

## The Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Policy Update

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CPP's Alternative GWT Committee was formed on August 26, 2020, to address changes to the [GWAR policy, EO 665, passed down by the CSU Chancellor's Office](#) in a memo dated March 12, 2020. EO 665 states that students "must demonstrate competence in writing skills through "a 3-semester unit, upper division course." By requiring *coursework* to demonstrate competence, the EO asserts that writing skills are best demonstrated as a process rather than through a single, high-stakes (and often inequitable) benchmarking assignment (exam, portfolio, etc.).

Drafted in 2020 and revised in 2023, CPP's plan calls for the creation of a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) program at CPP. Adopted by nearly half of all CSUs, WID programs recognize written communication not as a generic skill, but as a contextual one where conventions and audience expectations vary by field. By promoting the integration of writing into disciplinary courses, WID programs:

- respect the diversity of academic programs by empowering departments to set field-specific writing expectations;
- advance students' career readiness by preparing them to communicate in their chosen professions;
- and promote CPP's "learn by doing" mission by grounding writing instruction in field-specific work (e.g., reports, memos, business models, grant proposals, etc.).

The proposal below ensures students will be able to meet the GWAR standard and establishes the infrastructure to support faculty and students. To that end, the proposal:

- Eliminates the GWT examination;
- Replaces the Academic Senate GWT Committee with the University Writing Committee;
- And establishes standards, policies, and procedures for GWAR certification, review, and assessment.

### Proposal

1. **Graduate Assessment Writing Requirement (GWAR) Policy.** Eligible students will satisfy their GWAR through upper-division coursework in designated writing-intensive courses with a grade of C or higher. All majors must identify, within their curriculum, a way for students to satisfy GWAR. GWAR-certified courses should be offered as part of the curricular requirements of the major or a designated service course; Upper Division GE Synthesis coursework may also be available.
  - a. Students are eligible upon completion of 60 semester units per EO 665.
  - b. No writing-intensive courses may be designated as such by a major program nor included as a service course in another academic department without that department's approval.
  - c. A student's completion of another CSU's upper-division baccalaureate writing requirement with a grade of C or higher shall be transferrable to CPP.
2. **The University Writing Committee (UWC)** will oversee GWAR, replacing the current Academic Senate-appointed GWT Committee.

- a. **Membership:** The UWC shall consist of a Faculty Director or Coordinator with expertise in “Writing in the Disciplines” pedagogy who will serve as committee chair, the Composition Coordinator, one representative from each college, the University Library, a representative from the Office of Academic Programs, and a representative from the Office of Assessment and Program Review. It is recommended the University Writing Center Coordinator be included as well.
  - b. **Responsibilities:** The UWC’s responsibilities include:
    - i. Maintaining and developing GWAR certification standards and promoting best practices for writing instruction.
    - ii. Certifying courses as meeting GWAR standards.
    - iii. Coordinating with campus partners to advance faculty development, student support, and assessment practices.
    - iv. Conducting regular reviews of courses and assessment data to ensure sound, equitable, and consistent practices.
  - c. **GWAR Course Application:** Course certification and recertification are run through the UWC.
    - i. An academic unit proposing a new course for which certification is sought shall indicate on the proposal form that GWAR certification is requested and concurrently submit a proposal for GWAR certification in the Curriculum Management System (e.g. Curriculog).
    - ii. Proposals for GWAR certification of preexisting classes, or recertification, shall be reviewed directly by the UWC and need not be reevaluated by College and University Curricula Committees.
      - 1. GWAR courses in the GE program must also be reviewed by the GE Committee.
  - d. **GWAR Course Review and Recertification:** The Office of Academic Programs shall keep a record of all GWAR-certified courses and recertification timeline. Courses should be recertified either every seven years or in alignment with a department’s program review, as appropriate.
    - i. If a course changes in a way that it no longer meets the requirements for GWAR certification, the UWC and department should work to restore the alignment with GWAR standards, or that course’s GWAR certification can be revoked. If a course’s GWAR certification is revoked, the course can still be offered as a regular course, even if it no longer satisfies GWAR.
- 3. GWAR Certification Standards.** For a course to receive certification as a writing-intensive course, it must demonstrate it meets the following minimum standards:
- a. **Eligibility:** Upper Division course with a prerequisite of Junior Standing (60 units of coursework, per EO 665).
  - b. **Units:** GWAR must comprise at least 3 units. CPP considers this standard met either through:
    - i. a single, 3+ unit course,
    - ii. a corequisite course (e.g., a lecture and lab), 3+ units
    - iii. or complementary course sequence (for no more than 6 total units).

- c. **Enrollment Constraints:** Student enrollment in GVAR courses should not exceed 28 in 3-4 unit courses and should not exceed 40 in complementary courses. UWC is empowered to grant exceptions.
- d. **Learning outcomes:** The current standard for written communication at CPP was set by faculty through a university-wide consultation process and approved by the Academic Senate in the form of the written communication rubric (2018, rev. 2022). <https://www.cpp.edu/assessment/documents/written-communication-rubric.pdf>. This rubric identifies the minimum required learning outcomes associated with written communication. Writing assignments in GVAR courses must be assessable using the University rubric or aligned, certified instrument.
- e. **Pedagogical practices:** Disciplines are experts on the conventions and standards expected within their fields and writing instruction pedagogy should be adapted to those criteria. Minimum pedagogical expectations include:
  - i. *Amount of Writing:* Students produce at least 4000 words (approximately 7 single-spaced pages/15 double-spaced pages, including substantially revised words) of individually-composed writing.
  - ii. *Attention to Writing:* Meaningful time is devoted to instruction in writing through instructor feedback and other strategies (e.g., reviewing assignment expectations, peer review, analyzing audience needs and expectations, discussing disciplinary conventions and style, and embedded tutoring).
- f. **Grading:** GVAR is a CSU-mandated assessment requirement that certifies an individual student meets written communication standards. For that reason, course grades in GVAR-certified courses—which determine whether a student has met that standard—must be meaningfully aligned to a student’s individual performance on written communication. Grades assigned to a student’s written communication skills (defined by the rubric, which includes but is not limited to grammatical fluency) should constitute a substantial component of the course grade.
  - 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 GVAR certified at the time the student was enrolled, independent of the student’s catalog year.

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### GVAR Certification Standards

GVAR Standard	Description
<i>Upper Division</i>	Course must be a 3000 or 4000 level, prerequisite Junior Standing.
<i>Min. 3-units</i>	Can be a single course, corequisite courses, or complementary courses in sequence.
<i>Enrollment Cap</i>	28 for a single course, 28 in writing-intensive component of a corequisite, or 40 for complementary courses. Exceptions can be made in consultation.
<i>Pedagogy: Amount of Writing</i>	4000 individually-written words, including drafts.

<i>Pedagogy: Writing Instruction</i>	Meaningful time is devoted to instruction in writing through instructor feedback and other strategies (e.g., reviewing assignment expectations, drafting, peer review, analyzing audience needs and expectations, discussing disciplinary conventions and style, embedded tutoring).
<i>Assessment: Learning Outcomes</i>	Writing assignments in GVAR courses must be assessable using the University rubric or aligned, certified instrument.
<i>Assessment: Grading</i>	Grades assigned to a student's written communication skills (defined by the rubric, which includes but is not limited to grammatical fluency) should constitute a substantial component of the course grade.