

Honors Thesis Evaluation Guidelines

Honors College, Washington State University
Spring 2016

A thesis committee consisting of the thesis advisor and one WSU faculty thesis evaluator will evaluate the quality of the thesis project, determining the final evaluation of the thesis as *Pass with Distinction*, *Excellent*, *Pass*, *Pass with Revisions*, or *Fail*. The Honors faculty host for the presentation will guide the evaluation process.

Evaluation considers the student's performance in the following five areas:

1. initiative and self-direction
 2. quality and originality of the topic
 3. quality and originality of the research
 4. quality and style of the writing
 5. quality of the oral defense
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Pass with Distinction

Pass with Distinction is granted only to those students whose performance is superior in all of the above areas and whose final thesis product essentially is flawless.

Factors to consider for a *Pass with Distinction* evaluation include:

- The student showed extraordinary initiative and originality during the project
 - The student's performance on the oral exam was outstanding
 - The thesis is convincingly written in language representative of its academic context
 - The thesis is publishable or is to be presented at a regional, national, or international conference
 - The thesis is comparable to competent graduate work at the MA or MS level
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Excellent

Excellent should be awarded to students whose thesis work is outstanding in most of the above five areas or solid in all of the areas.

Pass

A *Pass* should be awarded to a thesis that is deemed satisfactory in all of the above areas. A thesis earning a *Pass* may be characterized by:

- an acceptable but weak or inconsistent oral presentation
- acceptable written thesis with some correctable problems in argumentation and discussion

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- acceptable research but relatively poorly written presentation of materials
 - content and presentation that are adequate for graduation but that lack depth or originality
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Pass with revisions

A *Pass with Revisions* will be awarded if the evaluating team decides that there is a need for revisions in order for the student to obtain a *Pass*. The evaluators will identify areas for revisions and communicate those to the student following the presentation. A deadline will be set for the student to make the revisions to be approved by the thesis advisor. The revised thesis will not be presented.

Fail

Fail characterizes work that is unacceptable in most or all of the five areas. A thesis receiving a *Fail* may furthermore be characterized by:

- the student failed to communicate with the thesis advisor
- the student failed to show up for scheduled meetings
- the student was not receptive to constructive criticism
- little or no evidence that the thesis was proofread
- presentation is superficial and appear unrehearsed
- use of media and/or resources is weak or non-existent

Few WSU Honors College theses receive a *Fail* since unsatisfactory thesis work typically is identified ahead of the defense by the Honors College in support of the student and thesis advisor.

Scoring the thesis

The thesis advisor and evaluator will receive the completed thesis with rubrics and thesis guidelines a week prior to the scheduled defense.

The Honors thesis will be scored by the evaluator using two rubrics, one for the written thesis, and one for the oral presentation. The evaluator will award 1-4 points responding to four levels of competence of the written and oral performances. The number-scoring should be considered a guide for the evaluator and need not reflect the final outcome of the evaluation.

The thesis presentation and the evaluation will be hosted by an Honors faculty member who will guide the evaluation process. In case of unresolvable disagreement between advisor and evaluator, the case will be reviewed and decided by the Honors College.