

Quality Assurance Certification Process

Instructional Process for Course Review and Teaching Online and Hybrid Courses



Online and hybrid courses provide students with the convenience of flexible asynchronous and synchronous learning experiences. These learning experiences must provide the same quality as can be found in in-person/on-campus courses. BCTC has established a quality review process for online and hybrid course offerings as well as faculty instruction to help assure a consistent level of quality in course design. The process contains two parts: (a) a course review involving a self-review and peer-to-peer approach to quality online education and (b) faculty demonstration of knowledge and skills for teaching online or hybrid courses.

Ongoing assessment of the quality of instruction is important not only for ensuring a minimum standard of excellence, but to provide a framework within which faculty can improve their teaching skills and methods while developing professionally. Accordingly, the quality assurance process is designed to support our faculty in reaching their goals.

The BCTC Quality Assurance Process was developed to hold all faculty accountable for providing a high-level of quality and consistent design approach for BCTC programs and courses offered in the online or hybrid format. The certification process provides a framework intended to achieve the following quality related goals:

- Comply with guidelines, procedures, and policies for teaching online and hybrid courses for BCTC.
- Meet or exceed minimum standards for student success and satisfaction.
- Identify factors, strategies, and processes that enhance student success and provide satisfaction.
- Regularly assess and monitor teaching, course operation, and educational outcomes.
- Provide ongoing training and support to faculty in their identified areas of interest and need.

Quality assurance is about *design* not delivery and is supported by the BCTC Quality Assurance Process. This process is not intended to evaluate course content; determining appropriate course content is ultimately the responsibility of the faculty member(s). The outcome of the QA process is about course design improvement and utilizing skilled faculty for the online environment.

The QA Process is used to ensure BCTC online courses are quality courses. Additionally, the process is meant to encourage faculty to teach online, ensure support and training will be available to assist faculty who want to teach online, and provide consistency to ensure that students who enroll in BCTC online courses will have a quality learning environment to encourage success.

Roles of the BCTC Quality Assurance Process

The quality assurance process involves a number of different roles and responsibilities; all are integral to the QA process. These roles are described below:

- ❖ **Assistant Dean of Learning Technologies and Distance Education:** provides guidance in the Quality Assurance process; oversees and implements the quality assurance process including: housing all completed reviews, training completions and certificate copies, mediating final appeals, maintaining up-to-date reports of course and faculty certification status; reviews completed; reviews and reports to academic leadership the progress of the course quality initiative, including certification of faculty; and supports the DL Committee throughout the review process.
- ❖ **Distance Learning Advisory Committee:** provides guidance in the Quality Assurance Process; responsible for setting timelines; providing review feedback on assigned courses; convening meetings with the QA Peer Review Team, and conducting final reviews (if necessary) with the Assistant Dean and Faculty member(s); responsible for supplemental review for all courses that are required to be submitted a second time.

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- ❖ **Assistant Dean:** oversees the division quality assurance process including courses under review; responsible for staying current with the quality assurance process to remain in compliance with current course policies; works closely with the Distance Learning Professional Development Coordinator and faculty in the division using the QA checklist to determine when a course is ready to begin the QA review process; and is responsible for assuring that faculty are teaching certified online and hybrid courses.
- ❖ **Quality Assurance Peer Review Team:** consists of one faculty member, experienced in on-line instruction, and one DL Advisory Committee member (at least one being a member of the division where the course resides, if possible). Team members will review the course referencing the self-reported QA checklist that the faculty members (or group of faculty members) submit. The team can work together or separately to add to the review to report findings and collaboratively assess the quality of courses being reviewed. The Quality Assurance Peer Review Team will be required to present their review during a meeting with the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning, Assistant Dean, and Academic Dean of the area (if needed and necessary). The team may also meet with the Assistant Dean and/or Assistant Dean of Learning Technologies and Distance Education to go over findings before the formal report. **Reviewers should be assigned to no more than three courses per year to review when possible.**
- ❖ **Faculty Member (full-time and adjunct):** oversees the courses including: management, design, development and delivery; ensures course is aligned with the quality standards set forth by the QA checklist; communicates with QA Peer Review Team, Division Chair, and DL Coordinator as needed during the review process; helps to implement changes to courses based on feedback from the QA reviews; completes required and continuous training to teach online and hybrid courses.

Part 1: Course Review

Course Offering Considerations

For online or hybrid courses, consider the following:

- ❖ Is the course identified already online or as hybrid?
- ❖ Can the content of the course (that is pre-developed) be available or used by another faculty member on campus or at another college (with permission)?
- ❖ Does the course use a departmental course designed shell?
- ❖ Has publisher content been identified with electronic or digital content, or open educational repository (OER) content?
- ❖ If no departmental course design or other design is available (or required), does the faculty plan to develop course content themselves, or does the faculty member require assistance in the development of course content?

Blackboard Course Development and/or Course Shells

Distance Learning Staff can assist faculty by working with IT and other sources to determine what access the instructor needs. If the instructor is a new adjunct or full-time who has not taught for the College before, the Division Chair/HR Department will need to work with the IT Department to obtain institutional access when officially hired.

Peer Review Process

When possible, a new online or hybrid course must be officially approved through the Quality Assurance Course Review process before being offered. The course design should be completed before the review process begins. The course review will utilize the approved QA checklist. The Course Review is based on and guided by the QA checklist. The QA course review is not looking for "just good enough," but looking for above average. Although this process is somewhat subjective, the basis for the decision is based in research literature and widely accepted standards about effective distance learning.

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Existing courses

The Assistant Dean of Distance Learning will compose a list of every fully-online and Hybrid course taught by a BCTC faculty member. From this list, approximately 15 (30 after the first year) courses will be selected by the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning each year for review. (This would begin with gateway courses as identified by the college leadership, course Master Shells, and other high enrollment courses. Gateway courses are necessary for students to progress through their chosen major and are usually those courses which contain material in which a student needs a clear-cut comprehension to be successful in completing other course requirements.) When a course is selected, the instructor will be notified that the course will be reviewed and the Quality Assurance Course Review process will begin (starting at step 2). This will continue until all current classes have been evaluated.

Existing online or hybrid courses who have been previously certified will follow the Three-Year Recertification Process.

New Courses

All new online or hybrid courses from BCTC to begin in Fall 2018 and forward will be required to complete the course certification process.

A new online or hybrid course is:

- ❖ a course that has never been taught at BCTC before;
- ❖ a course that has undergone significant changes from its initial design and development; the Assistant Dean in conjunction with the Academic Dean will make determinations about what constitutes significant change in a course; or
- ❖ a course by a new faculty member who has never taught online or hybrid courses before and not using an established and certified course design (unless using a department design shell).

The new course should typically be ready and open for review prior to the students beginning work in the class. For the course certification process, the new or existing course going through course certification should be ready for review by midterm of the first or current semester the course is being offered. A period of roughly four to six weeks is needed for the course certification process to be completed. This will allow time for the oral course presentation to be scheduled, presented, then final summary plans to be completed (and if necessary allow meetings with the instructor, if necessary, to discuss the findings of the course review). The instructor will use the first two weeks to conduct a self-review (using the established QA checklist), leaving two to four weeks for the review to be scheduled and a summary of the review findings to be completed. The QA checklist should be used during the design and development process as a guide. Adaptive course design is encouraged and accepted. This means that a baseline of the course design is created. Then based on the needs of the course additional content may be added, assignments may be changed, or new technologies may be implemented and used.

The following deadlines are thus suggested:

- ❖ Fall courses – ready for review by October 1 or midterm (whichever occurs first)
- ❖ Spring courses – ready for review by March 1 or midterm (whichever occurs first)
- ❖ Summer courses – ready for review by June 1

All course that are on the list to be certified and not certified by or at the beginning of the term will be closely monitored and reviewed to ensure the course is working toward the review. All courses must have approval of the Assistant Dean and the Academic Dean before they are added to the schedule. The Assistant Dean should make the decision about when to create the course in PeopleSoft and only associate the instructor's name with the understanding that if the instructor does not meet the requirements for teaching an online course (either because of course or faculty certification), the course may be cancelled or reassigned, and the instructor may be given an in-person course or reassignment.

Master Shells

Master shells are shells manually created by a distance learning staff member or distance learning faculty course leader in Blackboard or in an area specific LMS to give the faculty/instructors a static shell to build and design the course to be certified. Masters shells are used for copying your course content each semester to the course being taught. The master shells never have student enrollments and can be updated during the semester while scheduled courses are active. Courses that have multiple sections are encouraged to create one common master course shell. All master shells will have the required Blackboard basic template that all courses need to have.

The Three-Year Recertification Process

Approximately every three years a course that has completed the initial course certification will complete a recertification. The recertification is an opportunity for the faculty member(s) who originally submitted (or uses) the course design to provide a self-review of the course. The review may include the following:

- ❖ what faculty have learned during the three years;
- ❖ what has been added, removed, or changed in the design;
- ❖ what new technologies have been used;
- ❖ what new strategies in teaching and learning are being used;
- ❖ has the curriculum or book changed;
- ❖ how is interaction and communication occurring;
- ❖ other items as identified.

Subsequent reviews may be initiated by the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning, Assistant Dean, Program Coordinator, or Faculty member(s) request:

- ❖ If more than 3 years has passed since the original review
- ❖ If new Books (electronic, hard copy, etc.), new technologies, curriculum changes, or instructor changes occur that have a significant impact on the design of the course
- ❖ Student feedback indicating significant deficiencies in a course
- ❖ Outcomes analysis indicates improvement needed
- ❖ National standards change
- ❖ If professional or accreditation review is pending

The following may not constitute a new review before the 3-year recertification process:

- ❖ Changing assignments
- ❖ Adding assignments
- ❖ Updating tests or test questions
- ❖ Correcting errors
- ❖ New version of a text that has minor changes
- ❖ Others (please contact the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning to clarify)

Faculty are encouraged to be innovative and try new technologies and strategies each term. The innovativeness does not always require a recertification of the course.

Training and Support

A series of Professional Development sessions will be held each semester to:

- ❖ provide reviewers and online faculty with details about the Quality Assurance Process
- ❖ provide faculty with sessions on how to design and develop their online course.
- ❖ provide faculty with sessions on how to use online strategies for student engagement and involvement.

All faculty can request one-on-one training sessions to assist in the QA process and designing and developing an online course.

Quality Assurance Course Review Checklist

The Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric (ECP) has been approved for all KCTCS colleges to use as the required quality assurance rubric. The ECP is not only used as an evaluation tool by the faculty members and the Quality Assurance Peer Review Team, it is also a guide that should be used when faculty member(s) are developing course content for delivery. It provides evidence and alignment of all quality components while providing intervention, support, and confirmation of all course/program aspects. Ensuring high quality at every level is imperative to the success of the delivery of courses and to each student who wishes to enroll in any BCTC course. The quality of courses offered through BCTC is assessed in part by the completion of the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric.

The Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric is divided into four key areas. Each key area is subdivided into multiple standards that indicate completeness and quality: Meets and Does Not Meet. The minimum criteria to meet quality assurance standards, referred to as the "KCTCS essential standards," will consist of the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric's 14 Compulsory Standards (5 point standards) plus those in "Accessibility of Course Design" (Standards 1.13-1.16) and "Accessibility and Technical Factors" (Standards 4.13-4.17). Standards that score a "Does Not Meet" In the required areas must be addressed before a course achieves quality certified status and cannot be made available for future enrollments until the standards are met and verified. Input and feedback must be written if a specific standard in the QA Course Review checklist is not met. For standards scored as Not Applicable, an explanation must be included. This feedback will provide more detailed information and suggestions to the faculty member(s).

The table below lists some qualities of well-written recommendations.

Qualities of Well-written Recommendations	
Constructive	Try to offer solutions, not just identify problems.
Specific	Include a specific example of what is being recommended.
Measurable	How will the instructor know when the recommendation has been implemented?
Sensitive	Avoid negative language. Keep recommendations and comments on a positive note.
Balanced	Point out strengths as well as weaknesses.
Objective	Offer opinions only about the design, not about mode of delivery.

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Review Process

Listed below are the steps for the review process:

1. To initiate the review, the faculty member will consult with the Assistant Dean and/or Program Coordinator who will send notification to the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning. The Assistant Dean or Assistant Dean of Distance Learning may also identify courses to be certified (i.e. new courses). The Assistant Dean/Assistant Dean of Distance Learning will remind faculty about the QA course review process including the QA checklist. The faculty member will use the QA checklist during design and development.
2. After the online or hybrid course has been developed and designed (using the timeframes established above), the faculty member will complete a self-review using the QA checklist. This self-review will allow the faculty member to explain why areas Do Not Meet or does Not Apply. The Peer Review Committee will review the faculty self-review before a final report is submitted.
3. The faculty member will send the completed self-review QA checklist to the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning (and copied to their assigned Assistant Dean).
4. The Assistant Dean of Distance Learning will work with the Distance Learning Professional Development Coordinator to identify one faculty member and one DL Advisory Committee team member to serve as the Quality Assurance Peer Review Team for that course (*one member will be from the same division as the course to be reviewed, if possible*).
5. The Quality Assurance Peer Review Team will be given guest access to the course, by the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning, so they may complete their review. Team members are encouraged to use the faculty members completed self-review as a guide to complete their own review of the course (using the timeframes established above).
6. A course review meeting will be scheduled so that all reviewers, the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning, Assistant Dean, Program Coordinator, and Academic Dean of the area (if needed and necessary) can attend the certification review. The Quality Assurance Peer Review Team will present their findings during this meeting. The course review meetings will be working meetings where the reviewers talk together with others, discuss the faculty self-review, and make their final decisions. If questions come up they can be addressed with others at that time. Course review meetings should not become informational reports of what members have already decided. Discussing and deciding on the official review comments during the meeting will increase accountability and timeliness of reviews. One hour will be scheduled for each review.
7. At the end of the course review meeting, the QA checklist will be compiled into one completed QA checklist along with the faculty members self-review. The Assistant Dean of Distance Learning will setup a meeting with the faculty member and Assistant Dean (if needed and necessary) to go over the completed review. This step in the process is extremely valuable and will result in the sharing of ideas, materials, and possible improvements in the course.
8. In situations where a course does not yet meet the standards required by the QA checklist, specific areas needing improvement will be identified. Academic Deans and Assistant Deans will determine what is required for follow-up in each individual case. The faculty member(s) will be expected to address these concerns. Courses that do not meet minimum standards will be referred to as "in progress." **A course in progress cannot be made available for future enrollments or course scheduling until criteria have been met and verified.** Once needed improvements have been made the course will become QA certified.
9. The Assistant Dean of Distance Learning and Assistant Dean take the ownership and responsibility of proper review and scoring of quality assurance.
10. The original copy of the final, completed QA checklist with signatures, and QA Review Summary will be kept on file by the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning for SACS purposes. A digital copy will be posted by the Assistant Dean of Distance Learning on the Distance Learning SharePoint site. The faculty member will also be sent a final email stating the course has been certified with a link to the documents on SharePoint.

The Quality Assurance Course Reviewers should assume the student's point-of-view during the review. The instructor will need to present the course from the student view. This point-of-view often reveals aspects of the course that could be improved, make navigation easier, identify issues not seen from the instructor view, and enhance the learning environment for the students.

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Part 2: Faculty Certification

Training and support for instructors are critical components of distance learning at BCTC. Instructors need to have the necessary training and skills to fully utilize technologies available to enhance teaching and learning including the learning management system (LMS). Instructors need continuous training so they can demonstrate their knowledge and skills attained as well as the use of technologies required to facilitate and teach online or hybrid courses.

New Faculty

All new faculty will receive a one-hour overview during faculty orientation about distance learning; however, if the faculty member, in consultation with their supervisor, receives permission to teach in an online or hybrid format, full Blackboard Certification Training is required. Blackboard Certification Training will include technical and pedagogical elements of teaching online. New faculty will complete identified training (online or in-person) and complete the Blackboard Proficiency Exam where proficiency is shown by setting up a class from a blank shell and performing various actions with a passing score of 90% or higher.

The trainings will include

- Distance Learning at BCTC
- Role of instructor and students in online courses
- Uploading content in logical folders (publisher, self-created documents like syllabus, handouts, and presentations, etc.)
- Course tools and Best practices
- Communication and interaction
- Assessments and the grade center
- Pedagogical strategies for online learning

Existing Faculty

For existing online faculty wanting to teach using an Ultra course shell, see “Blackboard Ultra Courses” below. All faculty members who have been teaching online or hybrid courses will need to complete the annual update training (offered in-person and online) as well as additional technology training as deemed necessary by the program Assistant Dean and/or Assistant Dean of Distance Learning (these can be obtained through BCTC or KCTCS professional development sessions, online webinars, or other delivery method) and must be obtained each academic year. The sessions must be related to distance learning, teaching online, or using technology in online environments. If you are unsure about whether a session would count, contact the Distance Learning office. The Distance Learning Professional Development Coordinator will maintain a list of faculty members completed training and will work with the Assistant Dean to ensure training requirements are met. ***Existing online and hybrid faculty members may be asked to complete the full Blackboard Certification Training if determined necessary during the course review process.***

Blackboard Ultra Courses

With the required change to Ultra courses in summer 2022, the need for Ultra training will be required for all faculty wanting to teach online. This includes faculty who are new to online instruction and those who have many years of experience. Faculty members wanting to teach using an Ultra course shell will be required to complete the training course before the class shell will be converted to Ultra.

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Ongoing Training for Distance Learning Faculty

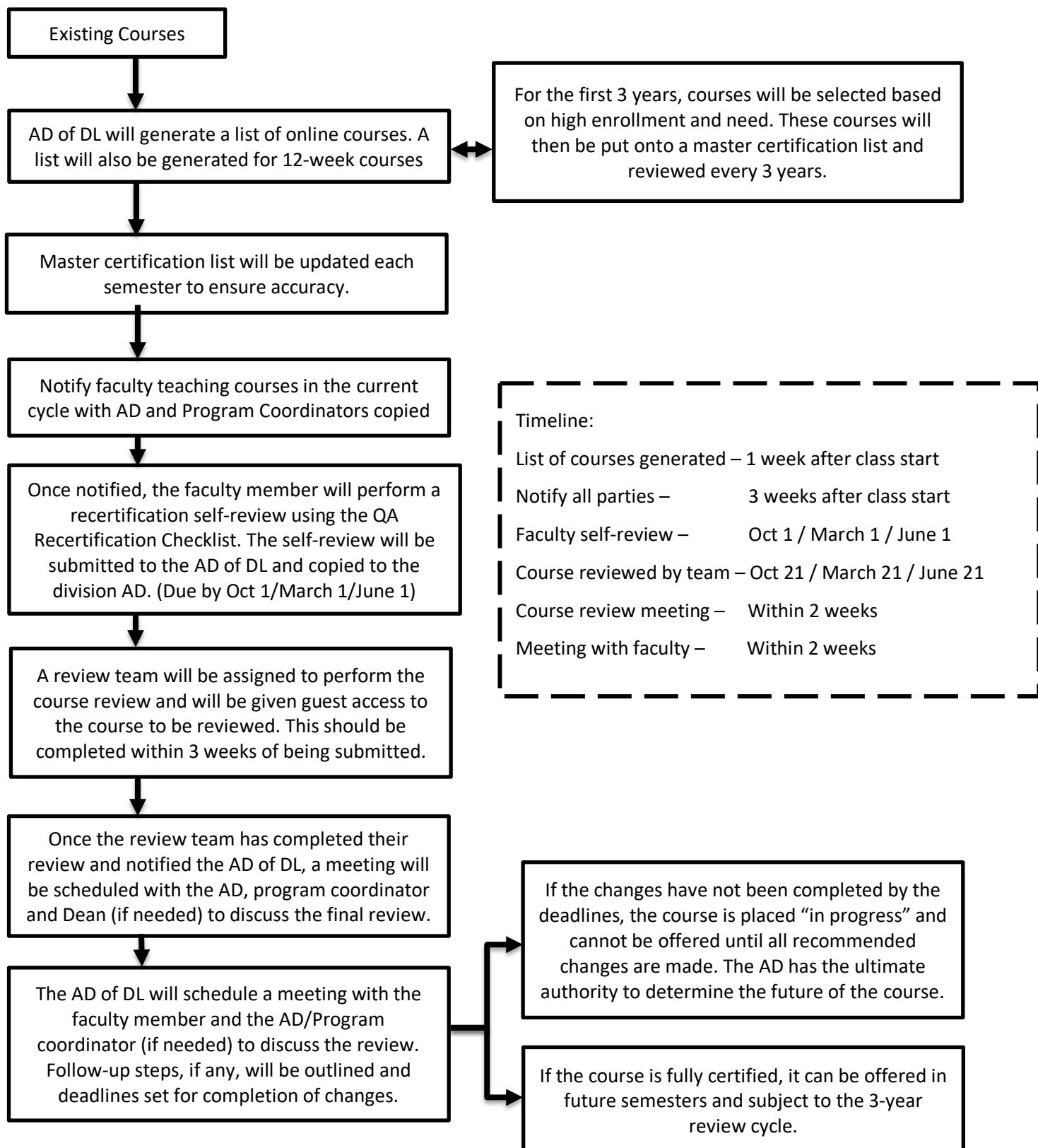
Training for Distance Learning faculty are designed to keep faculty up-to-date. Many workshops in using new technologies and pedagogical approaches are scheduled each semester through BCTC, KCTCS, or online through related vendors. Trainings include the following formats: Online tutorials and webinars (KCTCS Webinars, Non-KCTCS Webinars, and BCTC Webinars), and In-person workshops and training sessions (large group, small group, and one-on-one). Trainings can be requested one-on-one, by small group, or by division. Contact the Distance Learning office.

Other Trainings Topics can include (but are not limited to):

- Planning the Online Course and Best Practices
- Course Maintenance
- Working with the Course Environment
- Building Course Content
- Reporting and Course Utilities
- Using Technologies for Student Engagement
- Announcements and Scheduling
- Grade Center
- Tests, Surveys, and Pools
- Assignments
- Student Performance and Alerts
- Others as requested

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