WPE AND GPE SCORES BY TESTING SESSION JULY 2014-NOVEMBER 2018

The following chart presents information on the WPE (Writing Proficiency Examination) and its replacement, the GPE (GWAR [Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement] Placement Examination) for July 2014 to September 2018.

One of the main concerns of the GWAR Committee over the past 15 years has been to develop ways of assisting struggling writers at CSULB. In the past (prior to 2007), students who failed the WPE had no choice but to retake the test. This resulted in some students taking the WPE numerous times, but not passing. Since the WPE was a summative assessment given to the students at the end of their academic careers, there was no mechanism in place to help these students develop their writing skills. This meant that the WPE served as a barrier to graduation for a segment of the CSULB student population.

To address this problem, the GWAR committee created the "GWAR portfolio courses," first available to students in 2007. Students who failed the WPE could now be placed into one of these courses, which were specifically designed to help students develop their writing skills.

The GWAR policy that was passed in 2012 used these courses to create a pathway for students. First, the writing test was now to be given earlier in the students' academic careers (between 30 and 50 CSULB baccalaureate units for continuing undergraduate students and in the first semester of enrollment for transfer students), allowing students who failed enough time to be placed into ENGL 301A (for students who received 7 or below on the test) or a GWAR portfolio course (for students who received an 8, 9 or 10) before completing a General Education (GE) Writing Intensive (WI) capstone course. Students who passed the examination placed directly into the GE WI course. The reasoning behind the creation of this pathway was two-fold: (1) the committee sought to provide instruction to students who evidenced difficulties with academic writing in English; and (2) the committee sought to provide all students with experience writing academic English in the disciplines.

Responding to previous external evaluator concerns on the validity of a timed writing test for assessing student writing skills, and given the near-ceiling passing rates for native English-speaking students, the GWAR committee since 2012 has explored numerous options for identifying struggling writers on campus. However, due to logistical and financial constraints, as well as concerns from the Testing Office over workload, the GWAR committee ultimately settled on making small changes to the WPE. This resulted in the creation of the GPE, which differs from its predecessor in its use of supporting texts and graphs to help students produce more analytical (as opposed to narrative) essays.

While the change in the test received positive feedback from readers (faculty who rate the GPE essays) and other stakeholders, it did not lead to a significant change in passing rates. The chart below provides passing rates for different student demographics, including graduate, undergraduate and transfer students. Please note that most graduate students are exempt from taking the test, as students with a BA from an English-speaking university are exempt.

Students from non-English speaking universities can self-place into a GWAR portfolio course or take the GPE. Overall, the passing rates for undergraduate (93.6%) and undergraduate transfer students (88.3%) remain very high.

Test session	Student type	Fail	Pass
July 2014 (WPE)	Graduate	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)
	Undergraduate	22 (6%)	382 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	11 (10%)	101 (90%)
September 2014 (WPE)	Graduate	43 (40%)	64 (60%)
	Undergraduate	23 (7%)	305 (93%)
	Undergraduate transfer	139 (11%)	1143 (89%)
November 2014 (WPE)	Graduate	35 (39%)	55 (61%)
	Undergraduate	101 (6%)	1595 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	219 (12%)	1658 (88%)
February 2015 (WPE)	Graduate	16 (24%)	51 (76%)
	Undergraduate	76 (7.5%)	938 (92.5%)
	Undergraduate transfer	86 (10%)	742 (90%)
April 2015 (WPE)	Graduate	12 (37.5%)	20 (62.5%)
	Undergraduate	102 (8%)	1213 (92%)
	Undergraduate transfer	75 (12%)	572 (88%)
July 2015 (WPE)	Graduate	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)
	Undergraduate	31 (7%)	440 (93%)
	Undergraduate transfer	28 (14%)	176 (86%)
September 2015 (WPE)	Graduate	19 (30%)	44 (70%)
	Undergraduate	25 (7%)	335 (93%)
	Undergraduate transfer	164 (12%)	1155 (88%)
November 2015 (WPE)	Graduate	48 (39%)	74 (61%)
	Undergraduate	56 (6%)	940 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	201 (13%)	1386 (87%)
February 2016 (WPE)	Graduate	13 (43%)	17 (57%)
	Undergraduate	45 (6%)	717 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	72 (11%)	572 (89%)

April 2016 (WPE)	Graduate	20 (43.5%)	26 (56.5%)
	Undergraduate	78 (6%)	1198 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	81 (11%)	642 (89%)
July 2016 (GPE)	Graduate	11 (48%)	12 (52%)
	Undergraduate	28 (6%)	448 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	145 (10%)	1254 (90%)
September 2016 (GPE)	Graduate	5 (15%)	27 (85%)
	Undergraduate	16 (6%)	262 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	121 (13%)	818 (87%)
November 2016 (GPE)	Graduate	28 (32%)	59 (68%)
	Undergraduate	66 (7%)	935 (93%)
	Undergraduate transfer	149 (14%)	949 (86%)
February 2017 (GPE)	Graduate	3 (43%)	4 (57%)
	Undergraduate	29 (9%)	282 (91%)
	Undergraduate transfer	51 (11%)	411 (89%)
April 2017 (GPE)	Graduate	8 (33%)	16 (67%)
	Undergraduate	78 (6%)	1324 (94%)
	Undergraduate transfer	69 (12%)	515 (88%)
June 2017 (GPE)	Graduate	6 (20%)	24 (80%)
	Undergraduate	44 (6.8%)	605 (93.2%)
	Undergraduate transfer	183 (11.9%)	1351 (88.1%)
September 2017 (GPE)	Graduate	5 (18.5%)	22 (81.5%)
	Undergraduate	11 (5.4%)	191 (94.6%)
	Undergraduate transfer	86 (11.6%)	656 (88.4%)
November 2017 (GPE)	Graduate	22 (38.6%)	35 (61.4%)
	Undergraduate	54 (5.9%)	858 (94.1%)
	Undergraduate transfer	143 (15.1%)	805 (84.9%)
February 2018 (GPE)	Graduate	6 (33.3%)	12 (66.7%)
	Undergraduate	43 (8.5%)	465 (91.5%)
	Undergraduate transfer	67 (10.5%)	571 (89.5%)
April 2018 (GPE)	Graduate	15 (53.6%)	13 (46.4%)
	Undergraduate	63 (6.2%)	947 (93.8%)

	Undergraduate transfer	78 (13.9%)	482 (86.1%)
June 2018 (GPE)	Graduate	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
	Undergraduate	19 (4.0%)	451 (96.0%)
	Undergraduate transfer	53 (9.8%)	489 (90.2%)
September 2018 (GPE)	Graduate	0 (0%)	7 (100%)
	Undergraduate	7 (3.1%)	216 (96.9%)
	Undergraduate transfer	87 (7.9%)	1013 (92.1%)

With the passage of EO 1100, CSULB is considering changes to both the GE policy and the GWAR policy. The GEGR Ad hoc committee has recommended abandoning all campus-specific graduation requirements, including the writing requirement; the GWAR Committee has recommended that the requirement remain so the campus can have a system for helping struggling writers on campus.

Respectfully submitted,
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Chair of GWAR Committee
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