

## **Accreditation of Animal Science Programs - An Update**

The American Society of Animal Science has accepted the responsibility of implementing a voluntary Accreditation Program available to institutions awarding 4-year BS degrees in Animal Science by creating the Animal Science Council on Accreditation. This is in response to requests beginning in 2014 from ASAS members representing academia and industry employers of Animal Science graduates to establish standards for accreditation of animal science programs. Accreditation of professional programs, through program self-evaluation and third-party peer review processes, is a long proven and accepted method of ensuring quality and consistency of academic programs and is widely used throughout academic disciplines. Accreditation of Animal Science programs will be of value to the academic departments, colleges and institutions awarding the degrees, to the students graduating from these programs and to the employers of graduates from these programs. Animal science professionals from academia, industry and government are engaged to provide objective external review and attest to a program's quality and commitment to continuous improvement. With increasing expectations of accountability in higher education, accreditation provides a valued opportunity to verify program quality and capacity for training students who are prepared to enter diverse professional positions upon graduation or continue their education in professional degree programs.

Programmatic accreditation in the US is a non-governmental process where programs voluntarily undergo a periodic comprehensive review that determines a program's success in meeting defined professional standards. Accredited Animal Science programs can document third party peer review and evaluation of educational quality and accountability of a program in meeting essential standards identified and approved by animal science professionals from academia and industry. Accreditation does not rank programs, but rather identifies if program standards are met. Accreditation of an Animal Science Program accredits the program, not the institution.

Accreditation of Animal Science programs signifies that professionals in the Animal Science disciplines are proactively committed to high quality education and training of the next generation of animal scientists and have identified required standards for their program. When the Animal Science Standards for Accreditation are met, it ensures that the curriculum covers essential concepts, knowledge and experiences, that appropriate institutional support is present to deliver a sustained high-quality program and that the program has the necessary components to deliver graduates who are well prepared and ready for employment in the diverse professions of animal science.

A program seeking accreditation will conduct a thorough self-evaluation to assess and document compliance with the required accreditation standards. The institution will request accreditation and submit the required application materials. The Animal Science Council on Accreditation will then review the application, send a peer review team for an onsite visit and make a decision on whether the standards have been met.

The ASAS Accreditation initiative is now in the implementation stage. Recent advances in the implementation process have included:

- November 2019 ASAS Board of Directors approves Draft Accreditation Standards to be posted for public comment.
- February 10 – March 20, 2020 Accreditation Standards posted for public comment and critique. The opportunity to comment was open to ASAS members and non-members.
- The comments were addressed and a revised document of Accreditation Standards was approved by the ASAS Board of Directors.
- The ASAS Board of Directors moved to establish the 9 member Animal Science Council on Accreditation to handle matters of accreditation processes and actions.
- March 15, 2021 The ASAS Board of Directors will begin the process of filling Volunteer Animal Science Council on Accreditation seats. Applications will be received until March 15, 2021. The application is available at: <https://www.asas.org/services/accreditation>
- It is anticipated that initial program applicants will begin the process in 2021.

Additional details and information on Accreditation will be posted on the ASAS Accreditation Website: <https://www.asas.org/services/accreditation>. This site will serve as the main source of information for program leaders considering accreditation, and others with an interest in ASAS Accreditation. This site will be evolving as the Council is enacted to provide details on the processes and policies associated with Accreditation.