

Certification and Certificate Programs: Similarities & Differences

	Certification Program	Certificate Program	Credential Program
Key Characteristics	<p>Certification is conferred by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education and training</i> • <i>Experience requirement</i> • <i>Mastery of practice related knowledge</i> • <i>Assessment of that mastery of knowledge</i> <p>May also require additional testing and/or letters of reference</p>	<p>Attendance at some course of study. This may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A seminar, • Home study, • Online or Live Course 	<p>Credential programs are either certification or licensure programs. See column one.</p>
Attendance Requirement	<p>This does not apply. The experience and education requirements, as well as assessment render this moot.</p>	<p>Individual must go through a particular course of study. Could be a course, seminar, etc. Attendance is required.</p>	
Assessment Policies	<p>A rigorous and well constructed exam required. May require one or more valid and reliable tests. Exams tend to be multiple choices. There may be additional requirements – oral presentations or practice requirements.</p>	<p>Most certificate programs do have an assessment, the equivalent of a classroom test.</p>	

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<p>Test-out Options</p>	<p>There are no test-out options. There may be trade-offs in practice requirements, depending on the applicant's educational experience.</p>	<p>There are no test-out options in certificate programs as completion of the program is the criteria for awarding the certificate.</p> <p>Only in cases where college credits may be awarded are test-out options used.</p>	
<p>Continuing Education Requirements</p>	<p>All certification programs have some amount of continuing education credit that must be earned from some organization that is recognized as a CE provider.</p>	<p>None. A certificate program that does require this is trying to "act like a certification program." In lieu of CE requirement, it is a better policy to implement a more rigorous program to get the certificate.</p>	
<p>Common Delivery Mechanisms</p>	<p>No quality certification program delivers study online.</p>	<p>More certificate programs are being offered online. They require a strong assessment mechanism. Increasingly, organizations are requiring proctored secure test for online certificate programs.</p>	