

Guidelines for Petitions for Special Circumstances Waivers of the CSULB Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement

What is a Special Circumstances Waiver of the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement?

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). In unusual and exceptional cases, students may petition for a special circumstances waiver of the GWAR. Special circumstances generally refer to rare situations or conditions (e.g., writing-related medical issues, related learning disabilities, physical conditions, or other unusual circumstances beyond the control of the student) that have prevented the student from successfully completing the GWAR in spite of the student's completion of a GWAR course or other sustained efforts to improve their writing skills using appropriate resources.

How do students qualify for a Special Circumstances Waiver of the GWAR?

Students who believe they qualify for a special circumstances waiver must provide evidence of their sustained efforts to satisfy the GWAR and must document the exceptional circumstances that may qualify them for a waiver. This documentation might include, for example, medical records; medical, educational, psychological, counseling, or occupational evaluations; and/or evidence of the special circumstances. Evidence of the student's sustained efforts to satisfy the GWAR might include copies of recommendation forms received from GWAR Advisor(s) and documentation of tutoring or other forms of assistance that do not appear on transcripts. The student's WPE/GPE test record is provided by the Testing Department.

How do students request a Special Circumstances Waiver of the GWAR?

Petitions for special circumstances waivers are available from the Testing Department (Liberal Arts 5 - 173) or www.csulb.edu/testing. In addition to completing the petition form, the student must also submit a letter describing the special circumstances that have prevented the student from satisfying the GWAR along with appropriate documentation and evidence of the student's efforts to satisfy the GWAR.

Students submit their completed petition and supporting documents to the Testing Department. Petitions are evaluated by the GWAR Committee, and students are notified of the committee's decision by email in approximately **four to six weeks**.

What can students do if they don't qualify for a Special Circumstances Waiver of the GWAR?

Students who don't qualify for a special circumstances waiver should pursue the following alternatives:

- Students may satisfy the GWAR by earning a score of 4 or higher on the analytic writing portion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). To satisfy the GWAR, students submit a copy of their test score to Enrollment Services, Brotman Hall - 101.
- Students may satisfy the GWAR by receiving a passing score on a writing portfolio submitted in connection with an approved GWAR course. Currently, the following courses are approved:

COTA 300 (College of the Arts)
ENGL 301B (Department of English)
ENGR 310 (College of Engineering)
FMD 450 (Department of Family and Consumer Sciences)
HIST 300 (Department of History)
IS 301L (Department of Information Systems)
LING 301 (Department of Linguistics)

- Students may request extended time to complete the GPE. This testing accommodation gives students 2 hours rather than 75 minutes to complete the test.
- Students with physical or learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to demonstrate writing proficiency may qualify for computer-assisted testing. Students who believe they qualify should request a referral from the Office of Disabled Student Services (Brotman Hall – 270).
- If they have not already done so, students who lack English language proficiency should enroll in one or more of the following courses:

GPE 10 and GPE 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. 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.

- Students should also seek tutoring and other one-on-one assistance from the following resources:

The UCUA (Horn Center – 103) provides one-on-one tutoring for students who need to develop English language proficiency.

The Writers Resource Lab (Learning Arts Building - 212) provides writing instruction through tutoring, workshops, and online resources. Instructional activities include one-on-one tutoring and WPE preparation workshops.

