

Swarthmore College Honors Handbook
2026-2027
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Introduction

The Honors Program is a distinctive and celebrated feature of the Swarthmore College curriculum. Introduced in 1922 by Swarthmore's President Frank Aydelotte, the Honors Program demands the best of our students and offers one of the richest and most rewarding modes of learning available at the college. The program is unique in its focus on deep collaboration between students and faculty and in its written and oral exams given by outside experts. Students think through ideas together in seminars and other group settings and pursue a wide range of special projects. At the end of their senior year, honors students take written and oral exams with external examiners who independently evaluate their work. The program reflects the faculty's belief that the ultimate test of excellence in education is a student's ability to communicate their depth of knowledge to an external evaluator.

Part 1: Guidelines for Honors Students

Aimee Johnson, Director of the Honors Program, is available to answer any questions you have. You can reach her at 610-328-7357 or aimee@swarthmore.edu. Her office is Science Center 143.

Information about Honors in Departments and Programs

Honors programs vary among departments and programs. Some departments require a thesis, some require Senior Honors Study (SHS), some require individual projects, some require none of these options. You can find a detailed description of each Honors program under the listing of the department and program in the College Catalog. Consult the College Catalog and talk to the chair for the requirements of individual departments and programs.

Applying and Withdrawing

Students normally apply for the Honors program in the spring of their sophomore year, at the same time they apply for their majors and minors. They consult with advisors in the major and minor fields and fill out an application on the major/minor portal. Students may be accepted, deferred, or rejected according to the standards of the individual departments and programs (see the College Catalog for the specific departments and programs). Students may also apply for Honors in their junior year or the fall of their senior year, if it is still possible for them to complete all Honors requirements. Students should check with individual departments and programs about these deadlines.

Students must finalize their Honors plans by September 30, 2026 (for Philosophy the deadline is the end of the add/drop period).

If a student wishes to make changes after that date, the student should consult with advisors in both the major and minor departments. They must then apply for the change on the major/minor portal and wait for a decision.

The latest date for a student to drop Honors is December 1 of their senior year (for Philosophy the deadline is the end of the add/drop period in September). In the case of extraordinary circumstances, the student may petition the Curriculum Committee for a waiver of this deadline.

The student should first consult with the Director of the Honors Program. Students who drop Honors must fulfill the requirements for a course major. Please check with the individual departments and programs.

In some cases, a student who withdraws from Honors may not receive SHS credit or may receive NC for SHS work. This will vary according to the policies of departments and programs. Be sure to consult with your department and program.

Faculty may withdraw a student from Honors up until the end of the fall semester of the senior year if in their opinion that student's work does not meet the standard for Honors. There is no precedent for dropping a student from Honors for any other reason. Faculty should consult with the Director of the Honors Program.

Majors and Minors

All Honors students must complete 4 two-credit preparations. To showcase the student's accomplishments in our liberal arts setting, these four preparations will span more than one discipline. This is why the most common model for an Honors program is an Honors major (3 preparations) and Honors Minor (1 preparation). There are, however, a few Interdisciplinary Honors majors which already span more than one discipline and thus have all 4 preparations in that one major. See the College Catalog for full details.

Students may have an additional course major that is the same as the Honors Minor, or a second course minor. If the course major is an interdisciplinary major, that major must include one of the main departments used in the student's Honors Minor.

Interdisciplinary Honors Minors

As mentioned above, receiving honors at Swarthmore means demonstrating excellence in more than one discipline. Students are welcome to have their Honors minor be in an Interdisciplinary program; however, the two-credit preparation used for this Honors minor must be outside the Honors major. In particular, this means that the two credits used for the Honors minor preparation cannot be crosslisted with the Honors major.

Individualized Honors Majors

Individualized Honors Majors are designed by the student in consultation with all of the relevant faculty members and the Director of the Honors Program. All participating faculty members and the Director of Honors must approve the program and serve as advisors. This type of Honors program consists of 4 related two-credit preparations from at least two departments or programs.

Individualized Special Honors Majors must choose, in consultation with their advisors and the Director of the Honors Program, either 1) to have one 90-120 minute oral exam, which is given by a panel of all four examiners, or 2) to have separate oral exams on each preparation, including a

thesis oral exam (if applicable) given by at least two examiners who represent different departments in the student's program. These last two examiners may or may not be the examiners for the student's other preparations.

A student with an Individualized Honors Major may have an additional course major, or up to two course minors.

Honors Preparations

Each Honors preparation must be at least 2 credits (or the equivalent – see below).

The nature of preparations varies, and students should check with their advisors in the major and minor about the various possibilities for Honors preparations. Current models include:

- A double-credit seminar
- A double-credit thesis
- A combination of two related courses
- A course and a related single-credit thesis
- A variety of courses or seminars that serve as preparation for the single-credit thesis
- Research combined with transcript credit
- A project in the creative or performing arts
- A community-based learning project

On rare occasions, departments/programs allow a student to use a course combined with a 1-credit attachment (or a related 1-credit directed reading) as a preparation. This should be discussed with your advisor.

Theses, Special Projects, and Senior Honors Study

Theses: Some departments/programs allow the honors student to write a thesis as one of their Honors preparation. This can be done either as a double credit preparation by itself, or as a single-credit preparation in conjunction with a related course or with a related single-credit or double-credit seminar.

It is possible that a student writes a thesis as one of their Honors major preparations and also writes a thesis for their Honors minor preparation, thus giving them a total of two theses used as Honors preparations. It is never the case that a student writes more than two theses.

There is no college page limit on theses. Guidelines are set by individual departments and programs.

The Swarthmore advisor may offer advice and criticism on the thesis, but not a grade.

A student is allowed to consult with a student Writing Associate about a thesis.

A double-credit thesis stands as a single preparation.

A single-credit thesis must conform to one of the following three models:

- 1) A single-credit thesis packaged with a course to which it is closely related.
- 2) A single-credit thesis that is the result of extended work or research carried on outside the classroom (for example, in a summer laboratory research project). Although only one credit is given on the transcript, the amount of work represented is in effect 2 credits.
- 3) A single-credit thesis that serves as a culminating exercise, building upon work in a variety of other courses and seminars.

Special Projects: Students may pursue special projects as Honors preparations. These projects are treated like theses and usually include a regular course component and an independent project component. Questions should be addressed to individual departments and programs or to the Director of the Honors Program.

Senior Honors Study (SHS): Some departments and programs require SHS work, either to finalize theses that are a required Honors preparation or to write SHS papers that are part of a non-thesis preparation and are assessed by the examiner. In some departments/programs, these SHS papers are revised versions of papers done in a seminar or a course; in other departments/programs, the SHS papers are based on questions posed by the examiner, and these papers are then part of a portfolio sent to the examiner. Other variations are possible; please consult the *College Catalog* and talk to your advisor for the requirements of your particular departments and programs.

A paper that is written as part of SHS is different than a thesis, and will have a limit to its length. Specifically:

For a SHS paper drawing on a single preparation and sent only to the examiner for that preparation: 4,000 words (about 13 pages).

For an integrated SHS paper drawing on the work of two or more preparations and sent to all relevant examiners: 6,000 words (about 20 pages).

These word limits do not apply to theses and other similar projects used as preparations. There is no college-wide limit for such projects, although departments and programs may choose to set such limits.

Different SHS projects have different deadlines, and the student is responsible for knowing them and meeting them. Consult with individual departments and programs.

Students are in general allowed to discuss each other's SHS activities and portfolio projects. For SHS papers that are based on questions posed by the examiner, students are allowed to get feedback and guidance from faculty up until the point that the examiner submits the exam questions or topics. The amount of faculty supervision of SHS work varies from department to department and program to program; consult with your department or program advisor for more details.

Avoiding Scheduling Conflicts for Spring Term Seniors

If during the spring semester of your senior year you plan to take two seminars, or a seminar and a course that is required for your Honors program, please alert the chairs or Administrative Assistants/Coordinators of all relevant departments so that they can try to avoid a conflict in scheduling.

Avoiding Schedule Overload for Spring Term Seniors

There are many demands on all seniors during their spring semester; there are even more for seniors doing honors. Because of this, honor students should be mindful about the number of courses they take during their senior spring, along with how many written final exams (along with the written honor exams) they will need to do. All those exams will require time to prepare for them. In addition, some students will have a thesis (possibly two: one for their major and one for their minor) along with various SHS papers to write, all of which need to be completed towards the end of the spring semester of their senior year. Thus it is recommended that senior honor students do not take more courses and seminars during the spring semester than is necessary.

Due Dates

All theses, papers, and other written material to be submitted to examiners are due to the relevant departmental Administrative Assistants/Coordinators on April 30 at the latest. Some departments and programs have earlier deadlines. Please check with the AAs of all your departments and programs.

Written and Oral Exams

Most, but not all, Honors preparations are examined with a written exam given during the final exam period of the spring semester of the senior year. *All* Honors preparations are examined orally by the external examiners during the Honors period after the written exams. Students must take the written and oral exams on campus and in-person except for extenuating circumstances beyond their control. The Director of the Honors Program must approve exceptions to this regulation and may consult with the Provost and Curriculum Committee.

Examiners are chosen by Swarthmore faculty members. It is up to the professor of each preparation to decide whether to give students the names of their examiners prior to the exam period. Examiners do not provide written feedback on written or oral exams. In addition, examiners are under no obligation to communicate with students after the exams, and students should not contact examiners after the exams. In fact, students may not consult independently with examiners at any time, unless explicitly invited to do so by the examiner.

The Registrar's Office schedules both the written and the oral exams. The scheduling of written and oral exams obviously must take many factors into consideration: the large number of exams,

the availability of rooms and IT support, and other scheduling demands of students and examiners. Every effort is made to spread out each student's exams to the extent that is possible. Contact the Associate Registrar if you have any questions.

The College is mindful of the fact that some students may not be able to take Honors exams on specific days for religious reasons. Students in this situation should inform the Director of the Honors Program early in the fall term of the senior year so that the Honors schedules can be planned accordingly.

Written exams in 2027 will take place from May 6 to May 13.

The written exam schedule will be made available to you at the beginning of March.

Students will be asked to choose whether they would like to handwrite their exams or use a computer. The examiners are requested to treat both methods equally.

During the period between written and oral exams, students are allowed to discuss Honors written exams with each other if they wish to do so.

Oral exams in 2027 will take place from May 16 to May 17.

The oral exam schedule will be made available to you by mid-April.

More on Written Exams

Many Honors programs require four 3-hour, in-person, written exams given during the final exam period of the spring semester of senior year. Some departments and programs use an alternative to the written exam. Check the *College Catalog* and confer with your departments/programs for the modes of examination required by your departments and programs.

Previous written exams are available on the Honors Program website. You are encouraged to consult these exams when you begin work on a specific Honors preparation.

Students are allowed to bring to the written exam materials that have been specified by their individual departments and by the examiners. You will be informed about these details by May 1.

The Registrar's Office will email students their completed written exams within 24-48 hours after the exam.

There are no written exams for theses and most special projects. Preparations for theses are only examined orally. Check with your individual departments and programs.

If students are also taking course exams during the Honors written exam period, it may be possible to take those course exams early. Consult with your course professor.

More on Oral exams

Students often find the oral exams the most exhilarating and fulfilling part of the Honors process. These exams put you directly in touch with the broader scholarly and professional community.

Oral exams are based on what the examiner has been sent: some combination of the students' written exams, papers submitted to the examiner, thesis or other similar project, and syllabus (different preparations will involve different materials), in the proportion that the examiner sees fit. If your department or program gives examiners different instructions they will let you know in October of the senior year.

Normally, students are allowed to bring the following to the oral exam: a copy of the written exam questions and the completed exam, the thesis, and papers or other material submitted to the examiner.

Students should not discuss orals with other students who have not yet taken their oral exam.

Oral exams for regular preparations last 30-45 minutes.

Thesis oral exams last 45-60 minutes.

Individualized Honors Majors must choose, in consultation with their advisors and the Director of the Honors Program, to 1) have one panel oral exam 2) have four oral exams, one for each preparation: each would have one examiner except for a thesis oral exam, which would have at least two.

Panel oral exams for Individualized Honors Majors last 90-120 minutes. The examiners on the panel do not meet to discuss the exam beforehand.

At the panel exam, each examiner is given 20 minutes to examine the student. They do not need to take up all of that time, but they should not go over 20 minutes. After each examiner has had his or her chance to examine the student, there is time left over (10-40 minutes) for cross-disciplinary conversation.

Grading and Honors Marks

Examiners will determine a single Honors mark for each preparation (taking all elements of the preparation into consideration) on a scale from Highest Honors (4.333) to F (0), including pluses and minuses. The student's four Honors marks are then averaged to determine whether the student receives Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors, or no Honors. Each Honors mark is weighted equally.

If a student turns in a thesis, paper, or special project late, the department may indicate this on the material sent to the examiner with the following notation: "This paper was X days late; this lateness can be considered in assessing the student's performance in the Honors preparation."

You will receive your Honors level by email by late afternoon on Tuesday, May 18.

Final Honors levels are printed on the diploma.

Grades on your transcript for seminars and courses will be determined by your instructors at Swarthmore. The grade on your transcript for your thesis or special project is almost always determined by the outside examiner. Direct any questions to individual departments and programs.

Disabilities

If students have documented disabilities, they are entitled to accommodations for Honors exams. Students should send requests for accommodations to the Director of Student Disability Services by **February 1**.

Illness During the Honors Exam Period

If you experience a health concern that may impact your ability to complete the Honors exams, contact the Student Health and Wellness Center at 610-328-8058. An on-call registered nurse is available after hours at 610-328-8548. After you have connected with health care, contact Public Safety, 610-328-8333, provide your phone number, and ask that they contact the Registrar. You do not need to share the details of your health concern with the Registrar. The Registrar's role is to help you coordinate the logistics of your next steps with Honors exams.

Honors and Study Abroad

It is usually possible to combine Honors with study abroad, especially for students who study abroad for only one semester. Students who study abroad for a year will need to plan their Honors programs very carefully. Sometimes work done abroad can form part of an Honors preparation. Students should check with their individual departments and programs about this. Students who wish to pursue study abroad and an Honors program should consult as early as possible with their major advisor and the Off-Campus Study Advisor.

Honors Exams for Those Finishing Coursework in December

Occasionally students complete their graduation requirements in December. In such cases the student normally takes the Honors exams the following spring.

If a student's final semester at Swarthmore ends in December and the student wishes to take the Honors exams the preceding spring, the student must petition the Curriculum Committee in

writing and obtain the written support of the major and minor department or program. The student must explain the reasons for wanting to do so and give a detailed list of coursework planned for the final semester. The student must also 1) have completed at least 28 credits and have 4 or fewer credits to complete in the final semester after Honors exams, 2) must not be graduating early, and 3) must have completed all Honors work and all work in the major and minor.

Part 2:
Guidelines for Administrative Assistants/Coordinators and Faculty

Advising Students about Honors

Recent surveys have shown that the two most important factors in a student's decision to pursue an Honors program are: 1) their passion for their subject and 2) consulting a faculty member about a possible Honors program. In addition to advising students about what sorts of Honors programs are possible (all information can be found in Part 1 of the *Honors Handbook* and the *College Catalog*), students may need to be made aware that Honors students at the college often find the oral exams the most exhilarating and inspiring part of the Honors program. In addition to the program's academic rigor and its emphasis on independent learning, the program is designed to build confidence and a sense of mastery for all participating students, not only those who are pursuing an academic career after graduating. It is important to keep in mind the range of possible Honors preparations; there is considerable flexibility in Honors programs. It is also important to inform Honors students and examiners if your department's or program's deadlines and guidelines for written or oral exams differ from those in this handbook.

Aimee Johnson, Director of the Honors Program, is also available to advise students at any stage of their studies and to answer questions. You can reach her at 610-328-7357 or aimee@swarthmore.edu. Her office is Science Center 143.

Changes to your Department's or Program's Honors Program

All general changes in Honors preparation modes, SHS rubrics, and examination or evaluation formats must be cleared with the Curriculum Committee. Proposed changes should be sent to the Director of the Honors Program as early in the academic year as possible so that they may be discussed by the Curriculum Committee and resolved in time for students to be properly informed of any changes.

Admitting and Withdrawing Students

Students apply for an Honors program in individual departments and programs, and faculty decide whether to accept, deny, or defer them, according to the standards established by the department and program. Departments are encouraged to take into consideration a student's potential as well as the student's past performance. Students may apply in their sophomore and junior years, or sometimes as late as the first semester of their senior year.

Students' final Honors programs are due September 30, 2026, but at the discretion of the department/program, they may make changes to their Honors program through the second week of the spring semester of their senior year. Students may withdraw from Honors up until December 1 of the senior year.

Faculty may withdraw a student from Honors up until the end of the fall semester of the senior year *if in their opinion that student's work does not meet the standard for Honors*. There is no precedent for dropping a student from Honors for any other reason. If a faculty member or

department/program is considering dropping a student from Honors after the fall semester of the senior year, they must consult with the Director of the Honors Program.

Advocating for Exceptions in a Student's Honors Program

If a faculty member wishes to support a student's petition to the Curriculum Committee to waive a certain rule, they should first consult with the Director of the Honors Program.

Seminar Scheduling

During the time in the fall when faculty are scheduling spring term Honors preparations, conflicts can arise when a student plans to take multiple seminars that are part of his/her/their Honors program. In this case, students are asked to alert the chairs or coordinators involved in the possible conflict so that departments and programs can **try** to avoid a conflict in scheduling.

We remind faculty teaching a fall seminar that during finals week, the instructor may schedule either a seminar meeting or a final exam, but not both.

Spring seminars should be concluded before exam week in the interest of Honors students who will be taking exams.

Grading

Faculty do not submit grades for theses or special projects, which are graded by the examiners (with certain exceptions). Swarthmore instructors may direct, read, and comment on the thesis or special project as part of the ordinary process of its preparation. Instead of submitting a grade for these credits, faculty should submit IP.

Faculty may choose to use the Honors exam as the final exam for spring term courses or seminars. In this case, they should not turn in any grades for any students, Honors or non-Honors, or speak with students about their exams until the final Honors marks have been determined at the end of the Honors period.

Examiners are given an explanation of the grading procedures for Honors in the examiner packets they are sent by individual departments and programs.

Inviting and Securing Examiners

In October the Registrar's Office will send you the AA/Faculty/Chair Honors Packet and the Examiner Packet.

The AA/Faculty/Chair Packet contains:

A cover letter from the Director of the Honors Program

The complete *Honors Handbook* (Part 2 is specifically for AAs and Faculty)

The AA Honors checklist

Honors dates and deadlines

The Examiner Packet contain:

Honors checklist for examiners

"Instructions for Honors Examiners" (=Part 3 of the *Honors Handbook*)

Honors dates and deadlines

The *Honors Handbook*

Faculty and AAs should be aware of any students in their department or program who are being examined on individualized special majors. The Director of the Honors program will send specific instructions to AAs and to the Registrar by November about the type of exam each student will take. This information will be important for choosing examiners and for scheduling exams.

Examiners should be secured by March 1. Because it can sometimes take some time to find examiners, departments and programs are advised to begin the process before the end of the fall semester.

Students pursuing an Individualized Honors Major will meet with their advisors and the Director of the Honors Program during the fall semester of the senior year to determine whether the student will be examined 1) by a panel of all four examiners (90-120 minute oral), or 2) have individual oral exams and (if applicable) a thesis exam given by at least two examiners (45-60 minutes) who represent different departments in the student's program. These examiners may or may not be the student's preparation examiners. The Director of the Honors Program will then send the plan for each student's exams to the pertinent departments and programs.

External examiners are chosen by the Swarthmore faculty. Examiners should not know or have worked with the students whom they are examining. Examiners may occasionally participate in preparatory events with Honors students (e.g. make presentations in an Honors seminar or watch a play rehearsal), but should not participate in extended contact that assumes a teacher-student relationship. Swarthmore emeritus professors may not serve as external examiners. A former Swarthmore faculty member may be an examiner if his or her primary academic affiliation has been elsewhere for at least 4 years. The Director of Honors should write a letter requesting an exception to the rule if a faculty makes a compelling case for allowing emeritus professors.

An examiner may return to examine for the same preparation for a maximum of two consecutive years. After that the examiner should not be invited to examine again for at least one year. Under special circumstances, an examiner may be invited to examine for three consecutive years if the Director of the Honors Program approves. After examining for three consecutive years, the examiner should not be invited to return for at least two years.

If at all possible, a student should be examined by a different examiner for each preparation. They should not have the same examiner for more than two exams.

A student may not have more than one examiner for a single preparation (except in the case of an interdisciplinary thesis in an interdisciplinary program or for a thesis in an Individualized Honors Major).

Any Honors preparation made up of separate components (such as two related courses, a course plus attachment, or a course plus a single-credit thesis) must have a single examiner for the entire package of related components.

Every student examined on the same preparation must have the same examiner.

If students with the same preparations have SHS work that differ in nature, the department should explain this to the examiner.

Faculty should tell examiners that they may need to be on campus for oral exams on May 16 and/or May 17. However, examiners must be on campus on Tuesday, May 18 in order to attend departmental caucuses, the All-Examiners' luncheon, and the All-Examiners' Meeting after lunch, which is an essential part of the Honors process. Attendance is mandatory. We make every effort to accommodate the individual examiner's personal schedules. But in recent years we have had to schedule many back-to-back oral exams on Tuesday morning, which creates an unusually stressful situation for students. If an examiner states from the start that he/she/they cannot be on campus on May 18, the faculty should find another examiner.

It is up to the individual faculty member whether or not to reveal to the students the identity of the examiner before the exam period. Departments and programs may have a policy about this or may want to consider establishing such a policy.

Schedule of Honoraria for Examiners

Examiners are paid for written exams per exam (no matter how many students are taking the exam) and for oral exams per student. The fee schedule for examiners in the program is:

For writing (a.k.a. "setting") the first written exam, reading one thesis, or assessing one special project: \$975.00

For writing (a.k.a. "setting") an additional written exam, examining an additional thesis, or assessing an additional special project: \$450.00

For each student examined in an individual oral (30-45 minutes): \$150.00

For each student examined in a panel oral (90-120 minutes) or for a thesis (45-60 minutes): \$225.00

The Head Examiner, who is chosen by the Director of the Honors Program and oversees the All-Examiners' Meeting, will be paid \$750 above the fee for his/her/their exams.

If you have a special situation regarding the examination that does not fit exactly into the fee schedule above, please contact the Director of the Honors Program so we can negotiate an appropriate fee.

Materials Sent to Examiners

Examiners should be sent the following by March 15:

The Examiners Packet (sent to you in October by the Director of the Honors Program)

Your department cover letter
All materials necessary for writing the written exam
Previous Honors exams

"Instructions for Honors Examiners," (*Honors Handbook Part 3*), which is in the examiner packet, has been made as comprehensive and clear as possible in an effort to cut down on the number of communications with examiners and to avoid duplication. Please include in the cover letter only information that is unique to your department and program and not covered in "Instructions for Honors Examiners," including:

- 1) For each exam, a list of the materials that will be examined (e.g. written exam, papers, thesis, other SHS materials) so that the examiner knows what he/she/they will be receiving.
- 2) An explanation of the nature of any SHS materials.
- 3) Guidelines for the oral exams in your department, if they differ from those in the *Handbook* in timing or content (regular preparations 30-45 minutes, thesis orals 45-60 minutes, panel oral exams for individualized majors 90-120 minutes).
- 4) Information about exceptions to the rule that theses and special projects receive a grade given by the examiner on the student's transcript.
- 5) Any other information that is unique to your department's or program's Honors program.

Departments and programs are responsible for sending to examiners materials relevant to the preparations that they are examining. Before writing exam questions or other evaluative assignments, examiners should be sent syllabi or their equivalent for the preparation(s) they are examining and for any portfolio work done in Senior Honors Study. These materials may include reading lists, a list of topics, a brief explanation of the SHS work, and limited background materials appropriate to the candidates' preparations. Faculty should be cautious about sending materials that might be construed as pointing out possible directions the examiner's written and oral exams might take, since the examiner is expected to be free to shape questions without advice or constraint on the part of the faculty. Previous Honors exams may be sent to examiners, but examiners are not restricted to the formats that previous exams have taken. Faculty should not send copies of exams that they themselves have written.

Returning examiners need to fashion new questions each year.

Instructors may communicate with examiners about the nature of candidates' preparations, but should not discuss with them the quality of the student's work until after final Honors marks have been determined.

All theses, papers, and other written material to be submitted to examiners are due to the relevant departmental and program Administrative Assistants/Coordinators on April 30th at the latest. If your department or program has an earlier deadline, please inform students at the beginning of the senior year.

For departments/programs that have their students engage in Senior Honors Study (SHS) where the student produces a SHS paper, the word limit for this SHS paper is as follows:

4,000 words (about 13 pages) for a SHS paper drawing on a single preparation and sent only to the examiner for that preparation.

6,000 words (or about 20 pages) for an integrated SHS paper drawing on the work of two or more preparations and sent to all relevant examiners.

The chair or the director of the student's major or minor should see to it that appropriate limits are not exceeded when SHS portfolio materials are sent to examiners.

These word limits do not apply to theses and other similar projects used as preparations. There is no college-wide limit for such projects, although departments and programs may choose to set such limits.

If a student turns in a thesis, paper, or special project late, the department or program may indicate this on the material sent to the examiner with the following notation: "This paper was X days late; this lateness can be considered in assessing the student's performance in the Honors preparation."

Written and Oral Exams

Examiners must submit their written exams to departments and programs by April 10 (some departments and programs have earlier deadlines). Faculty should check a *printed* copy of the submitted exam to make sure that it is fair and appropriate and conforms to the electronic version in special fonts, figures, colors, etc. Some negotiation with the examiner is occasionally necessary.

Faculty should not assume that the digital version of the exam is identical to the printed version. In recent years information on the digital version of some written exams did not appear on printed versions, which makes it imperative for faculty to proofread carefully and ensure that exams given to students conform to the electronic versions they received from examiners.

After faculty have proofread and approved the paper versions of the exams, AAs should submit an electronic copy (please double-check that it is correct) of the exams to registrar@swarthmore.edu by April 15, as well as printed copies for each student being examined (plus 2 extra). Electronic copies are archived for use by future students.

Written and oral exams are scheduled by the Registrar's Office.

The oral exam schedule will be sent to Administrative Assistants/Coordinators and examiners by mid-April. Oral exams are based on what the examiner has been sent: some combination of the students' written exams, papers submitted to the examiner, thesis or other similar project, and syllabus (different preparations will involve different materials), in the proportion that the examiner sees fit. Please remind examiners and students if your department or program has guidelines for oral exams that differ from these standard ones.

Oral exams for regular preparations are 30-45 minutes. Thesis oral exams are 45-60 minutes. Panel oral exams for individualized special majors are 90-120 minutes; the examiners on the panel do not meet to discuss the exam beforehand.

At the panel exam, each examiner is given 20 minutes to examine the student. They do not need to take up all of that time, but they should not go over 20 minutes. After each examiner has had his or her chance to examine the student, there is time left over (10-40 minutes) for cross-disciplinary conversation.

Directly after the panel exam, the four examiners will caucus to determine four honors marks and then submit them to the Registrar.

Maintaining the Independence of the Examiners' Evaluations

Faculty members may share with their students ideas about general strategies for taking written and oral exams, but they should do this with all of their students and before exams begin. After exams have been received, faculty are not allowed to advise students or respond to questions about their written or oral exams.

Once a thesis, paper, or similar project is sent to the examiner, faculty should not engage in conversation with the student about it.

Faculty must refrain from anything that might be construed as special instructions or coaching between the written and oral exams.

Faculty may not sit in on oral exams.

Faculty may not discuss individual students with examiners or read any exam paper until final Honors marks are determined.

Faculty should not discuss with examiners how Swarthmore interprets any form of Honors in relation to letter grades.

The Department/Program Caucus

It can be difficult for examiners to decide how to translate their understanding of a student's knowledge to an Honors mark, and thus many examiners find it helpful to have the chance to talk with the other examiners. The department/program caucus serves exactly this purpose: it is a chance for the examiners from that department/program to discuss the performance of individual students in an effort to finalize the Honors marks for all of the students they have examined. This is particularly important for first-time examiners.

The department/program caucus is attended by all the examiners from that department/program. If a department/program has only one examiner, effort should be made to find them another caucus.

Examiners for students with an individualized major who have a panel oral exam caucus immediately after the panel to discuss and decide on their marks for that particular student. If

such examiners are also examining other students for a department/program, then they will attend that caucus as well.

The chair of each department or program should choose one of the examiners to lead the caucus of the department or program, preferably, but not necessarily, an examiner who has served here in the past. The only responsibility this caucus leader has is to organize the caucus discussion. In particular, the caucus leader should go through the list of students examined and, after introducing each student's name, give that student's examiners the chance to discuss the student's performance on each exam and exchange impressions in an effort to help each examiner determine their final mark. The examiners then each decide on their final mark for the student. Each examiner will then submit their grades via the Qualtrics Survey that will be sent by the Registrar's Office. All examiners also receive these instructions in the "Instructions for Honors Examiners" (Part 3 of the *Honors Handbook*).

With few exceptions, all examiners attend a caucus that is normally arranged by the major departments. Please contact Usha Jenemann or Aimee Johnson if you have questions about which caucus an examiner should attend.

Monday Dinner and Tuesday Luncheon

Faculty should remind examiners that they are expected to attend the departmental or program dinner on Monday night. This dinner is intended to provide an opportunity for social and professional exchange. All department faculty, even those who have not taught Honors students that year, should be invited and encouraged to attend.

Departments and programs are expected to avoid extravagant spending for the dinner.

Faculty members hosting examiners are also expected to attend the Tuesday luncheon, to which all faculty members are invited.

Honors Marks and Grades

Students will be notified of their Honors results by email by late afternoon on Tuesday, May 18. For students who do not receive Honors, the following policies hold:

If the student receives an overall mark of Pass, the student will automatically fulfill the comprehensive requirement in the course major. The minor will need to be reviewed by the department.

When a student receives an overall mark of Marginal Pass or Failure, the major and minor departments will review the exam papers to determine whether the work satisfies the requirements for a course major and minor.

Grades on the transcript for theses and special projects are determined as follows:

HHH, or HHH- Automatic A+

HH+, HH, or HH- Automatic A

H+, H, or H- Examiner chooses between B+ and A-

P, MP, or F Department or program determines the grade, which cannot be higher than a B

Grades on Transcript for Philosophy SHS

Grades on the transcript for Philosophy SHS will be determined by averaging the numerical equivalents of the three Honors marks for majors and by converting the single honors mark for minors. The Registrar's Office will make these calculations.

All Examiners' Meeting

Faculty who have taught or advised Honors preparations for seniors taking Honors exams must be present outside the All Examiners Meeting on Tuesday afternoon or be on-call and easily reachable by phone during that time (roughly 1:00 – 3:30 pm). Chairs are responsible for having the relevant contact information (or assigning another faculty member to have this information) in case a faculty member must be contacted.

If under extraordinary circumstances an examiner is not able to attend the All-Examiners' Meeting, the department or program chair should get in touch with the Director of the Honors Program and arrange for the examiner to be reachable by phone.

A student's instructors are occasionally called into the All Examiners' Meeting. The Director of the Honors program and the Provost will supervise this process. Faculty should not volunteer information or judgments of their own, but should simply answer the questions asked by the examiners.

Part 3: Instructions for Honors Examiners

We are extremely grateful to you for serving as an Honors examiner. The program reflects the faculty's belief that the ultimate test of excellence in education is a student's ability to communicate their depth of knowledge to an external evaluator. This document contains all the essential information that you need. The department or program for which you are examining will convey to you any additional information that they would like you to have. If at any point you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Aimee Johnson, Director of the Honors Program (aimee@swarthmore.edu) 610-328-7357.

Approximately one fifth of the undergraduates at Swarthmore College pursue an Honors program, which requires them to take four Honors exams at the end of their senior year based on work that normally has been completed during the junior and senior years. Every student's Honors program consists of four Honors preparations from at least two academic disciplines, usually in the form of a major (three preparations) and a minor (one preparation). There are some Interdisciplinary Honors majors that do not have a minor and take four preparations drawn from at least two academic disciplines. Every Honors preparation consists of two Swarthmore credits, the equivalent of eight semester hours. All Honors students take four oral exams (except in the case of an individualized major), and most take four written exams at the end of the senior year. These written exams are taken in a proctored setting. Honors preparations that are theses or special projects do not have written examinations.

The only way for a Swarthmore College student to receive an honorific on the transcript (Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors) is to take four Honors exams at the end of the senior year. You, the external examiner, determine these marks through your assessment of the exam you give. The program is committed to giving you considerable freedom to make an independent evaluation of a student's work. We do not want you to match the Swarthmore College faculty's assessment of the quality of a student's work: we want you to bring your own standards of evaluation and assessment to the process. Swarthmore College faculty will not discuss individual students with you until after the final Honors marks are determined, and they will not discuss written exams with students once those exams have been submitted.

Basic Responsibilities

1. Create a Written Exam. If you have been asked to write a written exam, you will be sent the relevant syllabus and have access to previous Honors exams. Please base your exam only on the materials you are sent, which you will receive by March 15th. You are not required to follow the format of previous exams, but they may help to provide guidelines. Your exam is due in pdf format to the department or program's Administrative Assistant and the relevant faculty member by April 10th (departments or programs with earlier deadlines will inform you of those deadlines). If you are examining a thesis or special project, you will not be asked to create a written examination for that preparation.
2. Receive and Evaluate Completed Exams, Papers, Theses. You will be notified by the Registrar's Office of the particular date/s that your written exam will be administered (all written exams will

be administered between May 6 and 13). Shortly after the exam is completed, The Registrar's Office will send you a PDF of the completed exam.

Any thesis, special project, or paper that is part of a student's Honors portfolio will be sent to you by May 1. The nature of these materials differs from department to department and program to program, and will be specified in the department or program's cover letter to you.

Keeping in mind that, at the conclusion of the oral exams, you will be asked to give one of the following marks for the entire exam package of each student you examine (written exam, oral exam, papers, etc.), you should tentatively evaluate the material according to the following scale. Although you will have the opportunity to discuss the performance of individual students with other examiners at a departmental caucus, your marks are ultimately not expected to conform to any standard other than your own. Please note that you are not expected to give written feedback to students at any point in the Honors process. The independence of your individual evaluation of each student you examine lies at the heart of the Honors Program.

HHH	(4.333)	P+	(2.9)
HHH-	(4.167)	P	(2.7)
HH+	(4.0)	P-	(2.5)
HH	(3.833)	MP+	(2.3)
HH-	(3.667)	MP	(2.1)
H+	(3.5)	MP-	(1.9)
H	(3.333)	F	(0)
H-	(3.167)		

HHH= Highest Honors

HH= High Honors

H= Honors

P= Pass

MP= Marginal Pass

F= Fail

At the conclusion of the Honors process, the Registrar's office averages each student's four Honors marks to determine the student's overall mark, which can only be one of the following (without pluses or minuses):

HHH
HH
H
P
MP
F

Students who receive an overall mark of P, MP, or F do not receive an honorific on their degree. It is not part of the Honors process to assign letter grade equivalents to Honors marks, except in cases of theses and special projects.

If you are examining a thesis or special project, the overall mark the student receives from you will be assigned a grade equivalent and will appear on the student's transcript. Any exceptions to this policy will be explained by your department.

Grades on the transcript for theses and special projects are determined as follows:

HHH, or HHH-	Automatic A+
HH+, HH, or HH-	Automatic A
H+, H, or H-	Examiner chooses between B+ and A-

3. Travel to campus for Honors period (May 16-18). Once you receive your oral exam schedule (mid-April), you should make travel plans and keep in mind that you may need to be here as early as Sunday, May 16. All examiners must stay through the All-Examiners' Meeting on Tuesday, May 18, which usually ends by 3:30pm. Your commitments while on campus are:

- a) Administer oral exams according to the schedule and instructions you will be given by the Registrar's Office. Oral exams for regular preparations are 30-45 minutes. Thesis oral exams are 45-60 minutes. Panel oral exams for individualized special majors are 90-120 minutes. Examiners are asked to stay within the time limits and to allow for a brief break between examinations. The scheduling of oral exams is complicated because each student in the program takes four oral exams. Please be available to administer orals on May 16, 17, and 18.
Orals are based on what the examiner has been sent: some combination of the students' written exams, papers submitted to the examiner, thesis or other similar project, and syllabus (different preparations will involve different materials), in the proportion that the examiner sees fit. If departments have more specific guidelines for oral exams, they will inform you in their cover letter. Panel oral exams for individualized special majors last 90-120 minutes. The examiners on the panel do not meet to discuss the exam beforehand.
At the panel exam, each examiner is given 20 minutes to examine the student. They do not need to take up all of that time, but they should not go over 20 minutes. After each examiner has had his or her chance to examine the student, there is time left over (10-40 minutes) for cross-disciplinary conversation. Directly after the panel exam, the four examiners will caucus to determine four Honors marks and submit them to the Registrar.
- b) Attend the department's or program's dinner on Monday evening. Every department and program hosts a dinner for examiners and faculty on Monday evening. This traditional part of the honors process is intended to be an occasion for social and professional exchange. No discussion of individual Honors students or exams is allowed (as is the case for the entire Honors period up until the All-Examiners' Meeting has adjourned).
- c) Attend the departmental or program caucus on Tuesday morning. Only the examiners attend this departmental or program caucus as it is a chance to exchange information about the performance of individual students in an effort to finalize the Honors marks for all of the students you have examined. One of the examiners in each department will be assigned as the caucus leader. The only

responsibility of this caucus leader is to go through the list of students examined, and after introducing each student's name, give that student's examiners the chance to discuss the student's performance on each examination and exchange impressions in an effort to help each examiner determine their final mark. The examiners then each decide on their final mark for the student. Each examiner will then submit their grades to the Registrar's Office via Qualtrics.

If you are an examiner for a student with an individualized major who has a panel oral exam, you and the other examiners on that panel will caucus immediately after the panel in order to discuss and determine your marks for that particular student. If you are examining other students for the department/program as well, you will also attend the departmental/program caucus.

- d) Attend the Honors luncheon on Tuesday. While faculty and examiners eat lunch, the Registrar's Office calculates the Honors average mark for each student.
- e) Attend the All-Examiners' Meeting after the luncheon on Tuesday. This meeting is usually finished by 3:30pm. The purpose of this meeting is to check with examiners that the correct marks have been submitted, and to give a student's examiners the chance to discuss any cases that are deemed "potentially discussable." Potentially discussable cases are those where a student's final mark falls numerically close to or at the midpoint between one primary Honors category and another (gray area cases), or where a student's four marks exhibit a wide variance in spread from highest to lowest or a large standard deviation (stretch cases).
- f) Some departments and programs hold receptions after the meeting. This is optional.

Schedule of Honoraria

You will be paid an honorarium according to the schedule below. Examiners are paid for written exams per exam (no matter how many students are taking the examination) and for oral exams per student. The fee schedule for examiners is:

For writing the first written exam, reading one thesis, or assessing one special project: \$975.00

For writing an additional written exam, examining an additional thesis, or assessing an additional special project: \$450.00

For each student examined in an individual oral (30-45 minutes): \$150.00

For each student examined in a panel oral (90-120 minutes) or for a thesis (45-60 minutes): \$225.00

The Head Examiner, who is chosen by the Director of the Honors Program and oversees the All-Examiners Meeting, will be paid \$750 above the fee for his/her/their examinations.

Thank you for agreeing to serve as an Honors examiner. The faculty and students are grateful for your hard work!

Aimee Johnson
Professor of Mathematics
Swarthmore College

Appendix 1: Senior Honors Study

Senior Honors Study (SHS) work is optional and at the discretion of departments and programs. It is designed either to enhance or to integrate Honors preparations. Examiners often find portfolio material a valuable addition to written and oral exams.

SHS work may or may not be credit bearing. Credit and grading policies will be determined by the department or program. Faculty determine whether the work is given a letter grade or CR/NC. Faculty assign the grades, not the Honors examiners.

Departments that have credit-bearing options for the SHS activity and wish to continue to count this Honors element (up to one credit) as outside the major for purposes of the 20 course rule may apply to the Curriculum Committee for this waiver.

SHS work is often, but not necessarily, done in the spring of the senior year.

Individualized Special Majors may have SHS requirements that differ from departments' regular majors.

SHS policies in individual departments and programs should be available in the *College Catalog* and in individual department and program descriptions of their Honors programs.

Students are allowed to discuss each other's SHS activities and portfolio projects. For SHS work based on questions or topics submitted by the examiner, students are allowed to get feedback and guidance from faculty up until the point of this submission by the the examiner. The amount of faculty supervision of SHS work varies widely from department to department.

Departments may use SHS activities, portfolio materials, or both.

SHS Activities

SHS activities can include, for example, a colloquium for students to discuss their ongoing research, writing an intellectual autobiography, a program where students work individually on revising their seminar papers, independent reading from a list prepared by the department, or the preparation of a work of creative, visual, or performing art. It may involve writing essays on topics assigned by the examiners.

SHS Portfolio Materials

SHS portfolio materials are Honors materials sent to the examiner to be used as part of the evaluation. Portfolio materials may be generated in the SHS activity or in the preparations themselves.

Portfolio materials may not come from courses that are not part of a student's Honors program.

The word limits for student portfolio papers are as follows:

For a portfolio paper drawing on a single preparation and sent only to the examiner for that preparation: 4,000 words (about 13 pages).

For an integrated portfolio paper drawing on the work of two or more preparations and sent to all relevant examiners: 6,000 words (about 20 pages).

These word limits are upper limits. Department and programs are free to set their own lower limits. They should be sure to specify these in the *College Catalog* and to communicate this information to students at the beginning of the senior year.

Materials such as graphs, computer codes, and data will not be counted as part of the word limits, but they should be kept within reasonable limits.

The chair or the director of the student's major or minor should see to it that appropriate limits are not exceeded when SHS portfolio materials are sent to examiners.

Appendix 2: Plagiarism Protocol

If an examiner suspects a student of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, he or she should notify the Director of the Honors Program immediately, who will notify the Provost. The Provost and the student's preparation instructor will be responsible for initiating any charges of plagiarism or academic dishonesty according to the college's rules governing such practices. If the student is found guilty of such charges, he or she will be required at the very least to withdraw from the Honors Program. If charges of plagiarism or academic dishonesty are brought so late that they cannot be resolved before oral exams, examiners will be instructed to proceed with the exams and deliberations (without directly confronting the student and without discussing the case with other examiners) and to record a tentative overall Honors mark which would stand in the event that the charges were to be found groundless. The student's overall Honors mark will be considered tentative until the charges can be resolved.

Appendix 3: The Marks-to-Points Table

HHH	4.3333
HHH-	4.167
HH+	4
HH	3.8333
HH-	3.667
H+	3.5
H	3.3333
H-	3.1667
P+	2.9
P	2.7
P-	2.5
MP+	2.3
MP	2.1
MP-	1.9
F	0

The Gray and Stretch Algorithms

The algorithms were developed by the Curriculum Committee based on several previous years of data, and were approved by the Swarthmore faculty.

Gray area rule

It is noteworthy that the margins in which an average is in a “gray area” are different depending upon the levels being compared. Some examiners may question this, but these margins are those set by the Swarthmore faculty.

The mid-point between HHH and HH is 4.083. Marks with an average equal to 4.083 are presented as HH by policy, and they are marked “gray” (discussable). Marks with averages of 4.083 plus or minus .05 (between 4.033 and 4.133 inclusive) are also marked “gray”. The mid-point between HH and H is 3.583. Marks with an average equal to 3.583 are presented as H by policy, and they are marked “gray” (discussable). Marks with averages of 3.583 plus or minus .04 (between 3.543 and 3.623 inclusive) are also marked “gray.”

The (faculty-approved) break point between H and P is 3.033. Marks with an average equal to 3.033 are presented as H by policy, and they are marked “gray” (discussable). Marks with averages of 3.033 plus or minus .05 (between 2.983 and 3.083 inclusive) are also marked “gray.”

Note: the faculty-approved break point between H and P is indeed 3.033, not the mid-point of 3.017.

Stretch rule

Either the standard deviation $> .5$ or the spread between highest and lowest marks ≥ 1 .

The “spread” criterion tends to be met before the standard deviation criterion, making the “spread” calculation the most relevant.

Appendix 4: Procedures for the All-Examiners' Meeting

The All-Examiners' Meeting takes place on Tuesday after the Honors luncheon as soon as the Registrar's Office has finished calculating the final Honors marks. The Registrar runs the meeting and the Head Examiner oversees any substantial decisions or problems that need to be resolved.

The purpose of the meeting is twofold: 1) to confirm, and, if necessary, correct the students' individual Honors marks. At this meeting *individual* Honors marks cannot be changed for any reason except for an input error by the examiner 2) to give examiners the opportunity to discuss any final Honors marks that fall into the "potentially discussable" range ("gray" or "stretch" cases only). See Appendix 2.

After the examiners have checked their individual marks against the sheet provided by the Registrar, the examiners are asked if they wish to discuss any of the potentially discussable cases. If one or more of a student's examiners wish to discuss the final mark, all four examiners will meet briefly to discuss the mark. If none of the examiners wish to discuss the case, the calculated final mark will stand.

In discussing each student's marks, Swarthmore asks examiners to use a consensus decision-making model. Examiners should not change individual marks or recalculate the average. They should talk over what the overall Honors level should be and tell the Associate Registrar what the consensus has determined. If the four examiners cannot reach a consensus, then the calculated mark will stand. These small conferences take place in the meeting room and should last no longer than 15 minutes.

In exceptional cases, if the four examiners trying to come to a consensus feel that they need additional information about the performance of a student, they may call into consultation the student's instructors and ask for information that they think will aid them in making their final decision. The Registrar will call in the Director of the Honors Program and the Provost. The Director of the Honors Program will convene the group of examiners and instructors and instruct them as follows:

Normally the examiners may ask very limited questions of the instructors; typically, the two questions asked follow this model: (1) Would you be surprised if this student did not receive Honors (or HH or HHH)? And (2) Would you be surprised if this student did receive Honors (or HH or HHH)? Faculty should not volunteer information about the student in question on their own: they are not there to advocate. Faculty should simply answer the questions asked by the examiners.

Missing Examiners

Examiners are required to attend the All-Examiners' Meeting, and we expect them to be there and participate. If late in the spring an examiner has such circumstances as to make it impossible to participate in the larger examiners' meeting, and the department cannot find another examiner, or if the written exam has already been taken, then the examiner, the department chair of the examiner's field, and the Director of the Honors Program should communicate about the situation and arrange for the examiner to be reachable by cell phone at the large meeting if he/she/they is needed to participate in a discussion of one of the potentially discussable cases. Someone in the departmental

group of the examiners present at the meeting should be given the absent examiner's cell phone number so that contact can be established during the meeting if needed. If the attempt to include the examiner by phone in the discussion should fail, the remaining examiners in the discussing group should simply proceed without the input of the absent examiner.

If it comes to the Registrar's attention that an examiner is not present for unknown or **unscheduled** reasons, the Registrar will ask the Director of the Honors Program to search for the missing examiner and to communicate with the department chair so that they can try to reach the examiner by phone. If communication with the missing examiner cannot be established in a reasonably short time, the meeting will move on without his or her participation.

Appendix 5: Written Exams and Internet Connectivity

Students are not allowed to take written Honors exams on their own laptops and devices. They take them on desktop computers that are disconnected from the internet and use software that prevents the loss of data by periodically saving the document. Students open a “white sheet” to type the exam and are unable to leave the “white sheet” without ending the session. Even if the desktop computer were connected to the internet, students would have to close the “white sheet” (and thereby end the writing of their exam) in order to access it.

However, it is possible that an examiner might want a student to have access to the internet for some reason, such as watching a video clip or to respond to material on the web. It is also the case that some faculty, departments, and programs permit students to bring copies of notes and readings to the written exams and these may be in digital form.

Thus each faculty, departments, and/or programs will determine the level of access to notes and the internet and will inform students in advance of these decisions regarding their written exams. For each exam, Honors students will be informed that they have one of the following three possibilities::

- No connectivity and no printed material. Students have no access to material of any kind in any format.
- No connectivity, but printed material permitted. Students can bring hard copies of notes, articles, books, and other materials to the written exam (and these materials can be limited - for example, to a single copy of *Hamlet*), but they will not have access to the internet or online notes, articles, books.
- Full connectivity and printed material permitted. Students can use their laptops/tablets (or one provided by ITS) to access online notes, articles, books, and other materials. They can also bring printed material. The desktop computer on which the student writes the exam, however, will not be connected to the internet. This prevents cutting and pasting from one laptop/tablet to the desktop computer. Please note that in this case students will be using TWO computers/devices during the written honors exams: one desktop computer with “white sheet” software, and one laptop or tablet.

If a department or program decides on the third option (full connectivity), they must inform students to bring their own laptops/tablets to the written exams. In the case that students do not have a personal laptop or tablet to use, the Registrar’s Office will work with ITS to obtain a loaner in advance of written Honors exams.

This third option is only to be used when absolutely necessary, and departments and programs are in no way encouraged to change their current policies. It is the case that connectivity provides an opportunity for students to use search engines to help answer questions. However, students do sign an academic integrity agreement (a policy that has been in place for several years). Moreover, students are aware that surfing the web detracts from the time used to write the exam.

Appendix 6: Frequently asked questions

What is the purpose of the Honors Program?

The program is unique in its focus on deep collaboration between students and faculty and in its written and oral examinations given by outside experts. Students think through ideas together in seminars and pursue a wide range of special projects. At the end of their senior year, Honors students take written and oral exams with external examiners who independently evaluate their work. The program reflects the faculty's belief that the ultimate test of excellence in education is evaluation by external examiners.

What are my obligations as an Examiner while I am at Swarthmore?

Administer oral exams; go to the dinner hosted by the department or program on Monday, May 17; attend the department or program caucus on Tuesday, May 18; attend the luncheon on Tuesday, May 18; and be present at the All-Examiners' Meeting after the luncheon. You cannot leave before the meeting adjourns.

Oral exams are based on what the examiner has been sent: some combination of the students' written exams, papers submitted to the examiner, thesis or other similar project, and syllabus (different preparations will involve different materials), in the proportion that the examiner sees fit.

What are my responsibilities as an examiner?

You are expected to write a three-hour exam (unless you are assessing an Honors Thesis or Special Project) that you assess before you come to Swarthmore and administer an oral exam. All examiners must meet with their students for oral exams. The written and oral exams help you determine the level of Honorific for the student you examine. The independence of your individual evaluation of each student you examine lies at the heart of the Honors Program.

Please note that you are not expected to give written feedback to students at any point in the Honors process or even assign letter grades to the written and oral exams.

How are Honors grades determined and what standards should examiners use?

Faculty should not discuss with examiners how Swarthmore interprets any form of Honors in relation to grades.

Examiners will determine a single Honors mark for each preparation (**taking** all elements of the preparation into consideration) on a scale from Highest Honors (4.333) to F (0), including pluses and minuses. The student's four Honors marks are then averaged to determine whether the student receives Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors, or no Honors.

The only way for a Swarthmore College student to receive an honorific on the transcript (Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors) is to take four Honors exams at the end of the senior year. You, the external examiners, determine these marks through your assessment of the student's ability, based on the written exam, papers submitted to you, thesis or other work, along with the oral exam. The program is committed to giving you considerable freedom to make an independent evaluation of a student's work. We do not want you to match the Swarthmore College faculty's assessment of the quality of a student's work: we want you to bring your own standards of evaluation and assessment to the process. Swarthmore College faculty will not discuss

individual students with you until after the final Honors marks are determined, and they will not discuss written exams with students once those exams have been submitted.

Although you will have the opportunity to discuss the performance of individual students with other examiners at a departmental caucus, your marks are ultimately not expected to conform to any standard other than your own.

If you are examining a thesis or special project, the overall mark the student receives from you will be assigned a grade equivalent and will appear on the student's transcript.

What is the purpose of the department caucus?

The departmental caucuses (only examiners attend) are a chance to exchange information about the performance of individual students in an effort to finalize the Honors marks for all of the students you have examined. The chair of each department and program will select one examiner to serve as caucus leader. The caucus leader should go through the list of students examined, and after introducing each student's name, give that student's examiners the chance to discuss the student's performance on each examination and exchange impressions in an effort to help each examiner determine their final mark. The examiners then each decide on their final mark for the student. Each examiner will then submit their grades to the Registrar's Office via Qualtrics.

What is the purpose of the All-Examiners' meeting?

The purpose of this meeting is to check with examiners that the correct marks have been submitted, and to give a student's examiners the chance to discuss any cases that are deemed "potentially discussable." Potentially discussable cases are those where a student's final mark falls numerically close to or at the midpoint between one primary Honors category and another (gray area cases), or where a student's four marks exhibit a wide variance in spread from highest to lowest or a large standard deviation (stretch cases).

When can examiners discuss a student's performance with Swarthmore faculty?

You cannot discuss any aspect of a student's performance until the All-Examiners' Meeting adjourns.

Are students able to request their individual preparation marks?

We do not share with students the individual marks for exams because the honorific that they earn is not always the straight average of their individual marks. If students' honorifics qualify for discussion due to the gray or stretch rules, examiners have the ability to change an honorific that might not correspond exactly to the average of the individual marks.

Can examiners discuss with the student his/her/their performance after the conclusion of the All-Examiners' Meeting?

While you are welcome to discuss a student's performance with that student, you are under no obligation to do so. Most examiners choose not to. In some instances, examiners have invited students to make contact in order to discuss theses, but students should not take the initiative. If this occurs, then discuss the matter with the chair of the program or department that invited you.

