



## Accessibility Plan

Approved by Senate April 27, 2022

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### Message from President—Accessibility Statement

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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*

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### About AST

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#### *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 interreligious dialogue, which is becoming a major part of the societal context in which ministry now must exercise its calling.

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### **Purpose of the Accessibility Plan**

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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.

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### **Introduction to the Plan**

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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.

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## Accessibility Advisory Committee Members

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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.

### Committee Members (2022-23)

Allie Crawley, Communications Staff

David Deane, Faculty

Grace Hussey, Student

Shannon MacLean, Alumna

Tabitha McLaughlin-Carey, Student

Brenda Munro, Co-Chair

Brad Murray, Library Staff

Kevin Parks, University Musician

Michelle Robichaud, Student and Co-Chair

Terry Slaunwhite, Facilities Manager

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## Areas of Commitment

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

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

## Awareness and Capacity Building

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

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

Deliverables	Compliance Date	Accountability	Strategies for Compliance	Progress to Date
Attendance at 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 4, 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 Universities' Committees	March 4, 2022	Faculty, Students	Sharing information on others' deliverables to formulate AST's own	March 4, 2022 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, 2022 with responses to C. Melanson
Ensure all Faculty are aware of service of SMU Fred Smithers Centre and how to refer students there. <a href="https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/fred-smithers-centre.html">https://www.smu.ca/campus-life/fred-smithers-centre.html</a>		David Deane		
Ensure an Academic Accommodation statement is included in all Registration information		David Deane, 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	
		Communications to post information given	Communications post in various forms of social media	
		Communications	track viewing results of Social media	
Promotion of Access improvements as accomplished through social media		AAC prepare info for Comms. 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 2022
Promote via social media	February 2022	Comms.	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 CAO	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	<a href="https://www.halifax.ca/transportation/halifax-transit/access-a-bus">https://www.halifax.ca/transportation/halifax-transit/access-a-bus</a>	May 2022

## 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: xxxxx	Complete
Accessibility Audit	2009	AST Board	Baseline to identify barriers	Complete
Accessibility Audit	Spring 2022	Architect / Facilities Manager / AST CAO	Circulate by CAO to T. Slaunwhite in August 2022 and to B. Munro in October 2022  File shared with Accessibility Committee in Fall 2022.	September 2022

## 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**

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For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

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Robichaud, Michelle	<a href="mailto:farashaofottawa@gmail.com">farashaofottawa@gmail.com</a>	613-600-7747

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

This document is available in alternate formats, upon request. Please contact Michelle Robichaud at [farashaofottawa@gmail.com](mailto:farashaofottawa@gmail.com).

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## Feedback

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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.	<a href="mailto:pinehill@astheology.ns.ca">pinehill@astheology.ns.ca</a>	902-423-3158
Robichaud, Michelle	<a href="mailto:farashaofottawa@gmail.com">farashaofottawa@gmail.com</a>	613-600-7747

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## Appendix A—Glossary

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### 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.