



## THESIS DEFENSE GENERAL INFORMATION

The Honors thesis is examined in the manner that one would examine the work of a master's degree candidate but with differing expectations. Since it is an undergraduate thesis, the level of expected academic achievement is above that of an excellent term paper but below that of a master's thesis. As prelude or postlude to the actual thesis defense, we encourage the Honors Coordinator (or other Honors representative appointed by the college) to take 5-10 minutes to briefly review the student's Honors experience.

### SAMPLE DEFENSE AGENDA

While most defenses last between 60-75 minutes, participants are encouraged to schedule 90 minutes so that the procedure will not be rushed. Guests are allowed and even encouraged. The student's thesis faculty advisor chairs and conducts the defense and is free to make any modifications he or she deems necessary to the agenda below:

1. **INTRODUCTION** of student, faculty, and others attending the defense
2. **PRAYER** (if there are no objections)
3. **OPENING PRESENTATION** by the student (approximately 20 minutes)
  - A. The student may use this time to talk about their interest in the project and give an overview of their research and findings. Some students use PowerPoint presentations, etc., but a visual presentation is not required and should not overshadow the actual questioning and discussion that follow.
4. **QUESTIONING** by the thesis faculty advisor, reader, and Honors Coordinator (or other Honors representative)
  - A. As the person who has worked with the candidate most closely, the faculty advisor is in a position to ask the most detailed questions regarding the thesis and the candidate's work.
  - B. Additional questions could include the following:
    - How did you choose your thesis topic?
    - What was your methodology for approaching your topic?
    - How is your topic significant to your discipline and what are its connections to larger areas of inquiry and scholarship?
    - Are your conclusions consistent with previous work in your discipline?
    - What contribution to scholarship does your thesis make?
    - What further work does your study suggest?

- What was the most difficult part of doing your Honors thesis?
- How do you compare your Honors thesis experience to the other research and writing you have done?

5. **DISMISSAL** of candidate and other guests while committee deliberates and signs forms

- A. Options are *pass* (minor revisions or corrections permitted); *pass with qualifications* (thesis accepted subject to agreed-upon revisions); or *recess* (major work needed, requires that the defense reconvenes).
- B. The chair (thesis faculty advisor) checks the box on the submission form indicating the committee's decision, noting revisions to be made and citing comments made by the committee regarding outstanding or noteworthy aspects of the thesis, and indicated a date when qualification should be completed by.
- C. While it is always an option to recess the defense, it is hoped that the defense would be a positive culmination of the student's undergraduate experience. If in reading the final draft you have questions about whether the thesis is ready to be defended, the committee member should consult with the thesis faculty advisor before the defense is scheduled to be held. In cases where a recess is a possibility, faculty advisor should consider postponing the thesis defense.

6. **DECISION** is made by the committee; candidate is invited back and informed of committee's decision

7. **SUMMARY** presented of the committee's written comments (chair as spokesperson); helps student understand any revisions that need to be made and a date that it needs to be completed by

8. **REVIEW** of Honors and/or undergraduate experience (approximately 5 minutes) facilitated by the Honors Coordinator

- A. The discussion may include the Honors portfolio/Great Works responses (if submitted), Great Questions essay, and/or any other Honors experiences.

9. **RETURN MATERIALS** (final thesis draft and portfolio, if submitted) to the student

## **POST-DEFENSE PROCEDURES**

All committee members sign the thesis submission form, then the defense chair delivers or mails the thesis submission form to the Honors Program office, 102 MSRB, or email to [honors@byu.edu](mailto:honors@byu.edu).