

# Accreditation Policy

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## 1. Introduction

The Zoo and Aquarium Association maintains a progressive and world leading Accreditation Program based on contemporary scientific knowledge and best practice<sup>1</sup>. This Program has been the subject of global interest for its ability to achieve tangible assessment of Positive Welfare and operate effectively on reduced resource.

The Program is also recognised for its empowerment of member organisations. Members can achieve Accreditation while continuing to operate under their own unique systems and structures.

The Association's remit is not one of regulation and compliance. There is an expectation that all members will meet their relevant regulatory requirements as part of maintaining eligibility for membership. Instead, Accreditation focuses on criteria that defines high-quality zoos and aquariums regardless of their jurisdiction. In so doing, Association

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'best practice' in this context refers to practices that are formally recognised by the Program at that time. A philosophy of continuous improvement will ensure 'best practice' benchmarks are maintained at a contemporary level.

Accredited organisations can be recognised and trusted throughout the global community, including government agencies.

## 2. Purpose

The objective of this policy is to outline the goals and expectations of the Zoo Aquarium Association (Association) Accreditation Program (the Program).

## 3. Program Philosophy and Guiding principles

- 3.1 The Accreditation Program will adopt a philosophy of *continuous* improvement and to be characterised as a program that:
- a. is credible and transparent;
  - b. conducts/validates assessments objectively and impartially;
  - c. is outcomes focused, serving to validate a member has met pre-set benchmarks and avoids imposition of prescriptive practices;
  - d. does not replicate or replace regulatory inspections;
  - e. is aligned with contemporary industry relevant practices and concepts, maintained through a continuous improvement cycle;
  - f. acts to recognise competency for the future period of Accreditation status;
  - g. operates on *mutual trust and respect*<sup>2</sup>; and
  - h. regards Accreditation as 'a shared brand'<sup>3</sup>.

## 4. Scope

- 4.1 Accreditation will focus on best practices that define modern Zoos and Aquariums. These include:
- a. Positive Animal Welfare. This is the primary focus of the Program as it underpins everything that we do as a zoo and aquarium community;
  - b. Biosecurity;
  - c. Safety;
  - d. Sustainability (Managing Business impact to the environment); and
  - e. Conservation.

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<sup>2</sup> This term recognises that the Accreditation Program is a self-regulating initiative and therefore information exchanged between the Program and its participants is shared in good faith.

<sup>3</sup> This term recognises that external perceptions on the Program are influenced by the activities of both the programs governance *and* the accredited members themselves. Accreditation approvals are based on recognition that accredited members operate in a manner that strengthens community trust in the accreditation brand.

## 5. Participation and Eligibility

- 5.1 Participation in Accreditation will be mandatory for all Association Members. All Regional and International Members must achieve and maintain Accreditation to retain Association membership.
- 5.2 Non-member participation will be subject to Board approval on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.3 International organisations that seek ZAA Membership and Accreditation are subject to the following requirements:
  - a. International Organisations must be assessed on an annual (12 month) basis to maintain a working relationship between ZAA and the organisation. Where an organisations review performance is considered is of high standard and there is confidence that Positive Welfare will be maintained for an additional 12 months, ZAA may recommend to skip the following annual review in recognition of this.
  - b. Where their local National or Regional Association is NOT a WAZA member, organisations may directly apply for ZAA Membership and Accreditation.
  - c. Where their local National or Regional Association is a WAZA member, organisations must secure and maintain membership with that Association prior to establishing ZAA Membership and Accreditation.
  - d. Where their local National or Regional Association is a WAZA member, and the organisations is Accredited by that Association, the scope of ZAA Accreditation may be reduced down to assessing and confirming Positive Welfare of Australasian regional native species only.

## 6. Duration of Certification

- 6.1 Accreditation will be issued for a period of 3 years, after which a re-assessment is required for renewal.

## 7. Transfers, Exemptions or Extensions to Accreditation

- 7.1 Accreditation is not transferable to another site unless prior approved as per Association Membership Policy
- 7.2 Requests to extend the period of Accreditation, or maintain membership after expiry of accreditation, will be subject to Board Finance Audit and Risk Committee and/or Board approval.

## 8. Recognition

The Accreditation Program is recognised through a provision of an Accreditation certificate and logo.

## 9. Program Governance and Management

- 9.1 The Accreditation Program will report to the Association Board through the Executive Director.
- 9.2 The Program will be coordinated by the Association Executive Office who will be responsible for facilitating certification of participating organisations.
- 9.3 The Program will be supported by the Standards and Accreditation Committee (SAC) and formally recognised subject matter experts.
- 9.4 The benchmarks necessary to achieve Accreditation will be developed and maintained by the SAC and approved by the Board.
- 9.5 Site Reviews will be conducted to validate a member has achieved the necessary benchmarks for Accreditation.
- 9.6 Recommendations to Accredit or not to Accredit will be confirmed by the Standards and Accreditation Committee and are subject to Board approval.
- 9.7 Assessment criteria, benchmarks and standards will be revised from time to time to maintain currency with contemporary practices. Reviews of assessment criteria, benchmarks and standards will be conducted by the Standards and Accreditation Committee together with the Association office, and in consultation with relevant subject matter experts. Any final changes in assessment criteria, benchmarks and standards are subject to Board approval.

## 10. Site Visit and Validation

- 10.1 Site reviews will be undertaken by trained<sup>4</sup> Association representatives and conducted with objectivity and impartiality, and free of conflict of interest.
- 10.2 An onsite visit is to be part of each accreditation review to ensure all relevant information shared during a review is considered/appreciated in the right context.
- 10.3 Documentation in the form of a report will be produced by the Association representative to demonstrate coverage, concluding outcomes, and recommendations for approval for every member assessment.

## 11. Decision to Accredit/Not Accredit

### 11.1 Decision to Accredit

Decision to Accredit a member will be made when all Accreditation Requirements are validated to have been met.

### 11.2 Decision to Not Accredit

Decision to Not Accredit a member will be made when:

- a. There is insufficient information to validate that all accreditation requirements are met (including if welfare status of the animal cannot be determined regardless of all information provided), and despite

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<sup>4</sup> All Association audits are conducted in accordance with principles of ISO standards.

reasonable attempts to obtain the required information within the established time frame, and/or

- b. Contradicting information is provided which cannot be clarified within the established time frame despite reasonable attempts to do so, and/or
- c. Evidence indicates that a Member may not have capacity to be compliant with Accreditation criteria beyond the Accreditation review process, and which cannot be fully determined within the established time frame despite reasonable attempts to do so, and/or
- d. A Member has shown to be non-compliant with prevailing legislation, including animal welfare, and exhibited animal laws and regulations, and/or has breached the Association Code of Conduct or Member Policy

### **11.3 Final Opportunity to gain Accreditation**

Where a decision to Not Accredit is made, the Board can decide to offer one additional and final opportunity for the member to re-attempt achieving Accreditation.

- a. The decision to provide a Final Opportunity will only be offered once per Member. Any additional opportunity will be at the Board's discretion.
- b. The decision to provide a Final Opportunity will be based on consideration of the reasons preventing the initial recommendation for Accreditation, and where there is sufficient confidence that the member can achieve accreditation if it is re-attempted.
- c. Where a member is offered a Final Opportunity, the member will be informed of the reasons preventing initial Accreditation and will be granted an additional 4 to 6 weeks to prepare for re-assessment, the exact timing to be confirmed at the time of granting the Final Opportunity.
- d. Accreditation fees will be charged for a Final Opportunity re-assessment.
- e. While a Member is participating in the Final Opportunity certain Association services may be suspended, as per section 11.4 below.
- f. Association services to support the Accreditation Program such as information and training, will remain available to members participating in the Final Opportunity.
- g. Failure to gain Accreditation through the Final Opportunity will be referred to the Board for a decision on membership eligibility.

### **11.4 Suspension of Services**

- a. While a member is participating in the Final Opportunity, Association services applicable to animal welfare risk will be suspended including:
  - i. Members participating in the Final Opportunity will be informed of the expectation that they cannot receive Species Management Program (SMP) Priority Species from other Members until Accreditation has been confirmed.

- ii. Members participating in the Final Opportunity will be informed of the expectation that they cannot receive services from the Association to support any arrangement for importing or importing / re-exporting including managing quarantine services on behalf of other members.
- iii. Animal dispositions i.e. species transfers from a Member participating in the Final Opportunity, as per SMP recommendations, will continue to go ahead during this period.
- iv. It will be the Member's responsibility to inform other Members that they cannot receive Association Program animal transfers during this period.

### **11.5 Disputes and Appeals**

- a. Members will be eligible to Appeal a decision with the Board.
- b. Where a Member makes an Appeal to reverse a Board decision in relation to Accreditation, the Appeal process will only assess information relevant to the time the Accreditation decision was made.
- c. The Board will maintain the right to address each Appeal as is appropriate to the situation.
- d. All Board decisions are final.

## **12. Accreditation Fees**

### **12.1 Site Review Fees**

- a. Set fees will be applied to all members for site reviews to support the logistics costs of conducting site reviews. Association representatives time will not be charged.
- b. Site reviews will be coordinated to minimise costs to the membership.
- c. Fees will be detailed in the fee schedule, reviewed annually.

### **12.2 Cancellation/Rescheduling Fee**

- a. Should a member cancel or reschedule a planned review, a cancellation/reschedule fee may be applied to recover any costs incurred.
- b. Should the Association representative cancel or reschedule the cost will be covered by the Association.
- c. Cancellation/Rescheduling fee may be waived at the discretion of the Executive Director.

## **13. Breaches to Accreditation**

- 13.1 A Breach to Accreditation is defined as when an Accredited Member is found to not be meeting all relevant requirements for Accreditation.

- 13.2 Formal complaints regarding a member that indicate a potential breach to accreditation will be investigated as per the Association Complaints Management Policy and procedure.
- 13.3 An investigation to the breach will be required if there is a need to re-establish community trust in the Program, the member, or both.
- 13.4 Members are required to inform the Program if a breach to Accreditation has been identified, so that appropriate action may be considered to support the members return to compliant state.

## 14. Cancellation / Withdrawal or Denial of Accreditation

- 14.1 Accreditation will be cancelled or withdrawn from the member if:
  - a. a membership is cancelled/not renewed;
  - b. current Accreditation has lapsed without renewal;
  - c. significant changes prompt a requirement to renew membership in accordance with the Association's *Member Policy*;
  - d. a member is found to be operating in breach of Accreditation Requirements;
  - e. If false or misleading information was found to be provided to obtain Accreditation; or
  - f. A member is in breach of the Association's *Code of Conduct*.
  - g. A member has not met the requirements for Accreditation through the Association's Accreditation review process.
- 14.2 A member who has Accreditation withdrawn or has been denied Accreditation will be referred to the Board for a decision on membership eligibility.

## 15. Confidentiality

All information utilised for the purposes of Accreditation will be treated as confidential to protect members business sensitive information.

## 16. Review for Program Effectiveness & Continuous Improvement

The Program and its management will undertake regular reviews of the Program's performance to maintain effectiveness for its participants and contemporary best practices based on scientific and/or industry input.

## 17. Related Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines of the Association:

- a. Code of Conduct

- b. Policy - Member
- c. Policy - Complaints Management
- d. Policy - Regional Species Planning and Management
- e. Policy - Animal Welfare
- f. Position Statement - Biosecurity
- g. Accreditation Requirements
- h. Accreditation Procedures
- i. Definitions Document

## 18. Definitions

In this policy, unless the context requires otherwise:

**Accreditation** is a process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented.

**Appeal** means an appeal against a Determination or Sanction

**Association** means the Zoo and Aquarium Association Inc. (ABN 71 836 556 156).

**Board** means the board of management of the Association.

**Member** means a member of the Association, as defined in the Association *Members Policy*, and may include an employee, officer or agent of a Member of the Association.

**Member Review** is the complete process for confirming a members Accreditation status, including the *Site Visit*.

**Program** means the Association Accreditation Program

**SMP Priority Species** is all species determined to be a priority by the relevant ZAA Taxon Advisory Group. Where a ZAA Regional Species Plan (RSP) exists for the relevant taxonomic group, Priority Species include all species listed in the RSP.

**Site Visit** is the action of the Association's representative visiting a members site to validate the outcomes of a member's self-assessments.

## 19. Proviso

The intent of this policy is to provide a framework for the majority of activities undertaken by Association members/subscribers. Any issue/concern which arises that is not covered by this policy, but falls within the purpose of the policy, will be included and addressed by the Association Board, or their delegate, in the best interest of the Association and its membership.

## 20. Approval and Review Details

| Approval History   | Details           |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Approval Authority | Association Board |



|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Relevant Committee and/or Stakeholders</b> | Standards and Accreditation Committee |
| <b>Original Approval Date</b>                 | 27/11/2012                            |
| <b>Last Review Date</b>                       | 08/08/2023                            |
| <b>Next review date</b>                       | 08/08/2028                            |

This document should be reviewed within five (5) years of the date of approval or last review.

| <b>Amendment History</b><br>Approved / Amended /<br>Rescinded / Reviewed | <b>Authority</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Description / Notes</b>  |
|--|------------------|-------------|---|
| <b>Approved</b>  | <b>Board</b>     | 08/08/2023  | Updated Final Opportunity, and Disputes and Appeals sections. Refined wording   |
| <b>Approved</b>  | <b>Board</b>     | 19/05/2022  | Update to include Final Opportunity option. Changed references 'ZAA' to 'Association'. Updated Definitions. Refined wording.        |
| <b>Approved</b>  | <b>Board</b>     | 11/02/2019  | Removed content to go into procedural documentation. Refined wording and Introduction.  |
| <b>Approved</b>  | <b>Board</b>     | 16/03/2021  | Updating wording to reflect specific criteria outlined in WAZA's Animal Welfare Evaluation Process Assessment Tool.                 |
| <b>Approved</b>  | <b>Board</b>     | 1/12/2021   | Updated scope; Removed 6.2 "Requests to extend....." and moved to Section 7 – Transfers, Exemptions and Extensions to Accreditation |