

Clark Honors College Thesis Evaluation Criteria

After a thesis defense, Clark Honors College thesis committee members evaluate the quality of the overall thesis project. The evaluations are *Pass with Distinction*, *Pass with Honors*, *Pass*, and *Fail*. The committee may decide to withhold a *Pass with Honors* or a *Pass* until necessary revisions are made; a time limit should be set for completion of the revisions.

The evaluation must consider the student's performance in the following areas:

- initiative and self-direction
- quality and originality of the topic
- quality and originality of the research
- quality and style of the writing
- quality of the oral defense

Pass with Distinction is granted only to those candidates whose performance is superior in all of the above areas and if the draft presented at the defense requires only minimal revision. Additional guidelines that might be helpful are:

- The student's performance on the oral exam is superior.
- The student showed extraordinary initiative and originality during the project.
- The thesis is clearly in the top 10 percent of Clark Honors College theses or departmental honors theses.
- The thesis is publishable, in part or whole (depending on the traditions of the disciplinary press).
- The thesis is comparable to competent graduate work at the MA or MS level.

Pass with Honors is the usual decision; it should be awarded to students whose thesis work is good in all of the above five areas. A thesis that is outstanding in a few of the categories, but not in most or all, should be awarded *Pass with Honors* rather than *Pass with Distinction*. Between the distinguished top 10 percent and the merely acceptable, *Pass with Honors* is the evaluation earned by the majority of Clark Honors College students.

Pass is awarded to those theses that are adequate, but not up to the standards of *Pass with Honors*. This includes theses that may be good in a few of the five areas but only adequate in the others. Theses earning *Pass* may be characterized by:

- a weak oral presentation
- acceptable research but poor written presentation of materials
- acceptable presentation of thesis but significant (and correctable) problems in argumentation or research
- content and presentation that are adequate for graduation but that lack depth or originality
- a need for significant revision, which must be approved by the thesis director.

Fail is for work that is unacceptable in most or all of the five areas. Very few Clark Honors College theses are failed, not only because of the general high quality of the work turned in by Clark Honors College students, but also because thesis committee members should discourage students from standing for oral examination if they are not fully prepared and the committee members have not read and approved of the thesis, at least conditionally.

Thesis Evaluation Checklist (Optional):

Initiative and Self-direction

- Superior
 Good
 Weak

Topic Quality and Originality

- Superior
 Good
 Weak

Research quality and Originality

- Superior
 Good
 Weak

Writing Style and Quality

- Superior
 Good
 Weak

Quality of Oral Defense

- Superior
 Good
 Weak

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