



MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Department Chairs, and Faculty

FROM: James M. Palmer *J. Palmer*
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Rolando R. Garza *R.R. Garza*
Director, Center for Academic Technology

CC: Robert Vela, University President
Michael Houf, Faculty Senate President

DATE: September 28, 2023

SUBJECT: Requirements for Teaching Distance Learning Courses

Teaching online involves delivering education and instruction via the Internet and digital technology, which require different skill sets and strategies than traditional classroom teaching. Online teaching consists of using various online tools, which can take many forms, including live virtual classes through Zoom for Education, asynchronous learning through Blackboard discussion boards, and digital assessments of assignments, quizzes, and exams.

Teaching online requires engagement, effective communication, and adaptation to learners' various learning preferences and needs. Given the changing and increasingly competitive landscape in online learning, faculty must be well-trained in technology and best practices to reach today's students effectively. TAMUK currently has 213 faculty who have undergone training and are considered Distance Learning Certified. The list is maintained by the Center for Academic Technology (CAT).

Effective Spring 2024, all faculty assigned as Instructor of Record in Blue & Gold (Banner) teaching Hybrid (section 900), Online (section 600), and/or Web-Substituted (Section 500) must be certified by the TAMUK CAT to teach Distance Learning courses. The certified list will be distributed to college deans and department chairs by September 29 so the current faculty status can be shared. Faculty not fully trained and certified will not be assigned to teach online. The Center for Academic Technology staff stands ready to support faculty with training and certification needs for the Spring.

Certification Overview

Certification aims to ensure a consistent and high-quality online learning experience for all Javelinas while supporting faculty to teach effectively online. Continued distance learning

certification is needed once every 5 years to keep up with the evolution of the Learning Management System (LMS) upgrades and course design changes. The certification requirement is a foundation for delivering high-quality online higher education at TAMUK.

Certification Methods

The university's official Learning Management System is *Blackboard (Anthology)*. The university's official web conference service is *Zoom for Education*. Faculty may be certified through the following three methods:

- 1) **CAT - Distance Education Certification Program** – The program trains faculty to successfully engage students online and create a quality course for future term delivery. The program allows faculty to test their understanding and apply what is learned through hands-on activities utilizing an applied certification sandbox in Blackboard. The program is 5 weeks long with weekly meeting requirements offered in a hybrid environment. The program is offered every academic semester, including summers.
- 2) **Certification Verification from Another Institution** – TAMUK Department Chairs can submit certifications/transcripts or other documents of faculty being hired for distance education to the CAT Director, Dr. Rolando R. Garza, at rolando.garza@tamuk.edu for review and approval. Certifications must be approved before assigning faculty to sections or submitting course modification changes to the academic schedule.
- 3) **Quality Assurance Demonstration Checklist / Current Course Evaluation** – CAT has an internal Quality Assurance Checklist for online courses with a grading rubric for course review. The checklist has been created using Quality Matters foundational principles for quality assurance and can be applied to an existing distance learning course shell in Blackboard. Faculty must utilize any feedback or recommendations for improvement to meet certification requirements. Faculty interested in this course evaluation method should email both CAT Director Dr. Rolando R. Garza at rolando.garza@tamuk.edu and CAT Instructional Designer II – Dr. Mariya Pachman, at mariya.pachman@tamuk.edu to begin the evaluation of an existing distance learning course.

CAT Website – <https://www.tamuk.edu/academictechnology/digitallearning/certification.html>

Successful online teaching at TAMUK requires pedagogical expertise, technical proficiency, and a commitment to providing a high-quality educational experience for all Javelina students. These certification methods support our ongoing efforts in student success.