Frequently asked Questions

What is the WPST?

WPST stands for "Writing Proficiency Screening Test." It is used to determine your readiness for Writing Proficiency (WP) courses, which satisfy the University's Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. You must pass the WPST before you can enroll in any Writing Proficiency (WP) course, in or out of your major. For example, any student wishing to enroll in ART 4570, a WP course, must pass the WPST before the semester begins. Art majors, also, must first have passed the WPST before enrolling in ART 4570.

What does the WPST consist of?

The WPST is a test of your writing abilities. You will be given an hour and a half to write one essay to demonstrate whether you write well enough to enroll in a WP course. A very modest performance will get you through because the WPST is a screening test rather than a final competence indicator.

The subject is always one that requires no specialized information beyond common sense experience of life, and you are asked to say something substantial about the subject. Merely generating correct sentences and giving back the question-repeating what the question supplies-is not enough. You must develop and sustain a main idea throughout the essay.

What is a WP course?

It's an upper division course, in any department, designated as a Writing Proficiency course by the University Writing Committee. In a WP course, students are expected to write as an integral part of learning course content and preparing for their careers. A grade of C- or higher in the WP course indicates that the department endorses the writing competence of the student receiving the grade.

If I have passed my GE courses (ENGL 1001 and ENGL 2000 or PHIL 2000) and also passed the WPST, why should a WP course be necessary?

The WPST does not guarantee writing competency. It is a screening test. The WP course offers you time to learn to polish your writing in contrast to the WPST's rapid first draft.

Writing is not just something to be instructed in and tested on. It's a way of communicating information about your discipline while at the university and afterward as you pursue your chosen career. The right place to practice is in a WP course in your major -- when you're relatively mature and committed to a subject area and are anticipating entering a given field of work after graduation. Achievement is demonstrated in WP courses, where you write about a subject you know about for teachers in that discipline. The teachers of WP courses will provide you with important feed-back about how effectively you are communicating the information you are assimilating in your major coursework.
How can I identify a WP course? Some WP courses are listed in the University catalog. Since new WP courses are added from time to time, you should check with your department or advisor for an updated list.

WP courses are identified in the Class Schedule by the symbol "WP" occurring immediately following the course title. Example: ART 4570 001 Senior Seminar in Art History (WP).

**Who must take the WPST?**

All students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree (BA or BS) must take the WPST, except those who have satisfied the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement on this campus, or those who satisfied the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement on another CSU campus before transferring to Stanislaus. Since one reason for the WPST is to implement a CSU system wide writing requirement, there are no exemptions based on GPA or other performance indicators.

**If I challenge the content of a WP course, do I have to take the WPST First?**

Yes.

**If I pass the CBEST as an undergraduate, do I still have to take the WPST?**

Yes.

**If I take more than one WP course, must I pass the WPST each time?**

No. Once you have passed the WPST, you may enroll in as many WP courses as you like.

**Can I register for a WP course before I have passed the WPST?**

Yes. You might be required to register for classes before having the opportunity to take the WPST. If this happens, you may register for a WP class. Remember: if you fail to take the test or don't pass it by the first day of the WP class, you must drop the course.

**When should I take the WPST?**

If you started Stanislaus as a freshman, you should take the WPST as soon as you pass ENGL 2000 or PHIL 2000. If you transferred to Stanislaus as a junior, take the WPST during your first semester on campus -- unless you have not yet completed ENGL 2000 or PHIL 2000 or their equivalents.

**How can I prepare for the WPST?**

Read and write regularly. Take your Area A General Education classes seriously. Take other courses in which writing is required. If you have difficulty with your writing, seek help from a tutor at the Writing Center. Attend the WPST Preparation Meetings. Take advantage of the campus-sponsored self-help facilities (see pp. 15-17).

Read the sample question in the next section of this booklet. Write your response (allow
yourself 1 1/2 hours). Then, read the sample essays in the booklet and compare them to your essay. Also read under ‘Help with the WPST’ on this website.

**What is the WPST preparation meeting?**

It is a quick review session for the test. Dates and location for each meeting will be posted on this website and in the WPST Office, Writing Center and all academic departments.

**How are the WPST essays scored?**

Your WPST essays are read by CSU Stanislaus and local community college faculty (not just English teachers!) who are trained for the work and who do it under controlled conditions for accuracy and uniformity in scoring. They read the WPST essays holistically; that is, they make a judgment about the overall merit of each piece of writing, trying to reward what the essay does well. Each essay is read and scored by at least two different readers.

**What are the WPST readers looking for?**

They are looking for papers that focus on the question and develop an idea in an informative, explanatory manner. Acceptable essays will be organized. The writing will be free of habitual errors.

**What if I fail the WPST?**

You must retake the test until you pass.

**What if I repeatedly fail the WPST?**

**WPST Workshop**

The Writing Center, in cooperation with the WPST office and Student Support Services, is offering a series of WPST Preparation Workshops. For more information, go to the ‘Welcome’ page of the WPST website, and click on the WPST Workshop. PDF. Please visit the WPST office, MSR 180 to sign up for the workshop sessions.

**ENGLISH 3000**

ENGL 3000 (3 units) is an Intermediate Composition Course. Course designed to help students further develop their abilities in addressing the complexity of a topic, developing an argument, organizing information, and controlling language. Students successfully completing the course and the final examination will be eligible to register for Writing Proficiency courses. Prerequisite: Two unsuccessful attempts on the Writing Proficiency Screening Test (WPST).

**Good Papers:**

- Focus on the question
What are the WPST dates?

The WPST is offered approximately one month before the beginning of each semester. Current test dates are on the Welcome page of this website under ‘Dates to Remember’.