

DATE: May 17, 2018

TO: Neil Hultgren, Chair
Curriculum and Educational Policies Council

Ruth Piker, Chair
General Education Governing Committee

Norbert Schürer, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Rebekha Abbuhl, Chair
Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Committee

SUBJECT: GWAR Committee Report for 2017-2018

The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Committee convened on September 1, 2017 and elected the following committee officers:

Rebekha Abbuhl, Chair
Lori Brown, Vice Chair
Leeanne Bergeron, Secretary

The committee met on the first and third Fridays of each month from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

GWAR Committee Membership

The following individuals served on the GWAR committee during the 2017-2018 school year:

- Rebekha Abbuhl (Linguistics)
- Joseph Aubele (Library)
- Leeanne Bergeron (GWAR/WAC Associate and GWAR Advisor)
- Lori Brown (Information Systems)
- Carol Comfort (English)
- Jason Deutschman (Advising Associate Director, College of Engineering)
- Deborah Fraser (Biology)
- John Hamilton (AVP University Access and Retention, Interim Testing Office Director, Spring 2018)
- Kerry Johnson (AVP Undergraduate Studies)
- Ken Kelly (Testing Office Director, Fall 2017)
- Rebecca Lemme (Dance)
- Jason Moore (Student ASI representative, Fall 2017)
- Jonathan O'Brien (Educational Leadership)
- Henry O'Lawrence (CEPC, Health Care Administration)

- Max Rosenkrantz (Philosophy)
- John Scenters-Zapico (WAC Director)
- Lori Smurthwaite (English)
- Lei Sun (Speech-Language Pathology)

The major activities of the GVAR Committee will be summarized in the following sections.

Executive order 1100 and its impact on the GVAR

EO 1100 passed on 8/23/17 and the committee began discussing the impact of this change at its first meeting in September 2017. This executive order directly impacts the GVAR, as it mandates that (1) students are limited to 9 units of GE capstone courses; (2) within the category of GE capstone courses, students must take 1 B-category course, 1 C-category course, and 1 D-category course; and (3) students are limited to 120 units. This presents a problem for the current GVAR system in that the majority of writing intensive (WI) GE courses are in the F category. Furthermore, the current system (which involves a timed writing test to place students into various pathways) occasionally involves students having to exceed the 120-unit cap (due to the fact that they have to take ENGL 301A and/or a GVAR portfolio course).

Following the implementation memo from Jody Cormack concerning the university's plan for phasing in EO 1100 (which stated that the GVAR committee is responsible for "examin[ing] the current GVAR policy and develop[ing] proposed changes in consultation with CEPC and GEGC"), the committee deliberated at length to develop four proposals to send forth to the GEGC and CEPC. As part of this deliberation, the committee examined GVAR policies in place at other CSUs, consulted with faculty and staff at CSULB, and met with representatives from the CEPC, GEGC, and Academic Senate.

The four proposals are the following. Please note that these are *proposals* only; they will need to be discussed, deliberated upon, and refined by the university community.

1. "The Choice." Departments, at their own discretion, will be able to choose one of the following:
 - a. *Option 1.* Students shall take the GVAR Placement Examination (GPE), and their scores will place them into one of three pathways. Low scorers (7 and below) shall successfully complete (with a C or better) ENGL 301A, a GVAR portfolio course, and finally a GE capstone course in the B, C, or D category. Mid-range scorers (8-10) shall successfully complete (with a C or better) a GVAR portfolio course and a GE capstone course in the B, C, or D category. High-range scorers (11 and higher) shall successfully complete (with a C or better) a GE capstone course in the B, C, or D category. Note: This is the current system.

OR

- b. *Option 2.* Departments shall require their students to successfully complete (with a C or better) one of the following: (1) a course in the major that has been approved by the GVAR committee, with a total of 5,000 across the various assignments and opportunities for feedback and revision; **or** (2) two “writing enhanced” courses in the major that have been approved by the GVAR committee, each with 2,500 words and opportunities for feedback and revision.
- 2. “Writing Instruction and Practice.” Students shall take the GVAR Placement Examination (GPE), and their scores will place them into one of three, three-unit upper-division composition courses. Low scorers (7 and below) shall successfully complete (with a C or better) an upper-division composition course (to be created) that is tailored to the needs of struggling writers. Mid-range scorers (8-10) shall successfully complete an upper-division composition course (to be created) that focuses on the needs of mid-level writers. High-range scorers (11 and higher) shall successfully complete an upper-division composition course (to be created) that addresses writing in the disciplines.
 - 3. “The Writing Across the Curriculum Alternative.” Departments, at their own discretion, will be able to choose one of the following:
 - a. *Option 1.* All students shall successfully complete (with a C or better) two existing, upper-division courses in their major that have 2,500 words each and opportunities for feedback and revision. These 2,500 words must be across two or more assignments in each class. These assignments should be in the formats/genres that the department values.

OR

- b. *Option 2.* All students shall successfully complete (with a C or better) one existing, upper-division course in the major that has 5,000 words and opportunities for feedback and revision. The 5,000 words must be across two or more writing assignments. These assignments should be in the formats/genres that the department values.

OR

- c. *Option 3.* Students can select either option 1 or 2, if their department has GVAR-approved courses in both categories.

OR

- d. *Option 4.* Students shall successfully complete (with a C or better) a Writing Intensive (WI) General Education (GE) capstone course located within the B, C, or D category.
4. “Department autonomy.” Departments shall submit to the GVAR Committee a plan that outlines how the department will address the writing needs of its students.

Initial feedback from the GEGC and CEPC indicated that Proposal 1 (“The choice”) and Proposal 2 (“Writing instruction and practice”) may not be possible due to the 120-unit cap. The committee looks forward to further discussion regarding these and other proposals in the 2018-19 AY.

The WAC pilot

In the 2016-17 AY, the GVAR committee approved a small-scale pilot, the “Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) pilot,” to test the feasibility of a possible alternative to the GVAR. This pilot involves three departments (History, Liberal Studies, and Dance). In these departments, two courses are flagged as “Writing Intensive,” as they involve at least two writing assignments each (totaling at least 2500 words in each course). Instead of taking the GPE and being placed into one of the existing pathways, students in these departments would satisfy the GVAR by successfully completing these writing intensive courses instead.

The committee discussed what kind of data will need to be collected from this pilot in order to determine its feasibility moving forward. In addition, as offering on this on a large scale could be administratively challenging, representatives from the GVAR committee met with enrollment services to discuss how the WAC pilot on a larger scale could be coded and managed effectively.

Online GVAR portfolio courses

A request to use COTA 300 as a pilot to test the feasibility of online GVAR portfolio courses was approved by the GVAR committee. The instructor of that course, Dr. Dana Doyle, has met with an online designer in academic technology services to determine the feasibility of the course, as well as to gather information on how to make sure that students are doing their own work and that students are getting enough support. Several design elements were discussed: having a required in-person timed writing, having students write multiple drafts of assignments in class, having students respond to each other’s work in class, and having the teacher respond to the

students' writing. Dr. Doyle will report back to the committee concerning the results of the pilot at the end of the Fall 2018 semester.

GWAR Coordinator's report

The GWAR Coordinator regularly reported to the committee. The GWAR Coordinator also presented special circumstances waivers to the committee. Extensive screening is conducted before petitions are presented to the committee. Petitions that are approved by the GWAR committee fall into one of two categories: (1) the student provides alternative demonstrations of her or his writing skills, or (2) the student has made consistent efforts to improve her or his writing and no longer has access to the campus and therefore cannot enroll in a GWAR course.

GPE Advisory Committee Chair's report

The GPE Advisory Committee chair regularly presented data on the GPE as part of that committee's efforts to monitor the reliability and validity of the test. In addition, the GPE Advisory committee created new prompts for the GPE test, piloted those prompts, and examined the results of those pilots in order to make recommendations concerning prompt use to the testing office.