aaalac INTERNATIONAL

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Wonder what's it like to be an Ad Hoc Visitor for AAALAC?

Accreditation and the Ad Hoc Visitor

Role, responsibility, and how serving as an Ad Hoc can benefit you personally and professionally.

Interested in becoming an Ad Hoc Visitor for AAALAC International?

The accreditation site visit is the cornerstone of the accreditation program. The process encourages collaboration and constructive discussion, helping institutions identify strengths, proactively address concerns, and align with internationally recognized animal welfare standards. Site visits are led by members of the Council on Accreditation which consists of experienced veterinarians, researchers, animal care program directors, and subject-matter experts from around the world. **Integral to the site visit team are Ad Hoc Visitors**—experts who bring specialized knowledge to the review process. Becoming an Ad Hoc Visitor offers many benefits, personally and professionally. If you are passionate about advancing responsible animal care in science and education, consider serving as an Ad Hoc and join us in supporting AAALAC's mission worldwide. Below is general information on AAALAC, the accreditation process, the roles and responsibilities of site visit team members, and personal insights from Ad Hoc Visitors.

- Details on how to **apply to be an *Ad Hoc*** are available on the AAALAC website.
- **Hear from current Ad Hocs** on their experiences serving in the role (video link).

Hear from current Ad Hoc Visitors on their experiences serving in the role...

About AAALAC International

AAALAC International is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing humane, responsible animal care and use in science and education. Through its voluntary accreditation program, AAALAC promotes high-quality animal care by encouraging institutions to meet or exceed internationally recognized standards such as the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Accreditation symbolizes excellence, transparency, accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

> "Serving as an Ad Hoc is probably the best continuing education I can receive as an attending veterinarian and program director. I've worked with a lot of amazing people on site visit teams, and I learn something on every site visit."
>
> —Alton Swennes, North America

AAALAC Mission

AAALAC International improves the welfare of animals in science and education through the accreditation of organizations meeting high standards of humane and responsible animal care and use.

Global Accreditation

Since its establishment in 1965 with just 11 accredited programs, AAALAC International has grown to more than 1,146 accredited programs across 52 geographic areas. This global expansion reflects the research community's commitment to strengthening animal welfare. Accredited institutions include universities, industry organizations, government agencies, and private research centers. Today, over 134 programs in Europe, 300 in the Asia-Pacific region, and 718 in North America actively participate in AAALAC's peer-reviewed accreditation process.

Accreditation Approach

AAALAC accreditation is distinct from regulatory inspections. It is a voluntary, confidential, collegial peer review designed to support institutions in sustaining high-quality animal care. The process

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encourages collaboration and constructive discussion, helping institutions identify strengths, proactively address concerns, and align with internationally recognized animal welfare standards. This supportive approach promotes a culture of refinement, responsibility, and continuous improvement.

Council on Accreditation

The Council on Accreditation is composed of experienced veterinarians, researchers, animal care program directors, and subject-matter experts from around the world. Council members conduct site visits, review institutional materials, and ensure consistent, high-quality evaluation of animal care and use programs. Organized into North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific sections, the Council leverages region-specific expertise to support balanced and informed assessments.

Ad Hoc Visitors

AAALAC maintains a roster of more than 300 expert Ad Hoc Visitors worldwide. Formerly, these individuals were identified as Consultants or Specialists. In an order to reflect the role they serve in providing support to the Council on Accreditation, the name has been updated to Ad Hoc Visitors. Additionally, Ad hoc Visitors will serve a three-year term and will be re-evaluated for possible reappointment every three (3) years. Individuals may be reappointed every three years with no limit on the number of times they may be reappointed. Ad hoc Visitors bring specialized knowledge in species-specific care, research methodology, oversight body operations, regulatory compliance, enrichment practices, and facility management. Ad Hocs strengthen the peer review process by offering diverse perspectives, ensuring that site evaluations are comprehensive, objective, and informed by up-to-date best practices.

Role of an Ad Hoc

Ad Hoc Visitors support Council members by assisting with preparation, on-site evaluation, and post-visit reporting. Their responsibilities include reviewing Program Descriptions, participating in facility assessments, evaluating oversight body operations, and engaging with institutional staff. Ad Hoc Visitors help ensure the evaluation remains objective and aligned with AAALAC standards by focusing on assessment rather than consultation. Their contributions are essential to providing thorough, balanced peer review.

Site Visit Process

Site visits are scheduled three times per year, and Ad Hoc Visitors are selected based on the needs of the institution, including species involved, research scope, facility complexity, and technical expertise. Preparation includes reviewing the Program Description, relevant SOPs, facility maps, and welfare policies. Typical site visits include an entrance briefing, facility walkthroughs, IACUC/Oversight Body meetings, staff interviews, and an exit briefing. The goal is to verify alignment with AAALAC's expectations while recognizing exemplary practices and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Post-Visit Support

Following a site visit, Ad Hoc Visitors may help prepare and refine the site visit report submitted to the Council. They may also assist in responding to Council questions to ensure institutions receive fair and accurate evaluations. This phase is critical to maintaining the rigor, clarity, and integrity of the accreditation process.

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>
> —Hui Li, Asia-Pacific Region

Call to Serve

AAALAC's mission relies on the expertise and dedication of professionals who support its global accreditation program. Ad Hocs contribute directly to improving animal welfare by helping institutions uphold high standards of humane and responsible care. Individuals passionate about advancing responsible animal care in science and education are encouraged to serve as Ad Hocs and support AAALAC's mission worldwide. Details on applying are available on AAALAC's website.

What Current *Ad Hocs* Say...

To learn more about the experiences of current Ad Hoc Visitors, visit aaalac.org/about/apply-to-become-an-ad-hoc/ for more testimonials and responses from active Ad Hocs.

How has being an *Ad Hoc* Visitor deepened your understanding of AAALAC's mission and the global culture of care in animal research?

"Through AAALAC's internal training, discussions with Council members, and participation in the entire site visit process, you'll be exposed to the depth of AAALAC's mission and the advanced practices of a culture of care in research."

—Keith Chien, Asia-Pacific Region

How has working with AAALAC and site visit teams influenced your professional network?

"As an Ad Hoc I have made special connections and friendships with many of the site visitors I have worked with and they have become invaluable resources for me in my own program management."

—Morag Mackay, North America

"Many people approach me to know how they can apply for AAALAC, and I became a reference on AAALAC in my country. I was invited to participate in the OIE/WAHO group who wrote Chapter 7.8 on laboratory animals welfare, and one of the reasons I was invited it was because I was an AAALAC Ad Hoc member."

—Ekaterina Rivera, European Region

How has your involvement as an *Ad Hoc* helped your institution?

"Knowing that many institutions face similar challenges, I've had ample opportunities to see how others have addressed or solved them. Often, I've been able to bring those ideas back and incorporate them into the framework at my own institution."

—Matt Rosenbaum, North America

"I think my role provides benefits to the institution in multiple ways. First of all, the experience has made me a more effective IACUC member and a better advocate for the "culture of care" at home. My voice somehow represents the AAALAC expectation and is conveyed directly to the institution. My presence helps convince senior leadership to allocate more resources to support the maintenance and enhancement of the program, which ultimately improves the institution's practice. Secondly, I act as a conduit for innovation, bringing back practical ideas that enhance our own program. Furthermore, by doing site visits and presenting at AAALAC workshops, my own reputation also helps to elevate the institution's reputation, as we are seen as contributing to the broader scientific community."

—Hui Li, Asia Pacific Region

How did you first become involved with AAALAC International as an *Ad Hoc* Visitor?

"I first become involved with AAALAC at the suggestion of a mentor. I was fresh out of my residency program and working at the CDC at the time as an officer in the Public Health Service at the time."

—Allison Williams, North America

In what ways has serving as an *Ad Hoc* Visitor enhanced your professional development?

"Serving as an Ad Hoc is probably the best continuing education I can receive as an AV and program director. I've worked with a lot of amazing people on site visit teams that I probably wouldn't otherwise have encountered. I learn something on every site visit. As I have moved further into program leadership, I think AAALAC has provided me with a strong ability to talk about the challenges we face in animal care."

—Alton Swennes, North America

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