

May 18, 2026

The following summary was prepared with the assistance of ChatGPT to compare the existing Rules of Accreditation to the revision approved by the AAALAC International Board of Directors in February 2026. This summary is provided for informational purposes only. If you have any questions, please contact the AAALAC Executive Office at accredit@aaalac.org.

The AAALAC International Rules of Accreditation were revised by the Board of Directors in March 2026 to clarify terminology, modernize language, and better reflect AAALAC International's current accreditation practices and philosophy. Importantly, these revisions do not create new accreditation standards or fundamentally change how accredited programs are evaluated. Most accredited units should not need to make operational changes as a result of these updates. The revised Rules of Accreditation will be posted after August 1, 2026 and will be considered effective immediately.

Key Highlights for Accredited Units

1. Clarification of What Constitutes an "Active Animal Care and Use Program"

The revised Rules now more clearly define the essential elements of an active program, including:

- compliance with applicable regulations,
- an Institutional Official,
- an oversight body,
- an Attending Veterinarian,
- education and training,
- occupational health and safety considerations, and
- appropriate facilities and procedures.

This change is intended to clarify existing expectations rather than introduce new requirements.

2. Expanded Description of Accreditation Principles

Section 2 was substantially reorganized to articulate the core principles that guide AAALAC International accreditation. These principles include:

1. humane and responsible animal use,
2. compliance with regulations,
3. institutional oversight,
4. veterinary care,
5. personnel training,

6. occupational health and safety,
7. physical plant and environment, and
8. continuous improvement.

The revisions provide additional explanation of concepts that have long been part of the accreditation process, including:

- the Three Rs (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement),
- animal welfare enhancement,
- personnel well-being, and
- continuous program evaluation.

These additions are explanatory and reflective of current accreditation philosophy and practices.

3. Updated Terminology and Consistency Improvements

Throughout the document, terminology was standardized and modernized. Examples include:

- greater use of the term “animal care and use program,”
- clarification of “accreditable unit,” and
- improved consistency in references to accreditation categories and processes.

These edits are intended to improve readability and consistency rather than change expectations for accredited organizations.

4. Clarification of Accreditation Categories and Processes

The revised Rules provide clearer descriptions of:

- Full Accreditation,
- Conditional Accreditation,
- Probation,
- Provisional Status,
- reassessment timelines, and
- revocation procedures.

The revisions largely codify existing practices and improve transparency regarding how accreditation decisions are managed.

5. Clarification Regarding Fees and Payment Requirements

These revisions do not represent a substantive change in AAALAC International’s fee structure or accreditation review process.

6. Additional Reporting Expectations

The revised Rules explicitly state that accredited units should promptly notify AAALAC International regarding:

- investigations,
- legal actions,
- formal proceedings, and
- related public reporting involving the animal care and use program.

This language formalizes practices already commonly followed during ongoing communication between institutions and AAALAC International.

Overall Impact on Accredited Units

The revisions are primarily organizational, clarifying, and administrative in nature. They:

- better define existing expectations,
- improve transparency and consistency,
- align the Rules with current accreditation practices, and
- modernize the language used throughout the document.

The revisions are not intended to impose new accreditation burdens or materially alter how accredited animal care and use programs are evaluated.