Top 25 IT Certifications
To gain refined skills and expertise and to increase pay, many IT professionals choose to pursue a certification.

Based on the findings of the 2015 IT Skills and Salary Survey (a nationwide survey) conducted by Global Knowledge and Windows IT Pro in the fall of 2014, the following are the 25 top certifications which command a higher salary from employers. The rankings are derived from certifications that received the minimum number of responses to be statistically relevant. Certain certifications pay more but are not represented due to their exclusive nature. Examples include Cisco Certified Internetworking Expert (CCIE) and VMware Certified Design Expert (VCDX).

With each certification, you'll find the average (mean) salary and a brief description.

1. Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)
Offered by ISACA, it is designed for IT professionals, project managers, and others whose job it is to identify and manage risks through appropriate Information Systems (IS) controls, covering the entire lifecycle, from design to implementation to ongoing maintenance. It measures two primary areas: risk and IS controls.

2. Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
Also by ISACA, aimed at management more than the IT professional and focuses on security strategy and assessing the systems and policies in place more than it focuses on the person who actually implements those policies using a particular vendor's platform. Only offered three times a year, making taking the exam more of a challenge than with many other certification exams. It requires at least five years of experience in IS, with at least three of those as a security manager.

3. Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)
Offered by the International Information Systems Security Certification Consortium (ISC), CISSP is designed to provide vendor-neutral security expertise, similar to the certifications ISACA offers. Focused on risk analysis, cloud computing, security when developing applications, mobile, cryptography, physical security, business continuity and disaster recovery planning, and legal and compliance issues. CISSP candidates must have at least five years of full-time experience in at least two of the ten areas tested.

4. Project Management Professional (PMP®)
The PMP certification was created and is administered by the Project Management Institute (PMI®). The exam tests five areas relating to the lifecycle of a project: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. To become certified, individuals must have 35 hours of PMP-related training along with 7,500 hours of project management experience (if they have less than a bachelor's degree) or 4,500 hours of project management experience with a bachelor's or higher. PMP certification is another that requires years of planning and effort.

5. Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)
Also from ISACA, and this one is for IS auditors. It requires at least five years of experience in IS auditing, control, or security in addition to passing an exam that is only offered three times per year.

Focused on auditing, monitoring, controlling, and/or assessing IT and/or business systems. It is designed to test the candidate's ability to manage vulnerabilities, ensure compliance with standards, and propose...
controls, processes, and updates to a company's policies to ensure compliance with accepted IT and business standards.

6. Certified ScrumMaster
Originally focused on software application development, today it is often applied to many areas outside development. The Certified ScrumMaster designation was created and is managed by the Scrum Alliance and requires the candidate to attend a class taught by a Certified Scrum Trainer and to pass the associated exam.

7. Cisco Certified Design Associate (CCDA)
Cisco's certification levels are Entry, Associate, Professional, Expert, and Architect. Those who obtain this Associate-level certification are typically network design engineers, technicians, or support technicians. To achieve CCDA certification, you must have earned one of the following: Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician (CCENT), the lowest-level certification and the foundation for a career in networking; Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) Routing and Switching; or any Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert (CCIE), the highest level of certification at Cisco. You must also pass a single exam.

8. Citrix Certified Professional - Virtualization (CCP-V)
CCP-V is a newer certification from Citrix, replacing Citrix Certified Enterprise Engineer (CCEE) certification that was retired in November 2014.

9. Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) Routing and Switching

10. Juniper Networks Certified Internet Associate - Junos (JNCIA-Junos)

11. Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE)
The Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer is an old certification and is no longer attainable. It has been replaced by the Microsoft Certified Solutions Expert (yes, also MCSE).

12. ITIL v3 Foundation
ITIL® was created by England's government in the 1980s to standardize IT management. It is a set of best practices for aligning the services IT provides with the needs of the organization. It is broad based, covering everything from availability and capacity management to change and incident management, in addition to application and IT operations management. ITIL Foundation certification is the entry-level one and provides a broad-based understanding of the IT lifecycle and the concepts and terminology surrounding it.

13. Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)
The International Council of E-Commerce Consultants (EC-Council) created and manages CEH certification. It is designed to test the candidate's abilities to prod for holes, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities in a company's network defenses using techniques and methods that hackers employ.

14. VMware Certified Professional - Data Center Virtualization (VCP-DCV)

15. Certified Novell Engineer (CNE)

16. Citrix Certified Advanced Administrator (CCAA) for XenApp 6
17. Citrix Certified Enterprise Engineer (CCEE)

18. Citrix Certified Associate - Virtualization (CCA-V)

19. Citrix Certified Administrator (CCA) for Citrix XenServer 6

20. CCA for Citrix XenDesktop 6

21. Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP): Enterprise Administrator

22. CCA for Citrix XenApp 6

23. Red Hat Certified System Administrator (RHCSA)

24. Certified Novell Administrator (CNA)

25. Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator (MCSA)