

Memo

To: Bates College Faculty

From: Honors Committee—Sarah Strong, chair, Theri Pickens, Daniel Riera-Crichton Tom Wenzel, Judy Head, *ex officio*, Nancy LePage, academic support

Date: October 2012

Re: Honors Committee Recommendations to Departments and Programs

The Bates College faculty shows great dedication in shepherding the ten to fifteen per cent of our seniors involved in the honors program. Even so, surveys conducted by the Committee in 2009 and 2010, as well as follow-up discussions with chairs in 2011, indicate that many faculty members are concerned about the inconsistency of honors standards and the muddiness of parts of the honors process. At the same time, faculty new to the College, faculty members on panels for departments and programs not their own, outside examiners, and some participating students are confused about standards for granting honors. To clarify these and other issues, the Honors Committee recommends:

1. That all departments and programs develop and communicate to students, faculty, and outside examiners clear goals and guidelines for honors theses and for the award of honors, and that one characteristic be that “an honors thesis is an A thesis with significant research and high quality thinking and writing.”
2. That all departments and programs develop and communicate to students and colleagues clear guidelines and procedures for inviting students into their honors program.
3. That departments and programs initiate the honors process by the end of the junior year.
4. That departments and programs consider proposals or pre-proposals as part of the preparation process.
5. That students whose names are sent to the Honors Committee in January have made significant progress by the end of fall semester.
6. That departments and programs develop and communicate guidelines for a student’s removal from honors and that discussions about removal include the department/program as a whole.
7. That in the oral exam, students should be able to respond to probing questions. (The decision of whether or not to award honors is still weighted 40% oral defense and 60% written product.)
8. That advisors establish a schedule of deadlines for progress on the theses.

It is the goal of the Honors Committee that by the start of the fall semester 2012 each department and program have available to students via department or program websites written definitions of their procedures regarding honors and their standards for each stage of the honors process.