

Honors Expectations – Environmental Studies

Receipt of Honors in Environmental Studies is a special distinction reserved for those students who have excelled in their academic accomplishments throughout their time at Bates and have completed a thesis project with certain distinguishing characteristics and features. The distinction of Honors requires that the student and the thesis meet all of the criteria specified below. The effort the student puts in along with the approach to the topic and final thesis document all are important factors in a decision of whether to award Honors. An outstanding performance in several of the expectations for Honors may offset a less than exemplary performance in another area. A significant deficiency in any one expectation is sufficient grounds to deny Honors. The thesis advisor has the authority to withdraw the student from the Honors program at any time prior to the submission deadline for the written thesis. The oral examination panel members, who may consult with the advisor, have final authority for judging whether the student has satisfactorily met the criteria for receipt of Honors.

The thesis must explore a novel question or topic within the field of environmental studies and use methods drawn from the student's area of concentration. This exploration should be exemplary in its design, methodological rigor, creativity, breadth or depth, and ideally will be characterized by exceptional work in more than one of these facets. The student must demonstrate a high level of self-motivation, independence and continuous engagement in the project over the entire two semesters.

The thesis should describe a project that, if brought to completion, would be suitable for dissemination within an appropriate peer-reviewed venue in the student's area of study. In most instances, this means that the thesis work would be suitable for publication in the peer-reviewed literature, either as a stand-alone item or as part of a larger project. In fields such as the creative arts, the work would be suitable for exhibition or presentation at an appropriate public forum. The program recognizes that two semesters of work is seldom sufficient to complete a project to the point of a peer-reviewed publication or final public presentation, but the project should be on a trajectory for such an outcome.

In the written thesis and oral defense, the student must be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the project. One or more chapters of the thesis must develop the necessary background, theory and/or methodology through a thorough discussion and citation of relevant, published literature.

In the written thesis and oral defense, the student must demonstrate facility and expertise within the broad field of environmental studies as well as the more focused topic of her or his environmental studies concentration.

The student must demonstrate that considerable progress has been made in the actual execution of the project. Evidence of such progress should be commensurate with the project's theoretical and methodological underpinnings, and may include data, analysis, argumentation

or artistic work, as appropriate. The student must have advanced the project to the stage where defensible conclusions can be drawn or finished products can be evaluated.

The thesis must be well written and accessible to expert and non-expert audiences. A high quality written thesis is well organized, concise, grammatically and mechanically correct, coherent and logical in its arguments and development of ideas. The written thesis must cite appropriate sources that inform the project. Data must be clearly presented. Language must be precise, sophisticated and incorporate terminology appropriate for the topic of the thesis.

In the oral exam, the student must be able to answer questions posed by the examination committee and engage with members of the committee in a scholarly discussion of all facets of the project. The student must also recognize the limits of his or her knowledge, understanding or creation and be able to identify appropriate next steps in analysis, study, exploration of literature or generation of creative products.