

AAALAC International FAQs for COVID-19

April 2020

AAALAC Accreditation Status and Site Visit Postponement

QUESTION: *I read the March 15, 2020 message from the AAALAC International Executive Office that allows me to request a postponement for my site visit due to concerns about COVID-19. How does a postponement affect the accreditation status for our program?*

ANSWER: The accreditation status for your animal care and use program remains unchanged during periods of postponement. Please refer to the AAALAC International Rules of Accreditation (Section 7) for additional information on accreditation status.

If you have submitted your Program Description for an upcoming site visit and have subsequently decided to postpone the site visit due to COVID-19, send a request to accredit@aaalac.org.

New Applicants During COVID-19 Pandemic

QUESTION: *What guidance can you provide for submitting a new application for AAALAC accreditation?*

ANSWER: New applications are welcome and are processed at the time they are received at the AAALAC International Executive Office. You will receive correspondence acknowledging receipt of your application and Program Description. The scheduling of the initial site visit may be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and you are welcome to contact the AAALAC Office for questions. Please send your questions to accredit@aaalac.org.

Temporary Shutdown of Animal Care and Use Program

QUESTION: *We have temporarily suspended all animal activity and have no animals at our program at this time. Does this affect our AAALAC accreditation?*

ANSWER: There are several criteria required to maintain AAALAC accreditation, including the presence/use of animals. If you have stopped all use of animals, send a notification to the AAALAC Office and your program will be placed on "inactive status." An active animal care and use program must be resumed within twelve months to maintain accreditation. Please refer to the "Criteria for Accreditation" in Section 1 of the AAALAC International Rules of Accreditation.

Program Reviews and Facility Inspections for Animal Care and Use Programs

QUESTION: *The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in our program operating with only essential staff. What options do we have for conducting our program review and facility inspections?*

ANSWER: AAALAC International expects accredited programs to comply with all applicable laws and regulations as well as internal policies. The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, NRC 2011 states "Program review and facilities inspections should occur at least annually or more often as required (e.g., by the Animal Welfare Act and PHS Policy). Please refer to guidance from applicable oversight agencies as a start, as well as review your internal policies on this subject. The local IACUC/OB is authorized to make changes in existing policy as long as it is consistent with external guidance and regulations.

Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) Options

QUESTION: *Can we discontinue our post-approval monitoring program during COVID-19, due to limited resources?*

ANSWER: The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, NRC 2011 describes a variety of options for monitoring animal use and provides flexibility for monitoring studies after the protocol has been approved. AAALAC International interprets the Guide recommendation for a PAM program in the broadest sense, namely that there will be a system for ensuring animal procedures conform with the approved protocol or study plan.

