

The Honors Program provides qualified Bates students with an opportunity to pursue the independent research and study necessary to achieve mastery of a specific topic within the context of a major. The honors panel is a valuable element in this process for it allows the candidate to discuss and defend this work before recognized professionals in the field. The Honors Committee offers the following protocol to assist in the oral examination.

## **Before the Honors Panel Convenes:**

- An Honors thesis of A quality with significant research and high-quality thinking and writing. While the faculty and the committee recognize the importance of the development that occurs during the thesis process, to receive an award of Honors, the candidate's submitted thesis must be an exceptional one. Departments and programs are encouraged to provide standards, procedures, and expectations for an Honors Thesis to their candidates, faculty, and outside examiners.
- Before the oral examination takes place, each panel member reads and evaluates the written thesis and marks the Individual Evaluation Form as Honors, No Honors, or Honors with reservations. In the final award of Honors or No Honors, the written thesis is weighted at 60 percent; the oral examination is weighted at 40 percent. (This guideline does not hold in the case of performance or other creative theses.)

## **Setting the Process for the Oral Examination:**

- The chair of the panel, who is usually the member of the panel from outside the department or program, determines the order of questioning and the process followed during the oral examination.
- As a first step, the members of the examination panel, the advisor and the candidate enter the examination room for brief introductions. The advisor and candidate leave the room.
- The chair of the panel reviews the process to be followed during the oral examination.
- The chair collects the completed Individual Evaluation Forms from the members of the panel.
- To guide the oral examination, the chair may lead a brief discussion of the strengths and limitations of the written thesis, the academic context for Honors-level work, and the designations of Honors, No Honors, and Honors with reservations of the written thesis made by the individual examiners.
- Some panels find it useful to address specific questions to the advisor or for the advisor to make a statement at the beginning and the end of the oral exam without the candidate present. In this case the advisor re-enters the room to answer questions or make a statement to the panel.
- Once the procedure for the exam is decided and reviewed, the candidate re-enters the examination room.

## **The Oral Honors Examination:**

- Honors exams usually last 90 minutes.
- The panel chair may wish to begin the process by asking the candidate to give a brief outline of the work or opening statement or give the advisor the opportunity to ask an opening question. Before the oral exam, it is the advisor's responsibility to discuss with the candidate the oral examination, possible questions, and the candidate's possible introductory remarks.
- Questioning by the outside examiner typically follows the initial question or opening remarks, followed by the non-departmental/program member and the departmental/program member.
- The advisor may participate to a reasonable extent.

- As the questioning draws to a close or time runs short, the chair invites last questions from the examiners.
- Once the questioning is ended, the candidate is usually invited to make a final statement. For example, the candidate may want to talk about the implications and significance of the findings or research, address the strengths and limitations of their project, or discuss the sort of the research or analysis that might form an appropriate next step. This is the candidate's last opportunity to make an impression on the committee. The candidate should have the last word.
- The candidate leaves the room.
- The advisor may make a concluding remark or answer questions from the panel. The advisor leaves the room.

### **Evaluating the Oral Exam and Awarding Honors or No Honors:**

- The panel deliberates about both the written thesis and the candidate's grasp of related issues in the oral component. This final deliberation is key to the award. Remembering that the written thesis is more heavily weighted than the oral component, the panel awards Honors or No Honors.
- If an award of Honors is made but the panel finds an unacceptable number of errors in spelling, grammar, usage, or typing, it may make the award conditional upon corrections. (See Honors Guidelines, page 17.) No substantial changes may be made in content or text of the thesis.
- The chair of the honors panel marks the Panel Evaluation Form and the examiners sign it.
- The chair asks the candidate and advisor to rejoin the group.
- The chair announces the award of Honors or No Honors. The panel may choose to discuss the award with the candidate.
- The chair announces whether or not the mechanics of the thesis are approved. (See below.)
- The chair thanks the examiners for their time and the advisor and candidate for their work on the thesis.
- The chair delivers the Panel Evaluation Form and the Individual Evaluation Forms immediately after the exam to Academic Services, 7 Lane Hall
- An informal discussion of the thesis project may continue over a meal.
- If the panel has awarded Honors but the mechanics of the thesis are not approved, the student corrects the mechanical errors. The advisor examines the corrected copy of the thesis and determines its acceptability. Once the mechanics are acceptable to the advisor, the candidate uploads a corrected copy of the thesis to SCARAB, and delivers the Thesis Correction Form, signed by the advisor, to Academic Services, 7 Lane Hall. The deadline for both the final uploading and delivery of the form is 3 p.m.