

VULNERABLE SECTOR SCREENING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

In order to participate in field placements as part of their degree requirements for the Master of Arts in Criminology and Social Justice, students must comply with the Vulnerable Sector Screening (VSS) policy and procedure outlined below.

DEFINITIONS

Vulnerable persons refers to persons who, because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, are in a position of dependence on others, or, deemed by the University, to be at greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them. This includes but is not limited to children, youth, seniors, incarcerated persons, persons with addictions and mental health issues within the criminology and social justice sectors.

A **Vulnerable Sector Screening** (VSS) consists of a check by the Toronto Police Service, or the police centre that has jurisdiction over the area where the student resides. The check includes disclosure of:

- criminal record (adult);
- criminal record (young offenders);
- records of “not guilty by reason of mental incompetence”;
- pending charges and previous or ongoing investigations under federal and provincial statutes;
- pending charges under the Child and Family Services Act;
- convictions for provincial offences;
- probation orders;
- prohibition and other judicial orders which are in effect;
- records of conviction for offences under the Child and Family Services Act;
- records of contact with Police Services under the Mental Health Act.

Criminal Code convictions will not be reported as part of the criminal reference check if a pardon has been granted.

Summary information details any type of police contact for which the individual has not been charged or convicted.

Presence of a criminal record does not automatically disqualify a student from doing a placement, but certain restrictions may apply.

MA IN CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

POLICY

A current VSS is required before a student can commence a placement. If a student refuses to consent to or cooperate with the VSS policy, the student will no longer be eligible for the placement stream of the Master of Arts in Criminology and Social Justice Program.

- A VSS should be from the police in the jurisdiction of the student's residence.
- A VSS is considered valid for one year from date of issue. Where it will expire during the placement, students must recertify with a submission deadline of two weeks prior to the expiry date.
- Students are required to bring the VSS to the Program's office in person.
- Students are required to submit a VSS by the deadline issued by the Program.
- Students should retain an original copy of the valid VSS during the placement to be available if requested.
- Students who fail to provide a valid VSS by the submission deadline will not be permitted to start the placement until appropriate documentation is provided.

Cost

The cost of the VSS will be the responsibility of the student. Students should get a letter from the Graduate Program Administrator to avail student discounts.

Confidentiality of Information

Personal information cannot be collected, used or disclosed without the prior written consent of the student in question.

The Toronto Police Service, or other police centre, will only release information regarding their own criminal record and/or summary information to the student.

Information about offences under the *Young Offenders Act* will not be retained.

PROCEDURE

These procedures conform to the requirements of the Toronto Police Service. Where the procedures of the police centre that has jurisdiction over the area in which a student resides conflict with the procedures of the Toronto Police Service, the procedures of the relevant police centre will apply.

It is a requirement of the procedure established by the Toronto Police Service that up to three employees be designated as contact persons, to ensure consistent and accurate exchange of information and documentation.

The contacts for the MA in Criminology and Social Justice Program are:

- Mary Beth Halferty Kraay (gradcrim@torontomu.ca)
- Dr. Sara Thompson, Graduate Program Director
- Dr. Dan Horner, Chair, Department of Criminology

MA IN CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Students requiring a criminal reference check are responsible for personally meeting this obligation prior to commencing their placement.
- For students who reside in Toronto, the Graduate Program Administrator will:
 1. provide the student with a *Consent to Disclosure of Personal Information* form;
 2. inform the student about the VSS, including the type of information that will be disclosed (see Definitions);
 3. inform the student that the presence of a criminal record does not automatically disqualify them from the placement stream;
 4. request two pieces of identification to verify the identity of the student, including one piece of photo identification.
- Students who do not reside in Toronto will have to follow the procedures established by the police centre that has jurisdiction in their area of residence. This may include personally attending the police centre, getting any required forms signed by Program staff, and disclosing the results of the VSS to Toronto Metropolitan University. Students should visit the relevant website for information.
- Students are required to present their original VSS certificate to the designated persons in the Program for verification purposes; however documents will not be retained by the Program.
- The student must be prepared to show their original VSS to the placement host if requested.
- Any student who refuses to comply with the requirement for a VSS will be deemed to have withdrawn from the placement stream of the Master of Arts in Criminology and Social Justice Program.

INFORMATION ABOUT POLICE SERVICES APPLICATION FEES AND REQUIREMENTS

The information below is for general reference only. It is the student's responsibility to visit the specific Regional Police Service website for current and detailed information about the VSS process.

- Cost for the VSS vary across jurisdictions. Many jurisdictions require a letter from the Program to avail the student rate. Students may get the letter from the Graduate Program Administrator.
- Some jurisdictions, e.g. Toronto Police Services, do not accept cash, personal cheque or credit card and require certified cheques, money orders, or business cheques.
- Some jurisdictions, e.g. Niagara Police Service, require you to apply in person.
- Some jurisdictions e.g. South Simcoe Police, require their application form to be signed and witnessed by Program staff.
- Processing times may take up to 12 weeks depending on the jurisdiction.
- The MA in Criminology and Social Justice Program does not accept a VSS issued by any third party or private agency.

Fingerprints

- A student may have a "clear" police check record, but regional police service may still notify them via mail to submit their fingerprints. This implies that the gender and date of birth is a match to an individual with an existing criminal or pardoned sex offender record.
- In case of a "not clear" police record, the police jurisdiction will not release any result until the student has submitted fingerprints authorized by RCMP. The police jurisdiction will stop processing the original application form and advise the student to get the fingerprint done from an RCMP Accredited fingerprint company. This entire process may take 18 weeks and require additional fees. The delay caused may jeopardize the ability of the student to graduate.