

# STEPPING STONES TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT



You realize continuing and professional education is important to your career development and advancement, but deciding whether to pursue an advanced degree or earn a certificate requires thoughtful consideration. There are advantages to both. Determining which path is right for you means looking at a variety of factors, including program costs, the time required to complete the program, and the direction and goals you've set for your career.

## **Gain practical knowledge with immediate ROI**

Certificate programs are an increasingly popular option, and in many ways more feasible in terms of the financial investment and time commitment. Students view them as a viable alternative to graduate programs, because the curriculum specifically targets the kind of practical skills needed in the workplace. Students can immediately begin applying what they've learned, and employers like that. Many companies will even pay an employee's certificate program tuition. Like graduate degrees, certificates also indicate

serious dedication to a particular field and provide a competitive edge in hiring and promotion situations. In addition, many certificate programs prepare you to take accreditation exams, meet state-mandated requirements for continuing education, or lead to becoming a licensed professional.

Employers view graduate degree programs as an indication someone can add significant value to an organization. However, the time and expense required to complete a graduate degree often are not an option for working professionals. Graduate programs usually require a significant financial investment and at least a two-year commitment. Another drawback is the time-consuming application process, including entrance examinations and—if you've been out of school for awhile—additional coursework prior to being accepted. Most certificate programs can be completed within a year. Or, you have the option of taking several years to complete your certificate.

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## Improve your prospects

Professionals choose to continue their educations for a number of reasons. Some are looking to improve their advancement opportunities and sharpen their decision-making and leadership skills. Others are looking for a career change and, given the faster return on their investment, frequently choose certificate programs for their convenience and immediate practical applicability. Another growing group is recent graduates who find the addition of a certificate program to their résumés helps them stand out as individuals who have both theoretical and practical knowledge. They are also seen as motivated lifelong learners—an asset hiring committees view as a real positive.

**Certificate programs, many of which can be taken online, offer targeted educational opportunities.**

## The UC Davis Advantage

All UC Davis Extension certificate program courses carry transferable academic credits that may be used to fulfill graduate program requirements at colleges and universities at their discretion. Programs undergo a rigorous, academic approval process by UC Davis advisory boards mindful of current needs and trends. Program instructors are working professionals with real-world expertise in their fields who focus on specific skill areas needed in the workplace. Certificate program students have the opportunity to work closely with instructors and fellow students, providing a valuable professional network for the future.

As one recent certificate program graduate stated, “These courses supplied a strong foundation to advance my career. UC Davis Extension offers a wide variety of programs that perfectly fit into my life as a parent and working professional.” A UC Davis Extension certificate says you’ve committed to a deeper understanding of your industry. It also says you’re a valuable and competent professional.

	CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS	GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS
<b>TUITION</b>	\$2,300-\$12,000	\$28,000+
<b>TIME COMMITMENT</b>	One year of part-time study (or as long as five years)	At least two years of full-time study
<b>CURRICULUM</b>	Practical with some theoretical aspects	Theory-based
<b>FACULTY</b>	Professional experts with knowledge of current best practices and industry trends	Scholars and researchers
<b>NETWORK WITH</b>	Professionals with similar interests	Other students
<b>TUITION ASSISTANCE</b>	Often employer-paid	Competitive scholarships, grants and fellowships
<b>VALUE TO STUDENT</b>	Can significantly increase salary	Can significantly increase salary

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CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION