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Let's Talk Credentialing: Certifications vs Certificates

In the field of occupational safety and health, certifications are important. But it is essential that individuals and organizations understand the difference between a course or program completion certificate and recognized professional certification. Professional credentials, also known as professional certifications, are earned and are awarded by recognized professional organizations to verify one's professional qualifications and competence. They attest to a specified process and successful completion of criteria established and maintained by professional organizations. The certification credential awarded to candidates is based on a third-party assessment of competence by a credentialing body.



Henry Payne, PhD

Certifications indicate mastery/competency as measured against a defensible set of standards, usually by application and/or exam. The certification issued is time limited and must be regularly renewed for the candidate to demonstrate continued competence. Examples include Certified Safety Professional (CSP), Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH), and Construction Health and Safety Technician (CHST).

- A certificate program is a training program on a specialized topic, generally consisting of series of courses for which participants receive a certificate after completing the courses and passing related assessments.
- A course completion certificate may be issued for a single course on a generalized or specialized topic, which may or may not require participants to complete and pass an assessment.

Many training providers advertise certifications, but do not have legitimate authority to act as a credentialing body. Always be sure to verify the provider's accreditation and question the standards on which the certification is based. Global Occupational Safety and Health Academy, LLC is accredited by the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET).

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