

The University Writing Requirement at Cal Poly Pomona

The Alternative GWT Committee was formed on August 26, 2020, to address changes to the Graduate Writing Test passed down by the CSU Chancellor's Office in a memo dated March 12, 2020. The Committee revised and adopted their proposal following the CSU Chancellor's Office memo dated April 25, 2022. This document summarizes, then details, our work.

Summary

CPP faculty value writing proficiency as a core component of student success; in the professional world, communication skills often serve to distinguish high-achieving professionals from their peers. Formerly, each student at CPP demonstrated their writing proficiency through the Graduate Writing Test (GWT). This imperfect and inequitable measure of student writing did little to acknowledge faculty's disciplinary perspectives or support the University's commitment to writing instruction. It also failed to cohere with the Academic Senate's policies on "meaningful writing" housed in the GE program (AS-2230/67GE).

Meaningful writing is best understood within a disciplinary context, and the committee proposes the attached referral draft to align faculty recognition of the importance of discipline-specific writing (memos, reports, essays, proposals, grants, etc.) with writing instruction at CPP.

This proposal serves to satisfy the CSU Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) by constituting a University Writing Requirement appropriate to CPP's polytechnic education. The highlights of the proposal include:

- Eliminating the GWT examination
- Allowing students to demonstrate writing proficiency through successful completion of Senate-approved upper-division writing-intensive courses
- Supporting major programs in identifying pre-existing courses within the major that meet the qualifications for a writing-intensive course (either as-is or with modification)
- Affording opportunities for students to satisfy this requirement through approved upper-division GE courses or courses in another discipline outside their major
- Replacing the Academic Senate GWT Committee with the University Writing Assessment Committee, which will oversee and support these efforts.

Proposal

1. Undergraduate University Writing Requirement (UWR)
 - a. Students will satisfy CPP's University Writing Requirement (UWR) by taking an upper-division writing-intensive course designated by a "W" in the University Catalog. Writing-intensive courses may be offered by the major-granting academic unit, another academic unit, or the General Education program.
 - i. No writing-intensive courses may be designated as such by a major program in another academic unit without that unit's approval.
 - b. **Eligibility:** Students will be eligible to take a W course after completion of 60 semester units per EO 665.
2. The University Writing Assessment Committee (UWAC)
 - a. The UWR will be overseen by an Academic Senate-appointed standing committee. The University Writing Assessment Committee (UWAC) will replace the senate GWT Committee.
 - b. The UWAC shall consist of one representative from each college, a Writing in the Disciplines Coordinator who will serve as chair, a representative from the Office of Assessment and Program Review, a representative from CAFE, and the University Writing Center Coordinator.
 - c. The UWAC will be responsible for the following:
 - i. Certifying courses as meeting the requirements for a writing-intensive "W" designation (listed below).
 - ii. Conducting regular review of course certification, as described below.
 - iii. Reviewing petitions of substitution for W-certified courses and transmitting the decision to the petitioning academic unit and the Registrar's Office. Student petitions must be accompanied by evidence of equivalence, including:
 1. Course syllabus;
 2. Sample writing or writing prompt from the course;
 3. Evidence of a grade of "C" or better for the course.
 - iv. Coordinating with CAFE for faculty development and resources to ensure writing instruction is sound, equitable, and consistent.
 - v. Coordinating with the Learning Resource Center and the University Writing Center to provide adequate support to faculty and students in W courses.
 - vi. Facilitating the collection of representative samples for University assessment.
 - vii. Evaluating assessment data to ensure equitable outcomes and take steps as necessary to promote student success in written communication.
3. UWR Course Certification and Approval Process
 - a. **Basic Qualifications:** To receive writing-intensive "W" certification, a course must be at the upper division and a minimum of 3-units. Academic units may propose new courses or designate existing courses to the UWAC.
 - b. **Learning outcomes:** To be designated as writing-intensive (W), a course must require, at minimum, students' demonstration of the following abilities (this list does not exclude other learning outcomes appropriate to the discipline and/or course):

- i. Understand the role of audience (i.e., professional, public, expert, informed novice) and purpose (i.e., to persuade, report, propose, review) in written communication
 - ii. Use appropriate disciplinary conventions (i.e., organization/structure, style and tone, formatting and citation practices)
 - iii. Critically engage with disciplinary content (i.e., through analyzing arguments, drawing conclusions, proposing recommendations)
 - iv. Leverage credible sources to develop informed ideas
 - v. Incorporate feedback and self-assessment to revise written work
- c. **Pedagogical practices:** To be designated as writing-intensive (W), a course must meet the following criteria:
- i. Amount of Writing: Students produce at least 4000 words (approximately 7 single-spaced pages/15 double-spaced pages, excluding references) of individually-composed formal writing that demonstrates upper-division written English proficiency within the course's given discipline
 - ii. Types of Writing: Students are assigned a variety of writing tasks that are sequenced and/or distributed throughout the semester, and not concentrated at the end
 - iii. Integrating Information Literacy and Critical Thinking in Writing: Students demonstrate the ability to analyze, organize, synthesize, and express their own and others' data or ideas; evaluate and incorporate source materials; and use disciplinary conventions appropriate for relevant audiences and purposes in their writing
 - iv. Processes of Writing: Students practice different writing processes (including brainstorming, drafting, substantive revising, and editing of major graded written assignments in response to instructor—and possibly peer—feedback and resources)
 - v. In-Class Attention to Writing: Meaningful class time is devoted to instruction in writing (i.e., analyzing audience needs and expectations, including conventions like the formal elements of technical reports or the level of formality expected in memos)
 - vi. Grading: 51% or more of a student's grade must be determined by their written communication skills through written assignments and/or take-home essay exams (e.g., written exams designed to allow for revision), which are evaluated for both content and quality of writing; students must pass the course with a C or better to fulfill the UWR requirement
 - vii. Class Size: Course enrollment cannot exceed 25 students without approval from the UWAC
- d. **Application Process:** Course certification and recertification are run through the UWAC.
- i. An academic unit proposing a new course for which certification is sought shall indicate on the proposal form that W certification is requested, and concurrently submit a proposal for W certification in Curriculog.

- ii. Proposals for W certification of preexisting classes, or recertification, shall be reviewed directly by the UWAC and need not be reevaluated by College and University Curricula Committees.
 - 1. W courses in the GE program must also be reviewed by the GE Committee.
- e. **Recertification:** The Office of Academic Programs shall keep a record of all W certified courses. After seven consecutive years, W certification shall expire. In the sixth year of certification, the Office of Academic Programs shall notify the academic unit that the course must be recertified.
 - i. If a course syllabus changes so that it no longer meets the requirements for W certification before the seven-year expiration, that course's W certification will be automatically revoked.
 - 1. A course that is denied W recertification will be allowed a grace period of one academic year to revise and resubmit for recertification. If the course has been denied W certification, it shall no longer be specified as a writing course but may continue to be offered as a regular course.
- f. Special Cases
 - i. Students shall receive credit for having met the requirement upon completion of the academic unit-specific upper-division writing course with a grade of "C" or higher, as long as the course was W certified at the time the student was enrolled, independent of the student's catalog year.
 - ii. Completion of another CSU's upper-division baccalaureate writing requirement with a grade of C or higher shall be transferrable to CPP.