

Swarthmore College Honors Handbook

2020-21

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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, the Director of the Honors Program is available to answer any questions you have. You can reach her at 610.328.8372, gledbet1@swarthmore.edu, Trotter 112. In case of an emergency you can reach her at 610.955.6492.

Both written and oral honors exams will be conducted remotely for the 2020-21 academic year.

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 (see *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 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).

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*. 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 preparations. The most common model for an Honors program is:

An Honors major (3 preparations) + and 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 may 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.

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:

3 or 4 (depending on the department) related two-credit preparations from at least two departments or programs.

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 thesis, or 2) have a panel oral examination (see “Panel Oral Exams” p. 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 **May 7** 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 Grace Ledbetter, if you have any questions.

Written Exams in 2021 will take place from **May 13 to May 20**.

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 2021 will take place on **Sunday May 23, Monday May 24, and Tuesday May 25**.

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 Grace Ledbetter 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 others 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 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.

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 they will fill in the ballot.

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 by **Wednesday May 26**.

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 Monica Vance, 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 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. His role 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

Both written and oral honors exams will be conducted remotely for the 2020-21 academic year. There will be no departmental caucuses. There will only be caucuses for Individualized Special Majors.

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 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 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.

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.

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**. 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 exam 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.

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 students. 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

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.

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
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, 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*** in timing or content (regular preparations **30-45 minutes**, thesis orals **45-60 minutes**, panel oral exams for individualized special 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 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 **May 7** 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 an electronic copy of the exams to registrar@swarthmore.edu by **April 15**. 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 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**.

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 they will fill in the ballot.

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.

Honors Marks and Grades

Students will be notified of their Honors results by email on Wednesday, May 26. 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.

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

HHH+, HHH, or HHH	automatic A+
HH+, HH, or HH-	automatic A
H+, H, or H-	examiner chooses between B+ and A-

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.

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. **Examiners usually travel to campus to administer oral exams, but this year all oral exams will take place remotely via Zoom and will be scheduled by the Registrar's Office.** 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.

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 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.

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 13-20**). Shortly after the exam is completed, **you will be sent a link to the completed exam from the Senior Associate Registrar.**

Any theses, special projects, or papers that are part of a student's Honors portfolio will be sent to you by **May 8**. 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.

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

HHH+, HHH, or HHH	automatic A+
HH+, HH, or HH-	automatic A
H+, H, or H-	examiner chooses between B+ and A-

3) **Administer oral exams via Zoom 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 exams. The scheduling of oral exams is complicated because each student in the program takes four oral exams. Please be available to administer orals during May 23, 24, and 25.

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.

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 they will fill in the ballot.

4) Because exams are being conducted remotely this year there will be no departmental caucuses (although there will be caucuses for Individualized Special Majors). **Departments will host via Zoom an informal meeting with their examiners shortly before the oral exam period begins. The Director of the Honors Program, Grace Ledbetter, will host via Zoom an information session with Q & A for all examiners and especially for new examiners. This meeting will take place in mid to late March.**

Payment

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.

Thank you so much for serving as an external examiner at Swarthmore.

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 ICommittee 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.

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.

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: Plagiarism Protocol and Marks to Points Table

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.

The Marks to Points Table

	4.3333333
HHH	3
HHH	4.1666666
-	7
HH+	4
	3.8333333
HH	3
	3.6666666
HH-	7
H+	3.5
	3.3333333
H	3
	3.1666666
H-	7
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.

