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3 **04-06**

4 July 28, 2004

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7  
8 **Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)**

9  
10 (Supersedes Policy Statement 79-11, 80-10, 94-12, and 99-14. Adopted pursuant to  
11 Executive Order 665, Determination of Competence in English and Mathematics.)

12 This policy was recommended by the Academic Senate on May 13, 2004 and  
13 approved by the President on June 14, 2004.  
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15  
16 **I. Introduction.**

17  
18 A. In order to obtain a degree or certificate from CSULB, all students must  
19 demonstrate upper-division competence in academic writing in English. The student  
20 is responsible for developing the skills necessary to demonstrate this competence.  
21

22 B. Because the overall education of students includes the development of writing  
23 skills, faculty members have a responsibility to encourage development of the  
24 appropriate level of skill and to refer students to sources of assistance where  
25 necessary.  
26

27 **II The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).**

28  
29 A. For the purpose of fulfilling the GWAR, students must demonstrate upper-division  
30 competence in academic writing in English, incorporating analysis and  
31 exemplification, with one or more of the following: synthesis, critique, inquiry, and  
32 argument.  
33

34 B. Assessments of writing competence at CSULB include but are not limited to:

- 35  
36 1. The CSULB Writing Proficiency Examination (WPE),  
37  
38 2. Other examinations, approved in accordance with VII.A.2, below, and  
39  
40 3. Assessments connected to upper-division, writing-intensive courses, approved in  
41 accordance with VII.A.3, below.  
42

43 C. An assessment of writing competence at CSULB that meets the following  
44 standards may be used to fulfill the GWAR.  
45

- 46 1. Proposals for such assessments must specify which students may attempt the  
47 assessment (e. g., all students, students who have failed the WPE, graduate  
48 students, and/or students earning degrees in a specified college). Any student who  
49 meets the stated criterion (a) may attempt the assessment.  
50  
51 2. The assessment must include formal writing that is evaluated under the following  
52 conditions:  
53

- 54 a. The student under evaluation is known to be the sole author of the writing.  
55  
56 b. The faculty readers who do the evaluation have successfully completed the course  
57 of training approved by the GVAR Committee.  
58  
59 c. All instructors of courses approved by the GVAR Committee as satisfying the  
60 GVAR shall themselves be qualified readers as specified above in II.C.2.b, above.  
61  
62 d. At least two qualified readers, approved for that purpose by the GVAR  
63 Coordinator, agree that the writing meets the GVAR standards. If the demonstration  
64 of writing accompanies a course, the course instructor shall serve as the third  
65 reader.  
66  
67 3. The proposal must include a defined procedure for reporting the resulting score to  
68 the student and to Enrollment Services.  
69  
70 D. Students who fail any approved GVAR assessments two times may not attempt a  
71 GVAR assessment for a third time unless they first obtain a diagnostic assessment of  
72 their writing skills from a designated faculty or staff advisor in the Learning  
73 Assistance Center and then pursue the prescribed corrective measures.

### 75 **III. Undergraduate Students**

- 76  
77 A. As a requirement for graduation, all undergraduate students must demonstrate  
78 writing competence by:  
79  
80 1. Passing an approved CSULB assessment of writing competence (GVAR) or  
81  
82 2. Having already passed an assessment of writing competence (GVAR) while  
83 matriculated at another CSU campus.  
84  
85 B. Assessments of writing competence from non-CSU campuses will be evaluated by  
86 the GVAR Coordinator as a fulfillment of the GVAR, on an articulation basis if  
87 possible or on a case-by-case basis if necessary.  
88  
89 C. Continuing students must attempt to satisfy the GVAR by their junior year.  
90 Upper-division transfer students must attempt to satisfy the GVAR early in their first  
91 semester in residency at CSULB, unless they have demonstrated competence at  
92 another CSU campus.  
93  
94 D. Continuing students and upper-division transfer students must first attempt to  
95 satisfy the GVAR by taking the WPE. After taking the WPE one time, continuing  
96 students who did not receive a "Pass" may attempt to satisfy the GVAR by using any  
97 of the assessments provided for in II.B.  
98

### 99 **IV. Graduate Students**

- 100  
101 A. As a requirement for advancement to candidacy for a master's or doctoral degree,  
102 all graduate students must demonstrate writing competence by:  
103  
104 1. Passing an approved CSULB assessment of writing competence (GVAR),  
105

- 106 2. Having already passed an assessment of writing competence (GWAR) while  
107 matriculated at another CSU campus, or  
108  
109 3. Earning a CSULB-approved passing score on the writing portion of an approved  
110 standardized graduate admissions test, such as the Graduate Record Examination or  
111 the Graduate Management Aptitude Test.  
112  
113 B. Assessments of writing competence from non-CSU campuses will be evaluated by  
114 the GWAR Coordinator as a fulfillment of the GWAR, on an articulation basis if  
115 possible or on a case-by-case basis if necessary.  
116  
117 C. Students with degrees from non-CSU campuses must either provide proof of  
118 meeting the requirement with adequate scores on a CSULB-approved standardized  
119 test or attempt to satisfy the GWAR by the end of their first semester of  
120 matriculation at CSULB.

121  
122 **V. Requirements for courses used to fulfill the GWAR**  
123

- 124 A. Only upper-division, writing-intensive courses at CSULB may be approved for use  
125 in satisfying the GWAR requirement, subject to the following provisions.  
126  
127 1. The course must include a substantial amount of instruction in academic writing,  
128 either of a general nature or specific to the discipline in which the course is taught;  
129 the course must include regular feedback to students concerning their progress in  
130 meeting the University's expectations for upper-division expository writing.  
131  
132 2. Prior to the end of the second week of instruction, students enrolled in the  
133 approved writing-intensive course must indicate that they wish to use the course to  
134 fulfill the GWAR and must pay the required fee. The instructor must then provide to  
135 each such student the scoring guide that will be used to evaluate the student's  
136 written work. Students may also take the writing-intensive course without  
137 designating it as their means of demonstrating GWAR competency.  
138  
139 3. A student's written work in a writing-intensive course must include at least two  
140 pieces of formal writing. The writing may include work done outside the classroom,  
141 but only if the instructor is able to certify that the work is the student's own. The  
142 writing submitted in an effort to satisfy the GWAR must be kept free of bias in either  
143 direction; therefore, if these pieces of formal writing are also used to help establish  
144 the student's course grade, any grades or comments must either be added after the  
145 GWAR scoring or be returned on a separate sheet of paper. The writing samples  
146 themselves may be returned to the student.  
147  
148 4. The writing samples used to satisfy the GWAR must be submitted no later than  
149 the last week of instruction. Each student's writing samples must be evaluated  
150 independently by three faculty, one of whom is the instructor of record for the  
151 course; all three faculty must have successfully completed the training process  
152 approved by the GWAR Committee. Insofar as practicable, the identity of the  
153 students should be masked when the readers evaluate the writing samples.  
154  
155 5. The three faculty readers will determine whether the student's written work  
156 demonstrates upper-division competence in academic writing in English.  
157

158 6. The GWAR Committee must approve in advance any course proposed for use in  
159 satisfying the CSULB GWAR, by determining that the course contains an appropriate  
160 amount of instruction in academic writing, either of a general nature or specific to  
161 the discipline, and that the course is writing-intensive.  
162

163 7. After the evaluation of the student's writing samples has been completed, a list of  
164 the students who took the course to fulfill the GWAR must be submitted by the  
165 instructor to the GWAR Coordinator and to Testing and Evaluation Services, along  
166 with their scores. The GWAR Committee may request a representative set of writing  
167 samples for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of this policy prior to  
168 preparing its annual report to the Academic Senate, as provided for below in VII.F.  
169

170 B. Such upper-division writing-intensive courses may include English 301 and 302  
171 (or their successor courses, if any), Interdisciplinary General Education Courses, or  
172 other appropriate upper-division or graduate courses.  
173

## 174 **VI. The GWAR Coordinator**

175  
176 A. The Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with  
177 the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, shall appoint the GWAR  
178 Coordinator.  
179

180 B. The GWAR Coordinator must be a member of the faculty with appropriate  
181 experience and qualifications.  
182

183 C. The GWAR Coordinator shall oversee the implementation of this policy; additional  
184 duties may be assigned by the Provost in consultation with the Executive Committee  
185 of the Academic Senate.  
186

## 187 **VII. The GWAR Committee**

188  
189 A. The duties of the GWAR Committee shall include, but not be limited to, the  
190 following:  
191

192 1. Overseeing the procedures for the administration of the CSULB WPE.  
193

194 2. Approving other examinations that can be used to satisfy the GWAR, and setting  
195 minimum passing scores for them, based on a determination that they are valid and  
196 reliable demonstrations of upper-division competence in academic writing in English.  
197

198 3. Approving other assessments of academic writing in English connected to upper-  
199 division, writing-intensive courses and setting the minimum score on a rubric  
200 approved by the GWAR Committee.  
201

202 4. Reviewing all existing assessments at least every five years.  
203

204 5. Approving the training processes for faculty who will score a CSULB assessment  
205 designed to meet the GWAR.  
206

207 6. Maintaining and disseminating information about the University list of approved  
208 assessments designed to meet the GWAR.  
209

- 210 7. Assisting colleges, when requested, in the development of additional courses or  
211 instruments to be added to the University list of assessments designed to meet the  
212 GWAR.  
213
- 214 8. Overseeing the distribution of information to students, faculty members, and  
215 advisors about resources available to help students develop the required level of  
216 writing skills and about policies and procedures for the various means of meeting the  
217 GWAR.  
218
- 219 9. Consulting with the following entities on issues relating to GWAR:  
220
- 221 a. Center for International Education;
  - 222
  - 223 b. Disabled Student Services;
  - 224
  - 225 c. Learning Assistance Center; and
  - 226
  - 227 d. Any other University offices that represent populations of students, faculty, staff,  
228 or administrators that may be significantly affected by a proposed change to the  
229 GWAR.  
230
- 231 10. Determining the qualifications for instructors eligible to teach GWAR approved  
232 courses, such as background in teaching composition, teaching English as a second  
233 language or other evidence of experience in developing academic writing skills.  
234

235 **B. Membership:**  
236

- 237 1. The Committee on Committees shall recommend to the Academic Senate two (2)  
238 faculty members from the College of Liberal Arts and one (1) faculty member from  
239 each of the other colleges, including the University Library, for membership on the  
240 GWAR Committee. At least one member must be probationary or tenured, and at  
241 least one member must be a lecturer. At least one member shall have specific  
242 training, background, or expertise in teaching and assessing writing in second  
243 language learners. In addition, at least three members shall have experience or  
244 expertise in teaching and/or assessing University writing. One member representing  
245 the composition program coordinator or the Writers Resource Lab coordinator, or  
246 designee.  
247
- 248 2. One student member, selected by the Associated Students, Inc.  
249
- 250 3. Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (or designee).  
251
- 252 4. GWAR Coordinator.  
253
- 254 5. Director, Testing and Evaluation Services (or designee).  
255
- 256 6. Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services (or designee).  
257
- 258 7. Representative from the Academic Advising Council, selected by that Council.  
259
- 260 C. Faculty members shall serve staggered, three-year terms to insure continuity.  
261 Members may serve consecutive terms.  
262

- 263 D. The committee shall annually elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.  
264  
265 E. The committee shall meet upon the call of the Chair, with a minimum of one  
266 meeting per semester.  
267  
268 F. The Chair of the committee shall annually submit a report to the Educational  
269 Policies Council and to the Graduate Council, with copies to the Chair of the  
270 Academic Senate and to the Provost.  
271  
272 G. Decisions of the GVAR Committee on the approval or disapproval of examinations  
273 or other writing assessments proposed as means for satisfying the GVAR, on the  
274 training process for faculty seeking to become qualified as readers of GVAR writing  
275 assessments, on waivers of the GVAR, or on other matters may be appealed to the  
276 Educational Policies Council and, if still unresolved, to the Executive Committee of  
277 the Academic Senate.  
278

279 **VIII. Waivers of the GVAR**

- 280  
281 A. The GVAR Committee may consider requests from current or former CSULB  
282 students for waivers of the GVAR, acting either as a committee of the whole or by  
283 delegating this task to a subcommittee of its own members.  
284  
285 B. Subsequent to the semester in which the first two courses or other mechanisms  
286 approved for satisfying the GVAR at the undergraduate level become available, no  
287 further requests for waivers shall be entertained by the University.  
288

289 **IX. The WPE Development Committee**

- 290  
291 A. The duties of the WPE Development Committee shall include, but not be limited  
292 to, the following:  
293  
294 1. Development of the bank of items for use in the CSULB WPE and recommending  
295 all changes in its content, format, and administration.  
296  
297 2. Monitoring, updating, and modifying, as necessary, the bank of WPE topics.  
298  
299 3. Conducting studies dealing with the reliability and validity of the WPE.  
300  
301 4. Training and certification of WPE readers.  
302  
303 5. Monitoring the consistency of scores among WPE readers.  
304  
305 6. Consulting with the following entities regarding issues of access and equity in the  
306 administration of the WPE and the bank of items to be used on the WPE.  
307  
308 a. Center for International Education;  
309  
310 b. Disabled Student Services;  
311  
312 c. Learning Assistance Center; and  
313

314 d. Any other University offices that represent populations of students, faculty, staff,  
315 or administrators that may be significantly affected by a proposed change to the  
316 WPE.

317  
318 B. The Committee on Committees, in consultation with the GVAR Committee, shall  
319 recommend to the Academic Senate for membership on the WPE Development  
320 Committee five (5) to seven (7) faculty members with experience as WPE readers  
321 and one (1) to three (3) faculty members with no experience as WPE readers,  
322 subject to the conditions listed immediately below. The Director of Testing and  
323 Evaluation Services (or designee) shall serve in an ex officio capacity.

324  
325 1. Faculty members must be selected from as wide a variety of disciplines and  
326 colleges as possible.

327  
328 2. At least one member of the committee should have knowledge about test  
329 development procedures.

330  
331 3. At least one member of the committee should have knowledge about the  
332 interpretation and application of testing statistics.

333  
334 4. At least one member should have expertise and experience teaching ESL.

335  
336 5. At least one member must be probationary or tenured and at least one member  
337 must be a lecturer.

338  
339 C. Members shall serve staggered, three-year terms to insure continuity. Members  
340 may serve consecutive terms.

341  
342 D. The committee shall elect a Chair and a Secretary each year.

343  
344 1. The Chair, in consultation with the GVAR Coordinator, shall select the items from  
345 the test bank to be used for each administration of the WPE.

346  
347 2. The Chair will call meetings of the committee and develop the agenda for each  
348 meeting.

349  
350 E. The committee shall meet at least once per semester upon call of the Chair.

351  
352 F. The committee shall report to the GVAR Committee.

353  
354 X. The CSULB Policy on GVAR, and its implementation, shall be reviewed by an  
355 external consultant from another CSU campus and by the Educational Policies  
356 Council and the Graduate Council every five years, with the initial review at the end  
357 of three years.

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**EFFECTIVE: Fall 2004**