

What the Graduation Writing Requirement Is All About

In 1976, the Trustees of the California State University System responded to both business community and university demands to reverse the decline in graduating students' writing skills. They stated that all students seeking a Bachelor's or Master's degree must "be required to demonstrate their proficiency with regard to writing skills as a requirement for graduation." The Trustees also decreed that students' writing skills be tested after completing ninety-quarter units. Thus, the California State University System established the Graduation Writing Requirement to assure that students have maintained the ability to write proficiently at the time of graduation and before they enter the professional workforce.

Cal Poly responded positively to the Trustees' mandate and created two options for fulfilling the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR):

1. Pass the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE), which costs \$35 and is given at 9 a.m. on a Saturday early in the fall, winter, and spring quarters. You must earn a score of 8 out of 12-points in order to complete your GWR milestone.
2. Pass a GWR-approved upper-division course with a grade of C or better AND receive certification of proficiency in writing based on a 500-word in-class essay. Students can enroll in one of the following NON-GE WRITING courses: English 301, 302, 310, 317, 318, 326; or from these GE C4 LITERATURE courses: 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 345, 346, 347, 349, 350, 351, 352, 354, 370, 371, 372, 380, or 381.

The University has established GWR certification standards and specification guidelines, which must be met within the English courses in Option 2. If a student chooses Option 2 to meet the GWR, he or she must inform the instructor teaching that course and students may attempt to write a proficient in-class essay more than once.

When you reach ninety-quarter units, you can either take a GWR-approved upper-division course or you can take the WPE. During the summer quarter, course work is the only option available. Test dates and sign-up deadlines are published in the test section of the Student Planning Calendar in the Class Schedule.