

# Swarthmore College Honors Handbook

2019-2020

revised by Grace Ledbetter, Director of the Honors Program, August 2019

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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 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.

## Part 1: Guidelines for Honors Students

Grace Ledbetter, Director of the Honors Program, is available to answer any questions you have. You can reach her at 610-328-8372, [gledbet1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:gledbet1@swarthmore.edu), Trotter 112. In case of an emergency you can reach her at 610-955-6492.

### Information about Honors in Departments and Programs

Honors programs vary among departments and programs. You can find a detailed description of each Honors program under that department or program's listing in the *College Catalog*. Please note that, in addition to their requirements for the Honors major and minor, many departments also have a Senior Honors Study (SHS) requirement that involves producing work that becomes part of the portfolio sent to examiners for assessment. Consult the *College Catalog* for the SHS requirements of individual departments.

### Applying and Withdrawing

Students normally apply for an Honors program in the spring of their sophomore year. 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. 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 about these deadlines.**

**Students must finalize their Honors plans by September 27** of the senior year (for Philosophy the deadline is the end of the add/drop period in September).

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 the 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 your individual departments.**

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 departmental policies. Be sure to consult with your department.

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.*

### Majors and Minors

All Honors students must complete 4 preparations. The most common model for an Honors program is:

**An Honors major (3 preparations) + Honors minor (1 preparation).**

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.

**In the case of interdisciplinary Honors minors:**

At least 2 units of the minor must be outside the student's Honors major.

When a student takes a cross-listed course or seminar for the Honors minor, that course or seminar may not be cross-listed in the student's major department. When departments or programs believe that special circumstances warrant an exception to this policy, they may apply to the Curriculum Committee for an exception.

In situations where work in the major is thought to be integral to the interdisciplinary minor, the student may, with the approval of the minor program, design a preparation of three units, where two units are outside the major and one unit is inside the major.

When the preparation for the minor is an interdisciplinary thesis, at least half the work of the thesis must be in a subject outside the student's major.

If a student's preparation for an interdisciplinary minor is in a department other than the interdisciplinary program, the student must meet both the requirements for the preparation in the other department and the requirements for the interdisciplinary program's minor.

### **Special Honors Majors**

There are two types of Special Honors Majors; neither includes a minor:

1. **Regularized Honors Special Majors** are designed by departments and programs. If a department or program offers a regularized special major, you can find the requirements under that department's entry in the *College Catalog*. Regularized special Majors consist of:

**4 related two-credit preparations from at least two departments or programs.**

In this case, a student may have an additional course major, or up to two course minors.

Special Honors Majors must be approved by all participating departments.

2. **Individualized Special 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 majors must either 1) write an interdisciplinary 2-credit thesis, or 2) have a panel oral examination (see "Oral exams" pp. 8-9).

A student with an individualized special 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 vary, 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 + a related single-credit thesis

A variety of courses or seminars that serve as preparation for the single-credit thesis

Research combined with transcribed credit

A project in the creative or performing arts

A community based learning project

### **Theses, Special Projects, and Senior Honors Study**

#### **Theses.**

A thesis may be written as an Honors preparation 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.

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.

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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 or to the Director of the Honors Program.

**Senior Honors Study (SHS).** Many departments require SHS work that is assessed by the examiner. Please consult the *College Catalog* for the requirements of individual departments. The word limits for SHS 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 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.

Because the bulk of SHS work is likely to be done in the spring semester of the senior year, students should try to limit their spring course load to **4 or 4.5 credits, including any SHS credits**, in order to leave time to study for Honors exams.

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

Regularized and Individualized special majors may have SHS requirements that differ from the regular department major and minor.

Students are allowed to discuss each other's SHS activities and portfolio projects. Students are allowed to get feedback and guidance from faculty **up until the point that the examiner submits the examination questions or topics**. The amount of faculty supervision of SHS work varies widely from department to department.

## 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 of all relevant departments so that they can **try** to avoid a conflict in scheduling.

### Due Dates

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

### 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.

Examiners are chosen by Swarthmore faculty members.

Examiners do not provide written feedback on written or oral exams.

The Registrar's Office schedules both the written and the oral exams. Contact Lesa Shieber, Associate Registrar, if you have any questions.

Written Exams in 2020 will take place from **May 7 to May 14**.

The written exam schedule will be made available to you by **March 1**.

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.

Oral exams in 2020 will take place on **Sunday May 17, Monday May 18, and Tuesday morning May 19**.

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

The scheduling of written and oral exams must take many factors into consideration: the large number of exams, the rooms and IT support available, the convenience of the students, and the convenience of the examiners. Every effort is made to spread each student's exams out to the extent that is possible.

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

Students may not consult independently with examiners at any time, unless explicitly invited to do so by the examiner.

It is up to the professor to decide whether to give students the names of their examiners prior to the exam period.

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

#### **Written exams.**

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

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 April 30.**

The Registrar's Office will email students their completed written exams within 24-36 hours after the exam.

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

For the examination procedures and requirements for regularized special majors, **check your department's requirements in the *College Catalog*.**

If you are also taking course exams during the Honors written exam period, it may be possible to take those course exams early. **Consult with the Director of the Honors Program.**

#### **Oral exams.**

Students often find the oral examinations 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 examinations, 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 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 examination: a copy of the written exam questions and the completed exam, the thesis, papers or other material submitted to the examiner.

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

**Oral exams for regular preparations** last 30-45 minutes.

**Thesis and Special Project oral exams** last 45-60 minutes.

**Panel oral exams for individualized special majors** last 90-120 minutes.

**Individualized Honors special majors** must choose, in consultation with their advisors and the Director of the Honors Program, either to be 1) examined in their oral exams by a panel of all four examiners, or 2) to have individual oral exams and a thesis oral exam given by at least two examiners who represent different departments in the student's program. These may or may not be the student's preparation examiners.

### **Grading and Honors Marks**

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."

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.

You will receive your Honors level by email in the afternoon of the last day of oral exams (**Tuesday, May 19**).

Final Honors levels are printed in the *College Catalog*.

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.**

### **Disabilities**

If students have documented disabilities, they are entitled to their reasonable accommodations for Honors examinations. Students should send requests for accommodations to Jenna Rose, Assistant Director of Disability Services by **February 1**.

### **Illness During the Honors Exam Period**

If you experience a health concern that may impact your ability to complete 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 Registrar Martin Warner at 610-328-8299, or Public Safety, 610-328-8333, provide your phone number and ask that they contact Registrar Warner. You do not need to share the details of your health concern with Registrar Warner. His 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 about this.** Students who wish to pursue both study abroad and an Honors program should consult as early as possible both 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 their 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 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 examinations the most exhilarating and empowering 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 in 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, which provide considerable flexibility in Honors programs (see *Honors Handbook* p. 5). It is also important to inform Honors students and examiners if your department's deadlines or guidelines for written or oral exams differ from those in this handbook.

Grace Ledbetter, Director of the Honors Program, is also available to advise students at any stage of their studies and to answer questions. x8372, gledbet1. Lesa Shieber, Associate Registrar, is the administrator of the Honor Program. x8297, lshiebe1.

### **Changes to your Department'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 or program. **Departments are encouraged to take into consideration a student's potential as well as the student's past performance.** Students may apply in the sophomore, junior, or sometimes as late as the first semester of the senior year.

Students may withdraw from Honors up until December 1 of the senior year. Their final Honors programs are due September 27 of the senior year, but it is sometimes still possible for them to make changes to their Honors program through the second week of the spring semester of their 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 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 two seminars or a seminar plus a course that are part of his or her Honors program. In this case, students are asked to alert the chairs or coordinators involved in the possible conflict so that departments can **try** to avoid a conflict in scheduling.

At the end of the fall semester during finals week, instructors 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.

The College requires that all students taking the Honors exam (including course students) take the exam under the guidance of an Honors proctor.

### **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.

If faculty choose to use the Honors exam as the final exam for spring term courses or seminars, they should be mindful that only Honors students will have completed Senior Honors Study. Furthermore, 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.

### **Inviting and Securing Examiners**

In October, you will receive the AA/Faculty/Chair Honors Packet and the Examiner Packets.

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 Packets** 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 (note that this deadline is earlier than in previous years)**. Because it can sometimes take some time to find examiners, departments and programs are advised to begin the process early in the spring semester.

Students pursuing an **Individualized Special Major** (not one designed by a department or program) 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 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. In the fall semester, the Director of the Honors Program will send the plan for each student’s exams to departments.

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 form. 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.

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 circumstance, an examiner may be invited to examine for three consecutive years. **Consult the Director of the Honors Program.** 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, and in any case 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).

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 (except in the case of a student with an interdisciplinary minor whose preparation is from a department outside of the interdisciplinary program).

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

**Examiners should be told that they may need to be on campus for the Sunday of the Honors period.** We make every effort to accommodate individual examiner's personal schedules. However, 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 or she cannot attend the All Examiners Meeting on Tuesday afternoon, faculty should try to find another examiner. Attendance at the All Examiners Meeting is an essential part of the Honors process.

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. Many faculty members do. Departments 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:

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. For setting the first written examination or examining one thesis or special project        | \$650.00 |
| 2. For each additional written exam or thesis  | \$300.00 |
| 3. For each student examined in an individual oral (30-45 minutes)                             | \$100.00 |
| 4. For each student examined in a panel oral (90-120 minutes) or for a thesis (45-60 minutes). | \$150.00 |

The Head Examiner, who is chosen by the Director of the Honors Program and oversees the All Examiners Meeting on Tuesday, will be paid \$500.00 above the fee for his or her individual exams.

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

The examiners' transportation costs (travel, food, and lodging) will be reimbursed. Examiners will receive forms for this reimbursement and should include receipts with the forms.

Departments and programs should try to secure the best possible examiners, bearing in mind that finding examiners whose travel expenses are less costly will help keep the overall costs of the program more manageable.

### 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 setting the written exam

Examples of previous honors exams

“Instructions for Honors Examiners,” (=Part 3 of the *Honors Handbook*), 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, that is, 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 or she will be receiving.
- 2) An explanation of the nature of any SHS materials.
- 3) Guidelines for the oral exams in your department, **if differ they from those in the *Handbook*** (examiners discuss the relevant materials **in the proportion in which they see fit**; regular orals last **30-45 minutes**, thesis or special project orals **45-60 minutes**, panel orals **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) Information about travel and accommodation. Examiners should not make their final travel plans until after the oral exam schedule is set (mid-April), which gives them a month in advance.
- 6) Any other information that is unique to your department’s Honors program.

Department and programs are responsible for sending to examiners **materials relevant to the preparations that they are examining.** Before setting 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 project or paper, 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 examinations are 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 Administrative Assistants on **April 30** at the latest. **If your department has an earlier deadline, please inform students at the beginning of the senior year.**

The word limits for SHS 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).**

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 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 by **April 10 (some departments have earlier deadlines)**. Faculty should check a **\*printed \*copy of the submitted exam to make sure of two things: one, that it is fair and appropriate, and two, that it conforms to the electronic version in special fonts, figures, colors, etc.** Some negotiation with the examiner is occasionally necessary.

AAs should submit a printed **and** an electronic copy of the exams to Lesa Shieber in the Registrar's Office by **April 15**. Electronic copies are archived for use by future students.

Written and oral exams are scheduled by Associate Registrar, Lesa Shieber.

The oral exam schedule will be sent to Administrative Assistants and examiners by **mid-April**. Oral exams are based on what the examiner has been sent: some combination of the students' written examinations, 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 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**.

Faculty are asked to remind examiners to end oral exams at the designated time and **to have someone present in the department during the oral exams to make sure exams do not go over time**. Because oral exams are often scheduled closely, it is important that students have sufficient time in between orals and that they not be in danger of arriving late for an oral exam.

### **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 instruction 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 examination paper until final Honors marks are determined.

Faculty should not discuss with examiners how Swarthmore interprets any form of Honors in relation to grades of A, B, or C. The independence of each examiner's standards for evaluation is a fundamental principle of the Honors Program.

### **Choosing a Caucus Leader**

The chair of each department or program should choose one of the examiners to lead the departmental or interdisciplinary caucus – preferably, but not necessarily, an examiner who has served here in the past. The departmental caucuses 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 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, and the caucus leader records those marks on the ballot. After this process is complete for each student, the caucus leader gives the completed ballot to the chair, who takes it to the Registrar's office. All examiners also receive these instructions in the "Instructions for Honors Examiners" (=Part 3 of the *Honors Handbook*).

### **Monday Dinner and Tuesday Luncheon**

Faculty should remind examiners that they are expected to attend the departmental 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.

**We would be grateful if departments would try to avoid extravagant spending for the dinner.**

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

### **Honors Marks**

Students are notified of their Honors results by email after the All Examiners Meeting. 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 examination papers to determine whether the work satisfies the requirements for a course major and minor.

### **All Examiners Meeting**

Faculty who have taught or advised Honors preparations for seniors taking Honors exams must either be present outside the All Examiners Meeting on Tuesday afternoon, or must 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 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 in to 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 evaluation by external examiners. This document contains all of the essential information that you need. The department 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 get in touch with Grace Ledbetter, Director of the Honors Program, Professor of Classics and Philosophy, Chair of Classics. 610-328-8372, [gledbet1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:gledbet1@swarthmore.edu).

Approximately one quarter of the undergraduates at Swarthmore pursue an Honors program, which requires them to take four Honors exams at the end of their senior year based on work that has been completed during the junior and senior years (and occasionally the sophomore year). Every student's Honors program consists of four Honors "preparations," from at least two disciplines, usually in the form of a major (three preparations) and a minor (one preparation). Special majors do not have a minor and take four preparations drawn from at least two disciplines. Every Honors preparation consists of two Swarthmore credits, the equivalent of eight semester hours. **All Honors students take four oral exams and most take four written exams as well.** Honors preparations that are theses or special projects are not given written exams.

The only way for a Swarthmore student to receive an honorific on their degree (Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors) is to sit for four Honors exams at the end of their senior year. You, the external examiners, determine these marks through your assessment of the examinations you give. The program is committed to giving you considerable freedom to make an independent evaluation of a student's work. **Your job is not to match the Swarthmore faculty's assessment of the quality of a student's work, but to bring to bear your own standards of evaluation.** Swarthmore 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**

Your responsibilities as an examiner are the following:

1) **Set Written Exams.** If you have been asked to set a written exam or exams, you will be sent the relevant syllabus and examples of previous honors exams. Please base your exam only on the materials you are sent, which you will receive by March 15. **You are not required to follow the format of previous exams, but they may help to provide guidelines.** Your exams are due in pdf form to the departmental AA and the relevant faculty member by **April 10** (departments with earlier deadlines will inform you of those). Faculty will check that the exams are fair and appropriate and may ask you to make minor revisions. If you are examining a thesis or special project you will not be asked to set a written exam for these preparations. **Philosophy and Linguistics examiners: you will receive different instructions from the department.**

2) **Receive and Evaluate Completed Exams, Papers, Theses.** You will be notified by the Associate Registrar of the particular date(s) that your written exam(s) will be administered (all written exams will be administered between **May 7 – 14**). Shortly after the exam is completed, **you will be sent a link to the completed exam from the Associate Registrar.**

Any theses, special projects, or papers that are 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 will be specified in the department’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** (written exam, oral exam, papers, etc.), you should tentatively evaluate the material you receive on the following scale. Although you will have a chance to discuss the performance of individual students with other examiners at the departmental caucuses, **your marks are ultimately not expected to conform to any standard other than your own.** The independence of your individual evaluations lies at the heart of the Honors Program.

**(note that you are not expected to give written feedback to students at any point in the Honors process):**

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**

**P = Pass**

**HH = High Honors**

**MP = Marginal Pass**

**H = Honors**

**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

Student 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 the case 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. When you are on campus you will be given guidelines for letter grade equivalents.

3) **Travel to campus for Honors period (May 17-19).** 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 17. All examiners must stay through the all-examiners meeting on Tuesday, May 19, which usually ends by 3:30 pm. Your commitments while on campus are:

**a) Administer oral exams according to the schedule you are given. 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 exams.

Orals are based on what the examiner has been sent: some combination of the students' written examinations, 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.

**b) Attend the department dinner on Monday evening.** Every department 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 time that the All Examiners Meeting is finished).

**c) Attend the departmental caucus on Tuesday morning.** 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. **One of the examiners in each department will be assigned as the 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 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, and the caucus leader

records those marks on the ballot. After this process is completed for each student, the caucus leader gives the completed ballot to the chair, who takes it to the Registrar's office.

**d) Attend the Honors luncheon on Tuesday.** While faculty and examiners attend this luncheon, the Registrar's Office calculates the Honors average mark for each student.

**e) Attend the All Examiners Meeting after the lunch on Tuesday. This meeting is usually finished by 3:30.** 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) Optional: some departments hold receptions after the meeting.**

Throughout the Honors period faculty members will host your visit and be available to answer any questions.

### **Payment**

The Administrative Assistant of the department for which you are examining will either book travel and accommodations for you, or will arrange for you to be reimbursed for these expenses. You will be paid an honorarium according to the following schedule:

### **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:

1. For setting the first written examination or examining one thesis of special project	\$650.00
2. For each additional written exam or thesis	\$300.00
3. For each student examined in an individual oral (30-45 minutes)	\$100.00
4. For each student examined in a panel oral (90-120 minutes) or for a thesis (45-60 minutes).	\$150.00

The Head Examiner, who is chosen by the Director of the Honors Program and oversees the All Examiners Meeting on Tuesday, will be paid \$500.00 above the fee for his or her individual exams.

**We look forward to welcoming you to Swarthmore in May.**

**Grace Ledbetter, Director of the Honors Program**

## 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. Because examiners have found portfolio material a valuable addition to written and oral exams, the Curriculum Committee urges departments to include portfolio work (SHS or not) in students' Honors preparations.

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.

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

Regularized and individualized special majors may have SHS requirements that differ from the regular department major and minor.

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

Students are allowed to discuss each other's SHS activities and portfolio projects. Students are allowed to get feedback and guidance from faculty **up until the point the examiner submits the examination questions or topics**. 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 world 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: Procedures for the 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 two-fold: 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 scribal error on the part of the caucus leader or data entry error on the part of the Registrar's Office.** 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 below, pp. 27-8 for how these are determined.)

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)? (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 Examiner 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 for her or him 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 or she 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 for **unknown** or **unscheduled** reasons an examiner is missing from the large meeting, the following process will be put in place: The Registrar will not take measures to confirm the attendance of any missing examiner at any stage of the meeting. However, if at some point it comes to the Registrar's attention that an examiner is not present or not participating, the Registrar will ask the Director of the Honors Program to search for the missing examiner and communicate with the department chair so that they can try to reach the examiner by phone, if possible, always with the proviso that if communication with the missing examiner cannot be established in a reasonably short time, the meeting will move on without his or her participation.

### **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 examinations, examiners will be instructed to proceed with the examinations 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.

### **Confidentiality of Process**

Once examiners have left the examiners' room, they are free to discuss individual cases with faculty. Examiners should not discuss cases with students.

### **The Marks to Points Table**

HHH	4.33333333
HHH-	4.16666667
HH+	4

HH	3.83333333
HH-	3.66666667
H+	3.5
H	3.33333333
H-	3.16666667
P+	2.9
P	2.7
P-	2.5
MP+	2.3
MP	2.1
MP-	1.9
F	0

#### For the Head Examiner

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  $\geq 1$ .

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

### Appendix 3: Statement of Understanding for Students Too Ill to Take an Honor Exam

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student phone/cell number: \_\_\_\_\_

For students too ill to take an Honors exam on time, the following rules exist to protect the integrity of the honors process:

- Send Registrar Warner confirmation of your illness by Worth Health Center or other health care provider.
- Do not communicate with other students except an appointed RA, Martin Warner, or his designate.
- Do not walk around campus or go to the dining hall or library until after you take any missed exams.
- Do not study the material for any exam you have missed due to illness (you may study for exams which have not yet occurred).
- Do not use the internet, email, phone, texting, or social media (simple phone use with parents, RA, Martin Warner, or deans is okay).

Re-enter the Honors exam process as soon as you are able.

If you live in College housing, Isaiah Thomas or Rachel Head of OSE will identify an RA who will check in on you regularly to see if you are well enough to re-enter the exam process. Working with OSE, the RA will deliver food to you from Sharples. OSE will tell the RA that conversations should only include checking on your well being (not about studies).

If a situation arises where you might need medically documented accommodations, contact Martin Warner, who will refer the matter to Jenna Rose in the Student Disability Office.

As soon as you are well enough to resume taking exams you should contact Martin Warner. Martin will coordinate how to proceed. To contact Martin, call 610-328-8299 or, if you have trouble contacting Martin, call Public Safety at 610-328-8333, provide your phone number, and ask that Public Safety contact Martin.

**All regulations regarding academic honesty and those regulations particular to Honors will be in effect.** Any student who does not comply with these rules is at risk for not getting Honors.

I have read and understand this statement of understanding. **Student signature and date:**