Best DevOps certifications in 2026: Kubernetes, cloud, infrastructure as code and beyond

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Short answer: for hands-on DevOps work, the Kubernetes exams from the Linux Foundation and CNCF (CKA, CKAD, CKS) are the most widely recognised vendor-neutral choice; the DevOps engineer certifications from AWS, Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud prove skill on one cloud; and HashiCorp's Terraform certification covers infrastructure as code. For engineers who lead delivery and platform decisions across tools, a vendor-neutral credential that tests judgement, such as IICTP's CTP or CAP, complements them.

TL;DR The short version

- The Linux Foundation and CNCF Kubernetes exams (CKA, CKAD, CKS) are the most widely recognised vendor-neutral DevOps choice.
- Cloud providers' DevOps engineer certifications prove skill on one cloud, and HashiCorp's Terraform certification covers infrastructure as code.
- Hands-on exams carry weight; learn Linux, Git and scripting first, and add a judgement credential such as IICTP's CTP or CAP if you lead delivery.

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By skill area

- **Kubernetes administration:** CKA.
- **Building applications for Kubernetes:** CKAD.
- **Kubernetes security:** CKS.
- **Cloud DevOps:** the professional or expert DevOps engineer certification from the cloud you run on.
- **Infrastructure as code:** the Terraform certification from HashiCorp.
- **Linux automation:** Red Hat Certified Engineer (RHCE), which covers automation with Ansible on Red Hat Enterprise Linux.
- **Cloud-native tooling:** CNCF associate exams on GitOps, OpenTelemetry and Prometheus.
- **Delivery and platform judgement across tools:** IICTP CTP or CAP, and CSTP for telemetry and observability.

Performance-based exams carry weight

The Kubernetes exams are hands-on: you solve tasks in a live environment rather than choose answers. That is close to the job, which is why many hiring managers rate them. Whatever you take, practise in a real cluster or pipeline, not only with question banks.

Skills a DevOps certification should prove

- CI/CD pipelines and safe releases with feature flags.
- Infrastructure as code and GitOps.
- Observability: SLIs, SLOs and error budgets.
- Security in the pipeline: DevSecOps and secrets management.
- Measuring delivery with DORA metrics.

A sensible order

1. Learn Linux, Git and one scripting language well.
2. Take a cloud associate certification for the platform you use.
3. Add CKA or CKAD if you work with Kubernetes.
4. Add infrastructure as code.
5. As you start leading platform and delivery decisions, add a credential that tests judgement across tools.

Before you book

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: Cloud Architecture Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. Linux Foundation. Training and certification. training.linuxfoundation.org.
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