

HONORS AND DISTINCTION

GENERAL HONORS

General Honors are routinely calculated by the Registrar's Office according to criteria recommended by the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing and approved by the Yale College Faculty. The bachelor's degree will be awarded *summa cum laude* to no more than the top 5 percent of the graduating class; it will be awarded *magna cum laude* to no more than the next 10 percent of the graduating class; and it will be awarded *cum laude* to no more than the next 15 percent of the graduating class. A listing of the values carried by letter grades and a more detailed statement about General Honors appears in The Undergraduate Curriculum section of the YCPS.

DISTINCTION IN THE MAJOR

Responsibility for nomination for the award of Distinction in the Major lies with the directors of undergraduate studies, whose recommendations are confirmed by the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing. After confirming the recommendations of the DUSes, the committee seeks approval from the Yale College Faculty and informs the Office of the Secretary of the University so that the awards may be inscribed on the students' diplomas.

Distinction will be awarded to those students who have earned grades of A or A- in three-quarters of the credits in the major subject or program, with a grade of A or A- on the senior departmental examination, senior essay, or senior project. All courses taken for the major are included in these calculations for Distinction in the Major. Grades of F as well as marks of CR in courses taken Credit/D/Fail are included as non-A grades. Marks of W, for Withdrawal, which carry no course credit, and marks of P, for Pass, do not figure in the calculation for Distinction. Instructions for viewing students' grades are given under How to Graduate a Senior.

Determining whether or not each senior has qualified for Distinction in the Major can be somewhat complicated, and in large departments it is time-consuming. As an aid to the DUS, the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing has drawn up a thorough set of instructions, including a table that indicates the number of courses that constitute three-quarters of a given number of credits in the major. These, along with nomination forms, are sent to each DUS in late March or early April. Since these instructions contain important information about policy and scheduling, it is helpful to look through examples of the instructions well in advance of their yearly arrival. [A sample of the recommendation form for Distinction can be found in PDF format under Appendix.]

The important task of determining the seniors qualified for Distinction falls at a busy time, and deadlines are, of necessity, early and firm. The Yale College Faculty must vote on all awards on the Friday before Commencement Day, and the heads of college and deans of the residential colleges must be informed of the awards on the day before Commencement, so that they can announce the awards when diplomas are distributed. The result is that you will be asked to submit nominations to the committee on or before the last day of the final examination period.

Almost all recommendations for Distinction in the Major are made at the same time: in May for Commencement. Nominations made at that time include students who completed degree requirements in December at the end of the fall term as well as those who are completing them at the end of the spring term. A certain number of students complete degree requirements following the graduation of their class, and they are awarded their degrees at a later date. Whenever the registrar requests certification from you that a student has completed the requirements of the major, that should be a signal to you to determine whether or not that student is eligible for Distinction in the Major. For these students, and for those whose instructors submit grades late, the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing will accept recommendations at any time and complete the process by which the award is made and inscribed on the student's diploma.

EXCEPTIONAL DISTINCTION IN THE MAJOR

The Yale College Faculty has approved this special award on the grounds that there would "occasionally be students whose work in the major is extraordinary, even when compared to the work of other students who receive Distinction." It was assumed that "many departments, even the larger ones, might go for years without making such a nomination." A candidate nominated by a department or program for the award of Exceptional Distinction in the Major must show a genuine breadth of scholarship in the field and have made significant original contributions to it. A student's qualifications for Exceptional Distinction in the Major should be nearly self-evident. Any doubt or reservation on the part of a DUS probably indicates that no nomination is in order.

A DUS who believes that the department has a candidate for Exceptional Distinction in the Major will need to begin fairly early in April to collect the materials necessary for the nomination. They include:

1. a letter on behalf of the department from the DUS or the chair, setting forth fully the student's qualifications
2. supporting letters from at least two other members of the faculty
3. some examples of the student's work, including the senior project

So that outstanding students will not be penalized by the crowded calendar or by the slowness of a faculty member to respond to the initiative of a DUS, the committee will be prepared to consider nominations after the deadline, even though the award may be delayed until after Commencement. It is important for the DUS to pay special attention to this award, because neither student nor faculty member is likely to take the initiative, without which a deserving student may easily be overlooked. More detailed information about this award is mailed to you in April, along with instructions for Distinction in the Major.