

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN FORENSIC SCIENCE

Mission

The mission of the Master of Science in Forensic Science program is to empower students with the fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to prepare them for successful careers in forensic science. This mission is accomplished through academic coursework, hands-on laboratory experience, research, and the completion of an internship in a forensic science laboratory.

Our overall program goals are:

- To provide full support combined with continual improvement in the quality of education, scholarship, and service in compliance with the mission of the university;
- To develop an understanding of the areas of knowledge that are essential to forensic science; and
- To provide students with the practical skills, knowledge, and problem-solving abilities that will promote their advancement within the field of forensic science

We try to meet these goals by having specific, well defined and measurable objectives wherever possible:

- Students will command detailed competence of core course material in forensic science.
- Students will acquire practical skills in forensic science and apply this knowledge.
- Students will be oriented in professional values, concepts, ethics and problem solving.
- Students will demonstrate integration of knowledge and skills necessary for future success in the field of forensic science.

The Master of Science in Forensic Science program requires the completion of 44 graduate semester hours of core and forensic science coursework that can be completed in two years of full-time, face-to-face study. The program is designed to provide students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities essential to forensic science. This unique and interdisciplinary program was the first of its kind in Texas. Graduate level topics include:

- Forensic biology
- Forensic chemistry
- Forensic toxicology
- Controlled substances
- Trace evidence and microscopy
- Instrumental analysis
- Crime scene investigation
- Pattern evidence
- Law and forensic science
- Ethics
- Quality assurance
- Statistics

These core topics are complemented with advanced coursework and laboratory instruction. The program maintains strong ties with accredited forensic laboratories in both the private and public sectors.

Students are required to:

- Complete an internship in a forensic laboratory;
- Complete an independent research project; and
- Demonstrate good oral and written skills that will prepare them for future success in both the laboratory and in the courtroom.

Those seeking careers in this field should be aware that background investigations similar to those required for law enforcement officers are likely to be a condition of employment. **Drug testing, history of drug use, criminal background checks, and other factors including use of social media may be considered for employment or internship placements.**

Additional information: Reference the Program Landing Page (<https://www.shsu.edu/programs/graduate/forensic-science/>) for additional information, such as cost, delivery format, contact information, or to schedule a visit.

Review of applications and offers of admission will begin Jan. 15 and proceed until enrollment openings are filled. A holistic review of each student's application will be completed on a competitive basis. All applicants are automatically considered for graduate assistantships in the Department of Forensic Science.

Please submit all documents to the Office of Graduate Admissions. Admission considerations include:

1. Graduate Application (<http://www.shsu.edu/admissions/apply-texas.html>)
2. Application fee (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/application-fee.html>)
3. A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in chemistry, biology, forensic or natural science
4. Completion of eight credit hours (two semesters or equivalent) of organic chemistry with laboratories
5. Official transcripts from all colleges/universities attended
6. GPA of 3.0 or higher (strongly preferred)
7. Official GRE (<https://www.ets.org/gre/scores>) (strongly preferred)
8. Three letters of recommendation with Admission Recommendation Checklists. At least two must be from academic sources
9. A personal statement of 500 - 750 words
10. A current resume or vita
11. TOEFL/IELTS scores and third-party transcript evaluation for international students (if applicable)
12. A personal interview may be requested

The application checklist and instructions are available at Application Resources (<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/forensic-science/admission.html>).

Note: To be eligible for employment at forensic laboratories, students may need to complete additional foundational courses beyond the standard MSFS degree requirements. For instance, prospective employees in Forensic Biology (https://www.swgdam.org/_files/ugd/4344b0_d73afdd0007c4ed6a0e7e2ffbd6c4eb8.pdf) must have completed a minimum of nine credit hours in upper-level biology courses, including biochemistry, genetics, and molecular biology. Additionally, prospective employees in Forensic Toxicology (<https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1450308/license-requirements-doc-revised-010820.pdf>) must have completed at least two courses, each carrying a minimum of three credit hours, in quantitative analysis and biochemistry, or similarly named courses. Students who have not taken these courses may be required to take these stem courses during their first year.

The Master of Science in Forensic Science does not require a formal thesis. However, students complete an intensive research experience FORS 6014 during both long semesters of the second year. Students in this capstone course must produce a written scientific report and orally defend their research in a public forum to satisfy the University's comprehensive exam requirement.

During the first year of study students are exposed to the major forensic disciplines in addition to the forensic internship. However, students are expected to develop a highly specialized degree plan, tailored towards their specific career goals. This is accomplished through specialized electives, advanced coursework, and forensic research.

Code	Title	Hours
Master of Science in Forensic Science (Non-thesis)		
Required Courses		
FORS 5116	Seminar In Forensic Science	1
FORS 5117	Controlled Substances	1
FORS 5226	Law And Forensic Sciences	2
FORS 5360	Pattern and Physical Evidence Concepts	3
FORS 5435	Trace/Microscopical Analysis	4
FORS 5440	Forensic Biology	4
FORS 5445	Forensic Instrumental Analysis	4
FORS 6014	Forensic Science Research ¹	6
FORS 6224	Quality Assurance and Ethical Conduct in Forensic Science	2
FORS 6371	Forensic Science Internship	3
FORS 6446	Forensic Toxicology	4
Electives		
Select ten credit hours of approved graduate courses in FORS, CRIJ, BIOL, PSYC, or CHEM		10
Total Hours		44

¹ FORS 6014 must be taken for a total of six semester credit hours.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) marketable skills initiative is part of the state's **60x30TX plan** and was designed to help students articulate their skills to employers. Marketable skills are those skills valued by employers and/or graduate programs that can be applied in a variety of work or education settings and may include interpersonal, cognitive, and applied skill areas.

The MS in Forensic Science is designed to provide graduates with the following marketable skills:

- Advanced discipline-specific knowledge.
- Hands-on laboratory skills.
- Familiarity with legal, ethical, and quality assurance issues.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Impartiality and scientific objectivity.
- Application of statistical concepts to forensic science.
- Familiarity with consensus-based scientific standards in forensic science.