

CERTIORARI. A writ issued by a superior to an inferior court of record, or other tribunal or officer, exercising a judicial function, requiring the certification and return to the former of some proceeding then pending, or the record and proceedings in some cause already terminated, in cases where the procedure is not according to the course of the common law.

The function of the writ is to secure the correction of errors of a judicial nature in the proceedings of inferior courts or in the decisions of special tribunals, commissioners, magistrates and officers exercising judicial powers affecting the property or rights of a citizen, who act in a summary way, and not according to the course of the common law, and it also applies in many cases to the proceedings of municipal corporations. It has also been allowed when the power is ministerial but necessarily connected with judicial action.

From Bouvier's Law Dictionary, 3rd Rev. (1914)