

Graduating with Honors at IIT – A Proposal

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Current System

- Students must complete at least 60 hours of graded course work at IIT to be eligible to graduate with honors, and such students are eligible for all levels of honors.

The cumulative GPA requirements for those levels are:

- *Cum laude* – 3.5-3.799
- *Magna cum laude* – 3.8-3.899
- *Summa cum laude* – 3.9-4.0

Proposed System

- Students who complete at least 60 hours of graded course work at IIT would be eligible to graduate *cum laude*.
- Students who complete at least 75 hours of graded course work at IIT would be eligible to graduate *cum laude* or *magna cum laude*.
- Students who complete at least 90 hours of graded course work at IIT would be eligible to graduate *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, or *summa cum laude*.

The cumulative GPA requirements for those levels would be:

- *Cum laude* – 3.4-3.599
- *Magna cum laude* – 3.6-3.799
- *Summa cum laude* – 3.8-4.0

Discussion

This is motivated, first, by a desire to offer students who do the great majority of their course work at IIT a tangible benefit, while also preserving such a benefit—albeit with limitations—for students who do less of their course work here. Second, some of the changes are intended as a sort of “trade-off” for imposing other, stricter limits. The third motivation has to do with our institutional credibility.

- Keeping the requirement for basic honors at 60 hours means that transfer students will continue to have to do about half (though technically a little less than half) of their course work at IIT to qualify.
- Raising the requirement for *magna cum laude* to 75 hours would mean that most such students would have to take about 3/5 of their course work at IIT (depending on the degree program) to be eligible.
- Raising the requirement for *summa cum laude* to 90 hours would mean that most such students would have to take about 3/4 of their course work at IIT (again, depending on the program) to be eligible.
- Changing the qualifying GPAs for the three levels of honors would be a “trade-off,” in that students would have to do more of their work at IIT, but would have a slightly lower threshold for graduating with each level of honors. It would also equalize the distinctions between levels at 0.2.
- Finally, graduating from IIT with high honors or highest honors should be a statement of endorsement by this university about the quality of students these levels represent. If we continue to give high or highest honors to students who complete only 60 hours with us, and who may have had much less successful results for their previous coursework, we abdicate a measure of our responsibility, and potentially set ourselves up for damage to our reputation.