



Date: February 21, 2024

To: Andre Avramchuk Chair, Academic Senate

From: Jane Gauthier, Chair Educational Policy Committee

Copies: M. Hawley, C. Pugh, K. Fisher, R. Roquemore, K. Elliot Brown, K. Franklin

Subject: **EPC Memo 23-11: Proposed Deletion of Graduate Writing Requirement– Chapter IV of the Faculty Handbook, (EPC 23-09)**

During the pandemic, the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) was suspended through Spring 2022. Subsequently, the CSU convened an advisory group to reassess the GWAR policy. Based on their recommendations, the CSU updated the policy to apply only to baccalaureate students.

In November 2023, the Graduate Student Subcommittee reviewed the attached memo from the Chancellor's Office entitled "Upcoming revisions to the CSU Policy on the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)." In consultation with this subcommittee, and in alignment with the CSU changes to GWAR Policy effective with the Fall 2023 Catalog, EPC is proposing the deletion of the GWAR Graduate Policy. EPC voted on February 14, 2024 to delete the policy and forward that recommendation to the Senate Executive Committee.

GRADUATE WRITING REQUIREMENT

(Senate: 4/3/84, 8/5/86, 8/23/88, 9/23/92[EA], 5/4/99, 6/2/15, 4/4/17; President: 4/19/84, 5/9/87, 10/7/88, 11/18/92, 8/17/99, 10/13/15, 4/19/17; Editorial Amendment: 9/00, 8/01)

All CSU students are required by Trustee policy to demonstrate competence in writing as a requirement for all advanced degrees. All post-baccalaureate students at Cal State L.A. who are subject to requirements of the 1984-85 or any later Catalog and who are pursuing a graduate degree are required to satisfy the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. Graduate students are considered to have met the GVAR requirement upon admission to the university if they (1) earned a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university where English is the medium of instruction; or (2) attained a score of 41 or better on the writing portion of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) or a score of 4 on the analytic writing portion of the GRE or the GMAT.

Graduate students must satisfy this requirement before completing 12 semester units. Graduate students may take the writing proficiency exam once. Students who do not pass are required to pass the designated GVAR course. Students who do not satisfy the GVAR requirement within their first 12 units may be subject to a registration hold. Students must satisfy this Graduate Writing Requirement in order to be Advanced to Candidacy.

Departments/divisions/schools may require of their majors additional discipline-based coursework in writing.

24 A student who has satisfied the Graduate Writing Requirement shall continue to be
25 certified with no time limit on such certification. A Post-baccalaureate unclassified
26 student is not required to satisfy this Graduate Writing Requirement.

27



Sylvia A. Alva, Ph.D.

Executive Vice Chancellor


CSU Office of the Chancellor

401 Golden Shore, Long Beach, CA 90802 www.calstate.edu

March 24, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: CSU Presidents

FROM: Sylvia A. Alva, Ph.D. 
Executive Vice Chancellor

SUBJECT: Upcoming revisions to the CSU Policy on the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) (formerly Executive Order 665)

Executive Order 665, published in 1987, established requirements for California State University students to demonstrate writing proficiency at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR), an element of that policy, has since been satisfied by CSU undergraduate students most typically via the completion of a designated upper-division course or in-person examination. Although only a few CSU campuses required the in-person exam, due to the pandemic the GWAR was suspended for *all* students through spring 2022. This pause has provided an opportunity to reconsider the place of GWAR in the CSU.

In a February 23, 2021, memo, Academic and Student Affairs committed to a process in fall 2021 to evaluate the future use of the GWAR. A group composed of writing faculty, administrators and a student representative were asked to review the GWAR in light of discussions regarding potential hardships and inequities brought about by high stakes testing and administrative barriers related to the requirement. Among its recommendations, this group highlighted that:

- If GWAR is to be continued as a CSU requirement, then the CSU needs to consider ending high stakes testing as a means of meeting the GWAR, ending the GWAR for graduate degrees, and aligning the assessment of student learning with other WSCUC core competencies.

The teaching and assessment of writing within the CSU system has evolved considerably over the past four decades since the GWAR was established. Most notably, in 2013 the CSU's regional accrediting body, WSCUC, included writing as one of the core competencies for which campuses are required to ensure students have achieved proficiency as part of the institutional review process for accreditation. This has provided campuses with the necessary impetus and support to require that writing skills be developed and assessed on an ongoing basis for all

students. (*Note: the other WSCUC core competencies are oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy and critical thinking.*)

At the same time, the relevance and necessity of the GVAR has come into question. Other than the GVAR, the CSU does not require an additional, systemwide demonstration of competence in any other WSCUC core competency; instead, assessment is managed at the campus level. Moreover, the differential approach to GVAR across the CSU's 23 campuses has raised concerns about its alignment with the CSU's ongoing efforts and significant progress in removing administrative barriers, eliminating high stakes testing and retaining and supporting students of all backgrounds toward timely degree completion.

Based on these considerations, as well as the advisory group's recommendations, the systemwide CSU policy requiring completion of at least one designated 3-unit upper-division writing course to satisfy GVAR has been updated to apply to baccalaureate students *only*, beginning with students with a catalog year of fall 2023 and beyond. Additionally, the use of a stand-alone examination may no longer be used to demonstrate competence in writing under the GVAR; however, writing exams are still allowed under the CSU policy on [Credit for Prior Learning](#). Each campus will continue to have the autonomy to develop an approach to writing instruction and assessment that aligns with their WSCUC-required commitment to continuous improvement throughout a student's educational program on their campus.

If you have questions regarding this policy update, please contact Dr. Alison Wrynn, associate vice chancellor, Academic Programs, Innovations and Faculty Development, at awrynn@calstate.edu.

SAA/aw

c: Steve Relyea, Acting Chancellor
Robert Keith Collins, Chair, Academic Senate, California State University
Isaac Alferos, President, California State Student Association
Alison M. Wrynn, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Programs, Innovations and Faculty Development
Nathan Evans, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff, Academic and Student Affairs
Provosts and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs
Vice Presidents for Student Affairs
AVPs for Academic Programs and Deans of Undergraduate Studies
Graduate Deans