

## Common Final or Standardized Exams response Fall 2011

Response from Alfredo Cuellar, Instructional Dean of Behavioral & Social Science

I am taking myself an attribution pending confirmation from our faculty in Behavioral and Social Science. I do not believe we use any standardize tests. May be in ADRP (Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Program); possibly in Psychology. I will confirm this information for you.

Response from Daniel Gilison, Science Department Chair

For BIOL100, there is no standardized exam. I feel that it has been that way because of academic freedom and allowing faculty to have some flexibility in how they teach the class within the confines of the course outline of record. There is a common lab schedule for all BIOL 100 sections for about half of the labs, but this is to help out the lab technicians in setting up the labs.

Response from Kseniya Gregory, ESL Department Chair

The ESL Department doesn't have common finals. However, we are thinking about developing them.

Response from James Fisher, chemistry instructor

Standardized exams are given in science major's chemistry courses Organic Chemistry II, Organic Chemistry I, General Chemistry II, and General Chemistry I. The exams are provided by the American Chemical Society (ACS) division of Chemical Education. Each student score is compared to the National Norms published by the ACS Chemical Education division. These scores have guided the chemistry department's decision-making process on lecture text books, lecture material, and laboratory experiments. Ultimately, these scores gauge the success of a transferring science major student.

Response from Krista Byrd, Behavioral Science Department Chair

We do not really use standardized testing in Psychology, Sociology or the Alcohol Drug Studies Program. When a student receives a certificate or A.A. in Alcohol & Drug Studies then they would take a standardized test to receive their California Addiction Treatment Counselor certificate (CATC).

Response from Bruce Seivertson, Social Science Department Chair

We do not use any standardized exams in any of the social sciences.

Response from Valerie Rodgers, Business Division / Chair

In the Business Department, instructors do not use standardized common exams/finals.

Response from Michael Heumann, English Department Chair

The English department, not ESL, conducts the English 99 common final. I'm sending you a copy of last semester's common final, along with our grading sheet/rubric, for you to use as evidence.

English 099 reason for a common final

In the fall of 2008, the Department of English as a Second Language (ESL), a part of the Division of English and ESL at Imperial Valley College (IVC), began discussion on the necessity of a review for the College's ESL program. The result was the decision to revise the current curriculum to be more pedagogically sound by creating a clear programmatic scope and sequence, as well as to reflect the needs to the student population at IVC.

The initial impetus to review the curriculum was that there was no clear programmatic scope and sequence. As a result, there was no continuity in expectations of skill development from one level to another that was easily discernable. In addition, due to a renumbering of courses that had occurred several years previously that resulted in a mismatching of course numbers, it was often difficult for people outside of the department, new faculty, part-time faculty, and students to truly understand what courses were companion courses at each level. Beyond this, in examining the curriculum, the faculty determined that there were courses that were no longer in line with current trends of ESL teaching. For example, there was a two course sequence on phrasal verbs. The original purpose of the courses was to provide students with additional exposure to, and practice in, vocabulary. Through discussion, it was decided that though these strictly focused offerings had the potential of being offered as support courses, their overall relevance as a major part of the program at IVC was limited and outdated. An examination of the curriculum of other California community college ESL programs confirmed this. The faculty also found that there were courses that the program did not offer, but should offer to make the program more complete and, again, to reflect the needs of the particular ESL student population at IVC. For example, an additional reading course was offered at the fifth level, and former conversation courses were changed to include a focus on listening, with particular attention being paid to academic listening/note taking skills at the Intermediate through Advanced levels in order to better prepare students to meet the demands of graduation-credit bearing courses. Again, an examination of other community college programs in California confirmed the decision. In particular, information received from the ESL Department Chair at Riverside Community College (Riverside, CA), and from the Faculty Instructional Specialist, Language Success Center at Chaffey Community College (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) proved to be invaluable. As such, it was decided that the following core program structure was to be adopted:

	Grammar/Composition (5 units)	Speaking/Listening (5 Units)	Reading (3 Units)
Level 1 (Beginning)	ESL 001	ESL 011	_____
Level 2	ESL 002	ESL 012	_____

(Low Intermediate)			
Level 3 (Intermediate)	ESL 003	ESL 013	ESL 023
Level 4 (High Intermediate)	ESL 004	ESL 014	ESL 024
Level 5 (Advanced)	ESL 005	ESL 015	ESL 025 (new course)

In addition to the core program, a new set of support courses was also to be created. These courses would each last ½ of the semester (8 weeks) and would allow students to receive additional, focused instruction in vocabulary, conversation, pronunciation, and review of verb tenses. In total, a new curriculum of 43 total courses was proposed.

The initial writing for the curriculum began in January 2009. The core writing team was made up of four full-time faculty members including the ESL Program Coordinator and a faculty member with experience in program design and a MA in Second Language Curriculum Development. The first task was to choose language that would allow for a smooth sequence to be developed throughout the levels. Based on this, the following wording was chosen:

Ability: ability of students to correctly use a given form or complete a given task accurately 70 – 80% of the time;

Competency: ability of students to correctly use a given form or complete a given task accurately 80 – 90% of the time;

Mastery: ability of students to correct use a given form or complete a given task accurately 90 – 100% of the time.

A scope for each level was then developed using information taken from IVC’s previous curriculum, information from various text book publishers, and other schools in California (gained through the use of CurricUNET and personal contacts). Sequencing was then put into place which would clearly move students from Ability at lower levels to Mastery at higher levels. As per guidelines issued by Chancellor’s Office for California Community Colleges, data was submitted supporting the fact that similar classes to the ones that were being proposed were offered at other institutions state-wide.

As with all curriculums, it is the hope that the ESL program at Imperial Valley College will continue to grow and change as new information and research emerges in the field of language acquisition. We will also continue to monitor the program to ensure we are responsive to the community and that needs of English Language Learners in the Imperial Valley are being met.

A common final was developed for English 099, a basic skills writing course, in 2007. Then in fall 2009 the English Division keyed the completed course-level SLOs into the rubric for assessing the common final. The final results will not be incorporated into a Comprehensive Program Review until after division faculty has had an opportunity for input, discussion, analysis, and suggested actions. The first division meeting for spring 2010 is scheduled for February 24, 2010.

Thereafter, instructors in each area (Writing and Reading) will meet to continue the dialogue which will also address the proposal that common finals be developed for all levels of developmental writing.

Collected by Jim Fisher, 9-9-11