

Honors Portfolio Defense Requirements

The defense is your opportunity to show and explain how you have met the Honors competencies. You will present your portfolio to a committee of three people (described below) and anyone else that you wish to invite. You will have 20 minutes to present your evidence of meeting the three competencies, and then the committee will have 30 to 40 minutes to ask you questions. After the questions are finished, then the committee will immediately meet privately to determine whether you have passed, and if there are any revisions or further experiences required. The committee will then inform you of the outcome and explain any revisions that they require.

Committee

- The Honors Director
- Your advisor/research mentor (or any MSU faculty member that you select)
- One faculty or staff member of the Honors Council (selected by the Honors Director)

Preparing for the Defense

As you work on your reflective essays in the Honors 475 Portfolio course, you should also be revising your portfolio to emphasize the experiences that form the basis of your essays. These essays will be the basis for your presentation, because they will help you to identify your most important experiences, think about how you have grown over time, and reflect on how you have met each competency. Use these essays to edit your portfolio, to include only the most relevant information that demonstrates how you have met each competency. Scheduling the defense is contingent upon successfully completing these three essays—you cannot proceed to the defense if the essays are not complete.

As you edit your portfolio, also think about what you will say about each competency during your presentation. In your defense, you will make the case that you have successfully met the competencies, and you will show us the relevant evidence for each.

Practicing your presentation will be essential, both to be sure that you are meeting the 20 minute time limit, and to get a sense of how you will progress. You can set up a separate page in your portfolio for your defense, where you summarize your accomplishments, or you can click through individual pages for each competency—whatever makes sense to you. However you decide to present your portfolio, your presentation should be polished, organized, and professional. Approach this as if you were presenting a paper at a professional conference. We encourage you to practice your defense with each other to get feedback.

You may also want to sit down with the faculty member that you've selected for the committee to show them your portfolio and talk about what you have completed. They may be less familiar with the Honors Program, so it would be a good idea for you to explain the competencies and your accomplishments to them before the defense. They may even give you an idea of the types of questions they might ask you, so you can prepare for them. Also, see the list of questions included at the end of this handout for more ideas of what to prepare for.

Schedule / Important Dates

- September 13: turn in a completed Defense Scheduling form to the Honors office (the form is available on D2L)
- Work with the Honors director to schedule your defense somewhere in weeks 8 or 9 of the semester (between 14-25 October)
- Print the Defense Form from the Honors website and bring this to your defense

During the Defense

You will begin the defense with your 20 minute presentation. In your presentation, you will show us your portfolio, and:

- Introduce yourself, your major, and your future goals.
- Explain how you have met the 3 competencies, highlighting the relevant experiences. If there are any experiences that you haven't completed yet, but you are planning on completing, make sure to explain these in your presentation.
 - As you talk about your experiences, you may also want to highlight how you have grown and changed over time. Consider showing some examples of early experiences compared to later experiences, and talk about how these show your progress.
- Explain how your experiences connect to each other—what connections have you found between the different competencies?

After you complete your presentation, the committee will ask you questions for 30-40 minutes. See the list of possible questions at the end of this handout for ideas of what to prepare for. Your responses will help the committee to determine if you have met the competencies.

Outcomes

There are three potential outcomes of your defense. After your presentation, the committee will determine whether you pass, pass with required revisions, or do not pass. Their decision will be noted on your defense form and will be filed in the Honors office.

- Pass: The committee has determined that you have successfully met the three competencies of the Honors Program. After having earned the necessary credits with an overall GPA above 3.3, you will graduate with Honors from Minnesota State Mankato.
- Pass with Required Revisions: The committee has determined that you have not successfully met one or more of the three competencies; however, you should be able to meet that competency within one of your planned experiences for the year. With this outcome, you will have to provide evidence to the Honors Director that you have completed the experience relevant to that competency and submit a revised portfolio, but, you do not have to defend your portfolio again.
- Not Pass: The committee has determined that your defense has not shown that you have met all three competencies. With this outcome, you will have to complete another defense of your portfolio, and pass that defense, to graduate with honors. You can re-defend during the last two weeks of the current semester, or in the next semester.

Potential Defense Questions

Leadership:

- What are some leadership mistakes you have made, and how have you learned from them?
- What are your greatest strengths as a leader? How have you developed these strengths over time?
- How have your experiences in teams and groups contributed to your understanding of yourself as a leader? How do you approach teamwork?
- How do you plan to approach future leadership opportunities? What types of leadership do you plan to seek out?
- How will you develop your leadership skills in the future? What skills will you focus on developing?

Research:

- What research method did you use in your project? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this method or approach?
- How did you take ethical concerns into account during your research project? What issues related to ethics arose?
- How has your knowledge of research and your view of yourself as a researcher changed based on your different experiences?
- How did your research project extend knowledge in your discipline?
- What did you learn through your experience disseminating your research?
- How will you use your research skills in your future career or school plans? How will you continue to develop these skills?

Global Citizenship:

- How did your engaged interactions expand your cultural competence and awareness? What did you learn about yourself through these interactions?
- How did you experience learning languages expand your cultural competence and awareness?
- What role will cultural competence play in your future career or school plans?
- What would you do in a situation at a future job where one or more of your co-workers is not as culturally competent as you? How will you help to bridge gaps between cultures?
- What work do you need to do to become more culturally competent? How will you accomplish this?
- How will you use your language training? Do you plan to improve your proficiency in other languages in the future, and if so, how will you accomplish this?
- Are you able to explain the perspective of another society or culture? What experiences have contributed to this ability to deeply understand others?