



California State University, Sacramento

Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)

Writing Placement for Graduates Exam Workshop Packet

1. Overview of the GWAR

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- b. The placement scores
- c. The three options for placement: equivalency standards, GWI, WPG

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- a. A sample test prompt
- b. The placement criteria
- c. FAQs about the WPG

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<http://www.al.csus.edu/writing/gewritingrequirements/gwar.php>

Graduate-Level Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)

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FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY

► What is the Graduate GWAR?

The GWAR is a CSU wide requirement that should be completed by graduate students before advancing to candidacy. The purpose of the GWAR is for students to demonstrate their proficiency at writing in an academic setting at a graduate level. The GWAR requires a two-step process:

Step 1: Receive a GWAR Placement;

Step 2: Complete the culminating experience for your graduate program.

► What are the Graduate GWAR Placements?

The GWAR Placement (Step 1) determines whether you will need additional writing instruction or assistance before completing your culminating experience. The placements are described below:

What you see	What it means
90	Step 1 of graduate-level GWAR met through Option A equivalency standards.
80	Step 1 of graduate-level GWAR met through Option C WPG test placement.
40	Step 1 of graduate-level GWAR not met through WPG; requirements must be met before advancing to candidacy.

► How do I receive a Graduate GWAR Placement?

There are three options by which you can receive your GWAR Placement:

■ Option A: Meet one of the equivalency standards upon entry to the university

These equivalency standards include having a graduate degree, being published in an academic journal, or having received a 4.5 or higher on the analytical writing portion of the GRE. For a list of ways to meet the equivalency standard and instructions for how to submit proof, see the Graduate GWAR webpage (listed above).

■ Option B: Earn a grade of 'B' or higher in a Graduate Writing Intensive (GWI) course in your graduate program

The GWI course will immerse graduate students in the discourse of their academic or professional discipline and prepare them to participate effectively in that discourse. At this time, not all graduate programs have a GWI course available for their students. For a list of current GWI courses and more information about these courses, see the Graduate GWAR webpage listed above).

■ Option C: Take the Writing Placement for Graduates (WPG) timed essay exam

The WPG is a timed essay test that is offered twice per year. For more information about the test, see the Graduate GWAR webpage (listed above.)

If you receive a placement score of 40, you must complete one of the following:

Alternative 1: Retake the GRE/GMAT exam and obtain a score of 4.5 or better on the analytical writing section. Then file a waiver form with the Office of Graduate Studies (refer to Option A above).

Alternative 2: Earn a grade of 'B' or higher in a GWI course in your graduate program which meets the GWI guidelines (refer to Option B above).

Alternative 3: Earn a grade of 'B' or higher in ENGL 220W, a graduate writing seminar which meets the GWI guidelines, offered through the College of Continuing Education (CCE) during the summer and winter sessions. This writing course is designed to help you practice prewriting, drafting and revising the kinds of writing that you will be required to accomplish throughout your graduate study. The goal of this course is for all participants to develop critical self-reflective scholarship through reading, research, writing, and discussion. For more information about ENGL 220W, see the course catalog or the CCE website.

The Writing Placement for Graduates (WPG)

The WPG asks writers to compose two essays: For the first essay, writers will respond to a topic after reading a selection of brief texts that represent a variety of genres typical in scholarly and professional writing, such as graphs, charts, tables, bullet lists, and scholarly prose. For the second essay, writers will discuss their writing history and practices.

On the day of the exam, writers should bring the following (an exam booklet and scratch paper will be provided):

- two forms of photo ID (e.g. Sac State One Card, Driver's License, passport, Military ID, etc.)
- several pens and pencils (final draft must be in ink)
- printed dictionary (optional) – thesaurus and electronic dictionaries are not allowed

► WPG Exam Dates

Upcoming Exam Dates	Online Registration Available	Make-Up Exam Date
Monday, January 5, 2015	December 5 - December 19, 2015	Tuesday, January 6, 2015
Saturday, August 22, 2015	August 3 - August 14, 2015	Tuesday, August 25, 2015
Saturday, January 23, 2016	January 4 - January 15, 2016	Tuesday, January 26, 2016

► Registration & Fees

Registration for each exam is available online at www.csus.edu/testing during a specific two-week period (see above). Registration closes at 12pm (noon) on the last day of online registration listed. Late registration for the WPG is NOT accepted. You can request accommodations during registration for the following:

Students with Disabilities: Students who are registered with the Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD) Office may be eligible to receive testing accommodations. For more information, contact SSWD in Lassen Hall 1008 (phone: 916-278-6955).

Multilingual Students: Multilingual students are eligible to receive an additional hour and fifteen minutes for the exam. Multilingual accommodations will be given to students who answer the multilingual question during online registration.

The \$20 exam fee is NONREFUNDABLE and NONTRANSFERABLE. Your exam fee will be posted to your MySacState account after you complete registration. Though the fee may be posted sooner, please allow until the end of business the day after you register for the fee to show on your account. Be sure to check your account frequently for an update of your fees. Fees must be paid by the due date listed on your MySacState account. It is recommended that you pay your fee within 72 hours. If you fail to pay your exam fees by the due date, your registration will be cancelled.

1) Paying in person at the Student Financial Services Center located in Lassen Hall room 1001. Normal Fall office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In person payment will be accepted through 5pm on the last day of registration. **OR**
2) Paying online through your MySacState Student Center, choose Account Inquiry, then click the green button to make an online payment. Additional fees will apply.

► Preparation Workshops

At the end of the online registration process you will find a link to help you sign up for a GEAR WPG workshop. These workshops are free, one-time, one-hour informational sessions that will give you information about the exam, show you a sample WPG exam, and give you a chance to ask questions about the exam.

► Make-Up Exam

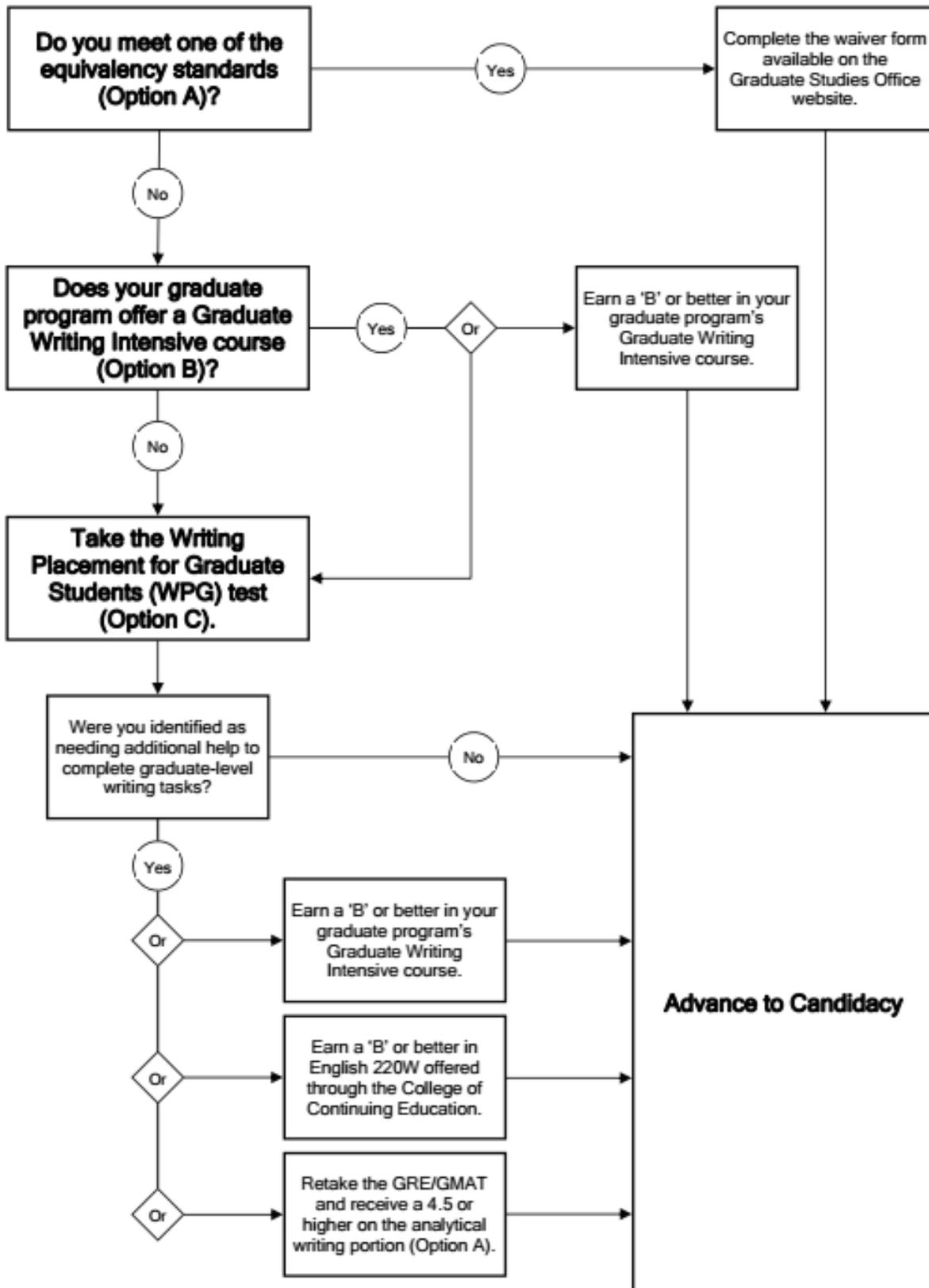
A make-up exam is available for students who aren't able to attend the day of the exam for religious, academic, medical, or other compelling reasons. Make-up requests are only considered for those who already registered and paid for the exam. If your request is approved, you will receive an email at your SaLink email address by end of business on Monday following the exam. To qualify for the make-up exam, students must send a request in writing according to the following instructions:

- Written requests can be sent via email to english@csus.edu or delivered to Calaveras Hall 103.
- All requests must be received by 12pm on the Monday following the original exam date.
- All requests must include the following information: 1) Name, Student ID #, Registration Confirmation #, and 2) supporting documentation (e.g. a written statement on letterhead from your clergy, proof of a conflicting exam appointment, a class schedule showing a Saturday course, a letter from your coach showing a conflicting athletic event, a doctor's note or police accident report proving an emergency on the day of the exam, etc.).

► Exam Results

Placement scores (see page 1 for an explanation of placement scores) will be made available as soon as possible—typically within three to four weeks after the exam date. You will find your score on MySacState. Go to your Student Center and select “Test Score Summary” from the drop down menu located toward the middle of the page.

Sacramento State University Graduate-Level GWAR Flowchart



Sample Writing Placement for Graduates (WPG) Exam Prompt

Preparation Time (30 minutes, MLI 45 minutes)

Read the Essay #1 question, then study the texts that follow it. Use the scratch paper provided to plan and organize your response. If you wish, you may also read the Essay #2 question at this time.

Essay #1 (60 minutes, MLI 90 minutes)

Several significant issues could emerge from the following five texts. Please read all the texts and write a cohesive academic paper, essay, report, or other document in which you do the following:

- identify and communicate a focus/issue arising from these texts;
- articulate your own analytical position on the issue;
- acknowledge other possible position(s) on that same issue; and
- develop and support your position by: explicitly referencing ideas from Text 1; incorporating ideas from at least two of the other provided texts; and using information from your own experiences and knowledge.

TEXT 1 (required)

excerpt from Understanding Graduate Students: Their Values, Beliefs, and Motivations by George Barna of Barna Research Group, Glendale, CA

If you want to understand the direction of this nation, examine the people who will lead the country during the first years of the next century. Where do you find these people? In our graduate schools. There are 1.5 million young adults enrolled in graduate programs in America today. If past performance is any indication -- and there is no reason to believe it is not -- they will quickly rise to positions of influence and authority in business, education, and government. A study of the CEO's of America's largest 1000 companies shows that the vast majority earned a graduate degree. Graduate training has become virtually a prerequisite for our federal lawmakers; more than three-quarters of our Congresspersons have a graduate degree on their resumes.

But what do we know about the graduate student population? In scouring the libraries and research computers for insights, it became clear that little attention has been focused upon the graduate student population. To address the paucity of information about this vital segment, the Barna Research Group worked in cooperation with Grad Resources to conduct a national survey of grad students. Using telephone surveys with a representative sample of 404 students, stratified by degree program and type of school, we evaluated their interests, lifestyles, and felt needs.

Grad school is a time of high anxiety for most participants. In fact, compared with measures of anxiety across different occupational groups, we found that grad students are more anxiety-ridden than most segments we have tested. The most crippling anxiety affecting grad students was the struggle to achieve balance in life. While there is gratification earned from academic achievement, grad students fear being transformed into academic machine, devoid of any real life outside the classroom or library. In conjunction with this fear was concern for their personal health. Many grad students indicated that stresses and pressures of grad school were taking an emotional toll on them. Success in career, finances, and scholarly pursuits, all ranked higher than their concerns about interaction with peers. This limited concern could be related to a fear that excess energy devoted to interpersonal activities might drain them of the focus they need to excel academically. Sadly, though, some grad students pointed out that the very emphasis upon academics, at the expense of deeper relationships, is what has led them to a point of emotional emptiness.

The importance of the issue of balance in lifestyle cannot be over emphasized. Balance is not one of the post graduate realities for which students are being prepared. Discussions about balancing career achievement and personal wholeness are absent from classroom lectures, and missing from pages of the textbooks that are underlined and memorized. Yet the conclusion grad students arrive at regarding balance may be among the most important products of their studies. Their definition of balance, their means of achieving it, and the importance of balancing competing interests will set the pace for their post collegiate lifestyles. And that, as much as anything else they derive from their studies, will direct the quality of their lives.

TEXT 2

<http://www.ncda.org/pdf/ncdareport.pdf>

Adults were asked the following question: Do you feel that you will need more training or education in order to maintain or increase your earning power during the next few years? Their responses are tabulated below:

FEEL MORE TRAINING/EDUCATION NEEDED TO MAINTAIN/INCREASE EARNING POWER DURING NEXT FEW YEARS

(Based on ever employed)

	Yes %	No %	DK/RF %	Total %	NI
TOTAL	53	45	2	100	(1001)
AGE					
18-25 years	80	20	0	100	(125)
26-40 years	66	34	*	100	(318)
41-55 years	59	40	1	100	(269)
56-65 years	26	73	1	100	(127)
66 and over	18	78	4	100	(136)
EDUCATION					
Less than H.S.	42	57	1	100	(79)
H.S. grad.	52	47	1	100	(305)
Voc./community college	66	31	3	100	(131)
Some 4-year college	65	34	1	100	(141)
College grad.	48	51	1	100	(328)

*Less than one-half of one percent.

TEXT 3

Excerpt from "How This Lawyer Ended Up With \$350,000 In Debt And Near Poverty-Level Income" by Laura Shin for Forbes.com.

Lisa S.* is 39-year-old on public assistance. She is also a law school graduate with over \$300,000 in student loan debt.

After getting her undergrad at the Minneapolis College of Art & Design, she had less than \$25,000 in student loan debt, which bothered her so much, she paid it off in two years doing freelance video production and editing everything from weddings and high school graduations to public events and historical documentaries. She then moved to California and got a master of fine arts from the University of Southern California Film School. "I assumed the more education, the higher salary," she says. "I was aware that with a master's degree, in certain jobs you can get a higher pay grade, and that you'd be eligible for more jobs, even with just teaching." But when she graduated, she was frustrated that "the career services department was basically telling me to go join temp agencies and giving me work that wasn't going to pay the bills, like production assistant or office assistant work — work that wasn't going to pay my student loan payments, and that I didn't need any education to have those jobs."

The following year, 2004, she gave birth to a son and soon realized she would not be able to make ends meet as a single mother doing film and TV editing. She did some number crunching and decided that law would allow her to earn more than what she was then earning, even if she earned at the low end of the pay scale. She enrolled at Pepperdine Law School, deferring her loan payments from USC, "which were killing me," she says. The total loan debt for her MFA and her JD was initially \$275,000.

Graduating in 2009, Lisa ended up on the job market at a time when employment for recent law grads had just begun slowing. (2013 was the sixth straight year of declining employment rates for recent grads.) Though she had been an A student all her life, having a toddler while she was in law school wasn't conducive to studying, so she ended up in the middle of the curve — a C student. Though before the recession, firms still would have recruited someone with her grades, by the time she graduated, jobs for students like her were scarce. Though she did one high-paying contract gig and passed the California bar, she eventually realized the state was too expensive for her as a single mom with two sets of grad school loans, and a \$15,000 post-graduate bar study loan exam. But moving back to Minnesota meant she had to retake the bar, which was about another year of

being unable to work as a lawyer, during which time she amassed \$40,000 in credit card debt, mostly to cover the extra costs associated with taking care of her son, even though she took on odd photography jobs and began adjunct-teaching law.

Now a solo practitioner in a small Minnesota town, where the median income in her field is \$50,000 a year, she is just starting out and making about \$20,000 per year. Even with that income, and \$500 a month in child support, she and her son are on food stamps, and he is in the free school lunch program. She is aware that her low income is affecting the extracurricular choices she makes with him and tries to take advantage of some of the special programs offered by her state for food stamp recipients, such as \$9 tickets to the science museum, where the actual price is \$30.

Though she has good credit — between 650 and 700 — “I have this big mark over my head because I have too much student loan debt,” she says. Though she once had hoped to buy a home, she cannot even afford the median home price of \$150,000 in her small town, where many of the local farmers who don’t have degrees own their homes. She also rues her inability to save for retirement or for her 10-year-old’s college education and doesn’t know what she’ll recommend to him when it is his time to consider higher education.

More than once she has thought that she might have been better off without the education and the debt. She’s been crunching the numbers and was surprised to realize it might make financial sense for her to default on her loans. “I do feel like the key decision that has harmed me was to try to get to the advanced level,” she says, adding that for many people such as doctors, it delays their ability to get started on goals like buying a car or a home till their 30s. “I will likely die before I repay this debt.”

**Lisa asked not to use her last name because it is distinctive; she also doesn’t want the details of being on public assistance and earning poverty-level income to affect her as she grows her law practice.*

TEXT 4

<http://www.idealists.org/info/GradEducation/BadReasons>

Bad reasons to go to grad school: Consider these red flags in your decision

You may want to reevaluate your readiness for graduate education if any of the following are a significant or the most significant factor in your interest in applying to grad school:

You are avoiding personal/family/financial obligations. As if graduate education weren’t already stressful enough! Rather than providing a solution to other issues going on in your life, going to grad school will most likely aggravate them. Who needs the extra stress? And a costly one at that. There are healthier and more affordable ways to resolve difficult personal challenges.

You are avoiding or having difficulty in the job hunt. If you are avoiding the job hunt—especially if this is your first job out of college—realize that when you complete grad school, you will find yourself in the same position again. Employers place a great deal of weight on your experience, not just your education.

You are dissatisfied with your current employment. Grad school is a very expensive solution unless you were already considering graduate education prior to your current situation, and feel that you’ve reached a point in your career where further education is necessary for advancement. If you don’t like your current job, consider finding a new job. If that’s not possible, try to make your job more satisfying by addressing the problems directly.

You don’t know what to do with your life. If this is the case, going to grad school is among the last things you should do. A graduate education can be an invaluable tool to help you accomplish what you want to do with your life, but it will not resolve any confusion or uncertainty about your career or life’s purpose.

You think that a graduate degree is necessary for your next steps. Definitely do your research first. Talk to people. Talk to people who are doing what you want to do. Ask them if a degree is necessary or matters for that job or field. If so, ask which degree they recommend and seek their advice on when you should go to grad school. If not, ask them what the steps are to get to where they are and do what they are doing.

You have always been curious about X. If you are curious about a particular subject or field, exploring that interest can take many forms, without having to commit the resources (time, money) required for grad school.

You have always wanted to live in X. Moving to another location can be one of the most stressful and exciting experiences you can undergo, and a move should be a consequence of your decision to go to grad school—not the other way around. Unless you are very sure that getting a graduate education is the right choice for you, using grad school as the main reason to move is probably not a wise decision.

TEXT 5

MEDIAN EARNINGS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2014 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS) BY SEX BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR THE POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	United States Estimate
Total:	36,034
Less than high school graduate	19,954
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	27,868
Some college or associate's degree	33,988
Bachelor's degree	50,515
Graduate or professional degree	66,944
Male:	42,137
Less than high school graduate	23,104
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	33,336
Some college or associate's degree	41,506
Bachelor's degree	61,619
Graduate or professional degree	84,137
Female:	30,481
Less than high school graduate	15,369
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	22,377
Some college or associate's degree	28,393
Bachelor's degree	41,917
Graduate or professional degree	56,185

Essay #2 (30 minutes, MLI 60 minutes)

Please write an essay in which you discuss the extent to which your own academic writing experiences as a student reflect the recommendations below.

The National Council of Writing Program Administrators, a professional organization for college writing teachers, recommends that in order to help students become more effective academic writers, “faculty in all programs and departments [should] help students to learn (1) the uses of writing as a critical thinking method; (2) the interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing; and (3) the relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their disciplinary fields.”

Writing Placement for Graduates (WPG) Placement Rubric

1. **FOCUS:** Identifies and communicates a focus arising from the prompt.
2. **POSITION:** Articulates writer's own analytical position on the focus or issue identified while acknowledging other possible position(s) on that same issue.
3. **COHESION:** Composes an introduction, body, and conclusion that analyze major ideas surrounding the issue and position articulated.
4. **DEVELOPMENT:** Develops and supports writer's position by: explicitly referencing ideas from Text #1; incorporating ideas from at least two of the other provided texts; and using information from your own experiences and knowledge.
5. **PROCESS:** Provides evidence of awareness of writing as a process: demonstrates awareness of process steps, and/or reflects on writer's own literacy history and practices.
6. **CONVENTIONS:** Shows awareness of academic expectations by making appropriate rhetorical choices, such as those related to audience, purpose, tone, format, and source integration.
7. **EDITING:** Displays evidence of editing with adequate control of grammar and mechanics appropriate to an early draft.

Frequently Asked Questions about the WPG

1. How long will the exam take? What are the time limits for the exam?

You should set aside 2.5 hours for this exam – 3.5 hours if you signed up for the WPG as a multilingual student.

- **WPG Time Limits:** The test proctor will take about 15-20 minutes to check in all students, verify identifications, mark the roster, and have students fill out a short questionnaire. Then, you will have 30 minutes to read the prompt and to plan your essays. You will be given 60 minutes to write Essay #1 and 30 minutes to write Essay #2. Test proctors will not remind you of these time limits. It is your responsibility to manage your time.
- **Multilingual WPG Time Limits:** If you are taking the multilingual version, it will take 15-20 minutes for check in. You will be given 45 minutes to read and plan your work, 90 minutes to write Essay #1 and 60 minutes to write Essay #2. Test proctors will not remind you of these time limits. It is your responsibility to manage your time.
- **Students with Disabilities Time Limits:** If you are a student registered with SSWD accommodations and require additional time, your time will depend on your approved accommodations. Contact the Testing Center at 916-278-6296 for more information.

2. Will there be holds on my registration if I don't take the exam or enroll in the course?

No holds will be placed on your registration; however, you will not be able to advance to candidacy until you have completed the Graduate GWAR.

3. Where can I see some sample WPG student essays?

Since the WPG is a placement test, we do not provide any sample student essays.

4. What are the possible WPG prompt topics?

The prompt topics for the first essay will ask writers to read several short texts, identify an issue arising from those texts, and write an essay taking a position on that issue. The several short reading texts that we provide in a WPG may be on any topic about which a college student may have some background knowledge. The second essay typically asks that students reflect on his or her writing process.

5. How long should the essays be for the WPG?

Your essays will not be scored on the length. You should plan accordingly so that you have time to draft and write both essays.

6. What format should I write the essay in?

There is no required format for the essays. However, we do recommend that you skip lines between paragraphs (but not between each line) as you write; this makes your work easier to read and leaves you room to make some revisions if necessary.

7. Does the prompt change for Essay #2 or will it always be about writing processes?

The prompt for Essay #2 will not always be the same; however, it will always ask writers to focus on some aspect of themselves as writers or on some aspect of their writing processes.

8. Can I retake the WPG if I am unhappy with my score?

No, the WPG is a placement exam that may only be taken once.