

# National Home Inspector Certification Council

**Accreditation and certification** are terms that are often used incorrectly within industry. Accreditation is a process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented.

*Organizations that issue credentials or certify third parties against official standards are themselves formally accredited by accreditation bodies; hence they are sometimes known as "accredited certification bodies" (Source: Wikipedia)*

The NHICC takes this one level higher by maintaining membership in ICE – Institute of Credentialing Excellence, and by pursuing ISO/IEC 17024 recognition: "Conformity Assessment - General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons". Additionally the NHICC certified home inspector is recognized for licensing in British Columbia and also Alberta. The NCCA accreditation through membership in ICE serves as a superior standard on how organizations should conduct certification.

**Definitions** (Source: NCCA)

**Accreditation:** As related to NCCA: Status awarded to a certification program that has demonstrated compliance with the Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs set forth by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.

**Administrative Independence:** An organizational structure for the governance of a certification program that ensures control over all essential certification and recertification decisions without being subject to approval by or undue influence from any other body.

**Autonomy:** Control over all essential certification and recertification decisions without being subject to approval by or undue influence from any other body. Autonomy in the management and administration of certification enhances the ability of certification programs to serve stakeholder interests, primarily those of consumers of professional services.

**Certificant:** An individual who has earned a credential awarded through a certification program.

**Certification:** A process by which a regulatory or other authorized professional body determines that a person has attained occupational/professional proficiency.

**Certification Agency:** The organizational or administrative unit that offers and/or operates a certification program.

**Certification Board:** A group of individuals appointed or elected to govern one or more certification programs as well as the certification agency, and responsible for all certification decision-making, including governance.

**Certification Program:** The standards, policies, procedures, assessment instruments, and related products and activities through which individuals are publicly identified as qualified in a profession, occupation, role, or skill.

**Licensure:** Mandatory procedures for determining license eligibility, granting licenses, and protecting the public regarding licensed occupations and professions.

**Regulation:** Governance of a profession with regard to entry requirements, occupational standards and ethics, credentials, licensure, discipline, professional development, continuing competence, compliance with legislative provisions, portability, etc.

## A few key "Standards" for the Accreditation of Certification Programs

**Standard 1** The purpose of the certification program is to conduct certification activities in a manner that upholds standards for competent practice in a profession, occupation, role, or skill.

**Standard 2** The certification program must be structured and governed in ways that are appropriate for the profession, occupation, role, or skill, and that **ensure autonomy in decision making over essential certification activities**.

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**Standard 3** The certification board or governing committee of the certification program must include individuals from the certified population, as well as voting representation from **at least one consumer or public member**. For entities offering more than one certification program, a system must be in place through which all certified populations are represented, with voting rights, on the certification board or governing committee.

## NHICC Certification Philosophy

The NHICC supports autonomy in the management and administration of certification protects certification programs from undue influence. Autonomy is required in order for certification programs to serve stakeholder interests, primarily those of consumers of professional services. However, since certification programs take different forms for different professions and occupations, a variety of structures may be effectively employed to prevent undue influence from competing interests.

***One of the inherent issues with most home inspection associations is the need for separation between their brand of mandated education course to become certified and certification, thus presenting a conflict of interest.*** If a certification organization provides an educational program (like most Home Inspection Associations require) including but not limited to technical home inspection education, exam preparation courses, study guides, the organization must not state or imply that:

- 1) This program is the only available route to certification; or
- 2) That purchase or completion of this program is required for initial certification. To do so is an intrinsic conflict of interest.

To avoid conflicts of interest between certification and education functions, the NHICC does not accredit education or training programs or courses of study leading to the certification. The NHICC National Admissions Board assess each individual application based on a graded point system that recognizes key background attributes of the applicant. High quality education and training programs already exist in the marketplace that satisfies the separation requirement for autonomy of the NHICC. A national certification program commonly referenced as the "National Initiative" and also soon after under the former National Certification Authority recognized this. The bottom line - the certifying agency performing as an independent unit usually ensures autonomy.

In addition to not formally accrediting education and training programs leading to the initial certification, the NHICC is open to assessing education and training credits based on the level of rigor and accountability that is provided for certification eligibility. As such the NHICC National Certification program is designed to conform to ISO/IEC 17024. Keywords "conform"- thus acting with satisfying the requirements of the conditions for ISO.

Accredited certification does not deliver a guarantee nor prevent errors or omissions. It provides a proven competency framework of checks and balances that significantly improves the rigor of the audit process and reduces the risk of incompetence.

Third party accreditation means that an organization's certification process and examination process have been reviewed and approved by an objective, unrelated third party that evaluates the validity of the certification and its examination procedures.

In addition, the NHICC also has a Director that has completed the ICE Credentialing Program, thus furthering our knowledge base of subscribing to "best practices" for Home Inspector credentialing.

### Consider this:

- Passing a certification establishes that the individual is minimally competent to work unsupervised in a given field or profession.
- Certification does not mean that an individual knows everything required to be considered an expert in a given field.
- Most courses provide either foundational education or continuing education content.

Only third party, independent certification can do this, and then only if it has been validated by the industry it is intended for and a Credentialing Specialist recognize it as psychometrically sound. The NHICC has met all these criteria.