



Certification vs. Certificate

People often ask, “What is the difference between certification and a certificate?” To assist you in communicating with your colleagues and clients and to help avoid confusion in the marketplace, we have provided you the comparison below.

By setting and enforcing standards for certification, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) seeks to protect the public and consumers through their mission to provide assurance to the public that the nurse holding the credential from an accredited certification program possesses the knowledge, skills and competency for quality practice in the specialty. In compliance with ABNS standards and requirements, the American Legal Nurse Consultant Certification Board (ALNCCB) certifies legal nurse consultant professionals through the Legal Nurse Consultant Certified (LNCC) program. Unlike many certificate programs being offered by colleges and private educational providers, the LNCC program is practice-based. It is not intended to teach individuals how to become legal nurse consultants. Rather, it is designed to measure an individual’s “knowledge-in-use” – the application of knowledge and skills by those with real-life experience in this role.

Certification	Certificate
Results from an assessment process that recognizes an individual's knowledge, skills and competency in a particular specialty	Results from an educational process
Typically requires professional experience	For newcomers and experienced professionals
Awarded by a third-party, standard-setting organization, typically not for profit	Awarded by educational programs or institutions often for-profit
Indicates mastery/competency as measured against a defensible set of standards, usually by application or exam	Indicates completion of a course or series of courses with a specific focus (different than a degree granting program)
Standards set through a defensible, industry-wide process (job analysis/role delineation) that results in an outline of required knowledge and skills	Course content determined by the specific provider or institution, not standardized
Typically results in credentials to be listed after one's name (LNCC, ONC, CCRN)	Usually listed on a resume detailing Education
Has on-going requirements in order to maintain; holder must demonstrate he/she continues to meet requirements	Demonstrates knowledge of course content at the end of a set period in time

Certification generally refers to an earned credential that demonstrates the holder’s specialized knowledge, skills, and experience.

Certification differs from a certificate program, which is usually an educational offering that confers a document at the program’s conclusion.

Accreditation of a certification involves a voluntary, self-regulatory process. Accreditation is granted when stated quality criteria are met.

LNCC is the only legal nurse consulting credential recognized by AALNC and accredited by ABNS.