

# What is AAALAC?

AAALAC International is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through [**voluntary accreditation**](https://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/what-is-aaalac-accreditation/) and [**assessment**](https://www.aaalac.org/pre-accreditation-evaluations/the-pse-program/)programs.

More than 1,040 companies, universities, hospitals, government agencies and other research institutions in 50 countries have earned AAALAC accreditation, demonstrating their commitment to responsible animal care and use. These institutions *volunteer* to participate in AAALAC's program, in addition to complying with the local, state and federal laws that regulate animal research.

Some of the institutions that have earned AAALAC accreditation include the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, The American Red Cross, and the National Institutes of Health.

# Why is AAALAC's role important?

For some, animal research is a controversial topic. But like others in the animal welfare arena, AAALAC endorses the use of animals to advance medicine and science when there are no non-animal alternatives, and when it is done in an ethical and humane way.

When animals are used, AAALAC works with institutions and researchers to serve as a bridge between progress and animal well-being. This is done through AAALAC's voluntary accreditation process in which research programs demonstrate that they meet the minimum standards required by law, and are *also* going the extra step to achieve excellence in animal care and use.

In this way, **AAALAC International is where science and responsible animal care connect**.

# What is AAALAC Accreditation?

The AAALAC International accreditation program evaluates organizations that use animals in research, teaching or testing. Those that meet or exceed AAALAC standards are awarded accreditation.

The accreditation process includes an extensive *internal* review conducted by the institution applying for accreditation. During this review, the institution creates a comprehensive document called a “Program Description” which describes all aspects of the animal care and use program (policies, animal housing and management, veterinary care, and facilities). The Program Description is then submitted to AAALAC.

Next, AAALAC evaluators (members of AAALAC's [Council on Accreditation](https://www.aaalac.org/about/council/)) review the Program Description and conduct their own comprehensive on-site assessment. The site visitors’ report is then reviewed by the entire Council on Accreditation and accreditation status is determined. If deficiencies are found, they are outlined in a letter and the institution is given a period of time to correct them. Once the deficiencies are corrected, accreditation is awarded. The entire process is *completely confidential.*

After an institution earns accreditation, it must be re-evaluated every three years in order to maintain its accredited status. Currently more than 1,040 organizations in 50 countries have earned AAALAC accreditation.

Accreditation benefits an institution and the animals in its care in many ways. And each time a new organization becomes accredited, it helps to raise the global benchmark for animal well-being in science.

# Here are a few of the benefits of earning accreditation ...

**It represents quality**  
Organizations and companies look for ways to communicate their commitment to excellence. In the scientific community, AAALAC International accreditation shows that an institution is serious about setting, achieving and maintaining high standards for animal care and use and committed to animal welfare in science. AAALAC International offers the only international accreditation for animal care and use programs, and it has become recognized around the world as a sign of quality and good science.

**It promotes scientific validity**  
When research involves animals, reliable scientific results depend on superior animal care. AAALAC International accreditation engages scientists, veterinarians, managers and administrators in an independent, rigorous assessment of their institution’s animal program—an assessment that ultimately results in improved animal welfare and better research practices and outcomes.

**It provides assurance in a global marketplace**  
Today it’s common for research institutions to partner or contract with other research entities around the world. Because laws and regulations related to animal research vary widely from country to country, AAALAC International accreditation can be used worldwide as a way to gauge the quality of a particular program, harmonize animal care and use practices, and provide assurance to diverse stakeholders.

**It’s a recruiting tool**  
AAALAC International accredited institutions can use their accreditation as a recruiting tool to attract the best and brightest researchers and professors. Talented professionals look for high quality programs to support their research. Accreditation assures potential employees that the institution is dedicated to achieving the highest standards for animal care and use.

**It demonstrates accountability**  
In today’s world, companies and organizations are held to very high levels of accountability—by their own constituents and the general public. Although animal research is a controversial issue for some, most people support biomedical research if it’s conducted in a humane manner. Accreditation through AAALAC International is voluntary and demonstrates a willingness to go above and beyond the minimums required by law. It tells the public that the institution is committed to the responsible care and use of animals in science.

**It provides a confidential peer-review**  
AAALAC accreditation requires an institution to first perform its own self-evaluation (an extremely valuable exercise for any institution to undertake). Next, a team of highly qualified AAALAC representatives provides an in-depth, confidential, on-site evaluation of the institution’s animal care and use program. This independent peer-review ensures that the institution’s program is meeting AAALAC International standards.

**It stimulates continuous improvement**  
When an institution participates in the AAALAC accreditation program, it’s committing to a process that stimulates continuous improvement. Earning and maintaining accreditation keeps an institution aware of, and engaged in, current best practices. Accreditation is a true commitment to humane animal care and use and shows the world that an institution is serious about ensuring animal well-being and conducting good science.

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# Accreditation Status Categories

The following represent the possible accreditation categories into which an institution may be placed subsequent to deliberations of the AAALAC International Council on Accreditation. For reference, a mandatory item is, in Council's judgment, a serious deviation from the recommendations of the Three Primary Standards and/or AAALAC International's [Reference Resources](https://www.aaalac.org/resources/reference-resources/) that must be corrected to achieve or continue accreditation. The significance of a mandatory item is ordinarily based on the Council's assessment of its potential to adversely affect the health, well-being or safety of animals or humans. *The categories are ranked in increasing order of severity of the mandatory item(s) identified.*

 New Applicant Institutions

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Category of Accreditation | Is the institution accredited? | Maximum number of months to correct mandatory item(s) |
| Award Full Accreditation | Yes. This is the only category in which the institution is fully accredited. | N/A |
| Award Accreditation with Condition | Yes | Correction of the mandatory item(s) to be reported in next Annual Report or at the discretion of Council. |
| Award Provisional Status | No | By vote of Council, up to a total of 24 months. Note that these are not calendar months, but rather represent the number of months granted by Council in each letter to the institution. |
| Withhold Accreditation | No. However, the AAALAC International Bylaws provide the opportunity for the institution to appeal this decision. | N/A |

# Accredited Institutions

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Category of Accreditation | Is the institution accredited? | Maximum number of months to correct mandatory item(s) |
| Continued Full Accreditation | Yes. This is the only category in which the institution is fully accredited. | N/A |
| Conditional Accreditation | Yes | Correction of mandatory item(s) to be reported in next Annual Report or at the discretion of Council. |
| Deferred Accreditation | Yes | 2 months. Failure to fully correct the mandatory issue(s) of Deferred Accreditation will result in Probation. |
| Probation | Yes | By vote of Council, up to a total of 12 months. Note that these are not calendar months, but rather represent the number of months granted by Council in each letter to the institution. If adequate correction of the mandatory item(s) is not achieved within the allotted time, proceedings to Revoke accreditation are initiated. |
| Revoke Accreditation | As of the date of the letter informing of the Revoke Accreditation status, the institution is no longer accredited. The AAALAC International Bylaws provide the opportunity for the institution to appeal this decision. However, the institution is not accredited during the appeal process. Accreditation is restored by a vote of the Council. |  |