# Best AI certifications in 2026: for builders, leaders and AI project managers

20 November 2026 · 7 min read · blogs.iictp.org/best-ai-certifications-2026

Short answer: for AI on a specific cloud, take that provider's AI certification from AWS, Microsoft Azure or Google Cloud. For leaders who need literacy rather than code, the providers' introductory and generative-AI leader credentials fit. For managing AI projects, PMI offers PMI-CPMAI. For engineers who build and run AI features across vendors, including local and private models, a vendor-neutral credential such as IICTP's AIP or LLMP tests the engineering judgement: evaluation, guardrails, data handling and operations.

**TL;DR The short version**

- For AI on a specific cloud, take that provider's AI certification from AWS, Microsoft Azure or Google Cloud.
- Leaders who need literacy rather than code fit the providers' introductory and generative-AI leader credentials; PMI offers PMI-CPMAI for AI projects.
- A good AI credential should test evaluating output quality and risks such as prompt injection, and AI exams change faster than any other area.

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## Three kinds of AI credential

- **Platform certifications:** prove you can use one provider's AI services. Useful when your employer is committed to that cloud.
- **Literacy and leadership credentials:** cover concepts, use cases and responsible use, for managers and non-engineers.
- **Practitioner credentials:** test whether you can build, evaluate and operate AI systems safely, whichever model or provider you use.

## Options by role

- **Cloud ML or AI engineer on one platform:** the AI and machine-learning certifications from AWS, Microsoft or Google Cloud.
- **Data platform teams:** Databricks offers generative-AI and machine-learning certifications for its platform.
- **Business or product leader:** the providers' foundational and generative-AI leader credentials.
- **AI governance, privacy and audit:** IAPP's AIGP (AI Governance Professional), and ISACA's AI credentials for audit, risk and security management.
- **Project or programme manager on AI work:** PMI-CPMAI, which PMI lists among its certifications.

- **Software engineer adding AI to products:** IICTP AIP, which covers LLM application design, evaluation, guardrails and operations.
- **Engineer running models on your own hardware:** IICTP LLMP, on local and private LLM deployment.
- **Courses rather than certifications:** providers such as DeepLearning.AI and NVIDIA offer course certificates; useful for learning, but check whether a proctored exam is involved.

## What a good AI credential should test

- Evaluating output quality, not only producing it. See how to evaluate an LLM application.
- Security risks such as prompt injection.
- Choosing between RAG and fine-tuning.
- Cost, latency and privacy trade-offs, including local vs cloud AI.
- Responsible AI in day-to-day decisions.

## A note on speed of change

AI certifications change faster than any other area: new exams appear and older ones are retired within a year or two. Prefer credentials that test durable skills, such as evaluation, security and system design, over those that test one product's current interface. Certification bodies rename, update and retire exams often. Check each issuer's own page for current versions, prerequisites and fees before you book.

> Related credential: AI Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

### Sources and further reading


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7. ISACA. Credentialing. isaca.org/credentialing.
8. IICTP. AI Practitioner. iictp.org/certifications/aip.
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Published by IICTP, an independent technical credential body, on 20 November 2026. The current version of this post is at https://blogs.iictp.org/best-ai-certifications-2026. More guides: blogs.iictp.org.