



## Applying for AAALAC International Accreditation

Applying for AAALAC International accreditation is a two-phase process. The first phase is an extensive internal review of all aspects of your animal care and use programme. The second phase is an external evaluation conducted by AAALAC representatives. Here's an overview of the steps involved...

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### How do we apply for accreditation?

Before you begin the application process, be sure to review the "Rules of Accreditation" to make sure your institution is eligible to apply. The rules are available online at: [www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/rules-of-accreditation/](http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/rules-of-accreditation/) (see also "Steps to Earning Accreditation").

If your institution is eligible, download an application package from the AAALAC International web site ([www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/apply-for-accreditation/](http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/apply-for-accreditation/)). The application package will include a two-page "Application for Accreditation" form. It also contains:

- An instruction outline that will guide you through preparing your "Programme Description," the key document used by AAALAC's Council on Accreditation to evaluate your animal care and use programme. The outline contains instructions and a complete list of all of the information you need to include.
- Formatting (word processing) and submission instructions and other helpful tools for completing aspects of the Programme Description.
- The Three Primary Standards used by the Council to evaluate programmes are: the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes, Council of Europe (ETS 123); the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, NRC 2011; the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide)*, 2020). Council also uses a number of international guidelines and a list of additional resources during the assessment process as appropriate to the location of the programme. (These resources are available online at: [www.aaalac.org/resources/referenceresources/](http://www.aaalac.org/resources/referenceresources/))

### How much does accreditation cost?

There is an application fee which covers the cost of the initial site visit. After your institution earns accreditation, there is then an annual fee which covers the cost of regular site revisits. Both of these fees are based on a sliding scale that generally correlates with the size of your animal facilities. The fee scale is available online at: [www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/fees-and-deadlines/](http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/fees-and-deadlines/)

### What should we include in our Programme Description?

Your Programme Description will include current information on your institution's:

- Animal care and use policies and responsibilities (including ethical review process and OHSP policies)
- Animal environment, housing and management
- Veterinary care
- Physical plant

The Programme Description outline will take you step by step through the process of preparing this information. The internal review inherent in the development of your Programme Description will help your institution identify and address weaknesses, resulting in improved animal well-being and better science. You can download the Programme Description here, be sure to refer to the "Top 10 Tips": [www.aaalac.org/program-description/](http://www.aaalac.org/program-description/)

### What happens after we submit our application package?

You will receive confirmation from the AAALAC International office that your application and Programme Description have been received.

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Next, your application undergoes an administrative review to make sure that your programme meets the criteria listed in the Rules of Accreditation. You will also be asked to submit an application fee which is based on the size of your animal facility. This fee may also be submitted with your application materials.

Next, a site visit team, made up of two or more AAALAC International Council Members and ad hoc Consultants/Specialists, is assigned to review your institution's animal care and use programme. The AAALAC International office will provide you with the names and affiliations of the site visit team members. The member of the AAALAC International Council leading the site visit team will contact you to schedule the visit. Site visits typically take one or two days to complete, depending on the size and complexity of your programme.

### What can we expect during the site visit?

Your site visit will start with an "in-briefing," during which key institutional members meet with the site visit team to discuss the accreditation process.

After the in-briefing, the site visit team will sit down with the appropriate representatives from your institution to go over your Programme Description. (The team will have thoroughly reviewed your Programme Description before the visit.) This gives the team members an opportunity to ask specific questions or request additional documents.

Next, you will take the team on a tour of your facilities. The team will review the areas where animals are housed and/or used, and also support areas. The site visitors may want to talk to the researchers and personnel working in those areas to get a more complete picture of your operations.

At a convenient point, you and the team will break for lunch. Typically, members of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee/Equivalent Oversight Body (E.g.: Animal Welfare Body, Ethics Committee) are invited to join the site visit

team for lunch to discuss the Committee's activities and other issues pertinent to your institution. After the tour, the team may ask you for additional information on specific protocols or procedures. The requested documents are then reviewed by the site visit team.

Toward the end of the day, the site visit team will meet (alone) to hold an "executive session." During this session, they discuss their key observations and information they want to share with you right away.

Finally, an "Exit Briefing" is held for members of your institution, as deemed appropriate by the institution's leadership. The team will share their key findings and what they intend to recommend to the Council regarding your accreditation status. At this point you have an opportunity to correct any misperceptions the site visit team may have. After the visit, they will document their findings and recommendations in an official site visit report that will be evaluated by the Council.

### Post Site Visit Communication

You may also formally respond to the site visit team's initial findings through the "Post Site Visit Communication" (PSVC). The PSVC is a letter and accompanying documentation that you submit (during the next 2 weeks after the site visit) to address any misperceptions, or explain how your institution is already responding to concerns raised during the Exit Briefing. Complete details on the Exit Briefing and the PSVC process are available online at: [www.aaalac.org/education-outreach/featured-stories/](http://www.aaalac.org/education-outreach/featured-stories/).

### What happens after the site visit?

The Council on Accreditation makes all final decisions regarding accreditation. The Council meets three times a year (January, May and September), so your application and site visit report will be considered during the first Council meeting that follows your visit. Prior to the meeting, at least four additional Council members will review and comment on the site visit report.

During the Council deliberations, the Council member that visited your institution will act as your representative, describing your programme and sharing his or her observations. Based on the discussions that follow, a letter is drafted that explains your accreditation status. After the Council meeting, the letter is individually reviewed, edited and approved by members of the Council and AAALAC staff. You should receive official notification of your accreditation within four to eight weeks after the Council meeting.

### How do we maintain accreditation?

If your institution is awarded AAALAC International accreditation, you will need to submit an annual report every year. The report provides current programme information, and explains any changes made to your animal care and use programme during the previous year.

To maintain accreditation, subsequent site visits are held every three years and follow the same process just described.

### What if we have more questions?

If you have additional questions about the accreditation process, your application package, your accreditation status, or specific questions related to your programme, don't hesitate to contact the AAALAC International (regional) office. AAALAC International and its Council members are always available to help you achieve and maintain excellence in your animal care and use programme—so be sure to utilise these resources!\*

