

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

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The following is a selection of frequently asked questions (and their respective answers) concerning the CCAC assessment and certification process.

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1. What is the assessment and certification process?

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) assesses and certifies institutional animal ethics and care programs every three years. Assessments take place through either a **regular visit** (conducted by a panel of peers) or an **interim visit** (conducted by an associate director of assessment, who may or may not be accompanied by a peer). Regular and interim visits generally alternate every three years.

Certification involves the review of institutional implementation reports and updates by the assessment panel and the CCAC. Once the information provided by the institution is deemed satisfactory, the institution can receive a CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®.

[Sample agenda and pre-assessment documentation requirements](#) can be found on the CCAC website.

2. What steps does an institution take to become CCAC certified?

Institutions that would like to apply for CCAC certification should [contact the CCAC](#) and follow the instructions outlined in [Helping Canadian Institutions Join the CCAC Program](#) (CCAC, 2017).

3. When should an animal care committee require the submission of a protocol by a researcher / instructor / study director?

All proposed animal-based research, teaching, and testing activities must be clearly described in an animal protocol that must be approved by the institutional animal care committee before any animal-based work can begin. For CCAC's definition of "animal" and for exceptions to the above statement, please refer to the [Requirement for submitting an animal protocol: Addendum to the CCAC policy statement on terms of reference for animal care committees](#) (CCAC, 2018).

4. Who can and can not be a community representative on the animal care committee?

Community representatives come from all walks of life; they can, for example, be members of a humane society, retirees, lawyers, homemakers, business people, teachers, ethicists, or members of the clergy. Community representatives can have any background as long as they have never worked with animals for scientific purposes, are not affiliated* in any way with the institution that they will be working with, and do not have any conflict of interest that would compromise their role.

Specifically, the following should not be asked to serve as community representatives:

- current or former employees of the institution;
- someone with a real or perceived conflict of interest (e.g., family member of an animal care committee member, researcher, or senior administrator; someone involved with Board or Senate of an institution, etc.);

* Former undergraduate students are acceptable community representatives as long as they have not pursued further studies or work experience involving animals in research, teaching, or testing.

- someone who has exceeded eight continuous years of service on an animal care committee; or
- someone (currently or in the past) involved in animal-based research, teaching, or testing (e.g., graduate student working with animals).

Additional information can be found in the [CCAC-CFHS Manual for Community Representatives](#) (CCAC, 2006).

5. How should third-party facilities be overseen?

In the case of a CCAC-certified institution that does not own the animals or facilities where research, teaching, or testing animals are housed (e.g., animals on private farms involved in teaching or research) or where animal-based work is undertaken, the CCAC's expectations with regard to institutional responsibilities related to the CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® are:

- that the institution be responsible for the activities and processes under its direct control (animal care committee functions including protocol approval, site visits and post-approval monitoring, training of their personnel, scientific and pedagogical merit review);
- that the institution set clear performance expectations for the elements not directly under its control (animal welfare, facilities, competency of on-site staff, veterinary services, occupational health and safety, and crisis management), with the understanding that third party facilities that do not meet these expectations will not, or no longer, be included in research or teaching projects. These expectations can be communicated through a memorandum of understanding or other documented method; and
- that third party facilities be visited by animal care committee members annually (not all members need to participate in the visit). At least two animal care committee members with no real or perceived conflict of interest can undertake a documented site visit and provide a report to the animal care committee. Facilities should strive to meet CCAC standards, and should at the very least meet industry standards (e.g., [National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice](#)) or an equivalent.

6. What CCAC resources are available to help animal care committees undertake effective and efficient site visits of animal facilities?

The CCAC has published [Guidance for Animal Care Committee Members Conducting Annual Site Visits](#) (CCAC, 2018) that includes a sample site visit form that animal care committees can adapt to their facilities.

In addition, the CCAC webinar [ACC Site Visits of Animal Facilities](#) is available on the CCAC website.

7. What are CCAC requirements with regard to the pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training?

All animal-based teaching and training activities that require an animal protocol must undergo pedagogical merit review, as described in the [CCAC policy: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training](#) (CCAC, 2016).

Additional resources include the [CCAC frequently asked questions: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training](#) (CCAC, 2018) and a [sample peer review form](#).

8. What are the CCAC requirements with regard to scientific peer review of animal based research?

Animal-based research must only be undertaken if expert, independent opinion has attested to the probable scientific value of the research within its field. For a research program or project that has been examined through an independent and expert peer-review process (e.g. federal and provincial granting agencies and others), the institutional research administration can choose to accept the results of this review as evidence of scientific merit. In other cases, it is the institution's responsibility to develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that proposed research that will involve animals is independently reviewed for scientific merit by expert peers.

Additional information can be found in the [*CCAC policy statement on: scientific merit and ethical review of animal-based research*](#) (CCAC, 2013) and its accompanying [frequently asked questions](#) document.