

CSULB - Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)

To obtain a degree or certificate from CSULB, students must demonstrate upper-division competence in academic writing in English by satisfying the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). To satisfy the GWAR, students should complete the following steps:

1. Undergraduate students must attempt the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) during the semester in which they complete 65 units. Transfer students and graduate students must attempt the WPE during their first semester of enrollment. Most students satisfy the GWAR by successfully completing the WPE on their first attempt. Three-hour WPE Workshops are offered during the 2-week periods prior to each test date. Registration is not required and there is no fee for these workshops. Dates, times, and locations of the workshops are posted on the Testing and Evaluation Services website.
2. Graduate and undergraduate students may also satisfy the GWAR by completing the analytic writing portion of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) with a score of 4 or higher. These tests are administered throughout the year at locations around the world. To register for these tests, visit www.gre.org. To satisfy the GWAR, students must submit a copy of their GRE or GMAT scores to Enrollment Services (#123 Brotman Hall) or to Testing and Evaluation Services (#216 Brotman Hall).
3. Students who are unsuccessful in their first WPE, GRE, or GMAT attempt and who lack English language proficiency skills should immediately seek help with their writing from the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) or the Writers Resource Lab, by enrolling in one of the following courses, or both.
 - WPE 10 and WPE 20 are 1-unit, non-baccalaureate courses designed to prepare students for the WPE that meet 1 hour and 45 minutes per week during the first 12 weeks of the semester. These courses are listed in the catalog under WPE Preparation and Review. Contact the English Department for more information.
 - English 301A (English Proficiency) is 3-unit, intermediate course in English usage for students who need English language development beyond English 100. Contact the English Department for more information.
 - The LAC (#104 Horn Center) provides one-on-one tutoring for students who need to develop English language proficiency.
 - The Writers Resource Lab (#212 Learning Arts Building) provides writing instruction through tutoring, workshops, and online resources. Instructional activities include one-on-one tutoring, assistance with preparation for taking or re-taking the WPE, and intensive language acquisition.
4. After attempting the WPE once, graduate and undergraduate students may satisfy the GWAR by successfully completing assessments connected to upper-division, writing intensive courses that have been approved for this purpose. Currently, the following approved courses include:
 - COTA 300 (College of the Arts)
 - ENGR 310 (College of Engineering)
 - ENGL 301B (Department of English)
 - FMD 450 (College of Health & Human Services)
 - HIST 300 (Department of History)

5. Students may attempt the WPE a second time and may also request one of the following testing accommodations:
 - Students may request extended time to complete the WPE. This testing accommodation gives students 2 hours rather than 75 minutes to complete the test. Students who fail the WPE with extended time will not be eligible to petition for it again until they have completed a writing course with a grade of "C" or better or "Credit" or have followed recommendations of a WPE Advisor. Extended time applications can be obtained from Testing & Evaluation Services, in Brotman Hall #216.
 - Students who have physical or learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to demonstrate writing proficiency may qualify for accommodated testing. Students who believe they qualify should request a referral from the Office of Disabled Student Services (#270 Brotman Hall).
6. Students who fail any approved GVAR assessment two times may not attempt a GVAR assessment for a third time unless they first obtain a diagnostic assessment of their writing skills from a designated faculty or staff advisor in the LAC and then pursue the prescribed corrective measures (usually tutoring, enrollment in appropriate courses, or both).
7. In unusual and exceptional cases, students may petition for a special circumstances waiver of the GVAR. Special circumstances generally refer to rare situations or conditions (e.g., writing-related medical issues, related learning disabilities, or physical conditions) that have prevented the student from successfully completing the GVAR in spite of the student's sustained efforts to prepare using appropriate resources. Students who believe they qualify for a special circumstances waiver must provide evidence of their sustained efforts to satisfy the GVAR and must document the qualifying circumstances. This documentation might include, for example, medical records and/or medical, educational, psychological, counseling, or occupational evaluations. Petitions for special circumstances waivers are available from Testing and Evaluation Services (#216 Brotman Hall).
8. Failure to satisfy the GVAR will prevent students from receiving their degrees, even if they have satisfied all other degree requirements. Therefore, students should act promptly to seek appropriate instruction, tutoring, or both to develop the English writing skills necessary to satisfy the GVAR. Repeated attempts to pass the WPE, GRE, or GMAT are likely to be unsuccessful without appropriate corrective measures.
9. To ensure successful completion of the GVAR, students should follow these guidelines:
 - Take the WPE promptly to determine your English writing proficiency.
 - If your first attempt is unsuccessful, see your advisor and identify available resources.
 - Immediately seek tutoring, enroll in appropriate writing courses, or enroll in a GVAR course.
 - If your second attempt is unsuccessful, immediately obtain a diagnostic assessment from an advisor at the LAC and pursue the prescribed corrective measures.
 - Consider requesting extended time or other testing accommodations.
 - Don't attempt the WPE, GRE, or GMAT repeatedly without obtaining appropriate assistance.
 - If you're unsure of how to improve your English writing skills, ask your advisor or go the LAC or Writers Resource Lab for advice.

This information was compiled and created for campus use by the CSULB Department of Professional Studies.