevant catalog copy into a single file. Put page breaks between sections and delete any catalog pages not relevant for this proposal. (4) Using the track changes function, revise the catalog pages to demonstrate what the information should look like in next year’s catalog. (5) Check the revised catalog pages against the proposal, making sure that program totals are correct when adding or deleting course credits. |

## D. Signatures

##### D.1. Approvals:

##### Required from department chairs, program directors, and deans from the academic unit originating the proposal.

| Name | Position/affiliation | [Signature](#_Signature" \o "Insert electronic signature, if available, in this column) | Date |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tanni Chaudhuri | Graduate Justice Studies Director |  |  |
| Carse Ramos | Chair of Sociology |  |  |
| Earl Simson | Dean of Arts and Sciences |  |  |
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##### D.2. [Acknowledgements](#acknowledge):

##### Required from all departments (and corresponding dean) impacted by the proposal. Signature does not indicate approval. Concerns should be brought to the attention of the graduate committee chair for discussion.

| Name | Position/affiliation | [Signature](#Signature_2) | Date |
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| N/A |  |  |  |
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