



PSE: The Program Status Evaluation

The Program Status Evaluation (PSE) is a completely confidential peer review that helps assess the quality of your animal research, teaching or testing program. It is used by many as a “pre-accreditation” service that allows an institution to see how its program compares to AAALAC standards *prior* to applying for accreditation. Almost all institutions that participate in a PSE go on to achieve Full Accreditation.

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What is a Program Status Evaluation?

The Program Status Evaluation (PSE) is a completely confidential peer review that assesses the quality of your animal care and use program, including animal husbandry, veterinary care, institutional policies, and the facilities where animals are housed and used based on AAALAC’s accreditation standards.

Because sound science demands quality animal care, the evaluation will not only promote the well-being of laboratory animals, it will help validate the results of research using animals. It can also serve as the first step toward achieving AAALAC International accreditation, a distinction earned by hundreds of institutions that have achieved excellence in animal care and use.

Why does AAALAC International offer Program Status Evaluations?

In 1965 the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) established a voluntary, confidential, peer-review accreditation program to optimize animal care in science. Today hundreds of universities, companies, hospitals and other research facilities around the world have earned AAALAC Accreditation.

In 1996, AAALAC adopted a new strategic plan and direction, changing the organization’s name to the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International. The name change reflects AAALAC’s international growth and its commitment to provide assessment services and operate its widely recognized accreditation program on an international level.

The decision to offer the PSE service was prompted by numerous requests from non-accredited institutions for “pre-AAALAC” site visits. These institutions, particularly those outside of the United States, are typically less familiar with the accreditation process and want to find out how their programs compare to AAALAC standards before engaging in the formal accreditation program. AAALAC is pleased to be able to accommodate these requests through its “Program Status Evaluation” (PSE) service.

The objective of the PSE service is two-fold. First, it’s meant to assist institutions in determining if their animal care and use programs meet AAALAC standards by identifying any program weaknesses and suggesting ways to improve or correct them. Second, it will help

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familiarize institutions with the AAALAC International accreditation process and encourage them to participate.

Who can participate?

The PSE service is available to companies, universities, hospitals, and other research facilities around the world who have never participated in AAALAC's accreditation program. More information is available through the AAALAC International office or online at www.aaalac.org/programstatus/index.cfm.

How does the process work?

After the application form and Program Description are submitted and reviewed by the AAALAC office, an on-site evaluation is scheduled. Evaluation teams are led by one of AAALAC's Executive Office Directors. Teams also include former members of AAALAC's Council on Accreditation—experts in the fields of veterinary medicine, laboratory animal science or animal research who are committed to humane animal care and use in science.

The on-site evaluation team conducts a comprehensive peer review and provides specific guidance on how to improve deficient program areas. It includes a facility walk-through, and meetings with animal care and research staff, representatives from oversight committees, and the Institutional Official. Recommendations are provided in a detailed written report after the visit.

How do we apply?

Although entirely separate from AAALAC's traditional accreditation program, a PSE is similar in procedure. To participate, request an application package from the AAALAC office or visit www.aaalac.org/programstatus/pseap.cfm. The application process includes developing a comprehensive "Program Description" of your institution's entire animal care and use operation. This involves an intensive self-assessment which identifies strengths and weaknesses, and raises internal awareness of issues surrounding animal well-being.

Does it prepare us for accreditation?

A PSE determines where your program stands in terms of meeting AAALAC standards. The Three Primary Standards used by AAALAC's Council to evaluate programs are: 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)*, FASS 2010; and the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes, Council of Europe (ETS 123). When appropriate, Council also refers to other broadly accepted reference resources. (For a complete list of reference resources, visit www.aaalac.org/accreditation/resources.cfm.) The evaluation also helps your institution gain a better understanding of the accreditation process before you officially apply.

It's important to note that participating in a PSE does not guarantee accreditation following any future accreditation site visit. But it *will* give you a sound understanding of the AAALAC peer-review process and what an accreditation site visit team expects. It will also identify areas that future site visit teams and the Council on Accreditation are likely to note as needing improvement prior to receiving accreditation. AAALAC's records show that 100% of institutions that have participated in a PSE and subsequently applied for accreditation have gone on to achieve Full Accreditation.

What kind of information will we get?

After the on-site review, you will receive a written report from the evaluation team. The report will identify areas that need improvement in order to meet AAALAC standards, and other modifications to consider in order to further improve your animal care and use program. It will also suggest possible strategies for improving any deficiencies. The report will be reviewed by four additional former members of the Council on Accreditation. This will ensure you receive valuable and pertinent information and suggestions from a variety of experts. The contents of your evaluation report are completely confidential and will not be shared with the Council on Accreditation.

How much does it cost?

Fees for the PSE service are negotiated in advance on an individual basis. They will be based on the costs involved in conducting the evaluation visit plus administrative expenses.

