

# ISA Credentials: Understanding Your Options

## Certification versus Qualification



### What is a Certification?

A Certification is a voluntary program administered by a non-governmental organization. It grants the use of a credential to individuals for a specific period of time. The Certification is available to those who meet predetermined and standardized criteria for knowledge, skills, or competencies.

The knowledge needed to pass a Certification assessment is learned through self-study and experience. The assessment is conducted independent of a specific class, course, or other training program. To retain the credential, certificants must meet requirements for renewal.

#### **Key elements of a Certification program**

- Focuses on a broad body of knowledge
- Administered independent of any education or training program
- Assessment is based on a body of knowledge rather than on specific learning outcomes
- Incorporates recertification requirements to maintain the credential, such as participation in continuing education opportunities
- Prohibits trainers from assessing their own trainees
- Forbids release of exam questions to anyone teaching preparatory courses or developing preparatory material

### What is a Qualification?

A Qualification is awarded for achievement of a narrow body of knowledge with very specific learning objectives. This type of program often takes the form of a classroom learning experience followed by an assessment to determine if the desired learning goals and objectives for the training have been met.

Qualifications have no recertification component. They are either valid for life or they require that the classroom learning experience and assessment be repeated for renewal.

#### **Key elements of a Qualifications program**

- Experience includes both instruction and assessment as part of the program
- Tests specific knowledge, skills, or competencies associated with learning outcomes
- Awards a Qualification only to those participants who meet the standards for performance, proficiency, or passing score
- Allows trainers to know and be familiar with the assessment questions
- Permits trainers to assess their own trainees, depending on the requirements of a given program
- Requires credential holders to retrain and retest at the end of a set period of validity, unless qualification is determined to be valid for life

