

Adopted: November 27, 2018

**ACADEMIC SENATE
Of
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY
San Luis Obispo, CA**

AS-858-18

**Resolution on Course Criteria for GWR-Certified
Upper-Division Courses Across the Curriculum**

Background Statement:

The California State University Chancellor's Office established an upper-division writing assessment mandate for its 23 campuses in 1978, and the requirement was more recently codified in 1997 as Executive Order 0665, Determination of Competence in English and Mathematics. Two key points of EO 0665 are as follows: 1) Certification of writing competence shall be made available to students as they enter the junior year; students should complete the requirement before the senior year; 2) Certification of graduation writing proficiency is an all-campus responsibility.

The Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR) at Cal Poly currently invites students to fulfill the mandate via one of two pathways: earn a passing score on a two-hour, handwritten essay exam, the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE), which is offered two or more times each quarter; or, earn a passing score on a timed, in-class essay exam *and* earn a C or better in a GWR-approved, upper-division, quarter-long English course.

During any given quarter, there are over 9,000 students eligible to fulfill this requirement. Generally, each year about 4,000 students complete the requirement by passing the WPE, and about 1,500 students complete the requirement in a GWR-approved English course.

In spring of 2015, in response to a 2014-15 GWR Task Force report, a senate resolution passed (AS-809-15) that outlined actions the university should take to address the issue of timely GWR completion, including the recommendation that "programs/departments develop a concrete action plan so that their students take the GWR during junior year."

Issues with the GWR program extend beyond students' timely completion, however. Whether students take the WPE or a GWR-approved, upper-division English course, there is a disconnect between what the GWR requirement tests and what experts in the field of writing studies advocate. In General Education (GE) A1 and A3 courses, as well as in lower- and upper-division English courses, students are taught that writing requires an understanding of audience and purpose; students are also taught the process of drafting, revising, and editing. The GWR as presently conceived, however, does not test for careful and intentional writing; rather, it tests for extemporaneous writing skills on an unannounced topic.

A 2015-17 GWR task force report (AS-839-17) suggested alternative approaches to the GWR for the university's consideration. Above all, the task force recommended replacing the current exam-based approach by 1) expanding GWR-approved upper-division course options beyond those

32 RESOLVED: That the university adopt the following procedure for certifying GWR upper-
33 division courses across the curriculum; and be it further
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35 RESOLVED: That the university adopt the following criteria for GWR course certification;
36 and be it further
37

38 RESOLVED: That the university establish a GWR Advisory Board to serve in an advisory
39 capacity to the ASCC and the GEGB, which will decide on course
40 modifications and new course proposals for upper-division courses seeking
41 the GWR designation; and be it further
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43 RESOLVED: That the GWR Advisory Board manage GWR-certified course-related faculty
44 support and GWR program assessment; and be it further
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46 RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate Executive Committee appoints to the GWR
47 Advisory Board one faculty member from each of the six colleges and one
48 representative from Professional Consultative Services, each of whom is
49 familiar with writing for audiences across the disciplines, to serve a two-
50 year term; and be it further
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52 RESOLVED: That the Provost appoints to the GWR Advisory Board the Writing and
53 Rhetoric Center director, who serves as GWR coordinator; the TT/tenured
54 English Department faculty member, who serves as first-year composition
55 coordinator; and the CTLT writing instruction specialist, whose primary role
56 is to support faculty across the curriculum in developing writing pedagogies;
57 and be it further
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59 RESOLVED: That Associated Students, Inc., appoints to the GWR Advisory Board one
60 student representative to serve a one-year term; and be it further
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62 RESOLVED: That voting members of the GWR Advisory Board shall include the Writing
63 and Rhetoric Center director, who serves as the GWR Coordinator; the
64 TT/tenured English Department faculty member, who serves as first-year
65 composition coordinator; a faculty representative from each of the six
66 colleges; one representative from Professional Consultative Services; and
67 one ASI student representative or designee. The Ex Officio non-voting
68 member shall be the CTLT writing instruction specialist or designee; and be
69 it further
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71 RESOLVED: That the Writing and Rhetoric Center director, who serves as GWR
72 coordinator, acts as chair of the GWR Advisory Board; is the direct point of
73 contact for GWR-related questions; calls advisory board meetings; facilitates
74 work related to course modifications and proposals, GWR course-related
75 faculty support, and GWR program assessment; and drafts reports on the
76 work of the advisory board; and be it further
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78 RESOLVED: That the chair of the GWR Advisory Board report to the Senate at large a
79 summary of the work of the advisory board, including the results from all
80 GWR-related reviews, on an annual basis.

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Criteria for GWR-Certified Upper-Division Courses Across the Curriculum

A.) Course Capacity

The recommended course capacity for all GWR-certified upper-division courses is 25 or less, with a maximum capacity of 30, as currently practiced in GWR-approved English courses. Any GWR-certified section of a course with a history of being scheduled with a capacity over 30 will lose its GWR designation.

B.) Enrollment Eligibility

Students must have junior class standing¹ and have completed GE Area A with grades of C- or better in order to be eligible to fulfill the GWR in a certified upper-division course.

C.) Course Proposal Requirements and Process

- All proposals for GWR-certified upper-division courses shall express commitment to two or three of the GWR-related student learning outcomes as listed under the newly developed GWR category in the curricular management process, and an explanation of how those outcomes will be met in the course must be included in the proposal;
- Proposals for GWR certification in online upper-division courses shall follow guidelines and standards as outlined in the Resolution on eLearning Policy (AS-750-12) and consult with both the CTLT writing instruction specialist and an online instructional designer about best practices for teaching writing courses online;
- The workflow process for attaining GWR course designation will be similar to the process adopted by the new USCP committee: proposals first will be sent to the GWR Advisory Board, who will evaluate course modifications and new course proposals seeking the GWR designation for coherence with criteria, consult with the proposer(s) to improve the submission as needed, and advance the course modification or proposal in the workflow to the GEGB or, for non-GE courses, the ASCC for final approval;
- Proposals for GWR-certified upper-division courses will be approved by ASCC in all cases following recommendation from the GWR Advisory Board, and the GEGB when applicable.

D.) Curricular Requirements

All approved GWR-certified courses must be at the 300- or 400-level and must include the following:

- A minimum count of 3,000 total written words for the quarter
- Opportunities during the course for both low- and high-stakes writing (minor and major writing assignments):
 - Low-stakes writing opportunities may include but are not limited to blog posts, journal entries, and short (potentially ungraded) in-class written responses to help students make meaning of course concepts;

¹ At Cal Poly, any student with 90 completed units has junior class standing; in the case of fulfilling the GWR, if a second-year student has 90 or more completed units, that student is eligible to fulfill the requirement.

- High-stakes writing should require more sophisticated uses of language and should elicit instructor feedback that addresses both the form and the content of the student's work. High stakes assignments should ask students to engage in complex rhetorical tasks that build on Area A courses, such as synthesizing information, developing evidence-based arguments, catering a text for a specific audience, etc.;
- The equivalent of at least two hours devoted to overt writing instruction that could include combinations of any of the following:
 - Applying key rhetorical concepts into course content, such as those with which students are familiar from A1 and A3, to assignments (e.g. rhetorical appeals, logical fallacies, etc.);
 - Explaining the purposes and expectations of a writing assignment;
 - Discussing the disciplinary conventions and contexts of an assignment;
 - Examining models of written work to help students understand how best to successfully complete an assignment;
 - Assessing a wide variety of sources and navigating the library's research tools;
 - Learning and following specific citation style guidelines (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) for research-based assignments;
 - Identifying and accommodating the needs of a specific audience;
 - Reading and commenting on peers' works with instructor guidance.
- One major writing assignment with a word count between 1,250 and 1,750 that incorporates a process-oriented approach including the submission of one or more drafts upon which students receive feedback during peer review (recommended) and/or from the instructor (required) and are given an opportunity for revision; *Note: An in-class essay exam may not be used to assess writing proficiency for GWR certification;*
- Partnership with the UWRC Center to encourage student use of peer writing tutoring during the revision process and/or to embed writing tutors into the course on a one-time or ongoing basis (optional);
- The following course policies for end-of-term GWR Certification:
 - Students must earn a C or better on the major writing assignment; *and*
 - Students must earn a final course grade of C or better with at least 35% of the final grade based on the cumulative grade of all writing projects.²

E.) Instructor Requirements

After the GWR designation is approved for an upper-division course, the department scheduling a GWR class will ensure that assigned faculty adhere to the following:

- Completion of a CTLT-designed workshop series on best practices in writing instruction prior to the start of the course and/or a department-designed workshop series in consultation with the CTLT Writing Instruction Specialist (Note: All instructors who currently teach GWR-approved courses will be required to complete an information session and will be invited to offer insights on best practices during CTLT workshops for other instructors);

² This is driven by CSU policy guidelines.

- Adoption of all GWR-certified curricular requirements and course policies, including the following:
 - Commitment to enriching the course with writing practices that support writing as a process to learning and meaning-making, as outlined above;
 - Writing assignment evaluation methods aligned with GWR outcomes;
- Clear communication about GWR requirements and policies to students (e.g., students must have 90 completed units in order to be eligible to fulfill the GWR in a course, and 2) students are aware that GWR completion is dependent upon a grade of C or better both on the designated writing assignment and in the course);
- Timely submission of grade rosters for all GWR-certified upper-division courses to the UWRC with clear notation of students who have completed/not fulfilled the GWR in the course

F.) Requirements for Ongoing Course Review

- All scheduled GWR-certified upper-division courses may be audited by the campus-wide GWR Advisory Board at any time (but at least every 4-5 years) to ensure that outcomes continue to be met;
- Instructors of GWR-certified upper-division courses will be expected to participate in aggregate assessment of student performance periodically, on a random basis, by the campus-wide GWR Advisory Board in an effort to inform continuous improvement of course design, foster ongoing professional development, evaluate the GWR program, and ensure alignment between the GWR and the assessment of writing as a core competency;
- Instructors of GWR-certified upper-division courses will be expected to engage in CTLT-designed renewal/refresher workshops and/or department-designed renewal/refresher workshops offered in partnership with CTLT on a regular basis.

G.) Implementation Plan

- Upon Senate approval, six or more of the upper-division courses from across the curriculum proposed to certify the GWR will be approved as part of Phase I of the incremental rollout to offer GWR certification across a broad range of upper-division courses;
- All courses selected for Phase I will be required 1) to engage in discussion during and at the end of the quarter with the GWR Advisory Board, and 2) to submit students' major writing assignment to the GWR Advisory Board at the end of the quarter, both of which will inform any necessary revisions to the workflow, professional development program, and/or course criteria;
- A timeline will be established to approve additional courses as resources allow.