NSCAD University

Accessibility Framework

2022-27

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

In 2017, the Nova Scotia Government passed the *Bill 59: Accessibility Act* ([link](#)) to make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030.

In order to assist public, private and non-profit organizations to identify, prevent and remove barriers, CONSUP and NSCC has developed the [Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework](#) (June 2020) which defines goals and commitments in 7 areas as follows:

- Awareness and Capacity Building
- Teaching, Learning, Research
- Information and communications
- Employment
- Transportation[SEP]
- Built environment
- Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Many of the *Accessibility Standards* in Nova Scotia that will support policy are still under development. Nevertheless, by doing an environmental scan of PSE across the country, we feel comfortable developing policy that will be robust and reflect the standards that will be approved.

NSCAD convened its Accessibility Working Group in 2020 and they have led a gap and barrier analysis. That report informs this inaugural five-year Accessibility Plan. The ultimate goal of the plan is to bring NSCAD into compliance with the standards for each of the areas above within the required timeframe. Beyond our legal obligations, the plan aims to clearly demonstrate our commitment to providing a truly accessible setting for studying, working and living. Therefore, this document outlines NSCAD's plan of initiatives to be launched over the next five years.

We want to work towards fostering a culture of opportunity and belonging. Integral to that culture is inclusion and diversity here at NSCAD, a value that is put forth in our [Academic Plan: Opportunity and Belonging, 2020-25](#) as well as our [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Targeted Action Plan](#). We believe that the initiatives proposed in this plan will help us make considerable progress in the areas of accessibility and accountability.

2. About NSCAD University

NSCAD is in Mi'kma'ki, on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq Nation. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Our vision

Informed by the past, engaged by the present, looking to the future, and guided by the intention to make positive change, NSCAD University is a beacon to those who seek to know the world as it is and to create what it might be.

Our mission

NSCAD University is an immersive, rigorous, and supportive academic community where members are known and celebrated for their creativity and differences. Through active inquiry we identify, define, and approach the complexities of our world, challenge conventional thinking, and create value and economic impact thought art, media, craft and design.

The core values that define and inspire us

As described in the Academic Plan: Opportunity and Belonging, 2020-25, NSCAD is a unique and beloved educational community, recognized internationally for its leadership and innovation in creative practice, research and pedagogy. NSCAD is Nova Scotia's university for creative careers, art and research. NSCAD is committed to collectively leveraging its unique strengths and resources to advance the economic, social and cultural well-being of all Nova Scotians (long-standing and newcomers).

NSCAD's graduates are uniquely placed to thrive in the emerging creative structures globally. At NSCAD, creative thinkers foment new ideas. With its studio-based, experiential, work-integrated, iterative, collaborative, technology-enabled, and critique-based andragogies, NSCAD is the ideal preparation for the anticipated futures and the attendant surprises. NSCAD must be ready to take a leadership role in articulating the values and principles of the emerging reality (first among these values is sustainability—environmental, fiscal, creative, and social) and advocating for creative futures. We must lead by example.

Students, Faculty and Staff

In 2021, NSCAD conducted its first census. 13% of faculty and staff self-identified as a person with a disability; 35% of students self-identified. The 2021 NSCAD census data suggests that faculty and staff experience disability at the same rate at the general population; it is noteworthy that disability is nearly three times more prevalent in the student body.

Who	Percentage
Faculty/ Staff	13%
Students	35%

3. NSCAD University's commitment to accessibility

NSCAD University is committed to maintaining the dignity and independence of all members of its support and teaching staff, its students and all visitors to the campus. NSCAD seeks to ensure that NSCAD campus is inclusive and that each person enjoys free and unhindered access to

NSCAD's programs, goods, services, facilities, communications, events and employment opportunities.

4. Responsibilities and delegation of powers

Anyone acting on behalf of NSCAD is responsible for being aware of and meeting the accessibility standards, for working together to meet these standards and for creating a working, teaching and learning environment that is inclusive.

The Vice-President (Academic & Research) and Provost is responsible for compliance with the accessibility standards. This office oversees the development of NSCAD's Accessibility Plan and delegates authority and responsibilities to the individuals holding the roles below and the following units to ensure the Accessibility Plan is implemented.

- Communications
- Dean, academic directors, and chairs
- Managers and directors in administrative areas
- Finance
- Operations (Facilities, IT, HR)
- Accessibility Advisory Committee

NSCAD Acccessibility Advisory Committee was created in Fall 2020. It provides advice to NSCAD's Senior Administration on identifying, preventing,and eliminating barriers to people with disabilities in NSCAD programs, services, initiatives, and facilities. The committee is composed of students, faculty, staff and members of the community. People identifying with a disability represent at least 50% of the constituency.

Evaluation

NSCAD is meeting legislated timelines for implementation. Listening to and acting upon feedback is an integral part of the evaluation process. NSCAD will continue to review and expand engagement and consultation strategies across campus and with the broader community, and especially with persons with disabilities.

Additional evaluation and reporting efforts include:

- Annual review of the Plan and preparation of progress reports; posted online and available in alternate formats upon request
- Compliance reports submitted to the Accessibility Directorate of Nova Scotia, which regulates compliance for all Nova Scotia organizations

- Feedback logged for internal performance assessment; data from feedback is used to better prioritize and identify issues and barriers

5. 2022-27 Accessibility Framework

NSCAD's multi-year plan was developed in collaboration with different sectors of NSCAD. The process anticipates consultations with students and members of NSCAD community at large. This plan describes the actions taken by NSCAD to make its environment accessible so each member of NSCAD community can enjoy free and unhindered access to all activities offered on campus.

We have divided the plan into seven sections, in line with the areas addressed by the Act:

1. Awareness and Capacity Building,
2. Teaching, Learning, Research,
3. Information and Communications,
4. Employment,
5. Transportation,
6. Built Environment
7. Procurement, Goods and Services.

In each section, we define the standards to follow and we outline our proposed initiatives during the course of 2022 to 2027. Identifying accomplishments and initiatives will help us make our campus accessible and meet the requirements of Act.

In 2020, NSCAD engaged ReachAbility, an accessibility support organization, to conduct an environmental scan of its community and infrastructure, leading to recommendations based on first-voice feedback and legislative standards. People involved were NSCAD past, current and prospective students, faculty, staff and members of the art community,

In addition, other engagement sessions, mostly targeted to students, were led by the Office of Opportunity and Belonging.

NSCAD's Accessibility Framework is conceived to be comprised of two phases:

1. **Phase One** (short term) – Compliance – 2022-27
2. **Phase Two** (long term) – Effectiveness and Impact – 2027-2032

5. Summary table of Accessibility Actions

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
1. Awareness and Capacity Building NSCAD develops and implements policies and procedures that will incorporate the basic principles of accessibility — dignity, independence, integration and equity.	Develop Multi-Year institutional accessibility plan (annually reviewed). Develop accessibility policy and associated administrative procedures. Campaign to promote and raise awareness of the accessibility policy and administrative procedures. Create mechanism for employees to raise awareness of *Accessibility Policy* and associated administrative procedures, with special attention to onboarding new employees. Updatepolicy and guidelines on accommodations measures for students with disabilities. Implement guidelines for work placements involving students with disabilities. Campaign to promote and raise awareness of policy and guidelines on accommodations measures for students with disabilities. Communicate best practices for creating accessible events.	Appoint a dedicated and staff position with relevant expertise on Accessibility to provide support to students requiring disability support and offer guidance to University staff and faculty on UDL , responsibilities, etc. Define and identify barriers to awareness and capacity building (attitudinal, communication, systemic/organizational, technological, physical) Work collaboratively with NSCAD Accessibility and Accommodations committee to develop programs and initiatives as well as bring awareness to accessibility from the first voice perspective. Consider and implement feasible recommendations from the Reachability report which was gathered from the perspective and first voice of NSCAD staff, student and faculty. Develop and deliver awareness workshop and training opportunities for staff, faculty/instructors, technicians to improve and build capacity on Accessibility and Accommodations. Establish a strong culture of accessibility and equity that is focused on ensuring that students, faculty and staff living with disability feel valued, welcomed and a sense of belonging.

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
		Review and update current NSCAD Accessibility policies, protocols and practices to fill gaps and ensure they are clear and comprehensive to all participants of accessibility and accommodation. Include process for activating the policy when necessary to resolve concerns arising from disability requests.
		Create ongoing training opportunities through specially designed foundational (and advanced) training modules on Accessibility. This should be mandatory for all current and incoming NSCAD employees.
		Design an interactive, accessible webpage dedicated to NSCAD Accessibility Plan – include links to NSCAD accessibility, NS Accessibility and Canada Accessibility plans as well as list other internal and external resources.
		Include a clear and concise roadmap/timeline detailing the University's planned path, KPI, timeline and outcomes (with descriptive ALT text of the image).
		As an added feature -- short clips, videos and foundational module should be available (similar to the one on Brightspace).
		Develop evaluation tool for NSCAD general student population and students who access disability supports to provide feedback and recommendation on service and areas of

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
		improvements.

Collaborate with NS Province to advise and launch collated "Make Teaching and Learning Accessible' guideline that will support accessibility initiatives. Complement guideline roll out with workshop to solidify learning and discussion.

Engage student population to expand their learning about accessibility through program initiatives (such Accessibility Art competition with a reflection on the creative piece. 'Disability experience' as precursor or complement to the creating artwork. A student living with disability could provide context, if necessary). This could be an annual exercise and the winner could have their work displayed at the ALG.

Collaborate with the provincial Accessibility Directorate to build capacity and increase awareness about the obligations of the post-secondary sector under the NS *Accessibility Act*.

Attend and work collaboratively provincial PSE committees and working groups for knowledge exchange and the development of a suite or resources and tools to be used through all PSE in the province |
| 2. Teaching, Learning and Research | Provide instructors and technicians with training on creating inclusive learning environments. Develop an | Updated course descriptions, as well as website overview information to include potential barriers for students to allow |

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
	ongoing training program on creating inclusive learning environments. Provide all employees with training on the integrated standards and the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Code*. Review procurement procedures for purchasing library materials. Implement initiatives for obtaining accessible library resources. Ensure the Learning Management System (e.g., Brightspace, TEAMS) is an accessible platform for online courses and meetings. Provide training to instructional designers on *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0* (WCAG 2.0). Provide training on creating accessible documents to University employees, current software includes MS Word, PowerPoint and PDF. Create and distribute guide for instructors to minimize the impact of learning obstacles.	them to make informed decisions before registering for classes.
3. Information and Communications Make all information and communications on NSCAD's website and distributed in classrooms available in accessible	Ensure University website is WCAG 2.0 compliant (and maintains highest accessibility standard). and implement a process for evaluating whether NSCAD's website Train webmasters and communications officers on the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0* (WCAG 2.0). Establish a process for feedback on the accessibility of NSCAD's website.	Create interactive map using innovative ideas and digital tools to help student, staff and visitors navigate NSCAD campuses.

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
alternative formats in order to maintain the dignity, independence and integration of all persons.	Monitor quality and accessibility compliance of Web contents. Create process for obtaining University publications in accessible formats. Make emergency and safety procedures in accessible formats and provide personalized safety plans. Implement initiatives for improving access to technology for students with hearing disability. Provide training on creating accessible documents to University employees, current software includes MS Word, PowerPoint and PDF. Ensure all software purchased meet accessibility guidelines and can output accessible documentation/reports as required. Provide all employees with training on the integrated standards and the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Code*.	
4. Employment Incorporate principles of dignity, independence, integration and equity for all candidates and employees into processes for recruiting, hiring, retaining employees, conducting	Create and implement guidelines on providing accommodations measures to University staff. Develop employment equity plan to incorporate principles and values established in EDI plan and in accordance with provincial requirements. Launch awareness campaign and training for managers on accessibility best practices related to hiring and meeting with candidates.	Review staffing levels to ensure sufficient support for student, staff and faculty. Develop onboarding practices focused on accessibility and inclusivity.

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
performance reviews and professional development activities.	Refine HR policies, procedures and guidelines to bring them into compliance with provincial standard. Evaluate and review guidelines on providing accommodation measures to employees	
5. Built environment Ensure that any new construction provides accessible access.	Continue the development of the facilities strategy to ensure that we have accessible and inclusive facilities by 2030. The facilities strategy includes new build and renovation of existing infrastructure. Develop a Web page on accessibility of NSCAD's buildings. Create a campus accessibility plan related to architectural elements on campus. Review standards for the design of public spaces (*Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment*). Train facilities staff to become familiar with all accessibility standards. Develop accessibility procedure to communicate alternate route or location of services in case of temporary closure or renovations.	Where feasible, upgrade washrooms to ensure they are gender neutral and accessible. Improve wayfinding on all campuses.
6. Transportation	Work with Halifax Port Authority and Halifax Transit to reinstate the bus routes at the Port Campus (priority), including a safe pick-up and drop-off area for Access-A-Bus Services. Work with the City of Halifax to determine proximate locations of accessible campus parking.	

Goals	2022-27 Initiatives	Proposed Actions (Reviewed by Accessibility Committee)
7. Procurement, Goods and Services	Review and update procurement policy, procedures and practices to procure goods and services. Develop and implement *Guidelines on accessible goods and services.* Train employees responsible for purchasing on procurement procedure as it relates to accessibility.	Identify gaps and barriers to good and services delivery through consultative process and previous ineffective practices Collaborate with Admissions and recruitment to identify a proactive process to initiating conversation about disability supports with incoming students Develop and implement guidelines (Terms of reference, MOUs) for engaging with external disability service providers (e.g. ASL interpreters to support students of university events) Assess NSCAD proficiency with the use of assistive technology

6. Next Steps

- Monitor progress and success throughout the 5-year plan, including
  - Description of that institutions have implemented related to training and capacity building
  - Description of new & existing awareness and education campaigns conducted by institutions
  - # and type of training & education opportunities provided for staff, faculty/instructors and students related to accessibility
  - Description of new & existing accessible customer service training that is conducted changes
- Assess and evaluate the framework
- Reframe objectives as required
- Continue research and adjust framework and action plan to best standards
- Train new and continuing employees
- Actively seek community feedback
- Through annual census, and associated working groups, compare accessibility related data to monitor improvement and progress.
- Create the next 5-year plan (2027-2032)

7. Conclusion

NSCAD has made considerable progress over the last few years in defining barriers on campus in order to make it a more accessible space for all members of NSCAD community. While the built environment poses challenges for adaptation, all the accomplishments described in this document have been possible through the efforts and teamwork of numerous dedicated and committed individuals in our different services and faculties. We would like to acknowledge their work and thank them for their contributions. These accomplishments will act as a stepping stone for implementing the various initiatives planned for the next three years. NSCAD will continue to work on identifying and eliminating barriers that remain so we can create a truly inclusive environment for studying, working and living.

Appendix 1

Definitions

Definitions

1. **Accessibility:** giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life.

2. **Accessible format:** A presentation of information that uses large print, recorded audio and electronic format, braille or other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

3. **Barrier:** Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

4. **Disability:** Disability: As defined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Code, a condition involving a physical disability, a developmental disability or a learning disability. A disability can be visible or invisible and includes:
    a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, and physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
    b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
    c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
    d. a mental disorder; and
    e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

5. **Goods and services:** Anything NSCAD produces or acquires from suppliers and all activities and interactions that result in an exchange of information, documents or products for the benefit of NSCAD community or the general public, including academic programs and services.

6. **Information and communications:** Data, facts, information and knowledge transferred in a variety of forms as well as interactions between members of NSCAD community or with the general public in order to provide, send or receive information. Information and communications can be promotional, informative, administrative or pedagogical in nature and in text, audio, digital or graphic format distributed in a printed, Internet, audiovisual, multimedia or physical form.

7. **University community:** The group of persons with a substantial relationship to the institution and that visit NSCAD, including students, employees, contractors, speakers and visitors.

Appendix 2
ReachAbility Recommendations from

NSCAD + You. Moving Accessibility Forward, 2021.

In 2020-21, ReachAbility conducted a gap and barrier analysis of our services and infrastructure and identified a list of potential improvements and actions that could be implemented in the next decade.

In no order of importance, below are the recommendations for NSCAD to consider. These recommendations are to be evaluate and coordinated with other NSCAD's initiatives:

– Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Targeted Action Plan, 2021
– NSCAD University Academic Plan, 2020-2025
– Project Elevate: NSCAD Recruitment Plan, 2020-2025
– Facilities Strategy, 2020-2030

Recommendations from ReachAbility Report: NSCAD + You. Moving Accessibility Forward, 2021:

- Make accessibility a financial priority. Add it to the budget and plan how it will be addressed. Accessibility is doable, even within NSCAD, but it takes planning, time and cooperation.
- Amend the students with disabilities and accommodations policies. Go beyond the twenty-year old accommodation letter, revisiting the timeline and processes around how students are provided accommodations; how requests are processed, and when they can be requested throughout the year so that plans and service providers are in place in time for classes to start. Create a policy that allows for individual autonomy for students with disabilities. Encourage, and allow, creative problem solving among students and faculty within the classroom and curricula that best serves the student and won't impede on the education of others
- Feasibility Study for Transitioning Services from Fountain Campus to the Port Campus.
- Upgrade at least one gender-neutral washroom facility on each level of each campus, ensuring they meet or exceed accessibility standards.
- Renovate all NSCAD building entrances and exits to ensure they are accessible. This can be done immediately at the Port Campus by making minor adjustments to ramps and adding wayfinding and can be done at minimal expense at Academy campus by installing a ramp to the Sackville Street entrance.
- Ensure adequate staffing for roles that provide support to students and/or staff. Adequate staffing includes the addition of an Indigenous Elder hired for Indigenous Student support addressing their needs that vitally require the support of an elder. This should be made a priority position, not one that is tucked away in the basement.
- Increase the availability of mental health and assessment support at NSCAD for all students including culturally appropriate support for students from marginalized community groups.
- Create interactive maps using innovative ideas and/or digital tools to help students, staff and guests navigate around the NSCAD campuses. Through universal design implement wayfinding that supports everyone in independently traveling around campus.
- Increase storage on campus for students by including lockers similar to those at the Port Campus in all new buildings and/or renovation plans. Purchase storage bins that have lockable

castors on them so they can be moved easily and stowed away under tables when space is needed; add castors to all current storage units to increase use and accessibility. Replacing all desks and tables with those that are adjustable in height (these can be moved to the new space when relocation happens)

- Create a standard for communication that ensures nothing is emailed, posted or otherwise if it does not meet certain standards for accessibility and need. Ensure all communication is delivered in accessible formats and can support the use of assistive technology. NSCAD should and can, aim to exceed the WCAG 2.1 standards with this.
- Implement a policy for mandatory, ongoing training around equity, diversity and inclusion for all teaching and support staff, inclusive of ICA's and RPT's. This should include continuous universal design for learning, plain language and accessible document creation, accessible media training, terminology, ease of accommodation, how to work with service providers, trauma informed statements and/or warnings, accessible facilitation, land acknowledgements, and access statements.
- Appoint a Compliance Officer or designated role to an existing staff member in order to create an immediate focus on compliance as soon as the Province of Nova Scotia has compliance information available.
- Change policies around the use of online class delivery platforms to allow for increased access for students and staff i.e., Microsoft Teams isn't accessible and Zoom is -allow faculty and students to choose.
- Updated course descriptions, as well as website overview information to include potential barriers for students to allow them to make informed decisions before registering for classes.
- Designate accessible parking at each NSCAD Campus and ensure it meets accessibility standards.
- Install elevators at Academy Campus.
- Develop training for service providers on the institution, policies and course load. Not every interpreter specializes in art practices and in order for them to support students properly the require adequate training and support themselves.
- Work with Metro Transit to provide accessible public transportation to all NSCAD Campus from anywhere within the greater HRM area. Change the course cancellation policies to better incorporate issues that arise due to lack of accessibility or the inability to accommodate so that students with disabilities
- Re-evaluate the various systems and platforms being used for storage, communication, marks and schedules, bookings etc. and reduce the number of systems being used by eliminating old systems and replacing them with more efficient technology.
- Create policies around curriculum sharing that builds capacity within the learning environment.
- Faculty can, and should make easily available any, and all, information related to classwork for students. This should be provided in advance within a timely manner and should not be withheld because of proprietary information. All information related to the curriculum should be available in alternative formats for those with varied learning abilities ie. by providing audio files of important information read aloud.

- Work with Indigenous Leaders on decolonization processes, reconciliation practices and ensuring Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.
- Adjust the height of everything that needs to be used regularly or in an emergency to accessible height of 1100mm (ie fire extinguishers, light switches, paper towel, soap, etc), and all outlets that are for student faculty regular use raised to an accessible height of 440mm.
- Ensure there are visual and auditory fire alarms and that emergency plans with muster stations for people in wheelchairs are clearly visible and on each floor.
- Ensuring all lighting is LED and adjustable
- Create a campaign about the need for inclusive and accessible services at NSCAD University to promote awareness and show inclusion as a priority within the NSCAD Community.
- Update policies for managers to help in meeting obligations to provide reasonable accommodations needed by employees with disabilities.
- Celebrate the diversity within your organization and make it a priority to highlight the significance equity, diversity and inclusion plays at NSCAD

Appendix 3

Accessibility Working Group Members

2021-22:

Laura Caswell (Vice-Chair, 2020-22)

Carleana de Wilde

Leanne Dowe

Ann-Barbara Graff

Lucky Howard (Committee Secretary, 2020-22)

Karen Keddy

Isabelle Nault

Maria Ortega

Anwen Service

Mara Toombs (Chair, 2020-22)

Charisma Grace Walker

Jayne Wark