

# Accreditation Handbook for Animal Science Programs

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Prepared by:  
Animal Science Council on Accreditation



**Note: Updates, corrections and edits to this document will be made on the online document and take precedence to all previous versions.**

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## Preface:

The American Society of Animal Science has accepted the responsibility of implementing a voluntary Accreditation Program available to institutions awarding four-year BS degrees in Animal Science by creating the Animal Science Council on Accreditation (ASCoA). This is in response to requests 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 train graduates who are well prepared and ready for employment in the diverse professions of animal science.

This handbook details the processes and requirements for Accreditation of Bachelor of Science degree programs in Animal Science.

## Introduction:

The American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) exists to foster the discovery, sharing and application of scientific knowledge concerning the care and responsible use of animals to enhance animal and human health and well-being. As such, the following five core principles guide the work of the society:

1. Animals are essential to human life and well-being.
2. The care and use of animals are held to the highest standards of integrity and professional ethics.
3. Research and scientific information are communicated in an open, transparent, and dynamic manner.
4. Career development for animal scientists, educators and producers is essential to the viability of the allied and animal industries.
5. Animal science and the production of animal-sourced foods must continually evolve to meet the needs and values of society.

Additional details about the ASAS can be found at [www.asas.org](http://www.asas.org). Pursuant to the core principles of the society as defined in the Mission Statement, and particularly core principle 4, the American Society of Animal Science, in furtherance of these principles, has established the Animal Science Council on Accreditation (ASCoA) to accredit educational programs in the United States that lead to a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science.

## Objectives of Animal Science Accreditation

- To advance the quality and continuous improvement of animal science education through program self-evaluation and peer review by qualified academic and industry professionals
- To foster excellence in animal science programs through periodic review and revision of standards for accreditation and to apply those standards while conducting the accreditation process
- To ensure that standards recognize and encompass the diversity of animal science programs that, in addition to production animal agriculture, may include care of companion animals, preservation of species (e.g. captive exotics), and management of laboratory animals
- Through this process, to assure students, employers, the public, and other organizations that ASCoA accredited programs have educational objectives and outcomes consistent with current professional standards for the field of animal science, and have adequate resources to accomplish these objectives

The standards for accreditation describe the essential elements of a program in animal science to include the following seven standards described in detail in the document entitled Accreditation Standards for Animal Science Programs.

1. Program mission and objectives
2. Program governance, administration and institutional support
3. Students

4. Program learning outcomes and curriculum
5. Faculty
6. Facilities, equipment and technology
7. Outreach and engagement with industry, public, institution

The Animal Science Board of Directors approved the Accreditation Standards for Animal Science Programs in July 2020 following posting for public review and input, and receipt, consideration and incorporation of public input.

This Accreditation process provides latitude for an individual program to fully describe their unique initiatives, applications to educate students in animal science and variation in how their program is implemented and accomplishes their objectives.

ASCoA recognizes the need for diversity and encourages an environment composed of students, faculty and external constituents that represent and promote communication and collaboration from representatives of different cultures, experiences and viewpoints.

It is explicitly not a goal of this program to assess the overall institution in detail. Instead, it relies upon the opinions of other accrediting bodies appropriate for such a task. To be eligible for this accreditation the institution must be accredited by a regional accrediting commission.

This document defines the process for Accreditation of Animal Science programs. The standards for accreditation are detailed in: Accreditation Standards for Animal Science Programs. This process and the Accreditation Standards will be periodically reviewed and updated as needed by the ASAS Board of Directors.

## Animal Science Council on Accreditation (ASCoA)

### Responsibilities

In 2020, ASAS established the ASCoA with the following responsibilities:

1. To approve and communicate the standards of accreditation
2. To define and implement the accreditation process
3. To conduct the accreditation process

### Governance and Authority

In 2020, the ASCoA was established by the ASAS Board of Directors and was incorporated into the ASAS Bylaws as a Committee/Council with the responsibility to conduct accreditation actions of Bachelor of Science degree programs in animal science.

ASAS is committed to the long-term success of the accreditation process and has established the following administrative policies in support of accreditation.

- ASAS recognizes the ASCoA as the accrediting body responsible for acting in matters of accreditation of professional animal science BS degree programs.

- ASAS expects the fees collected by the ASCoA to cover the direct costs of the accreditation site visits and Council meetings. ASAS is committed to providing support staff and overhead annually in support of the ASCoA function. The amount will be determined by the annual budget set by the ASAS Board of Directors.
- Membership to the nine-member ASCoA will be seated from applications received with selection and approval by the ASAS Board of Directors.

### Membership and Seating

The Animal Science Council on Accreditation (ASCoA) is responsible for implementing and conducting accreditation actions. This includes decisions on whether requirements of accreditation have been met. Membership to the nine-member ASCoA will be established from applications received with selection and approval by the ASAS Board of Directors. The ASCoA may review applications for the Council seats and make recommendations to the ASAS Board of Directors. Representation on the Council will include:

- Six animal science educators
- Two animal science industry professionals
- One government agency representative
- Accreditation Coordinator – Non-voting

All members of the ASCoA must be current members in good standing of ASAS. Two members of the ASCoA must be current members of the ASAS Board of Directors and may align with any of the three representation categories.

ASAS will assign the Accreditation Coordinator to support Accreditation activities and Council actions.

Membership on the Council will be for a three-year term that may be renewed once for a maximum of six years continuous service. Three-year terms are staggered. The Council chair and chair-elect are determined by Council vote.

New members are determined by Council review of nominations and applications received and a recommendation forwarded to the ASAS Board of Directors. The final decision on new membership resides with the Board of Directors. When selecting new members, the Council and Board of Directors are expected to consider diversity and inclusion, diversity of Animal Science programs regarding size and geographic location, and diversity of professional experience. Council members representing educators should reflect diversity in rank. Industry and government professionals serving on the Council must possess at least one degree (BS, MS, and/or Ph.D.) in Animal Science.

Council members must agree to participate in at least one face-to-face meeting held annually in conjunction with the ASAS national meeting. At this annual meeting, Council decisions and actions on accreditation are made. Additional meetings, especially in the first three years following implementation, will be called as needed by the Council chair and may involve in-

person and/or conference call participation. Travel and lodging for in-person meetings will be covered.

Replacement of Council members with unexpired terms will be the responsibility of the Council with approval by the ASAS Board of Directors and must fulfill the criteria of representation.

The Council will have the ability to modify operational and management processes and procedures as needed. The ASAS Board of Directors must approve any changes to the Accreditation Standards for Animal Science Programs.

## Eligibility for Accreditation

To be eligible to apply for accreditation, programs must meet the following prerequisites:

- The institution must be accredited by a regional accrediting commission.
- The program must provide evidence of institutional commitment to acquiring and maintaining the accredited status of its Animal Science program.
- When completed, the curriculum must result in the awarding of a Bachelor of Science degree and meet the standards defined in Animal Science Standards of Accreditation.
- The program title or degree description must be reflective of Animal Science.

## Application Process

Initiating accreditation of a Bachelor of Science program in Animal Science is a voluntary action supported by the institution's chief academic officer. An eligible program may apply for accreditation upon meeting the Standards for Accreditation and has had a least one graduating class.

A program interested in seeking accreditation must notify the ASCoA of its intention to apply in the year before submitting their application. Notices of intent to apply forms must be received by April 1 of the year before submission so that preparations can begin at the ASCoA annual meeting for the next cohort of applicants.

## Steps to Accreditation

- 1) Submission of completed Accreditation Application Documents to include:
  - a) A letter of support from the institution's Chief Academic Officer stating support for seeking and maintaining accreditation of the Animal Science program.
  - b) Completed Accreditation Application Forms and Required documents
  - c) Self-Study Report (SSR) following ASCoA Self-Study Report Guidelines.
- 2) Applications received before April 1 will be reviewed by ASCoA and a subcommittee assigned to each application. Subcommittee members will be responsible for a detailed review of the application and will present an initial report to the Council at the ASCoA annual meeting in July.
- 3) Applications received after April 1 will be considered in the subsequent pool of applicants.
- 4) At the annual meeting of the ASCoA:
  - a) Subcommittees will present individual reports to the Council on applications received.

- b) Council action will be taken on each application:
  - i) Outcomes include:
    - (1) Notice to Proceed. Application ready for scheduling site visit and proceeding towards accreditation
    - (2) Application is incomplete or found to be deficient in one or more of the Accreditation Standards
      - (a) Applications will be returned to the programs with information identifying where the deficiencies were found or information lacking.
    - (3) The application requires minimal additional documentation, which the program will be asked to provide.
      - (a) Additional documentation must be provided before October 1 if the program desires to remain in the current cohort of applicants or may choose to be reconsidered in the next cycle.
- 5) All applying programs will receive notice of the ASCoA action taken on their application within 14 days of the Annual Meeting.
- 6) For programs receiving Notice to Proceed, scheduling of site team visits will begin in Aug.
  - a) ASCoA personnel will contact the applying program to identify a site visit schedule.
    - i) Window for site visits is September – April
- 7) Site Visit. A 4-5 person team will visit the applying institution for 3 days on-site.
- 8) The Review Team Chair and Chair of the ASCoA, will incorporate input as appropriate and the review team Chair will submit a final report for presentation to and deliberation by the Council at the Annual Meeting.
- 9) Action will be taken at the meeting by Council members. Vote to
  - a) Award Accreditation
  - b) Accreditation deferred until identified corrective actions made and accepted by the Council
  - c) Accreditation denied
- 10) The ASCoA will deliver the Council decision in writing to the program within 14 days of the Annual meeting.
  - a) A program receiving a negative decision may request additional information from ASCoA on specific areas to improve the application for a successful outcome.

Note: Minimum time from application (April 1) to Accredited status is 15 months.



## Accreditation Timeline and Annual Calendar

Date	Action
By April 1	Deadline for applicants seeking accreditation to submit completed application materials for consideration during the next annual cycle.
April - June	Subcommittees (a subcommittee assigned to each applying program) of ASCoA members review and prepare initial report for Council to be given at Annual Meeting
July	Annual Meeting of ASCoA Council Acts on Program Applications (new applications) Council Acts on Accreditation Decisions (applications in progress) ASCoA communicates Council decisions to the Institutions
August	Site Reviews Scheduled with Institutions
September – April	Site visit window. Site visit must be completed before April 1 a) Review team chair will coordinate and prepare a team report within 30 days and submit that to the ASCoA Chair b) The final report by the review team and approved by the ASCoA Chair is sent to the chief academic officer and program head (and other academic personnel as required) for review and comment on accuracy within 60 days of the visit. c) Program officials will have 14 days after receipt of the report to make comments. d) The Accreditation Review Team submits final document to ASCoA for action at the annual meeting in July. e) The final Council decision will be delivered to program officials within 14 days of the annual meeting.

## Self-Study Report

Programs applying for accreditation will undergo a thorough self-evaluation to document and demonstrate compliance with the Accreditation Standards for Animal Science Programs. The self-evaluation is the most critical component of the accreditation process. The subsequent site visit is used to confirm, validate and further comprehend the information provided in the self-study document. Programmatic ability to identify, define and evaluate its own strengths, weaknesses and uniqueness is critical to the accreditation process. This process of in-depth analysis provides benchmarking that can provide valuable insight for the continuous improvement goals of the program.

The self-study will provide a comprehensive description of how the institution meets or exceeds the standards and should follow the guidelines provided in the Self-Study Guidelines document. The self-study is submitted and approved as complete and acceptable by the ASCoA before a site visit is scheduled.

## Site Visit

The purpose of the site visit is to gather information that corroborates and validates the self-study report and facilitate an in-person assessment of programmatic characteristics such as: morale, leadership, cooperation, the environment and physical state of the learning environment or other areas not easily conveyed in written form. The visiting team will have carefully reviewed the self-study before the visit. It will use the 3-day on-site visit to assess the educational quality and accountability of the program in meeting all of the essential standards identified for accreditation. Should there be areas of questionable or non-compliance with the standards, these will be noted and become part of the review team report. The Site Review Team responsibilities include:

- Assessment of compliance with Accreditation Standards
- Investigation of questions raised from self-study document
- Meetings with students, faculty, administration, staff, other involved groups (alumni, industry)
- Visit to program facilities – animal facilities, labs, classrooms
- Conduct of exit meetings to deliver review findings to administration and program personnel
- Submission of a written report of the site visit to the ASCoA Council

Upon completion of the site visit, the Site Review Team Leader with team member input will prepare and submit a report within 30 days and submit to the Chair of the ASCoA. The ASCoA Chair will approve and send the report to the Program leadership including the chief academic office and program head, for review and comment on accuracy within 60 days of the visit. Program officials will have 14 days following receipt to provide a written response to identify and correct any inaccuracies and/or to provide comment before advancing the report to the ASCoA for action. The Site Review Team Report and input will be an essential part of the accreditation process, but it is the ASCoA that makes the final accreditation decisions.

## Selection of the Site Review Team

The ASCoA will make the appointment of the Site Review Team members. All participants will have met the Visiting Team criteria and qualifications and submit an application to serve. The ASCoA will develop and maintain a pool of volunteers from which to select. Criteria for serving as a Site Review Team Member include: a B.S. degree in Animal Science, a minimum of 6 years of professional experience in an Animal Science or related field, and have a commitment and interest in academic training. Preference is given to visiting team members who are members of ASAS. Team members appointed to a program review will not have graduated from or have been a past or present faculty or staff member of the institution being reviewed. Candidate team members must disclose any other potential conflicts of interest with an institution early in the selection process. Current residency of team members is preferred to be outside the program's state. Of the 4-5 member Site Review Team, at least one visiting team member will be from Industry or Government sectors.

## Program Responsibilities During the Site Visit

The Program Head or designee will be responsible for the following in preparation for and during the Site Review Team Visit:

- Have a thorough understanding of the Accreditation Processes, Standards and follow the Guidelines for preparation of the Self Study.
- Inform institutional administrators, program faculty and staff of the application and process
- Accept or challenge for cause the Site Review Team Members assigned by ASCoA in the identified timeframe.
- Submit all required documents electronically by the assigned due dates.
- Work with ASCoA personnel in finalizing schedules, agendas, meetings and other components of the visit.
- Lodging and Site Review Team expenses will be covered by ASAS. Transportation assistance for Review Team members during the visit may be requested for travel to campus, facilities etc. and will be coordinated in advance.
- Facilitate meetings with program faculty, staff and students to maximize participation.
- Facilitate meeting for Review Team with employers of graduates and advisory committee.
- Provide a private conference room for Site Review while on campus.
- Be available throughout visit to answer questions as requested but Program Head will not participate in Review Team meetings and discussions.

### Example Site Visit Schedule

A typical site review is 3 days in length. The following is an example schedule and is adjusted to fit the program's and institution's needs.

<b>Day</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Arrival Day – Evening Prior	Team members arrive by late afternoon at the hotel. Team members have Team Meeting at hotel. Discuss agenda, team and individual responsibilities and assignments.
Day 1	7AM – Working Breakfast of final prep and travel to campus 8:30 – Opening meeting – Brief review of process and procedures. Attendees: Institutional Administrators, Department Administration and Personnel 9:30 – Meet with Program Administration – Head, Program Coordinator 10:30 – Meet with program faculty Noon – working lunch with Advisory committee, employers 1:30 – First meeting with small groups (e.g., students, staff, graduate students, producer/industry) 2:30 – Second meeting with small groups 3:30 – Third meeting with small groups 4:30 – Team Meeting 6:30 – Dinner – informal dinner with small group of faculty, admins
Day 2	8:30 – Tour Program facilities – farms, labs, classrooms, etc. 10:00 – Meet with program faculty (session 2) Noon – Team meeting working lunch 1:30 – Visit classes, other meetings as needed. May split team to cover 3:00 – Team discussions, draft report preparations 6:30 – Team Dinner – Discuss draft reports and plans for exit meeting
Day 3	6:30 Breakfast and Hotel Checkout 8:00 Exit meeting – Oral report of team findings to Institutional and Department administration 9:30 Exit meeting - Oral report of team finding to Program faculty and staff 11:00 Team departs

## Accreditation Fees

### Fees

Fees charged for the Accreditation of Animal Science programs are structured to cover the direct costs of accreditation site visits and Council meetings. ASAS is committed to providing support staff and overhead annually in support of the ASCoA function. An annual budget for the ASCoA will be approved by the ASAS Board of Directors. Annual and application fees of program participants will be reviewed and re-evaluated every 5 years. Changes to the fee structure will be approved by the ASAS Board of Directors and announced 12 months before implementation. All fees are due and payable when invoiced or application submitted.

### Fee Schedule

Item	\$
Application Fee (due with application submission)	\$5,000
Annual Fee (billed July 1)*	\$2,000
<b>*Annual Fee is included in the application fee for year 1.</b>	

## Confidentiality of Accreditation Process

All information provided by applicants in the Accreditation process is handled as confidential and for the use of the ASCoA and associated personnel. No disclosure of the Accreditation materials will be disclosed outside the process without the permission of the institution.

## Term of Accreditation

Accreditation of a program is granted upon the action of the ASCoA. It is accredited for a period of 7 years, provided that the program continues to meet all accreditation requirements, including submission of annual reports, notification of substantive changes to the program, and annual fee payments.

Continuing accreditation after the initial period will require a self-evaluation and site visit following the same process as for initial accreditation. Accredited programs will be notified at the beginning of year 5 of their term to begin renewal processes.

## Annual Reports

An annual report is required of all accredited programs. This allows the ASCoA to ensure that programs remain in compliance with the standards of accreditation. The annual reports are due on June 15 and will be reviewed at the ASCoA annual meeting in July. Late reports will be assessed a late fee.

### Annual report information

The annual report must contain the following information.

- Substantive changes in the program, which may include but are not limited to:
  - Changes in faculty and/or administration that impacts the program

- Curricular changes to the program
- Fiscal changes and impacts
- Enrollment updates
- Updates to graduation numbers and employment of graduates
- Actions taken in response to site visit review

## Withdrawal from Accreditation Status

An Institution that has submitted a letter of intent to apply for accreditation or has submitted a completed accreditation application document, may voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process at any time by submitting a letter of withdrawal from the program head/chair and/or the program Dean to the Animal Science Council on Accreditation. No annual/application fees will be refunded.

## Withdrawal from Accreditation Process

An Institution that has an ASAS accredited animal science program or is a candidate for accreditation, may voluntarily withdraw from accreditation at any time by submitting a letter of withdrawal from the program head/chair and/or the program Dean to the Animal Science Council on Accreditation. No annual/application fees will be refunded.

## Suspension of Accreditation

Accreditation can be suspended for two reasons.

### Administrative suspension

Cause for an administrative suspension is primarily lack of payment or reports required to maintain good standing. Payments and reports that are 60 days past their due dates are delinquent and will be suspended. Because this is an administrative action, this type of suspension is not subject to appeal. A letter from the Council will be sent to the program indicating cause, corrective action, and timeline.

An administratively suspended program will be listed as suspended for up to one year. If corrective action (e.g., submission of delinquent reports or payments) is not taken within the one-year period of suspension, accreditation of the program will be revoked. If corrective action is taken within the one-year period of suspension, the program's accreditation will be restored.

### Standards suspension

Cause for a standards suspension is failure to comply with accreditation standards or the parent institution has lost accreditation by its accrediting agency. A suspension because of standards failure is subject to suspension. A letter from the Council will cite specific deficiencies related to specific standards criteria, will list suggested remedies (but others may be appropriate), and will set a date by which the institution is to respond.

A program suspended because of standards failure is allowed 30 days for written notice of appeal (see appeal process below). If the appeal has not been initiated within 30 days, accreditation of the program will be revoked.

In case of suspension, no prepaid fees are refunded.

## Appeal Process

### Conditions for Accepting Appeals

Appeals may be made only in response to an ASCoA decision of accreditation denied. The grounds to appeal are limited to the following situations:

- Applicants do not agree that the ASCoA followed the published policies and procedures.
- Applicants do not agree that the ASCoA applied the published Accreditation Standards for Animal Science Programs.
- Applicants do not agree that the ASCoA accurately assessed the submitted documentation and evidence that was available at the time of the ASCoA decision.

### Procedures

- **Notice of Appeal.** The notice of appeal must be submitted in writing by the Dean of the college to the ASCoA Chair and copied to the Accreditation Coordinator within 30 days of receipt of the accreditation denied notification. This document must detail all of the grounds upon which the appeal is based.
- **Engagement of ASAS Board of Directors.**
  - Upon receipt of the notice of appeal, the ASCoA Chair will forward the notice to the ASAS Board of Directors from which a three person Appeal Committee will be formed within 30 days and will be chaired by a member designated by the ASAS President. Current ASCoA members or persons who were involved in the application review process are not eligible to participate on the appeal committee but previous ASCoA members should be considered if available. If no, experienced and previous ASCoA member is available from the Board of Directors, a former ASCoA member should be selected to serve as a non-voting member of the Appeal Committee to provide insight and knowledge of ASCoA functions, procedures and processes.
    - **Note: The role of the Appeal Committee is to determine if the ASCoA followed the published procedures and reached their decision in a fair manner. Their role is specifically NOT whether they would have reached the same conclusion as the ASCoA.**
  - Once established, the Appeal Committee will have access to all documentation from the accreditation process including application documents, correspondence and responses between the ASCoA, Site review team and institution. The information provided by the institution in the Notice of Appeal will be included in the documentation. The institution has the burden of proof that conditions for an appeal exist. The Notice of Appeal should contain detailed evidence to support the claim. The Institution will be informed in writing once the Appeal

Committee is in place. The Committee will have up to 90 days to render their decision.

- Appeal Committee will review the case and hold a virtual hearing. At the hearing, the institution and ASCoA are expected to have representatives available to respond to questions seeking clarification of positions and information presented in the documentation being reviewed by the Committee.
- Following the hearing, the Appeal Committee will have 30 days to present its decision in writing to the ASAS Board of Directors, to the ASCoA and to the institution. This decision will include the facts and reasons resulting in their decision.
- **Final decision by ASAS Board of Directors.** The ASAS Board of Directors will have 30 days after receipt of the Appeal Committee decision to make the final decision to either: Uphold the original ASCoA decision of Accreditation denied; or to overturn the decision of the ASCoA of accreditation denied. If the decision is to uphold the ASCoA decision then the ASCoA decision is final and the institution can reapply for accreditation after one year. If the decision is to overturn the ASCoA decision to deny, then a second review will be initiated in accordance with recommendation of the Appeal Committee. The decision of the ASAS Board of Directors is final and may not be appealed. The Institution will be informed in writing of the decision from the ASAS Board of Directors.