Sample Approaches to the Use of Common Exams
(Details relating to II.A.2.g.)

Fire Science, for example, uses a common test bank for Fire Science 111, with computerized randomization of questions from a database. Broadcast Electronic Media Arts uses common midterm and final exams in addition to common lab projects. Examination questions are continually vetted and refined during faculty meetings, and lab projects are all graded using a common rubric.

The CCSF ESL Department maintains a promotion test program that is administered to noncredit students in Levels 2, 4, and 6 (matching the California State Department of Education's Model Standards levels) to determine achievement of course SLOs and readiness for advancement. The exams utilized in the program were developed by CCSF faculty and are both valid and reliable. Testing is standardized and carefully monitored, and records kept of student results.

In credit ESL courses, students take common final examinations at each level assessing reading, grammar, and writing. Predictive validity for reading and grammar questions was demonstrated through significant correlations between test scores and subsequent success in general courses. The writing components, graded holistically, are grounded by the use of rubrics and anchor papers. All questions are panel-written by diverse faculty to avoid cultural and linguistic biases, and revised during a final editing process.

The English Department uses a variety of common assessments in its courses. English 90 and 91 require a common portfolio for promotion into subsequent courses. These portfolios, based on essays, annotated readings, and a cover letter, make use of one essay and one reading common to all sections. The English faculty use a common rubric for grading and grade portfolios as a group, using two raters to minimize differences between instructors and a third reader in the event of discrepancies. English 92, 93, 96, 1A, 1B, and 1C go through cycles of evaluation for assessment purposes and to guide the three-year course revision process. These may be common summaries, common essays, specific targeted strategies, reading, testing, et cetera. The new accelerated/intensive courses, English 95X and English 961A, will be going through a three-year assessment process from Spring 2011 to Spring 2013, using many of the above-mentioned practices.

In French and Spanish courses, instructors make use of a common bank of test sections to minimize differences in assessment between instructors, and work is currently underway in Foreign Languages courses to incorporate common elements into final examinations.

Chemistry 101A sections use common, team-written questions for the midterm examination, and all students in these courses take the same final examination. Chemistry 101B sections share common portions of the final examination. These common materials have been developed by faculty consensus over time, and faculty conduct regular revision, looking for flawed or biased items and taking into account how different student populations are performing.