

Durham University

Criminology

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/courses/info/?id=20721&title=Criminology+and+Criminal+Justice&code=L3>

[KC09&type=MSC&year=2021](#)

### **Personal Statement**

This statement supports my application for the MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Durham University. I will show that I have the ideal background for this course in both academia and experience; I will also demonstrate how this master's programme is perfectly suited to my career ambitions.

Currently completing my first degree, where I am on course for achieving a 2:1 (or above), I have studied units on psychology and crime, the media and crime and crime theory. Currently, I am completing a dissertation on Bentham's Panopticon and I am proficient in using both traditional libraries and online journals to gain information. I am fascinated by how crime theory links into historical perceptions of crime, and how we view crime differently as time passes (the age of consent is just one example). The undergraduate degree has shown me that crime is often only a crime when someone in power says it is, and those in power can manipulate public opinion and generate momentum.

Having studied power dynamics, criminology has shown me how certain groups have suffered from the place they are in society, and other groups seem to have almost remained above the law. White-collar crime, for example, remains often below the radar whereas stop-and-search has disproportionately targeted the black urban youth. There is so much to view with our delivery of justice, and as Joanne Belknap (the American criminologist) noted, the term "crime processing" and "criminal processing" is preferable to criminal justice as justice as such is far from just. It sometimes seems to be that those with the knowledge can circumvent the system.

For work experience, I have held a part-time job in my local bakery where I help in the evenings making sure the loaves of bread are all baked and ready for sale the next day. Combining this baking role in the town with studying for a degree has helped with the discipline of organisation, showing me the importance of advance planning to meet deadlines. In three years, I have never needed an extension and have shown personable skills in the workplace, as well as being dependable and saving for my future. As my job aspiration is to work for the probationary service, or for the courts, I have sat in court hearings (pre lockdown) watching ongoing cases and seeing how the courts work. The adversarial style of justice makes great interest, and I was fortunate to see a defence team at work on a defence, "setting up their ducks" before the case to make sure the prosecution were unable to get past the defence. They

were at pains to emphasise the fact that they, as the defence, were at no onus to “prove” innocence, but to show reasonable, and proper, doubt.

Outside work and study, I am a friendly and open person who enjoys debate and discussion. I was a member of the debating society in my sixth form and I also have been active in the University student union, directly helping two events that raised over £800- for Guide Dogs for the Blind and the ‘Parkinson’s Charity.’ We undertook a fun run in fancy dress and a street theatre where all donations went to charity. I have a personal commitment to the ‘Parkinson’s Charity’ as my grandfather suffered from it and I have a consequent commitment to the support for all those suffering from the condition.

I also enjoy watching football and am a season ticket holder with my father at Newcastle United. I played during my first year in the University team and liked to be a part of the friendship of competition and togetherness that comes with being in a team. Studying at Durham is an obvious choice for me as I am local to the North East and have been brought up in the region. Durham with its international student body and wonderful medieval town centre has always been a place I want to study in and having looked at the options for the MSc yours excites me the most. The historian that lies somewhere inside me likes to stand in Durham Cathedral beside the tomb of Bede and show my respects to the giant who came before.

I am motivated to apply for this master’s course as I would like to begin a career in the probation service. I strongly believe that the criminal justice system could serve the needs of our country and its people better, though I recognise a need to first gain a deep understanding of the key debates in this field so that I can forge my own judgments and critical insights and go on to establish an impactful career.

Thank you for reading my application, I am sure that your department fits my needs and is a natural extension of where I am today. I would be proud to study with you and am excited by this application. If there is anything further, you would like to discuss then it would be a pleasure to talk things through with you.