

HOW IS A CERTIFICATE DIFFERENT FROM A CERTIFICATION?

A certificate differs from a certification in several important ways.

CERTIFICATION

In general, certification is a third-party validation of competencies achieved from an outside source. The subject-matter is typically broad and at the conclusion, a professional credential is awarded (e.g., John Smith, RMA).

CERTIFICATE

In contrast, a certificate program usually includes the learning event itself, followed by an assessment. The topic is generally very focused in nature. At the successful conclusion of the training event and assessment, a certificate is awarded. (e.g., John Smith has attained a “certificate in ECG”).

Certification vs. Certificate vs. Certificate of Attendance

CERTIFICATION	CERTIFICATE	CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE
Does not provide instruction or training. Candidate knowledge attained from an external source (e.g., school, employment experience)	Provides instruction or training, but not always, to acquire specific knowledge, skills and/or competencies	Provides instruction or training, but not always, to acquire specific knowledge, skills and/or competencies
Assesses knowledge, skills, and/or competencies acquired from an external source	Evaluates mastery of learning outcomes linked to a learning event	There is NO demonstration of mastery of learning outcomes—there is no measurement
Assessment content is typically broad in scope	Assessment content may be narrow in scope	Assessment content may be narrow in scope
Awards designation (professional credential) to recognize achievement	Awards a certificate to recognize achievement	Awards a certificate of attendance
Typically requires demonstration of continued competency to keep certification active over a designated period of time	Depending on certificate, may require retraining in order to maintain certificate	