

Mt. San Antonio College

Certification for Online Teaching

Given the pace of change in new educational delivery modes, the Distance Learning Committee and the Academic Senate have proposed a certification process to assist faculty in gaining the needed competencies for effective online teaching. The certification process and details are below. A flowchart is provided for the entire process, from initial inquiry on the part of a faculty member to the actual teaching of a Distance Learning (DL) course.

Initial Inquiry by a Faculty Member

A faculty member wishes to teach a new or existing course by a DL modality – online or hybrid. The faculty member may contact the Department Chair, their Division Dean, the Online Learning Support Center (OLSC), or Staff & Organizational Learning to start the process. Regardless of where initial contact is made, the faculty member will be directed to the Online Learning Faculty Mentor, OLFM (Terri Beam, x6614) in order to facilitate their progress toward certification.

Starting the Certification Process (see flowchart also)

The faculty member will be directed by the OLFM to a web site that provides detailed instructions - a flowchart, contact information, a study guide, and links to the interactive exercises that will lead to completion of the certification process. The faculty will also meet at this time with the OLFM or a member of the DL Certification Team (an experienced online faculty member from the Distance Learning Committee, who is already certified for online teaching) for mentoring and advice on how to complete the process smoothly and successfully. At that time, the contents of the Study Guide will be reviewed and any questions by the faculty may be asked and answered. The tracking and verification of each step of the certification process will also be discussed at this time.

Certification Activities

The Professional Development Council's faculty committee, along with the experienced online faculty of the Distance Learning Committee, and the adhoc committee from the Academic Senate has approved a list of technological and pedagogical competencies that will be assessed in the certification process. The competencies will be verified by already certified faculty of the Distance Learning Committee in this process. The competencies are listed below:

Technological competencies:

1. email (composing, reply, forward, cc, bcc, folders)
2. email with attachment (attaching files, opening files, file types, viruses)
3. word-processing skill (creating, editing, saving typed documents)
4. web navigation skill (URLs, forward and back buttons, following links, new windows)
5. edit/delete discussion postings
6. download and install a plug-in
7. creation of a course web site, that contains the following components:
 - syllabus (class schedule, instructor info)
 - course outline
 - measurable objectives (matching ICCIS objectives for the course)
 - student learning objectives/outcomes
 - assignments
 - policies regarding:

- attendance
- add/drop
- make ups
- academic dishonesty
- grading
- repeating a course
- departmental intervention plan
- discussion forum (in or out of course web site)
- active course links
- interactive activities
- FAQs
- announcements (web, listserv or email)
- expectations
- accessibility accommodations for disabled students (such as alt tags on graphics)

Pedagogical competencies:

1. how to create effective instructions for discussion forum postings
2. strategies for discussion forum replies to keep the discussions going
3. awareness of different learning styles
4. awareness of the laws requiring reasonable accommodations for disabilities (ADA, Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act) and implementation of universal design principles in creating educational material, to maximize the availability of the information to all potential users. Ability to use accessibility evaluation tools and to make modifications to the web site as needed.
5. web design good practices – use of color, font, graphics, backgrounds, navigation bars, hyperlinks
6. awareness of Title 5 Regulations on effective student-instructor contact (“group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, email, or other activities”) in a DL course

Assessment of skill levels in these areas will be conducted in two different ways – an online, self-paced mode and a face-to-face mode (in either an individual or group setting). Most of the certification activities fall under the first mode, and may be completed as quickly as the faculty member’s time allows. Many experienced online faculty may already have many, if not all, of the above listed skills, and will likely move rapidly through this process. Other, less experienced faculty will require more skill development, either through individual study, mentoring from the DL Team, OLFM, and other OLSC staff, coursework or Staff & Organizational Learning workshops or classes. The face-to-face mode is not required, but desirable, for quick synchronous work in discussion forum activities. The face-to-face mode is required for certain Web activities that must be verified in person (for example - editing web pages, editing and deleting discussion forum postings, and downloading a plug-in). A group setting (workshops) will allow for many faculty to be certified simultaneously (which is fully expected once the process is made available).

Each online or face-to-face activity will contain the following components – information on the topic, hyperlinks for further exploration and learning on that topic, an activity designed for the faculty to demonstrate their particular skill or knowledge of the topic, and a verification step to complete that activity that notifies the faculty member that the activity is completed satisfactorily. The face-to-face activities will be conducted in a workshop or individual format with verification done in person at that

time. Verifications of all online or face-to-face activities will be reviewed by at least two experienced, certified, online faculty of the Distance Learning Committee. If the faculty member has not mastered the activity, then he/she will be notified and scheduled for a mentoring appointment to increase knowledge and skill before readdressing that activity. All activities may be performed repeatedly until mastery is achieved.

After all of the skills have been mastered and verified, the faculty member will have completed the certification process. They will be notified by the OLFM that they have satisfactorily completed the process, and that their name will be forwarded to the Distance Learning Committee as a qualified candidate for online teaching.

When a faculty member is placed in the schedule of classes for a future semester, their certification status will be checked by the Distance Learning Committee, before the class is offered. If the scheduled faculty member has not completed the certification process, then the faculty member and his/her department will be notified prior to the final schedule printing. This may allow the faculty member time to complete the certification process; however, if the faculty member is unable to complete the certification prior to the final schedule going to print, then the class will be pulled from the schedule until the faculty member has completed the certification process.

Teaching of DL Course

When a faculty member is placed in the schedule of classes for teaching a DL course in a future semester, the Distance Learning Committee will check their certification status before the class is offered. If the scheduled faculty member has not completed the certification process, then the faculty member and his/her department will be notified prior to the final schedule printing. This may allow the faculty member enough time to complete the certification process. However, if the faculty member is unable to complete the certification prior to the final printing of the schedule, then the class offering will be changed in the schedule.

Future Changes to the Certification Process

Periodically, this process and the criteria for certification will be reviewed for completeness and appropriateness and will be evaluated for compatibility with the ever-changing technology.

Support for this Certification Process

In order to implement this process for the entire campus, the following support from the College is needed:

1. An web site for online teaching certification to be created
2. A comprehensive online Study Guide to be created
3. Certification of the DL Team (DLC faculty), so that they can be immediate available as mentors for faculty going through this certification process. The DL Team members are expected to demonstrate the same level of competency as is expected from faculty undergoing certification.
4. Increase the reassigned time (to recent past level of 40%) for the OLFM for administration of the certification process, creation of study guide and interactive web site, and the associated increased demand by faculty for mentoring in the future
5. Support for the DL Team faculty members to have the time to mentor faculty undergoing this certification process is essential.

Other

Two processes are not addressed by this document:

1. **The evaluation of Distance Learning courses**

This task should be addressed in the regularly approved process for periodic departmental review of all courses and curricula.

2. The evaluation of Distance Learning faculty

This should be addressed in the regularly approved process for periodic evaluation of faculty.

The Certification Team respectfully recommends that the Academic Senate request that Education Progress Council and Faculty Association address these two processes. Members of the Certification Team would be willing to give input on these two additional processes to be developed.

Certification Faculty Team

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