DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Accessibility Plan

Acknowledgements

Recognizing and paying respect to the First Peoples on whose territories we live, work, and study is a vital part of our ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation. For this reason, a version of this land acknowledgement is used at formal meetings, at events, in publications, and in other university venues and settings as appropriate.

Land Acknowledgement

Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

This version of the Land Acknowledgement was developed in collaboration with the Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC). This updated land acknowledgement better reflects the importance of Indigenous Peoples, their Treaty rights, and significant contributions to our university and our communities. We sought to better reflect the broader lands on which Dalhousie operates — expanding it to include the territories of the Wolastoqey and Peskotomuhkati Peoples.

Recognition Statement

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

As institutions, individuals, and organizations strive to recognize and eradicate systemic racism, and its historical and current impacts, there is an increased desire to acknowledge the history and richness of the African Nova Scotian people. An African Nova Scotian statement represents just one way of recognizing the resistance, resilience, creativity, spirituality, and hope that has profoundly shaped our families and communities — and this province and country.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Foreword

Dalhousie University is committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment, where all individuals can thrive. We believe that accessibility is a fundamental right, and we prioritize removing barriers to ensure that every student, faculty, and staff member has equal access to the resources, opportunities, and support they need to succeed.

Dalhousie was recently recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers[1]. We value and celebrate the rich diversity of our community and remain committed to expressing our dedication to these values in our mission of teaching and learning, research, and service to our communities. As the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, the importance of accessibility cannot be overstated. Dalhousie has a profound responsibility to ensure that every student, regardless of ability, has equitable access to education; that every employee, regardless of ability, has equitable access to employment; and that our community members, regardless of ability, have equitable access to service. Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan is a commitment to those responsibilities and our promise to progress.

Dalhousie University's Accessibility Plan[2] outlines the strategies developed to enhance accessibility across all facets of our university. Through pathways programming, enhancing strategies to improve accessibility to employment, modifications to the built environment, policy development and other services and supports, we will continue to demonstrate genuine commitment to building and supporting an accessible environment.

Our dedication to accessibility extends beyond compliance, as we continuously work to create an inclusive campus that celebrates diversity and promotes a culture of belonging for all. Through ongoing efforts to enhance physical, digital, and academic accessibility, we strive to create a learning and working environment where every person is empowered to reach their full potential.

Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan is not just a report; it is a call to action. It challenges us to think creatively, act compassionately, and strive for excellence in everything we do. It is a statement of our collective responsibility to build a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

Respectfully,

Dr. Wanda Costen, Provost and VP Academic
Grace Jefferies-Aldridge, VP People and Culture

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[1] https://canadastop100.com/diversity/
[2] https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility/accessibility-at-dal/accessibility-plan.html

Background

Plan Origins

In 2017, Nova Scotia became only the third province to adopt legislation focused on persons with disabilities: the Accessibility Act. The Act recognizes accessibility as a human right and outlines how we as a province can identify, prevent, and remove barriers to access.

The Act requires "public-sector bodies" such as Dalhousie to craft a comprehensive accessibility plan to address barriers in the following areas:

- built environment

- teaching, learning, and research

- goods and services

- information and communication

- transportation

- employment

Dalhousie's first plan, released in April 2022, was also informed by the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework[3]. The framework identifies a shared vision and commitment and serves as a guide for the development, evaluation, and monitoring of institutional accessibility plans across the province.

The groundwork for Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan was a series of pre-2022 transformative changes to institution-wide policies and processes; organizational structures; and services and resources for students, faculty, staff, and community. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act brought broader focus to the importance of barrier removal and created more accountability, transparency, and structure to province-wide accessibility progress.

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[3] https://www.nscc.ca/docs/about-nscc/nova-scotia-post-secondary-accessibility-framework.pdf

Values

Creating inclusive, accessible spaces, services, and communities is a core element of Dalhousie's aspirations as a university, recognizing that people are fundamental to everything we do.

Dalhousie continuously strives to become a barrier-free institution and demonstrate commitment in how we address accessibility. As an institution, we will meet the core requirements set out by the Accessibility Act. The following shared values and beliefs will guide our activities:

- A diverse and inclusive Dalhousie enhances how we teach, learn, research, work, and engage within and outside the University.

- An accessible environment benefits everyone.

- Removing barriers is key for equitable access to education, research, employment, and services.

- Our approach will be collaborative, accountable, first voice informed, and values based.

Community Overview

Dalhousie's Community Equity Data Report[4]—a comprehensive analysis of equity data—states the following:

> *The number of persons with disabilities at Dalhousie has grown over the five years. By 2022, 19% of students, 8% of academic staff, and 15% of other staff identified as having a disability. Senior administration included 13% persons with disabilities, and 14% of Senate identified as such. While these numbers show progress, ongoing work is needed to create more inclusive and accessible environments.*

From the report:

- In 2018, students with disabilities constituted 10% of the student body (1,508), and by 2022, this figure had risen to 19% (2,900), surpassing national benchmarks for undergraduate and graduate student representation.

- 2SLGBTQIA+ students with disabilities increased from 2% (346) to 6% (908) of the student body. This further highlights the intersectionality within these groups and the evolving landscape of inclusivity in the educational setting.

- In 2022, seven faculties exceeded Dal's average for students with disabilities, while five fell below. Faculty percentages ranged from 8% (91) in Medicine to 28% (461) in Arts & Social Sciences.

- Academic staff with disabilities saw growth during the same period, going from 6% (56) to 8% (94), which remains less than both labour market availability and the student body.

- 2SLGBTQIA+ academic staff with disabilities increased from 1% (10) to 2% (26).

- In 2022, most faculties met or exceeded the university's average for academic staff with disabilities, with five falling below ranging from 3% (9) in Medicine to 7% (6) in Engineering.

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[4] https://www.dal.ca/content/dam/www/about/mission-vision-and-values/edia/Community-Equity-Data-Report-2018-2022.pdf

- Similarly, the number of staff with disabilities increased during the same period. In 2018, staff with disabilities made up 7% (119), rising to 15% (257) by 2022. Despite narrowing the gap over the years, a persistent disparity with the labour market remains, particularly in supervisory, intermediate sales and service, and other sales positions.

- 2SLGBTQIA+ staff with disabilities increased from 1% (15) to 5% (82) of staff. This further highlights the intersectionality within these groups and the evolving landscape of inclusivity in the workplace.

- In 2022, staff with disabilities achieved or surpassed the university's average in nearly half of the administrative units; however, most units exhibited representation ranging from 0% (Athletics & Recreation, Architecture & Planning, Office of the President) to 13% (Facilities Management, Medicine).

- The representation of senior administrators with disabilities increased from 10 to 12, maintaining a rate of 13%, which exceeds the figures reported by both Universities Canada (7%) and the national labour market (4%) for those at the rank of Dean or higher.

Table 1[5]
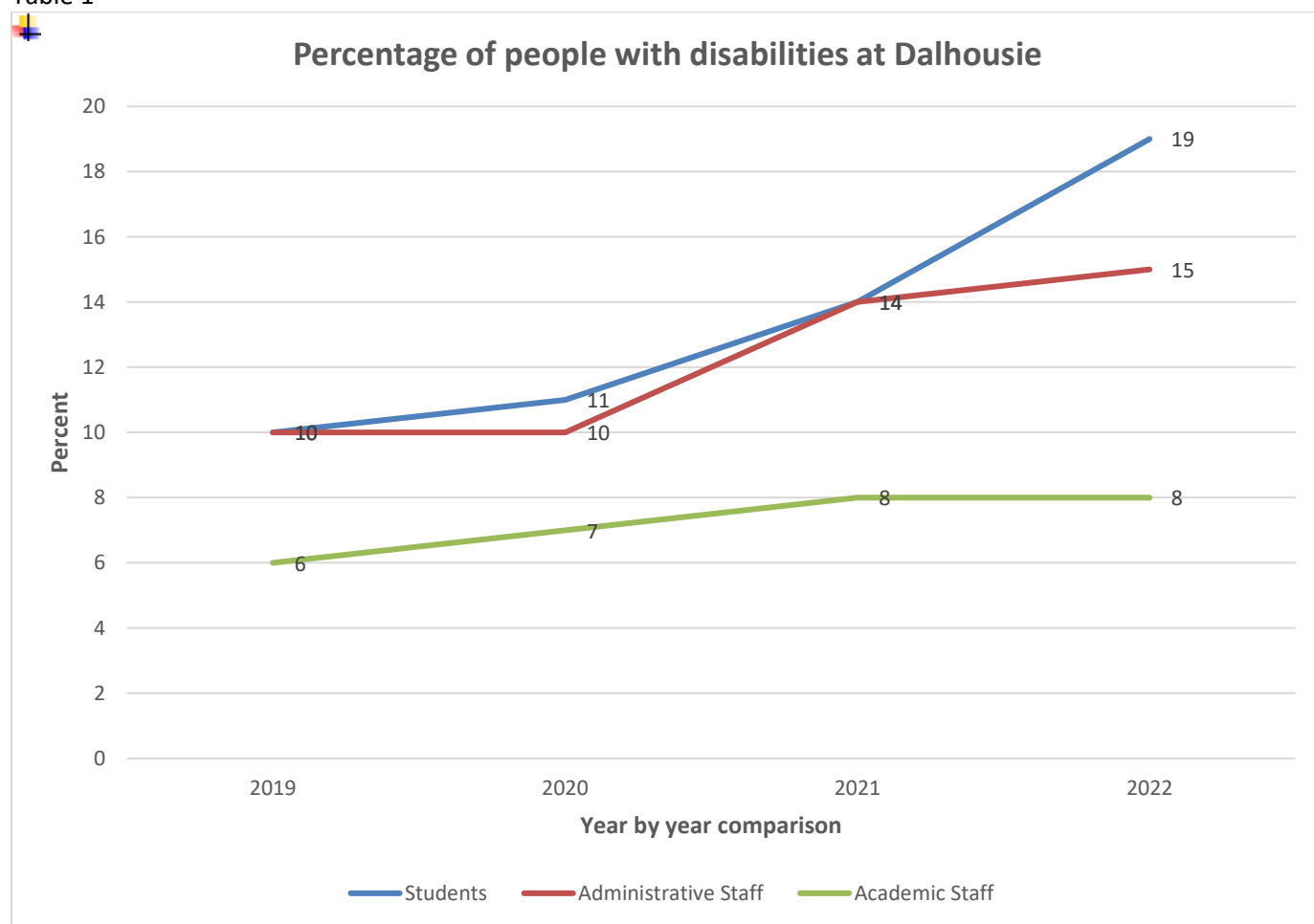
Percentage of people with disabilities at Dalhousie

Progress Made

Dalhousie tracks and reports progress each year during our annual Accessibility Week, which precedes the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Highlights of that work are as follows.

Built Environment
- Established accessibility criteria in three [Facilities Management Design Guideline documents](#) to enhance accessibility for built environment projects.
- Developed a [digital all-gender and accessible washroom map](#) (completed by Facilities Management and the University Libraries GIS Centre).
- Established snow removal procedures that prioritized accessible entrances.
- Developed and published Dalhousie's first Shelter-in-Place program, prioritizing the safety of people with disabilities in incident response planning.
- Installed emergency maintenance communication signage in all accessible washrooms across all four campuses.
- Installed accessible picnic tables across all four campuses at various locations.
- Removed 2,000 built environment barriers across all four campuses as part of ongoing infrastructure renovations.
- Created an accessible Chemistry Laboratory suite, which included the first electric height-adjustable fume hood on campus. This was a partnership between the Student Accessibility Centre, Environmental Health and Safety Office, Facilities Management, and the Department of Chemistry.
- Responded to multiple service requests regarding student accommodations (examples include retrofitting sinks in the Chemistry lab with emergency eyewash stations), accessible power door operators, and accessible furniture in classrooms (completed by Facilities Management).

Teaching, Learning, and Research
- Facilitated workshops, retreats, studios courses, and consultations focused on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) with educational supports available institution wide.
- Hosted Transformative Pedagogies Retreat sessions on disability and accessible language in the classroom, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and learning outcomes/assessment, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) for accessibility, accessible pedagogy and critical disability theory, assistive technologies, and student learning.
- Faculty of Health committed to in-house education on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), setting and achieving a goal of at least 50% of faculty participation.
- Established the IDEIA (Indigeneity, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility) Collective, a group of units that deliver education including on EDIA to ensure consistent approaches. Members are from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT), Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES), and People and Culture. An inclusive language guide is under development.
- Launched the Faculty and Staff Guide to Student Accommodations and Student Accessibility to advise on proactive strategies and tools for inclusive classrooms and identify other Dalhousie resources to support students with accessibility needs.
- Created an Accessibility in Course Design Policy Task Force and Advisory Group.
- Launched a review of the Student Accommodation Policy. Through consultation, an environmental scan, a standards review, and an external review, we are assessing our institutional response to student accommodation requests and subsequent implementation. We are reviewing student rights and

responsibilities when engaging accommodation processes and establishing how Dalhousie reflects a broader institutional commitment to accessibility.

- Hosted a kick-off event for [Able after Dal](), a career transition program for students entering the workforce or students seeking work-integrated learning experiences. The Accessibility and Employment panel featured employers committed to recruiting individuals with disabilities, removing barriers, and ensuring an inclusive work environment. The panel also featured Dal students sharing their experience navigating disability on their path to career readiness. Collaborators included Lime Connect, industry partners, and the Public Service Commission of Canada.
- Developed and adopted a resource for students, staff and faculty on accessible event practices and created a digital accessibility and accessible events guide on Dalhousie's SharePoint.
- Established a working group to work towards the provincial accessibility recommendations.
- Researched the process researchers use to obtain accommodations for their work environments.
- Created additional reporting for research centres and institutes to address disability studies.

Goods and Services
- Launched new accessible software to streamline the student accommodation process. The Student Accessibility Centre team can now efficiently manage the accommodation request, delivery, and evaluation process. The process of requesting and obtaining accommodations is now centrally managed on one platform, resulting in efficiencies for students, staff, and faculty.
- The Student Accessibility Centre received a monetary donation to increase and complement the inventory in the Assistive Technology Lending Library.
- Invested in technology for a Procure-to-Pay (P2P) solution to make the procurement of goods and services more accessible to end users (employees) and the supplier network.
- Provided accommodations such as standing desks, larger beds, and emotional support animals to students and staff working and living in residence.
- Information Technology Services continued to research and investigate the use of virtual lab environments to provide increased software access to students. This reduces/removes the current requirement for students to come to a physical lab for IT support.
- Dalhousie Arts Centre completed a draft guideline for accessible guest experiences as the leading component of a new guest experience standard and has registered as a participating venue with the Easter Seals Canada's Access2 program. Management and supervisory staff participated in EDIA foundations training.

Information and Communication
- Held inaugural Accessibility Week in November 2022, organized by a project team of faculty, staff, and students to build awareness and capacity related to accessibility on Dalhousie campuses. An annual event held the last week in November as a lead up to the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- The School of Social Work provided all readings in reader-ready formats, communication in audio and text options, and larger print materials.
- Distributed communications to students and staff in Dalhousie's Housing and Campus Connections unit in a format that met their accommodation needs.
- Initiated a rollout of accessible features of the Microsoft 365 suite of tools to include transcription and subtitle services.

- Completed a pilot program for the use of Microsoft Co-pilot within Dalhousie's email, Teams, and other parts of the Microsoft suite. The Co-pilot tool brings a new level of accessibility to the faculty, students, and staff.
- Introduced alternative platforms of communication for employees with accessibility needs (e.g., in person, by phone, virtually with close captions, by email, with American Sign Language interpreters, and with braille).
- Enhanced the "Be Counted" survey with additional questions on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility progress.
- Enhanced the "Your Voice" employee engagement survey with additional questions and data snapshots of all equity groups, including employees with disabilities.
- Improvements to Campus Tour experience, including:
    - Video of virtual guided campus tour under development with Communications, Marketing & Creative Services (CMC)
    - Circuit virtual tours of Faculties (Halifax, Truro, and Residences) are available at dal.ca/campustours
    - Incorporated land acknowledgement at start of each tour
    - Offering sensory-friendly tours on Saturdays
    - Instituted the use of battery-pack microphones during tours to enhance audio
- Tour guides map out accessible routes and provide directions to accessible routes and elevators for those with mobility considerations.

Transportation
Truro Campus
- Initiated repairs on the Agricultural Campus.
- Created accessible street crossings, widened pedestrian sidewalks, installed tactile attention indicators, and upgraded accessible parking stalls on Cumming Drive and Horseshoe Crescent.
- Created an accessible exterior approach and building entrance for Jenkins Hall, including a regraded and widened sidewalk.
- Renewed MacRae Library parking lot by including wider accessible crossings and additional accessible parking and upgrading signage.

Halifax Campuses
- Facilities Management, in partnership with the Office of Sustainability, upgraded a portion of the Killam Library sidewalk adjacent to the University Avenue Loop. The new sidewalk removed uneven concrete and a gravel path. The upgraded portion now has widened sidewalks and improves safer and more accessible navigation.
- Renewed exterior pedestrian sidewalks including stair removals, ramp renewals, and sidewalk repairs around the Life Sciences Centre.
- Repaired damaged sidewalks across all campuses.
- Installed tactile attention indicators at internal street crossings**.**

Employment
- Promoted the services of Dalhousie's Accessibility, Accommodations, and Wellness unit in the People and Culture office through the accessible.employment@dal.ca email account.

- Migrated Employee Accommodation Policy, documentation on the employee accommodation process, and additional resources to People and Culture's SharePoint.
- Ensured letters of employment, onboarding modules, and employee orientation materials refer to the (dis)Ability Caucus and to Accessibility, Accommodations and Wellness via the New Employee Onboarding Toolkit[6].
- Promoted the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) widely in new employee and new faculty orientations; onboarding modules, toolkits, and webpages; the quarterly benefits newsletter; and other wellness presentations and communications with employees.
- Delivered training sessions about accessibility, including the Accommodation Policy and the role and services of the Accessibility, Accommodations, and Wellness unit to academic units across the Dalhousie community and to senior leadership, including at New Employee Orientation and the annual New Academic Staff Orientation.
- Added an addition of $1,500.00 of benefits coverage for mental health treatment for all employees.
- Communicated to managers and supervisors that they must allow employees to attend (dis)Ability Caucus meetings during work hours.
- Promoted accessibility through Dal News stories and acknowledged in the Legacy Awards[7].
- Provided assistive technology to employees requiring it as part of an accommodation plan.

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[6] www.dal.ca/dept/hr/EmployeeResources/new-employees.html
[7] The Legacy Awards feature a compilation of 20 awards from across the university. These awards are selected by the Legacy Awards committee based on their alignment with Dalhousie's Strategic Priorities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Listen. Learn. Act. Listening to, learning from, and acting on feedback from across the university and community is a critically important element of Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan.

To inform our updated plan, we drew from multiple sources:
- Student Accommodation Policy review.
- Accessible Course Design Policy development.
- Feedback from students, staff, and faculty through pop-up consultations.
- Data from Dalhousie's Our Voice Survey, Be Counted Census, Community Equity Report, Employment Equity Plan, Employment Equity Plan Progress Report[8], and internal surveys administered through Student Affairs.

Additional evaluation and reporting efforts have included, but have not been limited to:
- Collaborating with the Provincial Community of Practice to define and implement a framework to track progress across Dalhousie and other provincial post-secondary institutions.
- Conducting an annual review of the plan and sharing updates broadly.
- Completing compliance reporting, as required.
- Identifying methods to collect feedback and mechanisms to address that feedback.

What We Heard: Pop-up Campus Consultations

The Accessibility Plan Working Group held pop-up consultations across all four campuses to ask students, staff, faculty, and community for recommendations to improve accessibility at Dalhousie. Recommendations touched on all six standard areas.

February 24, 2025—Student Union Building, Studley Campus
- Provide remote options to join class.
- Have more hybrid classes – in-person/virtual/split class.
- Increase note takers for classes.
- Improve accessibility in classrooms.
- Maintain the same advisor throughout degree.
- Require Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in courses.
- Improve access to information about accessibility supports.
- Record all lectures.
- Schedule classes at non-peak hours (6-10pm).

February 27, 2025—Tupper Building, Carleton Campus
- Improve snow clearing/ice buildup at curbs.
- Add ramps and accessible sidewalks.
- Improved navigation in the Dentistry Building.
- Add a ramp or lift to the Arts Centre sculpture court.
- Remove locked doors to improve access to classrooms in Tupper Link level 2.
- Require universal design in new buildings.
- Improve comfort and accessibility in classrooms and lecture theatres.

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[8] Links to public documents can be found in the Resources section.

- Improve accessible parking on Carleton Campus or provide shuttles between campuses.
- Improve temperature settings in buildings.
- Promote accessibility- and disability-focused courses provided at Dal.
- Require subtitles/captioning on all lecture recordings.
- Require recording of lectures.
- Provide training for staff and faculty on how to properly use IT/audio/mic equipment in classrooms.
- Provide certified and safe food options (e.g., gluten free).

March 3, 2025—MacRae Library, Agriculture Campus
- Small buildings across campus are a physical barrier. No accessibility into or inside them.
- Langille Building entrances are accessible but no vertical circulation causes major barriers.
- Banting Building main entrance is not accessible.
- Accessible parking must be signed to be enforceable, limited accessible signage at parking lots.
- Improved Residence accessibility.
- Lectures should be recorded and posted online.
- Extend time between classes when students must navigate from buildings.

March 4, 2025—B Building, Sexton Campus
- Provide funding for and develop a strategy to implement the Accessibility Plan.
- Provide online video recordings of lectures.
- Provide more varied lecture styles/formatting, i.e., online options.
- Educate on invisible disabilities to help others manage their own expectations and assumptions.
- Provide more information on what "Accessibility" means to Dalhousie and across each Accessibility Plan focus area.
- Improve and add sidewalks on Sexton Campus, i.e., on Sexton Field to O'Brien Hall.
- Improve physical barriers across campus, implement user-friendly campus design.

What We Heard: Student and Faculty Surveys

The review of the Student Accommodation Policy identified challenges faced by students requiring accommodations and the faculty members responsible for implementing them. Surveys conducted with both students and faculty reveal critical insights into accommodation policies and practices at Dalhousie.

Some insights from the Surveys include:
- **Classroom Environment:** The classroom environment, faculty attitudes, and successful implementation of accommodations heavily influence the success of students with disabilities.
- **Support and Education:** Faculty members feel that departmental support and education are crucial for effectively implementing accommodations.

In short, survey findings pointed to the following as areas for improvement**:**
- Clear communication on roles and responsibilities for students, staff, and faculty members.
- Efficient and effective implementation of approved accommodations.
- Overall organization and process coordination.
- Streamlined procedures.

Priority Areas and Actions

The following recommendations have emerged through consultations, a review and analysis of relevant reports (e.g., Employment Equity Plan Progress Report), and ongoing monitoring of our progress.

Per our Accessibility Plan, each of the recommendations listed below will form part of our strategic and operational priorities with accountabilities across Dalhousie.

Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan will take both an overarching and standard-specific approach, as appropriate, to ensure consistency across commonly identified actions such as budget planning and allocation, incorporation into campus master planning, and communication and/or development of educational tools and resources.

Built Environment

Our Commitment: Buildings and outdoor spaces on Dalhousie University's campuses provide meaningful access for intended users.

Standards, Guidelines & Frameworks

1) Adopt Provincial Built Environment Accessibility Standards. Where feasible, Facilities Management (FM) will follow CSA B651, in the interim of Provincial Standards.

2) Integrate provincial Built Environment Accessibility Standards into the FM Built Environment Accessibility Audit Tool.

3) Embedded accessibility design into FM's Design Guidelines and Operational Procedures to enhance campus development.

4) Develop internal processes to utilize provincial alternative compliance mechanisms where renovations are unable to meet provincial Built Environment Accessibility Standards.

5) Participate on the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Leads Community of Practice (CoP) and collaborate on Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework initiatives.

Campus Planning

6) Develop a strategy for Accessibility Plan implementation and funding, including a multi-year budget and annual allocation for built environment initiatives.

7) Implement an Accessibility Project Plan to remove barriers:

   a. Prioritize projects to create accessible building entrances and accessible washrooms. Prioritize implementation beginning with teaching buildings, then research buildings, mixed teaching and research, student experience, and administrative buildings.

   b. Ensure new capital projects hold a higher standard of accessibility, including Rick Hansen Foundation building features where feasible.

8) Develop a process and review requirements to capture accessibility features for all projects throughout inception, design, construction, and project completion phases.

9) Prioritize renovation to ensure accessibility in residences on the Agricultural Campus (AC). Ensure this priority is supported in the AC Framework Campus Development Plan (Agriculture Campus Master Plan).

10) Review and update existing procedures and processes to identify and eliminate accessibility barriers and better support persons with disabilities in temporary building disruptions and emergency situations during:

   a. Temporary building and weather-related disruptions (procedures for snow removal,

communication regarding projects, and other unplanned events with accessibility impacts).

    b. Evacuation procedures including fire alarm upgrades, expansion of accessibility scope, and updates to emergency signage to meet Nova Scotia Built Environment Accessibility Standards.

Documenting, Reporting & Auditing

11) Conduct ongoing built environment audits to monitor and report on accessibility improvements.

12) Develop a response plan, portal, process, and funding plan for additional accessibility enhancements and requests.

Teaching, Learning and Research

Our commitment: Dalhousie University is a leader in inclusive and accessible teaching and learning, and collaborative research on accessibility.

1) Ensure that Dalhousie research centres and institutes focused on accessibility consistently demonstrate engagement in accessibility and disability studies in their annual reports and strategic plans.

2) Actively promote and encourage opportunities for faculty and students to engage in accessibility and disability studies scholarship and research (e.g., Healthy Populations Institute).

3) Continue to develop and deliver accessibility education, resources, and capacity building for faculty, staff, and students, including assistive technology and student learning strategies.

4) Create pathways to support post-graduation employment, additional education, and other opportunities for students with disabilities.

5) Conclude the development of Dalhousie's Accessible Course Design Policy, which includes a commitment to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and provision for faculty education.

6) Support faculty members with disabilities in accessing and being successful in research environments.

7) Invest in technology to support accessible learning, including technology to support alternative format course material, up-to-date assistive technology, assistive listening systems in classrooms and auditoriums, and training.

8) Envision and launch an Accessibility Hub to support and measure the impact of cutting-edge work on accessibility at Dalhousie. This will be a shared venture that connects students, staff, and faculty to develop innovative approaches to accessibility for our university community and potentially beyond.

9) Using Lean Process Improvement principles, identify and address operational priorities. Assess impact.

10) Explore the creation of purpose-built spaces for accommodated exam testing.

11) Ensure that work-integrated learning opportunities, capstone projects, and other co-curricular or extra-curricular opportunities have institutional support to focus on accessibility.

12) Introduce the revised Student Accommodation Policy and launch an implementation plan.

Employment

Our commitment: Dalhousie University is an accessible and equitable employer, supporting the careers of employees with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility, and ensures their employees reflect the diversity of Nova Scotians.

1. Embed accessibility into all stages of the employment cycle, from pre-hiring to retirement.

2. Provide comprehensive training on accessibility legislation (employment) and the employee accommodation policy to all members of the university community. Training will include an understanding of the impact of misinformation and stigma related to disability.

3. Create and implement a formal return-to-work policy and process guidelines for persons with disabilities returning from extended medical leave or long-term disability.

4. Increase career development and advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities.

5. Ensure the widespread inclusion of persons with disabilities in recruitment, assessment, selection, and onboarding policies, processes, and procedures, including hiring committees. Verify that job postings only list essential qualifications and experience, taking into consideration transferable skills.

6. Formalize a job exit process for all employees to gather information on job exits for employees with and without disabilities. Information gathered via job exit procedures will support identifying trends and improving the retention of employees with disabilities.

Goods and Services

Our commitment: Students, employees, and visitors with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility have equitable access to goods and services provided by Dalhousie University.

1) Develop and regularly audit comprehensive customer service accessibility standards and associated guidelines that are:

   a. Informed by existing gaps between the standard and the current state of existing customer services spaces.

   b. Aligned with CSA B651[9] and the newly established provincial built environment standards and guidelines for new construction and renovation of customer service spaces.

   c. Monitored and evaluated, with appropriate mechanisms, resourcing, and staffing in place.

2) Ensure all customer service spaces meet accessibility standards by identifying short-term and long-term renovations.

3) Develop a multi-year budget and annual allocation process for accessible goods and services initiatives, identifying potential funding mechanisms for physical space improvements of current customer service spaces to meet accessibility standards.

4) Collaborate with government partners, post-secondary institution representatives, and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate to develop a provincial accessibility-focused customer service training module.

5) Complementing the provincial module, develop an accessible customer/client service training module customized for Dalhousie.

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[9] https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/built-environment/

6) Provide training for procurement teams on the importance of accessibility to their work. Map out the procurement process and identify relevant decision points for accessibility consideration.

7) Designate (a) specific unit(s) in Dal governance structure to execute training.

8) Mine accessibility-related data from existing surveys on Dalhousie's customer service and begin collecting data from new sources or on new topics.

Information and Communication
Our commitment: Ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information provided by Dalhousie.

1) Continue to generate an institutional culture focused on promoting and being a champion of accessibility.

2) Continue to widely communicate Dal's commitment to accessibility through key institutional messages and thoughtful and intentional programming, including organized events such as speaker series, discussion groups, conferences, and awareness campaigns.

3) Continue to develop and maintain a central online resource promoting all information around accessibility and accommodations for faculty, staff, and students.

4) Audit all non-academic educational/training programs currently in use and ensure all content is accessible to faculty, staff, and students.

5) Review and create policies and procedures to ensure all content, systems, and communications are accessible from initial development and distribution.

6) Continue to communicate and develop processes for creating accessible documents and communication materials for all employees and students, including:

   a. Informing and supporting employees about how to produce material in accessible formats.

   b. Providing guidelines to assist with creating and maintaining accessible websites.

   c. Developing clear and simple processes for requesting accessible formats.

   d. Ensuring all educational and training resources or materials are provided in accessible formats, upon request.

   e. Ensuring feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities.

7) Develop awards for focused work in accessibility (for faculty, staff, and students).

8) Ensure new websites, web content, and software, in general, conform to established accessibility guidelines.

Transportation

Our Commitment: Transportation provided to Dalhousie employees and students is accessible.

1) Develop a Landscape Master Plan for Halifax and Truro campuses, addressing accessibility standards and best practices and outlining maps, standards, and projects.
2) Develop a multi-year budget and annual allocation process for accessible transportation initiatives. This would include:
   a) Development of a funding plan.
   b) Development of signature joint projects.

     c) Allocation of additional funding through existing sources such as facilities renewal (no current funding stream for new accessibility projects); new strategic initiative funding; loan and grant program leveraging in partnership with government entities; or capital campaigns.

3) Develop and execute an accessible signage and wayfinding project specific to transportation on and around campuses.

4) Expand research project opportunities for students. Opportunities will be identified and secured by working with faculty and students through classes, internships, and thesis work.

5) Ensure updates and revision to Dalhousie's Multi-Campus Master Plan address:

- Parking lot accessibility improvements.
- Outdoor lighting upgrades.
- Pathway upgrades, including slopes, sidewalks, roadways, and entrances.

6) Develop and deliver accessibility education and training for departments and senior leaders responsible for transportation.

7) Define projects around critical destination routes.

8) Deliver program and service upgrades such as adaptive bikes in loan program and covered bike parking.

Next Steps

Dalhousie's current strategic plan, "Third Century Promise," will soon reach its conclusion. With a new strategic plan on the horizon, we have multiple opportunities to further identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in policies, programs, practices, and services.

In the short term, we will:

- Conclude the Student Accommodation Policy Review and launch the implementation plan.
- Conclude the Accessible Course Design Policy Development and launch the implementation plan.
- Review our Accessibility Advisory Committee governance structure and decision-making capabilities.

In the medium term, we will:
- Re-launch our baseline survey for ongoing evaluation of student, staff, and faculty experiences. Survey results will inform future Accessibility Plan priorities.
- Develop and establish an assessment framework to measure the impact and effectiveness of the Accessibility Plan.

In the long term and ongoing, we will:
- Continue campus consultations, drawing from existing resources (e.g., survey tools and community reports).
- Collaborate across units to develop and propose Impact Projects[10] through the Integrated Budget Planning Framework.
- Ensure Dalhousie's recommendations align with provincial standards and legislation as they are released. Make note of and respond to gaps.
- Continue to monitor and report on the Plan's progress.

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[10] The Integrated Budget Planning Framework includes a mechanism for supporting strategic projects that may lie outside the scope of a unit's core budget envelope or which span multiple units.

Contributors

Individuals and groups from all parts of the university played a vital role in Dalhousie's updated Accessibility Plan. Through various phases of consultation and development, our students, faculty, staff, departments, and external organizations took the time to share their insights and perspectives.

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- Dalhousie University Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Dalhousie University Accessibility Coordinating Committee
- (dis)Ability Faculty and Staff Caucus
- Accessibility Plan Renewal Project team
    o Quenta Adams – Assistant Vice Provost, Student Engagement and Success
    o Jen Davis – Manager, Wellness and Accessibility
    o Dr. Judy MacDonald – Director, School of Social Work and Assistant Dean, Equity & Inclusion
    o Tiffany MacDonald – Career and Recruitment Specialist
    o Órla McDevitt – Director, Accessibility, Accommodation, and Wellness
    o Sarah Pietarinen – Disability and Accommodation Advisor
    o Siobhan Smith – Facilities Planner Built Environment
- Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OPIE), and in particular:
    o Ashley Coffin – Planning and Project Manager
    o Leanne French Munn – Associate Vice-President, Planning and Strategy
    o Brenda MacPhee – Senior Institutional Planner and Project Manager

Resources

Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan is informed by various institutional reports and provincial government resources. We are sharing the following references for our readers.

- Dalhousie Accessibility Home Page
- Dalhousie Accessibility Progress Report 2023 [PDF]
- Dalhousie Accessibility Progress Report 2024 [PDF]
- Community Equity Data Report [PDF]
- Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework [PDF]
- Dalhousie Employment Equity Plan [PDF]
- Dalhousie Employment Equity Plan Progress Report Year 1 [PDF]
- Dalhousie Employment Equity Plan Progress Report Year 2 [PDF]
- Access by Design 2030