

Definitions & Differences Among Certification, Assessment- Based Certificate Programs and Certificate of Attendance for Continuing Education (CE).

It is important for nurses to understand the differences between the various programs and what completion of each represents. The differences between certification, assessment-based certificate programs, and continuing education, are defined by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence as follows:

Assessment-based Certificate Program:

- Non-degree granting program
- Provides *education and training* to aid participants in acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and/or competencies associated with intended learning outcomes
- Evaluates participants' achievement of the intended learning outcomes
- Awards a certificate only to those participants who demonstrate that they have met the intended learning outcomes by passing the end of course assessment(s) (hence the term, "assessment-based certificate program").
- The primary focus is on the educational provided through the course
- Most certificates are time limited and require certificate holders to demonstrate ongoing knowledge every two to five years.
- Credentials are not generally awarded for assessment-based certificate programs.

Certificates of Attendance or Participation (e.g. CE from ONS Congress):

- Provided for continuing education to participants who have *attended or participated* in classes, courses, or other education/training programs or events, without a demonstration that they have met the learning objectives.
- The certificate awarded at the completion of the program or event signifies that the participant was present and in some cases that the participant actively participated in the program or event.
- Demonstration of accomplishment of the intended learning outcomes by participants is NOT typically a requirement for receiving the certificate
- Possession of a certificate of attendance or participation does not indicate that the participant has accomplished the intended learning outcomes.
- Certificate of attendance is awarded based on attendance only, without the requirement of passing an end of course test.

Note related to nursing continuing education:: According to the ANA's Scope and Standards of Practice for Nursing Professional Development (2000, p. 24), continuing nursing education is the "systematic professional learning experiences designed to augment the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of nurses and therefore enrich the nurses' contribution to quality health care and their pursuit of professional career goals." According to the ANCC, CNE Providers determine the criteria for successful completion of an educational activity.

Certification (e.g. OCN®, CBCN®, AOCNS®)

- Individuals are evaluated against *predetermined standards* for knowledge, skills, or competencies that are not based on any one specific educational course.
- Participants who demonstrate that they meet the standards by successfully completing the assessment process (test) are granted a time-limited credential.
- Certified individuals must maintain continued competence.
- The credential awarded by the certification program provider denotes that the participant possesses particular knowledge, skills, or competencies.
- Certification is independent of a specific class, course or other education/training program
- Certification is also independent of any provider of classes, courses, or programs.