

Atlantic School of Theology Accessibility Plan (April 2022)

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.” There may be disagreement about what this means precisely, but at the very least it does mean that 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 continued improvement to how our educational community functions. All of this is a multi-year process, but it is undertaken with determination and good will to be as fully inclusive as possible in our life together.

Interim President, Tim O’Neill

About AST

An Ecumenical School

Atlantic School of Theology, an ecumenical school 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 school with an ecumenical Board of Governors, Senate, Faculty, student body and curriculum. The School 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 Religious Studies) degrees. The Master of Arts (Theology and Religious Studies) 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 will strengthen each institution to fulfill each other’s educational mission and service to the churches and to society. While each institution will retain its independent status and grant its own degrees, exciting possibilities for joint programming will become a regular part of AST’s program offerings. Students at AST will be able to explore new

avenues for theological education such as inter-faith dialogue, which is becoming a major part of the societal context in which ministry now must exercise its calling.

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

The 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, 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 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) 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, and friends—as we work together towards creating an environment that ensures that everyone has a full and enriching AST experience.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

In accordance with section 44 (2) of the Accessibility Act, 2017, *at least one half of the members of an accessibility advisory committee must be persons with disabilities or representatives from organizations representing persons with disabilities.* The AAC meets this requirement.

AST's AAC Members – 6 male / 3 female

Deane, David – Faculty

Demers, Kevin – student

Munro, Brenda – Administration - Cttee Co-Chair

Murry, Brad – Staff, Librarian
 Parks, Kevin – Faculty, University Musician
 Robichaud, Michelle – Student, Cttee Co-Chair
 Robinson, Jason - Student
 Slaunwhite, Terry – Staff, Facilities Manager
 _____ Communications

In accordance with Accessibility Act, 2017

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 include (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 Provincial Working Group meetings | | Kevin D, Brenda, Michelle, Terry | Sharing information with and from Working Group members via Teams group | Ongoing |
| Assistance from W/G member to develop Awareness and Capacity Building | March 4th, 2022 | AAC and Michelle Maloney (Dal) | | |
| Accessibility Cttee Terms of Reference | Feb 1, 2022 | AAC developed | Forwarded to AST Senate for Approval in March 2022 | |

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 |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Assistance from other Uni's Cttee | March 4 th , 2022 | Faculty, Students | Sharing information on others' deliverables to formulate AST's own | March 4 th met with rep from Dalhousie |
| Universal Design Learning Principles (UDL) | | | | |
| Principles of Academic Accommodation | | | Define rules of Confidentiality of Student Information | |
| Reaching out with a potential opportunity to share your experience as a student with a disability. | Spring 2022 | Brenda and students to promote | Members keep running track of students who have received and responded positively to being involved with the study. | Begin promoting April 22 with responses to Corrie Melanson |
| Ensure all Faculty are aware of service of SMU Fred Smithers Centre and how to refer students there. https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/fred-smithers-centre.html | | David Dean | | |
| Ensure an Academic Accommodation statement is included in all Registration information | | David Dean, Kevin Parks, Academic Dean (AST) | | |
| Investigate Cost of installing UDL tools in classrooms to accommodate Hearing and Visually impaired students | | David Deane, Terry Slaunwhite, co-Chairs | | |

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 | AAC prepare info for Social Media | Prepare information to share with Communications | |
| | | Dasiele to post information given | Dasiele post in various forms of Social | |
| | | Dasiele | Track viewing results of Social | |
| Promotion of Access improvements as accomplished through Social Media | | AAC prepare info for Dasiele to share in Social Media | Prepare information to share with Communications | |

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 |
|--|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Accessible bathroom, main floor Chapel Bldg. | February 24, 2022 | Terry | Standards met | Completed Feb. 24/22 |
| Promote via Social Media | February 2022 | Dasiele | Pictures posted in weekly update | Weekly update |

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 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|------------------|
| Campus Covid Precautions | Immediately | AST COO | All staff/ faculty post on their email signature: <i>AST campus is open with strict adherence to Nova Scotia Covid-19 public health measures and advice. Our priority continues to be providing high quality education while ensuring the health and safety of our community.</i> | |

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 | | Terry | Increase number as necessary when campus opens, and student body is known | |
| Student notified of how to gain information on bus routes including Access-A-Bus | Annually | AST Registration material and Student Union | https://www.halifax.ca/transportation/halifax-transit/access-a-bus | May 2022 |
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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 Review | November 2009 | Terry Slaunwhite | AST Accessibility Review, ADI Terry Slaunwhite , (NS) Ltd. Project No: L6516-001.1\2.2.5 | Complete |
| Accessibility Audit | 2009 | AST Board | Baseline to identify barriers | Complete |
| Accessibility Audit | Spring 2022 | Architect / Facilities Manager / AST COO | <p>Hi Linda (Moxsom-Skinner) I thought you should see this. Terry</p> <p>From: Anne Sinclair <anne@annesinclairarchitects.ca> Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 6:51:22 PM To: Terry Slaunwhite <TSlaunwhite@astheology.ns.ca> Subject: Re: NS University Accessibility Audit.</p> <p>Hi</p> <p>There may be a possibility that I can get the site work done before end of March, but it's more likely it will be after that.</p> <p>Our report writer has been ill and is back now, but not able to work full time, so we've been delayed getting the reports done for the other campuses, and some of them will not get finished before end of March.</p> <p>I realize there is a deadline for the accessibility plans for the province.</p> <p>We don't know how much time our report writer will be able to work each day - that's why it's difficult to predict when I can get to your work, but I will keep you posted.</p> <p>Sorry for any inconvenience this may cause you.</p> <p>Anne ANNE SINCLAIR ARCHITECT NSAA LEED AP Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified Professional 5675 Inglis Street Halifax NS B3H 1K2 902 423 1329</p> | |

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| | | | <p>anne@annesinclairarchitects.ca</p> <p>On Feb 4, 2022, at 9:39 AM, Terry Slaunwhite <TSlaunwhite@astheology.ns.ca> wrote:</p> <p>Hi Anne Our budget year ends Mar 31st, do you think it will be done before then? Thank you Terry</p> <p><Outlook-uzc3yjjl.jpg> Terry Slaunwhite Facilities Manager Atlantic School of Theology 660 Francklyn st Halifax NS B3H3B5 Cell 902 476-0746 Office 902 496-7947</p> <p>From: Anne Sinclair anne@annesinclairarchitects.ca Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 5:59 PM To: Terry Slaunwhite <TSlaunwhite@astheology.ns.ca> Cc: Linda Moxsom-Skinner <lmoxsomskinner@astheology.ns.ca> Subject: Re: NS University Accessibility Audit. Hi Terry and Linda We have had some setbacks since we last communicated, which have set us behind in our scheduling. We are still planning to do this work though. Please give me a call at your convenience. Thanks Anne ANNE SINCLAIR ARCHITECT NSAA LEED AP Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified Professional 5675 Inglis Street Halifax NS B3H 1K2 902 423 1329</p> | |
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| | | | <p>anne@annesinclairarchitects.ca</p> <p>On Feb 1, 2022, at 11:22 AM, Terry Slaunwhite <TSlaunwhite@astheology.ns.ca> wrote: Hi Anne I was asked to inquire about the progress of the accessibility audit. I wasn't exactly sure when you were staring. Could you please bring us up to date. Thank you Terry</p> <p><Terry Slaunwhite Facilities Manager Atlantic School of Theology 660 Francklyn st Halifax NS B3H3B5 Cell 902 476-0746 Office 902 496-7947</p> | |
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Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Goal - Nova Scotia’s post-secondary institutions regularly monitor and evaluate progress to remove barriers to accessibility, and the 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.

Example from Lunenburg County - Each municipal unit will be responsible for submitting an Accessibility Report Card to the Accessibility Advisory Committee by November 30 each year. This report card will track and report on the progress made towards the commitments in this plan, and performance of the policies and actions in their individual Accessibility Action Plans. The Accessibility Advisory Committee may also make recommendations to improve this plan. The Accessibility Report Cards of each municipal unit will be public documents, posted on their individual websites. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will review new directives, guidelines, and updates from the province as they are released, and determine if updates to this Accessibility Plan are required based on those updates. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the municipal units on the need for updates to their individual Accessibility Action Plans.

| Deliverables | Compliance Date | Accountability | Strategies for Compliance | Progress to Date |
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Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

Munro, Brenda L. pinehill@astheology.ns.ca 902-423-3158
 Robichaud, Michelle farashaofottawa@gmail.com 613-600-7747

Our accessibility plan is publicly posted at Website and/or Social Media Addresses *LINKS

The Full document and the Accessibility Guide for Faculty and Staff of Post-Secondary Institutions in Nova Scotia.pdf are on Teams.

This document is available in alternate formats, upon request. Please contact Michelle Robichaud at farashaofottawa@gmail.com.

Accessibility 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:

Munro, Brenda L.

pinehill@astheology.ns.ca

902-423-3158

Robichaud, Michelle

farashaofottawa@gmail.com

613-600-7747

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.