



Accessibility Plan
Approved by Senate April 30, 2025

Message from President—Accessibility Statement

As a theological university, Atlantic School of Theology (AST) has a special interest in accessibility. The inclusion of all persons in society, and indeed in the whole created order, is a value deeply held by persons of faith. The Bible speaks of all human beings as made “in the image of God.” All persons are to be regarded with deep respect, and their dignity and personal worth should be upheld at all times.

In light of this, AST is on a journey toward a fully accessible campus and learning experiences. We continue to learn about best practices, to adapt and try new pedagogies, and to update our built environment. It is a process of dialogue, learning, and continuing improvement to how our educational community functions. This process is undertaken with determination and goodwill to be as fully inclusive as possible in our life together.

President, The Rev. Dr. Heather McCance

About AST

An Ecumenical University

Atlantic School of Theology, an ecumenical university of theology and Christian ministry, was founded in 1971 by institutions of the three founding parties: the Divinity Faculty of the University of King’s College (Anglican Church of Canada), Holy Heart Theological Seminary (The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Halifax) and Pine Hill Divinity Hall (United Church of Canada). It is specially characterized as an ecumenical, tri-denominational theological university with an ecumenical Board of Governors, Senate, Faculty, student body and curriculum that is open to all students, regardless of background, faith, or spirituality. The university is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and offers Master of Divinity and Master of Arts (Theology and Religion) degrees. The Master of Arts (Theology and Religion) degree is offered in conjunction with Saint Mary’s University. Diploma programs and continuing education offerings are also available.

Affiliation with Saint Mary’s University

Since March 2002 Atlantic School of Theology has been affiliated with Saint Mary’s University in Halifax. Both institutions are committed to establishing and promoting joint and complementary academic courses and programs. They are also committed to achieving the operational efficiencies that strengthen each institution to fulfill each other’s educational mission and service to the churches and to society. While each institution retains its independent status and grants its own degrees, exciting possibilities for joint programming have become a regular part of AST’s program offerings. Students at AST are able to explore new avenues for theological education such as interreligious dialogue, which has become a major part of the societal context.

Purpose of the Accessibility Plan

Nova Scotia post-secondary education institutions will provide full and equitable access to education, programs, and services within a collaboratively developed and value-based commitment to accessibility that prioritizes

institutional accountability within a human rights framework.

Introduction to the Plan

Atlantic School of Theology (AST) is committed to creating a campus community that is safe and inclusive for all individuals. Successful learning, living, and employment outcomes are the result of a shared responsibility and commitment on the part of students, employees, faculty, and senior administrators. As AST continues to enhance its culture of inclusiveness, it will require the recognition and support of everyone on campus to ensure the removal of barriers to accessibility.

The aim of this document is to describe AST's compliance requirements as per the Accessibility Act, 2017, and measures it will take moving forward to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities so that our faculty, staff, students, parents, alumnae/i, and members of the broader community can access the school's goods and services, facilities, and premises in a way that ensures inclusion, dignity, and independence. The goal is to advance our understanding of what makes a truly accessible organization, and to transform that knowledge into a culture that builds accessibility into everything that we do. The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee would like to thank the many members of the school community for their hard work and collaborative efforts as we continue to foster positive attitudes and make progress towards a barrier-free campus. Accessibility is everyone's responsibility; we welcome input from all members of the AST community—students, faculty, staff, alumnae/i, and friends—as we work together towards creating an environment that ensures that everyone has a full and enriching AST experience.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee Members

The Senate of Atlantic School of Theology has incorporated the Accessibility Advisory Committee into the university's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee. Fully half of the members of the committee are people with lived experience in these areas.

Committee Members (2024-25)

Rob Fennell, Faculty

Katie Logan, Student

Katie Taylor-Flynn, Alumna

Brad Murray, Library Staff (on leave January -September 2025; Sophia Godsoe, Library Staff in interim)

Heather McCance, President

Thomas Nisbett, Board of Governors

Maryn Anderson, Board of Governors

Terry Slaunwhite, Facilities Manager

Areas of Commitment

Consistent with the [Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Framework 2020](#), we have identified commitments to improving accessibility within 8 areas of focus. These priority areas are:

- (1) Awareness and Capacity Building
- (2) Teaching, Learning and Research
- (3) Information and Communications
- (4) Delivery of Goods and Services
- (5) Employment
- (6) Transportation
- (7) Built Environment
- (8) Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Awareness and Capacity Building

Goal: Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions foster a culture of accessibility and equity; encourage and facilitate the prevention and removal of barriers to participation; and build capacity in these areas among employees and students.

- Develop and implement awareness and training programs for employees and students to increase knowledge and understanding of accessibility, equity, human rights, disability rights, and barriers to participation in post-secondary education.
- Encourage and support departments and employees to review and integrate areas of accessibility and disability issues into course curriculum of all relevant academic programs.
- Collaborate with the Accessibility Directorate to build capacity and increase awareness about the obligations of the post-secondary sector under the *Accessibility Act*.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
Attendance at Community of Practice meetings	ongoing	President	Sharing information with and from Community of Practice members	Ongoing
Accessibility Cttee Terms of Reference approved by Senate	April 2024	President, as chair of Senate		Completed April 16, 2024
Include areas of accessibility and disability issues into course curriculum in relevant programs	September 2026	Dean	As part of accreditation and Department of Advanced Education program review, include these areas	Review committee formed January 2025
Survey of campus community regarding accessibility needs and level of accommodations experienced	March 2025	President	Distribute survey prepared by the Community of Practice and review results for future action	Survey completed March 2025

Teaching, Learning and Research

Goal: Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are leaders in inclusive and accessible teaching and learning, and collaborative research on accessibility.

- Ensure access to and use of accessible technology in teaching and learning.
- Build capacity and implement supports for faculty and other employees to remove barriers to learning through inclusive practices and equitable assessment, such as principles outlined in universal design for learning and culturally responsive teaching and learning.
- Identify and adopt a common standard for ensuring students have access to resources, including accommodations, to support academic success, wellness, and transitions from high school and to employment, the community, or further study.
- Support the growth of research and scholarship on accessibility and disability studies, including collaborative accessibility research initiatives among Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions, led by first voice researchers.
- Expand and improve access to inclusive post-secondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
Universal Design Learning Principles (UDL)	Ongoing	Dean	Integrate training in best practices into August 2025 Faculty Conference	Initial introduction of faculty to UDL in 2022-23
Principles of Academic Accommodation	Ongoing	Dean, President, Registrar	Define rules of Confidentiality of Student Information Promote use of the standardized syllabus template w/accommodation statement for all courses Academic Calendar contains accommodation statement	Confidentiality rules to be defined during faculty Conference 2025. Dean to share standardized curriculum with all instructors ahead of each term. Academic Calendar contains Statement as of 2023-24.
Reaching out with a potential opportunity to share your experience as a student with a disability.	2025-26 school year	President	Invitation to speak at Thursday Community lunch to share experiences	
Ensure all Faculty and are aware of the services of SMU Fred Smithers Centre and how to refer students there. https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/fred-smithers-centre.html		Dean	Share during Faculty Conference August 2025 Include in standardized syllabus template	Initial introduction of faculty to Smithers Centre 2022-23

Ensure an Academic Accommodation statement is included in all Registration information		Academic Dean, Registrar		
Investigate Cost of installing UDL tools in classrooms to accommodate Hearing and Visually impaired students		CAO		Larger, interactive screens; new sound systems in classrooms and chapel – completed throughout 2024-25

Information and Communications

Goal: Information and communication at Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions is accessible.

- Ensure the communications policies, procedures, and practices at post-secondary institutions facilitate accessibility.
- Ensure institutional communication is delivered in formats that are accessible.
- Adopt a common standard to ensure the accessibility of post-secondary institution websites (e.g. WCAG 2.1 AA).

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
Accessibility Week – sharing successes through social media	December 2022	EDIA prepare info for Social Media	Prepare information to share with Communications	
		Communications to post information given	Communications post in various forms of social media	First introduction to Accessibility Week in 2023-24
		Communications	track viewing results of Social media	
Promotion of Access improvements as accomplished through social media		EDIA to prepare info for Comms. to share in social media	Prepare information to share with Communications	
Website review			Review website for accessibility when the website overall review takes place	Currently fundraising for website redesign

Delivery of Goods and Services

Goal: Students, employees and visitors with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility have equitable access to goods and services provided by Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions.

- Develop and provide accessible customer service training for employees.
- Provide customer service physical spaces that are conducive to positive accessible customer service experiences.
- Embed accessibility into procurement processes, including creating common accessibility language, accessibility requirements and criteria in tenders for goods and services purchased by Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions.
- Ensure services provided by Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are accessible to persons with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility, including accessible communication, supporting the use of assistive technology, accessible digital content and technologies, and welcoming service animals and support persons.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
Physical campus accessibility work	April 2027	Facilities Manager and CAO	New ramps to St Columba and Residence building entrances Elevators to serve both 1898 Building and Student Residence Building Rest stops along main driveway Relocate administration offices to 1898 Building for accessibility	Accessible bathroom, main floor St Columba Bldg. Completed Feb 2022 Accessible washrooms installed throughout Residence building, November 2024
Promote via social media	Ongoing	Comms.	Pictures posted in weekly update	Weekly update
Camino Nova Scotia program	Ongoing	Camino staff	Programming for those who can't walk long distances or developmental disabilities	Planned for inclusion in Summer 2025
Library services		Library Council	Accessible building and information desk Online and in-person assistance (navigating stacks) Reorganizing stacks (top and lower shelves) Cooling centre	

Employment

Goal: Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are accessible and equitable employers, support the careers of employees with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility, and ensure their employees reflect the diversity of Nova Scotians.

- Ensure processes, policies and practices facilitate and encourage the recruitment, selection, transition, career growth and advancement of persons with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.
- Build capacity among employees and senior leadership to cultivate a culture of inclusion and equity that supports, retains, and provides opportunities for career growth to employees with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.
- Ensure institutional policies and procedures provide inclusive, adaptable accommodations and adaptive tools for employees with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility and appropriate and supportive leave practices and return to work plans.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
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When hiring, ensure applicants are encouraged to request accommodations for interviews	April 2027	CAO	Senior leadership and others involved in interviewing to be educated on accessibility tools of online meeting platforms Schedule all in-person interviews in accessible buildings (once all buildings are accessible)	
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Transportation

Goal: Transportation provided to employees and students is accessible.

- Collaborate with local municipalities, the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network, and community transit service providers to ensure accessible, affordable public transportation to and from campuses, including bus stop infrastructure, sidewalks, and signage.
- Ensure accessible parking (that meets a standard such as CSA Group, Rick Hansen Foundation, or provincial built environment standard, when developed) on campuses is available to students, employees and visitors with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
Accessible Parking spots	September 2025	Facilities	Clearly mark these in each parking lot	Marking in one of the three parking lots
Students notified of how to gain information on bus routes including Access-A-Bus	Annually	AST Student Union	https://www.halifax.ca/transportation/halifax-transit/access-a-bus	Included in student services brochure

Built Environment

Goal : Buildings and outdoor spaces on Nova Scotia's post-secondary campuses provide meaningful access for intended users.

- Adopt common accessibility standards to ensure meaningful access to existing buildings, new construction, and major renovations. At minimum, institutions will comply with the Nova Scotia Building Code, and the *Accessibility Act's* built environment standard, when implemented, aiming to exceed them when feasible. New construction will be considered an opportunity to exceed minimum accessibility standards; for example, by meeting Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Rating.
- Develop recommendations for common priority areas (i.e. building features, phases) in which to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility.
- Develop and utilize a common accessibility auditing tool to assess the accessibility of campus buildings and outdoor spaces. Integrate institutional accessibility audits within facilities management inventory and budgeting processes. Ensure the *Accessibility Act's* built environment standard can be integrated into this tool, when developed.
- Develop a common reporting tool for facilities management employees to track and report progress on improving accessibility as part of each institution's accessibility planning process. Ensure the *Accessibility Act's* built environment standard can be integrated into this tool, when developed.
- Collaborate with local municipalities to integrate accessibility of municipal and post- secondary

infrastructure.

- Establish and implement processes to ensure accessibility during temporary disruptions with building infrastructure and outdoor spaces, such as construction or seasonal related elements (e.g. snow removal).
- Ensure all emergency evacuation systems, policies, procedures, communications and training enable the safe and efficient evacuation of persons with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility during an emergency.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
AST Accessibility Audit	September 2022	Facilities Manager	Engage accessibility expert for a full review of accessibility issues for campus	Complete September 2022
AST Space Use Principles		Board of Governors	Passed a Space Use Principles statement reaffirming that accessibility is a core principle for all spaces at AST	Complete October 2024
Improve accessibility in St. Columba Building	April 2026	CAO, Facilities Manager	Install new ramps Install new doors that can be opened with a button Review existing chair lift Review accessibility to platform in chapel and develop strategy to improve	New ramps completed March 2025
<i>See also deliverables under "Goods and Services"</i>				

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Goal: Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions regularly monitor and evaluate progress to remove barriers to accessibility, and their impact on students and employees, and continue to identify opportunities to improve access to education.

- Ensure the commitments outlined in this framework are reflected and operationalized in institutional accessibility plans required as public sector bodies under the *Accessibility Act*.
- Develop a common monitoring tool and evaluation framework to regularly assess and report on progress toward meeting the commitments outlined in this framework, and their impact on accessibility in the post-secondary sector.
- Review this framework at least every 3 years and update as required.
- Recognizing the significant additional costs of implementing aspects of this framework and meeting the requirements of the *Accessibility Act*, seek adequate funding from the provincial government above the regular operating grants for Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions to comply with the legislation and implement the commitments under this framework.

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
	ongoing	President	Work with the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents to secure funding for accessibility to be included in operating grants	Requests for this funding happens at least three times a year
Obtain grants for funding this work	Ongoing	Director of Philanthropy	Seek out and apply for grants that can move us towards these goals	Obtained a \$10,000 grant from the Anglican Foundation of Canada September 2024
Monitoring tools	March 2026	EDIA Committee	Develop a monitoring tool to use annually to track progress	

Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

Heather McCance president@astheology.ns.ca
902-497-1272

This Plan and the Committee Terms of Reference are posted on the AST website.

This document is available in alternate formats, upon request.

Feedback

We recognize that feedback is critical to the process of identifying and removing barriers to participation as well as improving how we deliver our services to persons with disabilities.

Please provide feedback by contacting us at:

Heather McCance

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902-497-1272

Appendix A—Glossary

Accessibility plan

A plan that addresses the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers in the policies, programs, practices, and services of AST.

Barriers

Barriers are anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities including:

- a physical barrier,
- an architectural barrier,
- an information or communications barrier, an
- attitudinal barrier,
- a technological barrier, a
- policy or a practice.

Disability

A disability includes a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society.