

**04-06**

July 28, 2004

### **Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)**

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

This policy was recommended by the Academic Senate on May 13, 2004 and approved by the President on June 14, 2004.

#### **I. Introduction.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Proposals for such assessments must specify which students may attempt the assessment (e. g., all students, students who have failed the WPE, graduate students,

and/or students earning degrees in a specified college). Any student who meets the stated criterion (a) may attempt the assessment.

2. The assessment must include formal writing that is evaluated under the following conditions:

a. The student under evaluation is known to be the sole author of the writing.

b. The faculty readers who do the evaluation have successfully completed the course of training approved by the GVAR Committee.

c. All instructors of courses approved by the GVAR Committee as satisfying the GVAR shall themselves be qualified readers as specified above in II.C.2.b, above.

d. At least two qualified readers, approved for that purpose by the GVAR Coordinator, agree that the writing meets the GVAR standards. If the demonstration of writing accompanies a course, the course instructor shall serve as the third reader.

3. The proposal must include a defined procedure for reporting the resulting score to the student and to Enrollment Services.

D. Students who fail any approved GVAR assessments 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 Learning Assistance Center and then pursue the prescribed corrective measures.

### **III. Undergraduate Students**

A. As a requirement for graduation, all undergraduate students must demonstrate writing competence by:

1. Passing an approved CSULB assessment of writing competence (GVAR) or

2. Having already passed an assessment of writing competence (GVAR) while matriculated at another CSU campus.

B. Assessments of writing competence from non-CSU campuses will be evaluated by the GVAR Coordinator as a fulfillment of the GVAR, on an articulation basis if possible or on a case-by-case basis if necessary.

C. Continuing students must attempt to satisfy the GVAR by their junior year. Upper-division transfer students must attempt to satisfy the GVAR early in their first semester in residency at CSULB, unless they have demonstrated competence at another CSU campus.

D. Continuing students and upper-division transfer students must first attempt to satisfy the GVAR by taking the WPE. After taking the WPE one time, continuing students who did not receive a "Pass" may attempt to satisfy the GVAR by using any of the assessments provided for in II.B.

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

A. As a requirement for advancement to candidacy for a master's or doctoral degree, all graduate students must demonstrate writing competence by:

1. Passing an approved CSULB assessment of writing competence (GVAR),
2. Having already passed an assessment of writing competence (GVAR) while matriculated at another CSU campus, or
3. Earning a CSULB-approved passing score on the writing portion of an approved standardized graduate admissions test, such as the Graduate Record Examination or the Graduate Management Aptitude Test.

B. Assessments of writing competence from non-CSU campuses will be evaluated by the GVAR Coordinator as a fulfillment of the GVAR, on an articulation basis if possible or on a case-by-case basis if necessary.

C. Students with degrees from non-CSU campuses must either provide proof of meeting the requirement with adequate scores on a CSULB-approved standardized test or attempt to satisfy the GVAR by the end of their first semester of matriculation at CSULB.

#### **V. Requirements for courses used to fulfill the GVAR**

A. Only upper-division, writing-intensive courses at CSULB may be approved for use in satisfying the GVAR requirement, subject to the following provisions.

1. The course must include a substantial amount of instruction in academic writing, either of a general nature or specific to the discipline in which the course is taught; the course must include regular feedback to students concerning their progress in meeting the University's expectations for upper-division expository writing.
2. Prior to the end of the second week of instruction, students enrolled in the approved writing-intensive course must indicate that they wish to use the course to fulfill the GVAR and must pay the required fee. The instructor must then provide to each such student the scoring guide that will be used to evaluate the student's written work. Students may also take the writing-intensive course without designating it as their means of demonstrating GVAR competency.
3. A student's written work in a writing-intensive course must include at least two pieces of formal writing. The writing may include work done outside the classroom, but only if

the instructor is able to certify that the work is the student's own. The writing submitted in an effort to satisfy the GWAR must be kept free of bias in either direction; therefore, if these pieces of formal writing are also used to help establish the student's course grade, any grades or comments must either be added after the GWAR scoring or be returned on a separate sheet of paper. The writing samples themselves may be returned to the student.

4. The writing samples used to satisfy the GWAR must be submitted no later than the last week of instruction. Each student's writing samples must be evaluated independently by three faculty, one of whom is the instructor of record for the course; all three faculty must have successfully completed the training process approved by the GWAR Committee. Insofar as practicable, the identity of the students should be masked when the readers evaluate the writing samples.

5. The three faculty readers will determine whether the student's written work demonstrates upper-division competence in academic writing in English.

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

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

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

## **VI. The GWAR Coordinator**

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

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

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

## **VII. The GVAR Committee**

A. The duties of the GVAR Committee shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Overseeing the procedures for the administration of the CSULB WPE.
2. Approving other examinations that can be used to satisfy the GVAR, and setting minimum passing scores for them, based on a determination that they are valid and reliable demonstrations of upper-division competence in academic writing in English.
3. Approving other assessments of academic writing in English connected to upper-division, writing-intensive courses and setting the minimum score on a rubric approved by the GVAR Committee.
4. Reviewing all existing assessments at least every five years.
5. Approving the training processes for faculty who will score a CSULB assessment designed to meet the GVAR.
6. Maintaining and disseminating information about the University list of approved assessments designed to meet the GVAR.
7. Assisting colleges, when requested, in the development of additional courses or instruments to be added to the University list of assessments designed to meet the GVAR.
8. Overseeing the distribution of information to students, faculty members, and advisors about resources available to help students develop the required level of writing skills and about policies and procedures for the various means of meeting the GVAR.
9. Consulting with the following entities on issues relating to GVAR:
  - a. Center for International Education;
  - b. Disabled Student Services;
  - c. Learning Assistance Center; and
  - d. Any other University offices that represent populations of students, faculty, staff, or administrators that may be significantly affected by a proposed change to the GVAR.

10. Determining the qualifications for instructors eligible to teach GVAR approved courses, such as background in teaching composition, teaching English as a second language or other evidence of experience in developing academic writing skills.

**B. Membership:**

1. The Committee on Committees shall recommend to the Academic Senate two (2) faculty members from the College of Liberal Arts and one (1) faculty member from each of the other colleges, including the University Library, for membership on the GVAR Committee. At least one member must be probationary or tenured, and at least one member must be a lecturer. At least one member shall have specific training, background, or expertise in teaching and assessing writing in second language learners. In addition, at least three members shall have experience or expertise in teaching and/or assessing University writing. One member representing the composition program coordinator or the Writers Resource Lab coordinator, or designee.

2. One student member, selected by the Associated Students, Inc.

3. Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (or designee).

4. GVAR Coordinator.

5. Director, Testing and Evaluation Services (or designee).

6. Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services (or designee).

7. Representative from the Academic Advising Council, selected by that Council.

C. Faculty members shall serve staggered, three-year terms to insure continuity. Members may serve consecutive terms.

D. The committee shall annually elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

E. The committee shall meet upon the call of the Chair, with a minimum of one meeting per semester.

F. The Chair of the committee shall annually submit a report to the Educational Policies Council and to the Graduate Council, with copies to the Chair of the Academic Senate and to the Provost.

G. Decisions of the GVAR Committee on the approval or disapproval of examinations or other writing assessments proposed as means for satisfying the GVAR, on the training process for faculty seeking to become qualified as readers of GVAR writing assessments, on waivers of the GVAR, or on other matters may be appealed to the Educational Policies Council and, if still unresolved, to the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate.

## **VIII. Waivers of the GVAR**

A. The GVAR Committee may consider requests from current or former CSULB students for waivers of the GVAR, acting either as a committee of the whole or by delegating this task to a subcommittee of its own members.

B. Subsequent to the semester in which the first two courses or other mechanisms approved for satisfying the GVAR at the undergraduate level become available, no further requests for waivers shall be entertained by the University.

## **IX. The WPE Development Committee**

A. The duties of the WPE Development Committee shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Development of the bank of items for use in the CSULB WPE and recommending all changes in its content, format, and administration.

2. Monitoring, updating, and modifying, as necessary, the bank of WPE topics.

3. Conducting studies dealing with the reliability and validity of the WPE.

4. Training and certification of WPE readers.

5. Monitoring the consistency of scores among WPE readers.

6. Consulting with the following entities regarding issues of access and equity in the administration of the WPE and the bank of items to be used on the WPE.

a. Center for International Education;

b. Disabled Student Services;

c. Learning Assistance Center; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

F. The committee shall report to the GVAR Committee.

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

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**EFFECTIVE: Fall 2004**