CERTIFICATION OF ANIMAL ETHICS AND CARE PROGRAMS

DATE OF REVISION: January 2020

1.   CCAC CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) assesses and certifies animal ethics and care programs of organizations conducting animal-based work in research, teaching and testing.

An organization's animal ethics and care program is certified based on institutional compliance with CCAC standards (policies and guidelines) and other relevant standards (see Appendix I, "Requirements for Obtaining a CCAC Certificate", Appendix II, "Requirements for Obtaining a CCAC Preliminary Certificate", and Appendix III, "Requirements for Maintaining CCAC Certification"). Compliance is assessed through:

- institutional documentation;
- CCAC assessments; and
- institutional responses to CCAC recommendations.

The CCAC Board of Directors awards and removes CCAC certificates upon recommendation from the Assessment and Certification Committee (AACC), working with the assessment panel* that visited the institution.

The CCAC certification process takes place every three years. A visual depiction of the certification processes is given in Appendix IV, "Timeline for CCAC Certification", and Appendix V, "Timeline for a CCAC Preliminary Certificate". Additional information on the Assessment and Certification Program can be found in the *CCAC policy: Recommendations made in CCAC assessment reports*.

1.1   CCAC CERTIFICATES

Three types of certificates can be awarded on behalf of the CCAC: the CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, the CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, and the CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®.

1.1.1   CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®

The CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® is awarded to institutions with sound animal ethics and care programs, that are in good standing (i.e. the institution has paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements and has signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*).

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* A CCAC assessment panel can be comprised of a director or an associate director of assessment alone, or with a group of volunteer experts.

An institution may receive the CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® if the report produced following the CCAC assessment contains:

- no recommendations;

- Major recommendations for which the institution has taken immediate and appropriate action; or

- Serious or Regular recommendations for which the institution provides one or more satisfactory implementation reports.

1.1.2   CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®

The CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® is assigned to institutions that have not started working with animals in research or testing, are seeking their first certification, and are in good standing (i.e. the institution has paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements and has signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*).

An institution may be assigned a CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® if it meets the requirements for a preliminary certificate (see Appendix II). The preliminary certificate is valid for up to 18 months and can only be extended by the CCAC in exceptional circumstances.

Additional information on obtaining a preliminary certificate can be found in *Helping Canadian Institutions Join the CCAC Program*.

1.1.3   CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®

The CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® is assigned to institutions that have significant or unresolved deficiencies in their animal ethics and care program. The institution must be in good standing (i.e. the institution has paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements and has signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*).

The probationary certificate is valid for one year and can only be extended by the CCAC in exceptional circumstances.

An institution may be assigned a CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® if, for example:

- upon review of an assessment report containing Serious recommendation(s), the AACC recommends the issuance of a probationary certificate prior to receiving an implementation report from the institution;

- the CCAC assessment report contains Serious or Regular recommendations, and the institution does not submit the required implementation report(s); or

- the CCAC assessment report contains Serious recommendations for which the institution submits a response that is not satisfactory to the CCAC.

An institution that has been assigned a probationary certificate is given specific deadlines within the probationary period to respond to the CCAC's recommendations. Progress made by the institution is evaluated at each deadline. A thorough review of the institution's progress is also undertaken at the end of the probationary period, and the institution's category of certification is reviewed.

2. REMOVAL OF A CERTIFICATE AND CHANGES IN CATEGORY OF CERTIFICATION

An institution's CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, or CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® will be removed if:

- the institution does not take immediate appropriate action after being issued a Major recommendation in response to an immediate and significant threat to animal health and welfare found during a CCAC visit;

- after being assigned a probationary certificate, the institution fails to respond—to the CCAC's satisfaction—to Serious recommendations contained in CCAC reports, despite being given a specified period in which to do so; or

- an institution is no longer in good standing with the CCAC (i.e. an institution has not paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements or has not signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*).

Consequences of certificate removal and changes in category of certification for academic, government, and private institutions are detailed below. An institution that loses its certificate will have its name removed from the list of certificate holders posted on the CCAC website.

2.1 ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

The federal granting agencies require that all institutions with an animal-based research program hold valid CCAC certification (either the CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, the CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, or the CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®) in order to be eligible for agency research funds.

The senior administrator responsible for the animal ethics and care program in an academic institution, and the respective Agency contact for institutional eligibility are notified through a letter from the CCAC executive director when an institution is no longer certified (either loses or relinquishes its certificate).

The current federal granting agency *Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions*, and in particular Section 3.5, "Research Involving Animals", specifies the responsibilities of institutions that involve animals in research and wish to be eligible for, and retain, granting agency funds. Removal of CCAC certification from an institution that involves animals in research and is eligible to receive agency funding constitutes a breach of the Agreement, which would be addressed as specified in Section 4.4, "Default and Remedies".

2.2 GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Senior administrators with overall responsibility for the animal ethics and care program in government institutions are notified if any of their units lose certification or have any other change in their category of certification.

2.3   PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

The chief executive officer of a private institution, or their designate, is notified if the institution loses its certification or has any other change in its category of certification.

3.   REPORTING MAJOR ANIMAL WELFARE INCIDENTS

Certified institutions must report major animal welfare incidents to the CCAC within 10 days of occurrence. The CCAC has developed a *Major Animal Welfare Incident Self-Reporting Form*. For examples of what constitutes a major animal welfare incident and how to contact the CCAC, see question 4 in the *CCAC frequently asked questions: Certification of animal ethics and care programs*. In addition, an account of all incidents reported to the institutional ACC since the last assessment visit should be included in the CCAC *Animal Care and Use Program Review Form*.

Failure to notify the CCAC of any major animal welfare incident will lead to a Major recommendation or the assignment of a probationary certificate when the CCAC becomes aware of the incident through other means.

4.   REPORTING CHANGES WITHIN A CERTIFIED PROGRAM

Certified institutions must advise the CCAC before any of the following planned, significant changes to their program are implemented:

*   significant change(s) in the structure of the animal ethics and care program, such as:

    *   a new faculty, school, department, research centre, or other unit in which animal-based work will be undertaken;

    *   changes in senior positions (senior administrator, animal care committee chair, veterinarian(s), facility director/manager), or changes in the responsibilities of personnel; and

    *   changes in reporting lines.

*   significant change(s) in the types of animal-based activities or the nature of the work conducted with them (such as the introduction of animal-based research in an institution that previously had only animal-based teaching activities; introduction of mammals in an institution that only kept non-mammalian species; new animal-based activities requiring specialized personnel and equipment, e.g., introduction of nonhuman primates);

*   significant change(s) in structure, function or policies of the animal care committee(s); and

*   new animal facilities or major renovations to existing ones (i.e. 30% or more of the existing facility is affected by the renovation).

The CCAC will consider any such reports and notifications and determine if further information is necessary. A special visit to the institution may be scheduled.

APPENDIX I
REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING A CCAC CERTIFICATE

Institutions wishing to be certified by obtaining a CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® will be required to be in good standing* and must have the following elements in place before their first CCAC assessment visit:

- compliance with federal, provincial and municipal legislation and regulations;

- an animal care committee whose composition, authority, responsibilities and functioning are defined in written terms of reference based on the *CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees*;

- an animal protocol form (or forms), according to the guidance contained in the *CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees*;

- complete protocols submitted by personnel working with animals in science for all planned animal-based work, with the animal care committee having reviewed and made decisions on any protocols planned for the near future. The protocol reviews should be based on relevant guidance (as found in the *CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees*, Section 3e) and documented in the minutes of one or more animal care committee meetings;

- standard operating procedures (SOPs) for animal-based work and facility management (if relevant);

- a formal agreement or agreements for veterinary services, based on the main elements of the Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine *Standards of Veterinary Care*;

- trained, qualified personnel in sufficient numbers to care for all groups of animals seven days a week;

- programs based on CCAC guidance for:

  - training of personnel working with animals in science;

  - post-approval monitoring;

  - occupational health and safety, to cover all animal project related risks; and

  - crisis management.

- where animal facilities are needed, they must either meet relevant CCAC guidance or a detailed plan with timelines must be in place describing how they will be improved to meet the standards; and

- the animal care committee must have visited all animal facilities, and must have approved of their use in one or more written site visit report(s).

The CCAC has created a guide, *Helping Canadian Institutions Join the CCAC Program*, which provides more information about the process of obtaining a CCAC certificate. Institutions are invited to contact the CCAC for guidance and information tailored to their particular situation.

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* The institution has paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements and has signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*.

APPENDIX II
REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING A CCAC PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATE

Only institutions that have not started working with animals in research or testing are eligible to be certified for the first time by obtaining a CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®. These institutions will be required to be in good standing* and must have the following elements in place before their first CCAC assessment visit:

- compliance with federal, provincial and municipal legislation and regulations;

- an animal care committee whose composition, authority, responsibilities and functioning are defined in written terms of reference based on the most recent version of the *CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees*;

- an animal protocol form (or forms), according to the guidance contained in the *CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees*;

- standard operating procedures (SOPs) for animal-based work and facility management (if relevant);

- a formal agreement or agreements for veterinary services, based on the main elements of the Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine *Standards of Veterinary Care*;

- trained, qualified personnel in sufficient numbers to care for all groups of animals seven days a week;

- programs based on CCAC guidance for:

  - training of personnel working with animals in science;

  - post-approval monitoring;

  - occupational health and safety, to cover all animal project related risks; and

  - crisis management.

- where animal facilities are needed, they must either meet relevant CCAC guidance or a detailed plan with timelines must be in place describing how they will be improved to meet the standards; and

- the animal care committee must have visited all animal facilities, and must have approved of their use in one or more written site visit report(s).

The CCAC has created a guide, *Helping Canadian Institutions Join the CCAC Program*, which provides more information about the process of obtaining a CCAC probationary certificate. Institutions are invited to contact the CCAC for guidance and information tailored to their particular situation.

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* The institution has paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements and has signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*.

APPENDIX III
REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINTAINING CCAC CERTIFICATION

Institutions wishing to maintain CCAC certification must ensure that:

- they are compliant with federal, provincial and municipal legislation and regulations;

- their animal care committee remains active and functional, meeting in person at least twice every year, visiting all animal facilities at least once every year, and fulfilling all of the responsibilities described in the *CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees*, including post-approval monitoring of animal ethics and care activities;

- their veterinary and animal care services continue to meet institutional needs and CCAC and Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine standards;

- their training, occupational health and safety, and crisis management programs are relevant, complete, up-to-date and in line with CCAC guidance;

- their facilities (if applicable) meet institutional needs and CCAC standards; and

- they are in good standing*.

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* The institution has paid its annual program participation fee in accordance with CCAC requirements and has signed a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*.
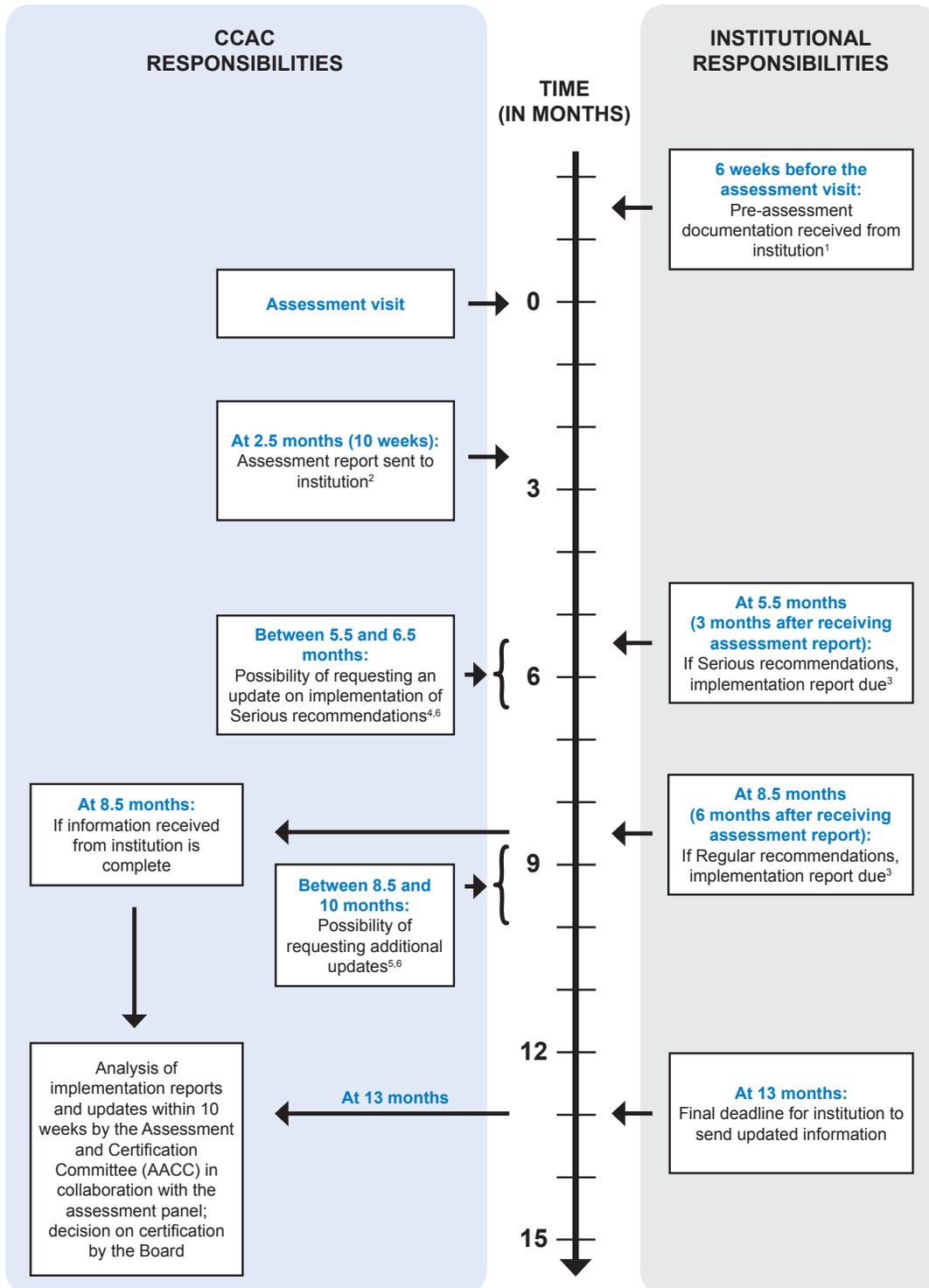
APPENDIX IV
TIMELINE FOR CCAC CERTIFICATION

**CCAC
RESPONSIBILITIES**

**INSTITUTIONAL
RESPONSIBILITIES**

**TIME
(IN MONTHS)**

**6 weeks before the
assessment visit:**
Pre-assessment
documentation received from
institution[1]

Assessment visit

0

At 2.5 months (10 weeks):
Assessment report sent to
institution[2]

3

**Between 5.5 and 6.5
months:**
Possibility of requesting an
update on implementation of
Serious recommendations[4,6]

6

**At 5.5 months
(3 months after receiving
assessment report):**
If Serious recommendations,
implementation report due[3]

At 8.5 months:
If information received
from institution is
complete

9

**Between 8.5 and
10 months:**
Possibility of
requesting additional
updates[5,6]

**At 8.5 months
(6 months after receiving
assessment report):**
If Regular recommendations,
implementation report due[3]

12

Analysis of
implementation reports
and updates within 10
weeks by the Assessment
and Certification
Committee (AACC) in
collaboration with the
assessment panel;
decision on certification
by the Board

At 13 months

At 13 months:
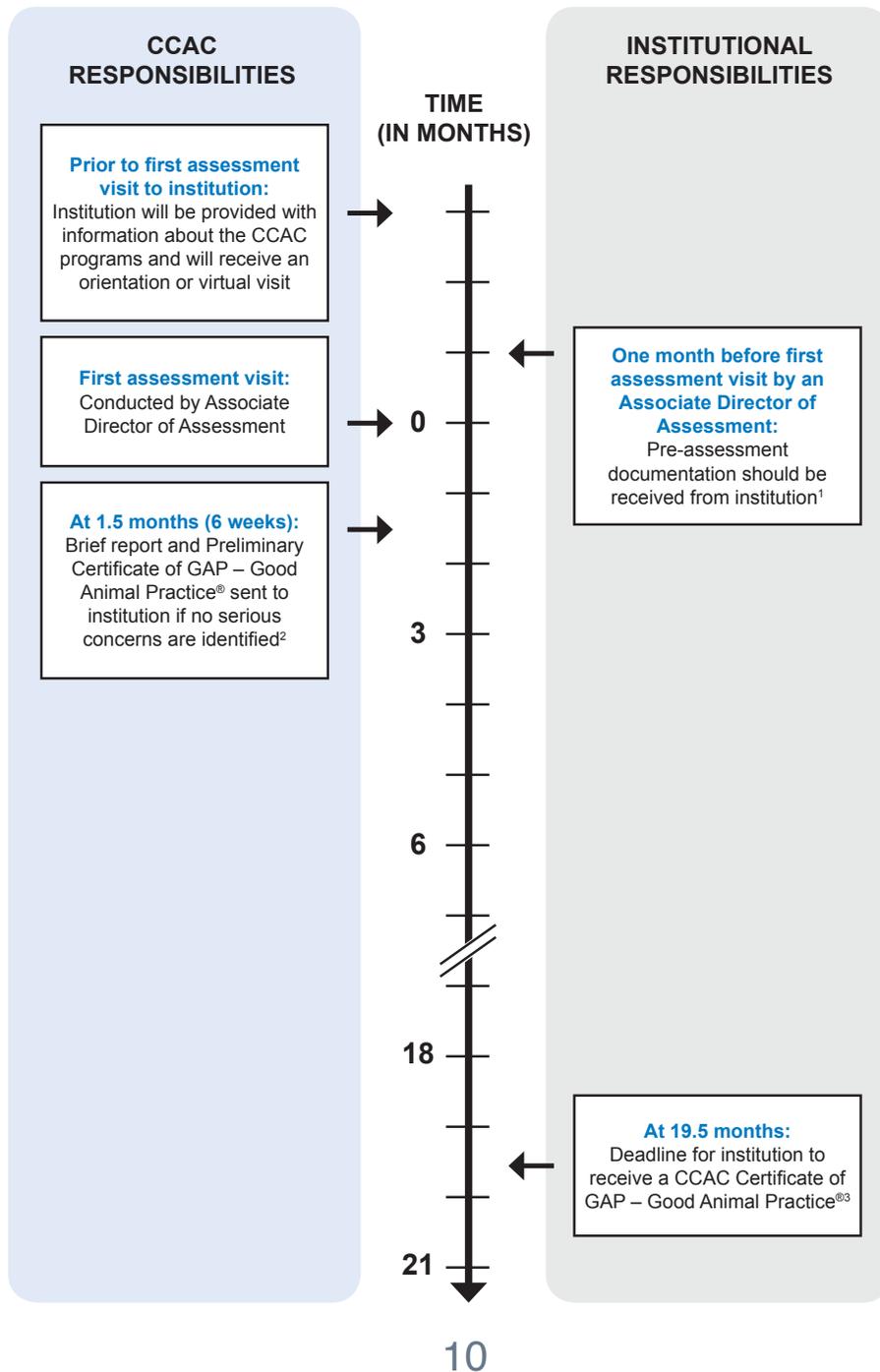Final deadline for institution to
send updated information

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1. Institutions are asked to submit pre-assessment documentation (CCAC *Animal Care and Use Program Review Form* or CCAC *Animal Care and Use Program Review Form for Interim Visits*) to the CCAC six weeks before the assessment visit.

2. Assessment reports are normally sent to the institution within 10 weeks of the visit. Certification will occur as soon as the CCAC is satisfied that the institutional animal ethics and care program meets all relevant CCAC requirements. This can be at the time the assessment report is sent to the institution (normally within 10 weeks) if there are no recommendations, or at any later time during the assessment process.

3. If the assessment report contains recommendations, institutions are asked to address them in an implementation report. Serious recommendations must be addressed within three months of receiving the assessment report, and Regular recommendations must be addressed within six months of receiving the assessment report.

4. The CCAC normally addresses any institutional response to recommendations within 10 weeks, making the certification process generally shorter when implementation reports are received before the deadlines. The CCAC may request more information, especially for Serious recommendations, in an update request.

5. The institution should normally respond to this update request with the implementation report on Regular recommendations.

6. In the majority of cases, the CCAC will limit its requests for updates on the implementation of recommendations to two letters per institution, prior to certification.

7. Updates can take any of the following forms: written documents, information provided by telephone, or through a special visit to the institution.

APPENDIX V
TIMELINE FOR A CCAC
PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATE

For institutions that have not started working with animals in research or testing and are seeking their first CCAC certification.

CCAC RESPONSIBILITIES

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

TIME (IN MONTHS)

Prior to first assessment visit to institution:
Institution will be provided with information about the CCAC programs and will receive an orientation or virtual visit

First assessment visit:
Conducted by Associate Director of Assessment

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At 1.5 months (6 weeks):
Brief report and Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® sent to institution if no serious concerns are identified[2]

3

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One month before first assessment visit by an Associate Director of Assessment:
Pre-assessment documentation should be received from institution[1]

At 19.5 months:
Deadline for institution to receive a CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®[3]

1. Institutions are asked to submit pre-assessment documentation (CCAC *Animal Care and Use Program Review Form for Interim Visits*) to the CCAC four weeks before the assessment visit.

2. If serious concerns are identified during the first assessment visit to an institution seeking a CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, the institution will not be certified until the concerns are addressed.

3. Institutions that receive a CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® must obtain a CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® within 18 months of receiving the preliminary certificate. An accelerated certification process, based on Appendix IV, "Timeline for CCAC Certification", may be put into place to ensure this.