



MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS ADVISING GUIDE: *Criminal Justice — Law Enforcement*

The **Criminal Justice Program** strives to prepare students for career employment in criminal justice agencies and related fields as well as for transfer to bachelor's degree programs.

The **Criminal Justice — Law Enforcement Option Associate in Science degree program** is designed for students interested in working as police officers and in other law enforcement careers. This option provides students with a strong foundation in criminal justice and the opportunity to focus their studies in the area of law enforcement and policing. The curriculum emphasizes both an academic and practical approach to the three major areas of criminal justice — the police, courts and corrections — providing students with basic knowledge of legal issues facing practitioners in these fields. Emphasis is placed on oral and written communications, as well as interpersonal skill-building, critical thinking, and understanding of the multicultural issues necessary for working with diverse populations.



This advising guide includes information that will help you to explore your academic and career interests and determine whether the **Criminal Justice major** will support your long-term goals.



EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS WITH ACADEMIC ADVISING

Throughout each semester, meet with your advisor so that he/she can guide you through a self-exploration process that will help you identify your academic and career interests.

Beginning of Semester:

- ___ Schedule an appointment to meet with your academic advisor during the first few weeks to discuss future plans and how a Business Administration Degree can help you achieve your goals.
- ___ Explore your personal interests by completing Focus2, an online career assessment tool:
<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices/focus2.aspx>

Mid-Semester:

- ___ Schedule an appointment with academic advisor review your academic progress, Focus2 results and create an academic plan in Degree Works.

Before Semester Ends:

- ___ Schedule an appointment to discuss and register for the classes you will take the following semester. (Early November for spring, Early April for fall and summer)
- ___ Visit the Academic Career & Transfer Center or call 1-800-818-3434 to schedule an appointment.

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- Exploring Your Options
- Personality Inventory
- Career Path
- Transfer Path

CRIMINAL JUSTICE LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Graduates of the program are prepared to:

- Describe the functions and interrelationships of the major components of the criminal justice system;
- Evaluate and utilize effective verbal, nonverbal and written communication;
- Identify valid research sources and use technology as a research tool;
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical standards in the criminal justice system and apply these standards to practical situations;
- Describe the diversity of experiences and viewpoints within society and analyze how perceptions are affected by culture;
- Recognize a social problem, develop a problem-solving approach, formulate and evaluate effective responses;
- Apply the law to a set of facts and describe possible outcomes;
- Demonstrate knowledge of career options in criminal justice and an understanding of qualifications and professional expectations

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Check off the statements that you think are important to a career in criminal justice:

- _____ Ability to identify and analyze social problems and develop solutions
- _____ Ability to quickly analyze situations and apply problem-solving skills to diffuse stressful and potentially dangerous situations
- _____ Appreciation for the considerations of gender and race
- _____ Broad understanding of criminal law and the U.S. criminal justice system
- _____ Excellent interviewing skills
- _____ Understanding of the nature of crimes
- _____ Understanding of society's reaction to crimes
- _____ Knowledge of mathematics, including basic math, algebra, geometry and statistics
- _____ Ability to handle large doses of personal responsibility and accountability
- _____ Ability to exercise self-discipline and self-restraint

Grading the quiz:

All of the above statements are important to a career in criminal justice. Ideally a student in criminal justice would check all of the statements. If you checked the majority of the statements, you should consider trying criminal justice as a major.

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IS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE MAJOR THE RIGHT FIT FOR ME?

Think about the following abilities and skills that criminal justice professionals should possess:

■ **Strong interpersonal communication skills:**

It does not matter what type of career in criminal justice you are interested in, communication skills are essential. You will need good written and verbal skills, as well as the ability to work with and communicate with people of very diverse backgrounds. Work in the field can be dangerous at times, and you will need to have the ability to communicate under pressure. All of the careers in criminal justice will involve extensive writing, for example: Presentence reports, police reports, prison disciplinary reports, background investigation reports, and many other types of writing.

■ **Ability to work under pressure and handle stress:**

It is critical that every criminal justice professional has the ability to handle stress. Criminal justice professionals regularly handle difficult people and difficult situations. A career in criminal justice can be extremely stressful, and the professionals in the field need to find healthy and successful ways in which to deal with the inherent stress of the career.

■ **Strong sense of ethics:**

Ethics are essential in any criminal justice career. A criminal justice professional should have an ethically sound view of his/her role in the criminal justice system. Because most criminal justice professionals have a great deal of power, it is critical that they understand the appropriate use of that power. The integrity of your work and the decisions that you make on the job are critical to upholding the public's faith in the criminal justice system.

■ **Critical thinking and problem solving skills:**

A criminal justice professional should have the ability to look at a situation, analyze it, and come up with solutions based on logic and reason. You will often have to make such decisions quickly and under stressful conditions.

■ **Physical fitness and health:**

All criminal justice professionals should have a reasonable level of physical fitness. Some careers will require more physical activity than others, but all the careers are stressful, so it is important that criminal justice professionals pay attention to their health. In most law enforcement careers you will be required to complete a physical ability test before you begin your career.

■ **Good computer and technical skills:**

Computers are common in all criminal justice fields today. A criminal justice professional should have good computer and technical skills. You will have to use computers and other types of information technology to check criminal records, match evidence with potential suspects, research someone's background/history, and perform other tasks necessary for the job.

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THE CAREER PATH

The criminal justice program prepares students for a variety of career options. Some of the careers associated with this major include: probation and parole officers, victim-witness advocates, law enforcement officers, corrections professionals, juvenile workers, court officers, community program workers, and many careers within human/social services. Careful planning with a career counselor is essential.

Career Planning Activities:

- ___ Work with career advisor to create resume, cover letter and help improve your interview skills
- ___ Identify internship and volunteer opportunities in your desired field
- ___ Attend career workshops and job fairs
- ___ Complete a Career Development Project in the Introduction to Criminal Justice course
- ___ Complete Career Development exercises/assignments in the Interpersonal Communications in Criminal Justice course



THE TRANSFER PATH

For professions requiring a four-year degree, the **Criminal Justice Program** offers transferable credit to four-year colleges and universities. Graduates of the program often transfer to: UMass Lowell, Westfield State, Northeastern University, Suffolk University, Fitchburg, Salem State, UMass Boston and Amherst, as well as many other colleges and universities. Make every effort to achieve good grades as most schools will not accept a course grade that is below a C.

Transfer Planning Activities:

- ___ Work with an advisor to discuss *MassTransfer*, Articulations and transfer agreements
- ___ Visit your selected campuses in person. Every college looks good online or in a glossy photo, but you can get a better feel when you visit
- ___ Meet with a transfer counselor to identify transfer scholarships
- ___ Research admissions requirements and deadlines at four-year colleges and universities

MCC ADVISING RESOURCES

Career Services:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices>

Transfer Services:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer>

MassTransfer:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer/masstransfer.aspx>

Financial Aid:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/financialaid>

Foundation Scholarships:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/foundation/scholarships>

College Board Match Maker:

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>

Disability support:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/DisabilitySupport/>

You can find more information about careers and salaries at: www.bls.gov.