



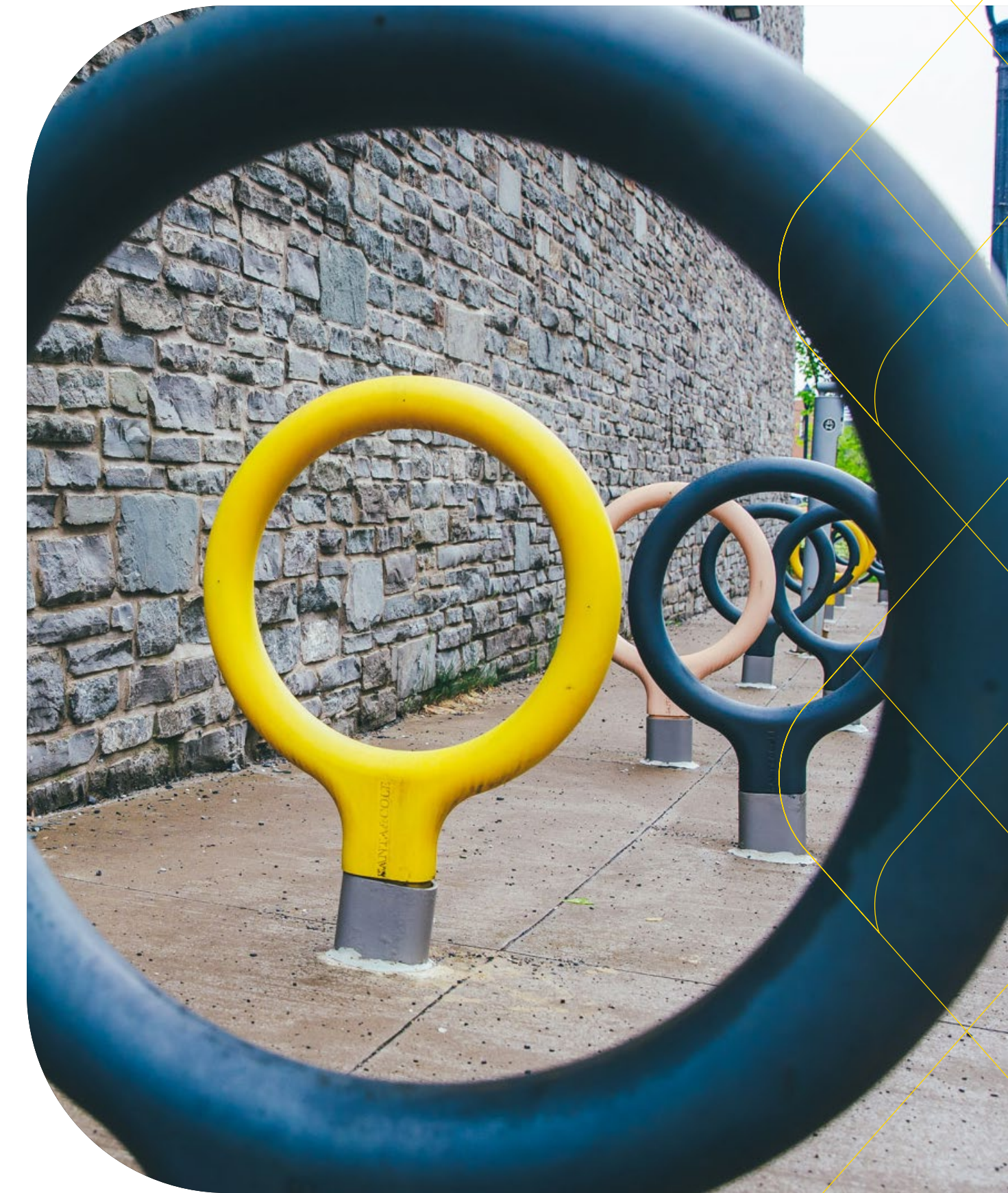
# Dalhousie University Accessibility Plan

**PROGRESS REPORT**  
2022-2023





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**Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi`kmaq. We are all treaty people.**

There are three key components to the statement. The first is particular acknowledgement that the land Dalhousie sits on is part of Mi'kma'ki, the territory of the L'nu'k. The second is the acknowledgement of the territory as both ancestral and unceded – recognizing that the Peace and Friendship treaties signed between the British Crown and the Mi'kmaq (unlike many other historic treaties in Canada) did not involve surrender of land. Finally, “We are all Treaty people” reflects that the Peace and Friendship treaties apply to all parties involved, Indigenous and settler alike.

**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.**

Having resided in the region for over 400 years, African Nova Scotian contributions to Nova Scotia and Canada began over 150 years before Canada became a country. African Nova Scotians came to the province through enslavement or through fleeing enslavement elsewhere, and continue to experience all manner of structural, systemic and individual discrimination. Until 1961, more than half of all Black people in Canada were African Nova Scotian. The Province of Nova Scotia identifies African Nova Scotians as a founding culture.



# Introduction

As an educational institution spanning multiple campuses and communities, Dalhousie University acknowledges the imperative to make Dalhousie fully accessible by removing barriers to education, employment, service, and research. We are committed to the work required to achieve this goal.

Creating inclusive, accessible spaces and services for all Dalhousie students, faculty, and staff are core elements of Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan. The university's strategic plan, Third Century Promise, explicitly lays out this commitment to inclusive excellence, recognizing that people are fundamental to everything it does, and that accessibility planning is essential to achieving Dalhousie's goal of becoming a national leader in equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

This Report will share highlights of accessibility improvements and work currently underway. There are dozens of initiatives and activities that have been completed, are in progress, or are planned and soon to be introduced. A comprehensive list of 2022-23 projects and achievements can be found on the [Dalhousie University Accessibility Plan website](#).

# Background

In 2017, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act was passed and proclaimed, demonstrating a commitment to a more equitable and barrier-free province for all Nova Scotians. The Act recognizes accessibility as a human right and sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

Included in the Act is a requirement for all post-secondary institutions to develop a publicly available accessibility plan that addresses specific areas of focus, in addition to providing information about how the post-secondary institution will:

- **Identify, remove, and prevent** barriers to accessibility
- Assess how proposed policies, programs, practices and services will **impact accessibility**
- Assess how **proposed enactments or by-laws** will impact accessibility

In 2019, Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions collaborated to develop the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework – the first of its kind in Canada. It was released June, 2020. The provincial framework provides a shared vision for accessibility in post-secondary education and establishes collaborative commitments for advancing accessibility at Nova Scotia's universities and Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC).

Dalhousie University's multi-year [Accessibility Plan](#) outlines steps and recommendations to achieve the 2030 provincial goal by implementing changes to the following areas of focus:

- 1 **Built Environment**
- 2 **Teaching, Learning and Research**
- 3 **Goods and Services**
- 4 **Information and Communication**
- 5 **Transportation**
- 6 **Employment**



## Championing the Work

Dalhousie is committed to ensuring persons with disabilities are involved in the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to their full participation. Accessibility planning is an opportunity for all members of the university to take an intentional and deliberate analysis of services, policies, procedures, practices, and programs to determine the actions that will advance accessibility on all campuses.

To support progress and meaningful implementation, Dalhousie University's Accessibility Plan is aligned with the University's overall strategic direction, and part of a recently introduced Integrated Planning Framework that will:

- integrate planning efforts across the entire institution to **deliver on the academic mission**
- break down silos** and foster cross-departmental projects and initiatives
- support data-driven decision-making**
- leverage resources** to enable high-impact institutional priorities and projects
- create enhanced accountability** and transparency in informing the Operating Budget plan
- streamline annual reporting processes** (connecting strategic priorities and work to the operating plan)

# Community and Leadership

Dalhousie's efforts towards a barrier-free campus today and in the future will be achieved by community and leadership.

Dalhousie is fortunate to have committed and dedicated community members and informed and committed leadership across faculty, staff, and students. The Accessibility Plan has brought together a new level of collaboration and partnership within and across campus units, through groups like the Advisory and Coordinating committees, and champions across the institution. This collaboration shines a light on the work to be done, while also cultivating a sense of inclusion, awareness about universal access, and a heightened consideration for all abilities in the programs and services delivered.

Most importantly, Dalhousie will continue to build momentum to affirm and challenge existing ways of working, and to consider accessibility in all functions of campus life.



## Progress in 2022-2023

# Built Environment

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

### PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

- Dalhousie's Accessibility Audit program, led by Facilities Management, continues to update building accessibility data. **Between May 2018 and March 2023, the Accessibility Audit identified over 1,000 barriers removed.**
- Grant received from *Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022 Small Projects Component* to offset accessibility renovation costs at the Life Sciences Centre (LSC) Common Area and Oceanography Tower exterior entrances. **Project implementation is scheduled for Summer 2024.**
- Grant received from *Nova Scotia Community Access-Ability Grant* to offset accessibility renovation costs at the B Building, Level 2 Male and All-Gender accessible restroom renovation, on Sexton campus. **Project currently under renovation, expected completion Fall 2023.**



## Progress in 2022-2023

# Teaching, Learning, Research

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

## PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

- Internal professional development related to document creation by **sharing internal expertise and inviting external facilitators**
- Facilitation of workshops, retreats, studios courses, and consultations that focus on and **incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**
- Collaboration with faculties to review and **effectively support implementation of student accommodations**
- IDEIA Collective established – a group of units that deliver education (including CLT, HRES, HR) on EDIA matters **to ensure consistent approaches Inclusive language guide under development**

- Faculty of Health has provided faculty members with training on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), **with a goal of at least 50% of Health faculty being trained**

The Faculty's Inclusion and Equity committee implemented a survey to obtain a baseline measurement for how UDL and CRP are being implemented within courses, with over a 50% response rate from faculty. The School of Social Work has an in-house Accommodations Officer who helps students navigate their accommodations

- Launched the Faculty and Staff Guide to Student Accommodations and Student Accessibility to advise on proactive strategies and tools **to facilitate inclusive classrooms and identify other available Dalhousie resources to support students with accessibility needs as reflected in the NS Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework**

## Progress in 2022-2023

# 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.

### PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

- The Student Accessibility Centre launched a new, accessible software to streamline the student accommodation process. **The process to request and obtain accommodations is now centrally managed in one platform** achieving efficiencies for student, staff and faculty users.
- The Student Accessibility Centre received a donation **to increase and complement the inventory in their Assistive Technology Lending Library**
- Investment 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**



## Progress in 2022-2023

# Information and Communication

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

## PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

- 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, the last week in November, was chosen as a lead up to the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- Incorporated accessibility features in non-academic educational/training programs
  - Auditing current education materials to ensure they incorporate accessibility features
- Introduction of alternative platforms of communication for employees with accessibility needs (e.g. in-person, by phone, virtually with close captions, email, availability of American Sign Language interpreters, and braille)
- Enhancement of “Be Counted” survey with introduction of additional questions to follow up on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility progress

## Progress in 2022-2023

# Information and Communication

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

## PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

cont.

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](http://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 to map out accessible routes and provide directions to accessible routes and elevators for those with mobility considerations



## Progress in 2022-2023

# Transportation

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

### PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

#### NEW SIDEWALK

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 upgrade portion now has widened sidewalks and improves safer and more accessible navigation.



Before at the Killam Loop, high volume of people per hour during peak can be up to 1200 people. Accessibility issues with broken surfaces, different materials, trip hazards and diff. heights. On route to the accessibility centre and library. *Photo: Siobhan Smith*



Project to fill in with one material, even, at the same height creating a wider path in line with the widths needed for the volume of people. *Photo: Siobhan Smith*

## Progress in 2022-2023

# 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.

### PROGRESS MADE IN 2022-23

- The presence of the Accessible Employment unit and its collaboration with CLT, HRES, and the Student Accessibility Centre has been an asset in quickly addressing barriers, connecting individuals with supportive resources, and collaborating to foster systemic change. Phase I completed to develop and deliver training sessions around accessibility for Dalhousie employees.
  - An Accessible Employment staff member was part of the Advisory Committee created by the Nova Scotia Directorate to help develop the Accessibility Foundations training
- Facilitation of third party ergonomic assessments through licensed Occupational Therapist professionals for situations that require more in-depth assessment based on medical need
- Fund created in Accessible Employment to help offset treatment or assessment costs for employees in extenuating circumstances
- The Accommodation Policy for employees was revised and made available through myDal in different formats
- The Registrar's Office implemented consistent hiring practices that take into consideration lived experience, with a focus on ensuring equity hiring
- Purchase of adaptive technology for employees to ensure accessibility needs are addressed, and the incorporation of assistive technology/services when a barrier is identified (CARTS, headphones, ergonomic equipment, etc.)

# By the Numbers



## ACCESSIBILITY AUDITING

Dalhousie continues to run the Accessibility Audit program to update building accessibility data. The Audits identify where barriers have been removed as renovations are completed. **Between May 2018 and March 2023, the Accessibility Audit identified over 1,000 barriers removed.**

## ACCOMMODATED EXAMS

**16% increase in the number of accommodated exams** written through the Student Accessibility Centre.

## 2040 UNIQUE STUDENTS

2,040 unique students met with a Student Access Advisor (1883 in Halifax, 152 in Truro) – just over 9% of the overall student population and **just under 20% of the student population in Truro.**

## 7,298 USES

Read Write is a speech-to-text software available for download for all Dalhousie students, staff and faculty. **This past year, tracked 7,298 uses.**



# Meeting Provincial Requirements

Dalhousie University is aligning its standards development with the timelines and guidance set forth by Access by Design 2030: Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia, where the first standards developed will be related to the built environment and education. These standards will be used to measure Dalhousie's progress.

## Progress is as follows:

Dalhousie received the proposed provincial standard document in September 2023. The document is currently being reviewed to assess against current, proposed and outstanding action.

Work around the other five provincial standards is pending as these standards are either in the public review stage, recommendations development stage, research phase or development committees are now being formed.

Dalhousie has undertaken many activities over the past year including integrating accessibility planning into all core operational areas. As Dalhousie moves forward, the goal is to continue to championing accessibility across all areas of the university.



