



# **National Commission for Certifying Agencies**

*The Accreditation Body of the National Organization for Competency Assurance*

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## **NCCA STANDARD INTERPRETATION MEMO**

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### **NCCA 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.*

### **Essential Element B**

*The governance structure, policies, and procedures must provide for autonomy in decision making regarding important aspects of the certification program such as eligibility standards; the development, administration, and scoring of the assessment instruments; selection of personnel; and operational processes.*

### **Background**

Commentary A under NCCA Standard 2 refers to “proprietary products or services” and the issue of undue influence. Questions have arisen related to the definition of a “proprietary product or service” and how the principle of autonomy specified in Essential Element B of Standard 2 applies.

### **Interpretation**

Definition:

**Proprietary Product Certification:** A certification program offered by a product owner to verify the competence of individuals in the use or application of that product.

Autonomy:

Because the organization owns the product(s), it is often itself one of the most significant stakeholders (if not THE most significant) in the certification program. The entire meaning of the certifications revolves around fidelity to the products and their intended use and operation as specified by the company. The organization would not be well served if certificants used or promoted the use of the products in ways that prevent

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The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is the only body with the authority to formally issue interpretations of the NCCA Standards. Please contact the NCCA at [info@noca.org](mailto:info@noca.org) for additional information.



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consumers to get full advantage from the products or that would create liability for the company through the inappropriate use of the product(s). By protecting its self interest, the company actually ensures protection for consumers because they are able to get the best benefit from their purchase, to get best benefit when the product is used on their behalf, and/or to avoid harmful consequences because the products are less likely to be used inappropriately by certificants.

To govern the certification the organization would get systematic input from certificants, customers, and other stakeholders. The concept of autonomy applies in that the company makes decisions to ensure the certification program serves its intended purposes and operates at a level of quality that ensures good certification decision making. Note that the language in Standard 2 commentary says the issue of undue influence is different—not irrelevant. An example of undue influence in this kind of program would be if certificants promoted a practice or application that would be inconsistent with the intended use and function of the product so they could use it more widely and thus make more money.