## 2017-2018

## Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update

Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2017- 2018

**Please click on the headings below to navigate the document – you will be taken directly to the section you wish to read!**

[Contributors 2](#_Toc527119079)

[Introduction 3](#_Toc527119080)

[Message from the Chair of the McMaster Accessibility Council 3](#_Toc527119081)

[Background 3](#_Toc527119082)

[Report Structure 4](#_Toc527119083)

[Student Initiatives 5](#_Toc527119084)

[Policy 7](#_Toc527119092)

[Spaces and Environments 8](#_Toc527119094)

[Teaching and Learning 11](#_Toc527119103)

[Technology 19](#_Toc527119128)

[Community-Engagement 23](#_Toc527119141)

[Resources 28](#_Toc527119157)

[AODA and Human Rights Code Training 28](#_Toc527119158)

[New Acquisitions to the McMaster Library 28](#_Toc527119159)

[Accessibility Hub 28](#_Toc527119160)

## Contributors

**With special thanks and appreciation to:**

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# Introduction

## Message from the Chair of the McMaster Accessibility Council

During this last year we continued to see an increased awareness of accessibility across campus. We can now see that the way we do our work is beginning to change and progress is being made across all areas of the university, but there is still much work to be done. Policies and processes are in place, but there is a need to communicate all of this information. One of the ways we hope to do this is with the introduction of this Accessibility Update, which we plan to provide to campus on a regular basis.

There continues to be more conversation taking place across campus around accessibility in our everyday work, not just in meetings where accessibility is an agenda item. We are regularly incorporating accessibility into discussions related to renovations and new physical design work and how best to ensure that we taking into consideration the broad range of individuals who may attend our classes (either in-person or virtually), meetings or other public events on-campus. We can see that communication is key to advancing this work. We need to share what work is being done across campus, in order to further encourage all areas to work together. We hope that this will help ensure that work isn’t being duplicated, and more importantly, will support the sharing of what is working, what isn’t working, and why.

While the [McMaster Accessibility Council](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/mcmaster-accessibility-council-mac/) (MAC) is working hard to advance accessibility at McMaster, it is important to acknowledge the staff, students and faculty who are also working to move the accessibility agenda forward. Accessibility is a shared endeavor and is not just the work of the Council. We all need to reflect on how we can integrate accessibility into our everyday work and ensure that accessibility becomes part of the way we do things at McMaster.

I am looking forward to a year filled with conversations around carrying out work more accessibly, and to see outcomes which incorporate this work naturally. I encourage everyone to do the same.

Anne Pottier

McMaster Accessibility Council, Chair

Associate Librarian

McMaster University

## Background

Since 2009, the McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC) has been tasked with compiling an [Accessibility Annual Report](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/about-us/) that highlights and summarizes yearly MAC accessibility accomplishments and demonstrates how McMaster is meeting AODA legislative requirements on an ongoing basis.

This year and moving forward, we want to move beyond reporting compliance requirements to facilitate greater awareness of accessibility work happening across campus by connecting students, staff, and faculty integrating accessibility into their teaching, work, and school practices and events.

This Update has a number of goals:

* **Recognition:** To highlight the important work that McMaster students, staff, and faculty have been engaged in this year - and to say thank you!
* **Inspiration:** To share tangible and motivating examples of how members of the McMaster are taking up our ethical and legislative responsibilities to “[build an inclusive community](http://fwi.mcmaster.ca/about-this-website/)” through enhanced accessibility.
* **Coordination:** To further develop a network of accessibility initiatives on campus and reduce a sense of isolation, individual responsibility, or working in silos. Accessibility at McMaster is a collective endeavor.
* **Information:** To offer relevant resources for enhancing accessibility in our units, contexts, and roles.

We received dozens of submissions from as many units all across campus! Our goal is to keep gathering this information, so please get in touch at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca) to let us know what you’re working on!

## Report Structure

The report is broken into 8 sections, as follows:

[**Student Initiatives**](#_Student_Initiatives)

[**Policy**](#_Policy)

[**Spaces and Environments**](#_Spaces_and_Environments)

[**Teaching and Learning**](#_Teaching_and_Learning)

[**Technology**](#_Technology)

[**Community-Engagement**](#_Community-Engagement)

[**Employment**](#_Employment)

[**Resources**](#_Resources)

When a description fit multiple categories, we chose a primary section it best fit and provided a summarizing title to help readers of the document best navigate sections and specific content. However, we appreciate any constructive feedback on the layout, organization, and navigability of the Update. Feel free to, contact us at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca) with any questions, concerns or comments.

# Student Initiatives

## Disability Peer Support & DisVisibility Week

This year, [McMaster Student Union’s Maccess](https://www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/47-msu-maccess) service run by/for students with disabilities, located in the basement of the Student Centre, was able to build off the momentum of the year before and work to strengthen our peer support and advocacy pillars. On the peer support pillar, we were extremely successful in our initial piloting of peer-led support groups. Support groups have been very effective in providing students with practical and emotional support by individuals with lived experience similar to their own.

[DisVisibility Week](https://www.facebook.com/events/152893328854026/) (Feb 26-Mar 2) focused on conversations about accessibility, disability and visibility around campus. Closed events offered a place for students who experience disability to catch a glimpse into the Maccess community.

## Student Athletes’ #NOGOODWAY Campaign

On March 7, 2018, a group of student-athletes, led by men’s volleyball player Andrew Richards, coordinated #NOGOODWAYDAY at McMaster. This campaign was created by [motionball](https://www.motionball.com/), an organization dedicated to raising funds and awareness for the Special Olympics Foundation, with the mission to end the casual use of the R-word in everyday conversation. On the day of the event, student-athlete volunteers asked individuals to make a commitment [via social media](https://twitter.com/Arich8/status/971428761781571584) and at their booth to never use the R-word derogatorily again. Campaigns such as this are taking steps to making access to sport a safe space for all.

## Disability DIScussions: Students Identifying and Addressing Barriers on Campus

Beginning in late fall 2017, the [Equity and Inclusion Office](https://equity.mcmaster.ca/) and [MSU Maccess](https://www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/47-msu-maccess) collaborated to create "Disability DIScussions". These themed events have created space for students with disabilities to connect, network, and discuss barriers they encounter at the university, as well as to present recommendations to address these barriers. Discussions to date have focused on the themes of: accommodation, Universal Design in the classroom, graduate studies with a disability, food accessibility, and disability in employment. Moving forward and taking into account student feedback, we plan to continue Disabilitiy Discussions into the 2018-2019 year. These sessions will cover topics around navigating higher education, disability and stigma, disability and graduate school and disability and employment. Please contact [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca) for more information about these events or subscribe to @EIOMcMaster on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EIOMcMaster/?ref=bookmarks) or [Twitter](https://twitter.com/EIOMcMaster) for event advertisements.

## Humans of McMaster

Each year, Student Accessibility Services (SAS) hires a Dis/ability Awareness Coordinator, whose main task is to create a new series of [Dis/ability Awareness Posters](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/disabilities-awareness/) for the McMaster campus. This year, Nusrat Mir chose to engage in a dialogue about different identities intersecting with dis/ability identity, the different ways certain labels or experiences may speak to us, and how we celebrate the many facets of ourselves. Intersectionality from a dis/ability perspective recognizes that persons with dis/abilities embody more than one identity they may be typically labelled with, and that other identities, including ethnicity, gender, age, religion and more all intersect with, shape and influence our experiences as dis/abled people.

The goals for this project included highlighting the complexity of dis/abled identities, connecting McMaster community members who may be experiencing similar experiences with each other, and celebrating the stories that she was privileged to record this year (hence the balloons in the images!). Having created this poster series with an intersectional approach, she was able to direct each person’s unique story to the McMaster Silhouette’s [Humans of McMaster](https://issuu.com/thesil/docs/march_29.v.88) photography and story sharing project. Display versions of these poster series are available for all to view in Mills Memorial Library.

## Student Initiated Accessibility Plan: McMaster Health Advocacy Symposium

The [McMaster Health Advocacy Symposium](https://www.facebook.com/MacHealthAdv/) is an annual student-led event that fosters the development of effective, responsible advocacy skills amongst health professional students. In order to “walk the talk” of health advocacy, we created our first Accessibility Plan in 2017. Striving for an event that is accessible to people with a range of abilities and disabilities, gender identities, dietary needs, cultural identities, and income levels, we created our plan and budget, and then fundraised to execute our plan. The plan covered everything from the website to the venue to the workshop format. [After the 2017 event](https://drive.google.com/open?id=12mJTHZhLRBB-qPaihw90DkAKYoZaSdqe), participants let us know they valued the physically accessible venue, affordable tickets, food that met their dietary needs, a prayer room, and gender inclusive washrooms. We see accessibility as a process rather than a product, and are already planning for improved access in 2018!

## Disability Action Group Research into Social Work Assignments

This year, the Disability Action Group in the School of Social Work (composed of students with disabilities) has been conducting research into how social work assignments (like process recordings, filmed/audio-recorded interviews, role plays, case studies, family autobiographies/genograms, attendance/participation, and self-reflections) contribute to undergraduate student learning - with a focus on the barriers students experience in assignment completion and the supports (un)available to them and how assignments might be made more accessible and inclusive. The group is in the process of data collection and will be compiling results and recommendations for faculty over the summer. Members have also been invited to guest edit an upcoming edition of the journal, *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, where students/faculty in the School of Social Work will describe how we’ve been advancing accessibility and inclusion through partnership.

## Cripping Graduate School: A Disability/Mad Studies Reading and Activities Group

A collaboration of graduate and undergraduate students and recent alumni has received SPICES funding from the School of Graduate Studies to establish a [Disability and Mad Studies Reading Group](https://gs.mcmaster.ca/graduate-student-life/spices/2018/cripping-graduate-school-disability-and-mad-studies-reading-and). The group endeavors to cultivate a social and intellectual disability community on campus for those with disabilities, developing Disability Studies scholarship, and/or interested in learning more. Anyone is welcome to participate, including community members without affiliations to McMaster. Planning has taken place over the summer, with monthly meetings starting in September 2018. For more information and to RSVP for upcoming Fall 2018 meetings, consult the [Cripping Grad School Google Form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc1gBeeXFVbvl7noeBbe-BysMAhy8TJp9E66zWUTsmAf1J9rA/viewform).

# Policy

## Development and Revision of Accessibility-Related Policies

Over 2017-2018, a number of accessibility-related policies have been under review and creation. These include:

* [McMaster’s Strategic Mandate Agreement (2017-20) with the Ontario](https://president.mcmaster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SMA_SIGNED_PublicVersion_Oct17.pdf) Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development includes an “Access and Equity” section, which reports on the numbers and satisfaction of students with disabilities at McMaster.
* McMaster’s revised [policy on the Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)  came into effect September 1, 2017.
* The McMaster University Policy on Accessibility, first established in 2010, is currently undergoing revision. If you would like to provide feedback into this process, email Kate Brown at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca).
* Housing and Conference Services, in collaboration with Student Accessibility Services, the Equity and Inclusion Office, and Environmental & Occupational Health Support Services, has implemented a new [Service Animal Agreement in Residence](https://housing.mcmaster.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/McMaster-University-Residence-Service-Animal-Agreement-2018-2019.pdf)  to support students in residence.
* The [Tobacco & Smoke-Free University Policy](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Employee/Tobacco%20&%20Smoke%20Free%20University%20Policy.pdf) which came into effect on January 1, 2018 has been flagged by stakeholders as having accessibility implications.
* Regular advocacy via the University Classroom Committee and the Web Accessibility Advisory Group

# Spaces and Environments

## Hospitality Services’ Audit of Physical Spaces and Food Options

In the spring of 2017, [Hospitality Services engaged with Sterling Frazer Associates to evaluate the physical accessibility of campus food service locations](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/putting-refreshment-within-reach/) - especially in relation to the Design of Public Spaces (AODA) standard and the updated Ontario Building Code. Hospitality reviewed the recommendations and developed a corrective action plan consisting of 93 initiatives and awareness training for Hospitality managers, employees and suppliers.

When [planning menus](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/putting-refreshment-within-reach/), Hospitality Services makes every effort to accommodate lifestyle, religion, and dietary restrictions. Gluten friendly options, vegan or vegetarian meals, kosher and halal options are offered on a regular basis. Zen Den and Paramount, our gluten-friendly and Halal eateries, were created with our students in mind and Hospitality is currently developing a new plan for serving meals made without Canada’s top ten allergens.

## Improving Accessible Parking and Parking Lots

Parking Services continues to increase and improve locations for accessible parking on campus. In 2017, Parking added 10 accessible parking spaces to the main campus location, bringing the total number to 101. In 2018, Parking will add 10 additional accessible parking spaces. The areas of focus for 2018 are parking Lot C to service the Health Promotion and Rehabilitation Centre and Sports Medicine Clinic as well as Lot G and Lot Q to service students living in residence with accessibility needs. A review of parking space aesthetics to improve visibility of the parking spaces also took place.

Several staff and students have been actively involved in providing suggestions for accessible parking on campus.

## Campus Facilities Projects

Meetings took place with campus stakeholders and the consultants and project managers for the ABB expansion, the Peter George Centre for Living & Learning, the Temporary Lecture Hall and the new Student Activity Centre and Fitness Expansion (SAFE) project at DBAC and IWC over the last year or so to review plans through an accessibility lens. The consultants outlined where accessibility features were incorporated into the plans for each project. Stakeholders responded with input on these features, raising issues which might cause concern or were not conducive to how spaces are currently used at McMaster, often things which are specific to the use of space in a post-secondary environment. It’s very helpful to be included in these discussions early in the planning process before decisions are set in stone. In each case some things were reworked to ensure a better final product.

## Accessibility Audit of Campus Residence Buildings

In January 2018, Housing and Conference Services (HCS) initiated an external accessibility audit of all residence buildings to ensure that they are compliant with legislation, as well as meeting the changing needs of McMaster’s students in residence and guests. Numerous areas of improvement were identified that will be addressed through an ongoing residence accessibility strategy, including some than can be quickly implemented.

Soon, many doorknobs will be updated to levers, public washrooms will have fixtures adjusted to accessible heights, common room furniture will be repositioned, and additional door operators will be installed in buildings with designated accessible student rooms. Also, two additional residence buildings now have fire alarms with strobe lights in keeping with commitment to the [Campus Accessibility Action Plan (CAAP)](http://facilities.mcmaster.ca/documents/Campus%20Accessibility%20Plan.pdf). Finally, HCS will be rolling out new AODA compliant websites in May.

## Renovations in Student Accessibility Services

During the 2016-2017 school year, [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) supported 426 students with physical disabilities and 1455 students with non-physical disabilities. This year, SAS revamped their office space to enhance service for this growing number of students:

* Two new offices were constructed to accommodate an additional program coordinator, and a [transition program coordinator](http://sas.mcmaster.ca/transition/), whose position is dedicated to assisting students with the transition into and out of university.
* Additional construction resulted in a space for testing accommodations, which almost tripled the size of the previous location.

## Creating Welcoming and Accessible Student Spaces (MAPS)

The [McMaster Association for Part-Time Students](https://maps.mcmaster.ca/) (MAPS) has been proactive in developing a welcoming and accessible space, attending to the needs of many students with disabilities who attend school part-time. Examples include:

* Installing a full glass automatic door with a signal indicator to provide visual and auditory accessibility when entering the space. In the future, Braille will be added to this door and other parts of the office.
* Providing an enclosed room to accommodate students needing quiet or private space for studying, resting, or breastfeeding.
* Making available electric “Sit-Stand” desks which allow for height adjustability to accommodate a variety of heights and mobility devices.
* Purchasing hearing devices from the Campus Bookstore to support students with hearing disabilities to better engage with lectures.
* Offering bursaries and a Bridging Fund for assistance in emergency situations so that no student is ever “left behind”.
* Outreaching to seniors in the community to facilitate their access to postsecondary education as auditors and registered students.

## Accessibility in Intramural Sports

As a part of our [Program Values & Vision](http://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/intramural-sports-0/program-vision-values), Athletics and Recreation is committed to working proactively to ensure members of all abilities are able to access our facilities, sports, programs and events. We welcome feedback on ways to better serve all members, especially with respect to accessibility and inclusion.

Athletics and Recreation will accommodate any student wishing to participate that requires a mobility accommodation. Members and guests of the McMaster community can complete an [Accommodation Request Form](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/intramural-sport-participant-accommodation-form) for each of our sports programs, and we have two Sport Chairs available for sign-out daily from the Joan Buddle Service Desk. Accessible sports Leagues and Tournaments we are currently facilitating include:

* [Wheelchair European Handball Tournament](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/intramural-sports/intramural-wheelchair-european-handball)
* [Sitting Volleyball](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/intramural-sports/intramural-volleyball)
* [Goalball](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/intramural-sports/intramural-goalball-tournament)
* [Residence Cup](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/intramural-sports/residence-cup) featuring accessible sport options
* New in 2018-19 will be our inaugural Wheelchair Basketball Tournament!

## All-Genders Washrooms Project

In 2017, the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) began the All-Genders Washroom Project in partnership with the MSU Queer Students Community Centre, MSU Women + Gender Equity Network and McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC) with the goal of establishing at least one All-Genders Washroom per building on main campus by September, 2017.

The Equity and Inclusion Office engaged in robust community consultations, including input from members of the  LGBTQ+ communities, Indigenous communities, faith-based communities and accessibility communities. EIO received strong feedback from persons who use mobility devices to *not* convert all single-user accessible washrooms into All-Genders Washrooms because there are so few of these facilities on campus, and the demand is great. Based on this feedback, the Project proceeded to convert only 1 accessible washroom in buildings where there are multiple accessible washrooms (i.e. newer buildings) into an All-Genders Washroom.

The next steps in the All-Genders Washroom Project are to fully audit all accessible washrooms to ensure they meet current accessibility requirements (turn radius, push button, grab bar, height of sink, etc.) and to map out washroom locations. The audit will also include other considerations such as footbaths for Muslim ablution, change tables for children and adults, and multi-language signage; for example, Mohawk on washrooms near the Indigenous Studies Program on the L.R. Wilson Building.

# Teaching and Learning

## Launching *Forward with FLEXibility: A Teaching and Learning Resource on Accessibility and Inclusion*

Launched in the spring and fall of 2017, [*Forward with FLEXibility: A Teaching and Learning Resource on Accessibility and Inclusion*](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/accessible-teaching-and-learning-project/)is McMaster’s new resource and training on Accessible Education for all staff and faculty with educational roles and responsibilities on campus. The resource, designed to fulfil institutional responsibilities under provincial accessibility legislation and further McMaster’s commitments to building an inclusive community, promotes four key principles for advancing accessibility in teaching and learning at McMaster: Flexibility, Alignment, Variety, and Explicitness. The resource is designed to take readers through examples of how these principles can be incorporated across the life of a course or training from design to delivery and assessment/evaluation. Those interested in participating in an evaluation of the resource and discussion about Advancing Accessible Education on campus, were invited to [participate in a focus group or interview over the summer of 2018](https://tinyurl.com/AccessibleTL). Feedback from these sessions will be made available shortly.

Information about the resource has been shared with faculty and instructors via faculty meetings, [Daily News updates](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/new-initiatives-resources-help-improve-accessibility-in-teaching-and-learning-on-campus/), and email blasts. The MacPherson Institute has also been offering in-person education on accessibility in teaching and learning through Accessibility Seminars offered as part of their [Educator Enhancement Series](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/eep/) and [Emerging Educators](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/teaching-learning-certificates-of-completion/) program for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The [September 2017 Annual Teaching & Learning Forum](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/event/teaching-learning-forum-2017/) for TAs featured a workshop on Accessibility and Accommodation, as well as one on Teaching with a Disability.

Members of the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Team at MacPherson have also been working with departments under IQAP review to complete [section 3.4 of the Self Study document on Accessibility](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Self-Study-Guidebook_2018-Edition.pdf).

## Facilitating Successful Transition in First Year Social Science

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, many key strategic efforts in 2017-2018 have focused on the difficult transition into university life, and on the first-year academic experience. There is increasing recognition that students, staff, and instructors would all benefit from efforts to make key expectations, processes, and institutional norms more explicit and clear, rather than expecting students to absorb or infer them (in keeping with the Accessible Education principles outlined in McMaster’s 2017 [*Forward with FLEXibility*](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/accessible-teaching-and-learning-project/)resource).

### Social Sciences 1T03

The Fall 2017 session saw the fourth iteration of [Social Sciences 1T03](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/courses/life-the-university-and-a-bit-of-everything), a first-year, first-term course delivered in a blended and active-learning format. The course focuses on key university skills such as note taking and scholarly searching, while also discussing trickier issues related to institutional problem-solving, etiquette, and accessibility. The course has continued to grow in size, with particular efforts made in the 2017 session to ensure that all online and in-person content is delivered in an accessible format, and that flexibility and variety are built into the course’s key practical skills tasks. This academic year saw the initial development of a series of online modules laying out clear and explicit expectations about plagiarism, library searching, and academic writing, which could potentially be adapted for wider use outside of 1T03.

### Social Sciences 1SS3

This small-group, active-learning, self-directed research course has, since its inception, prioritized the accessibility principles of flexibility and variety, as well as student-centred project design. It offers a unique venue for first-year students to build more personal collegial relationships with instructors and peers (in some cases, facilitating early identification and response to students’ accessibility/disability-related learning needs), and develop the skills and practices often passively expected in more disciplinary content-focused courses.

### Reset for Success Program

In January 2018, the Faculty piloted a program aimed at making an academic intervention for Level-I students whose first-term grade outcomes, for whatever reason, put them at great risk of academic jeopardy. This [Reset for Success program](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/first-year-students-get-a-second-chance-at-succes/) was successful in helping many students who faced medical, personal, or other serious difficulties in the Fall semester to recover their academic momentum. Lessons learned from this pilot program will inform future initiatives in the Faculty of Social Sciences aimed at access, retention and student success.

## Interdisciplinary Science Creating FLEXibility in the Learning Environment

In the School of Interdisciplinary Science (SIS), our guiding principle is to make our courses universally accessible for all students as is consistent with [*Forward with FLEXibility*](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/accessible-teaching-and-learning-project/) principles. We strongly believe in removing barriers to learning for all students.

### Accessible Labs

In our lab courses, we are proud to introduce our universally accessible Living Systems Lab (ABB106), which has been featured in the CP-NET video, ["These six F-words won’t fill up your swear jar: What do the F-words mean to youth with impairments?"](http://cpnet.canchild.ca/en/discover-cp-net/watch-the-cp-net-videos). With adjustable fume hoods and safety cabinets and spacious research spaces, we have created an enjoyable working environment for all of our students.

### Accessible Assessment of Student Learning

In our courses, we aim to create evaluation criteria that are also universally flexible. We recognize that all of our students have times at which they need to have some autonomy and control in their coursework.

* We embed 3-day grace periods for submitting assignments. We encourage all students to use these opportunities to plan their work and communicate with us about how they are managing.
* Furthermore, during group work, we do not ask students to self-identify if they have difficulty with public speaking. Instead, we ask all groups to organize tasks based upon their skills and comfort. We also provide online mechanisms for collaboration and discussion that facilitate meeting on or off campus.

We have implemented these expectations in our largest program, the Life Science Program. We have found that all students benefit from a flexible and inclusive learning environment.

## Accessible Education at McMaster’s Teaching and Learning Conferences

In November 2017, several accessibility-related presentations were given by McMaster staff, students, and faculty at the [MacPherson Institute’s 2017 Research on Teaching and Learning Conference](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/rtl2017/#schedule).

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) hosted its first 'mini-conference' on February 23, 2018 entitled, *Constants and Changes: Realities for Successful Teaching and Learning*. The theme was keeping the ‘student as person’ at the centre of the learning experience. Two talks specifically targeted issues of accessibility:

* [“Responding to the Learning and Mental Health Needs of Students: The Journey to a Better Way”](https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9c50wjmzU5jYmowS1QyNHhqN1JaVV93UGw1NzBvNTFOQlhF) (Lorraine Carter, McMaster University; Lorna Rourke, St. Jerome's University, University of Waterloo)
* [“Instructor Development Practices Supporting Adult Learners with Disabilities: Monologues from a University Case Study”](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1iMjkHAV1LIaRbTr5HdGaFJxUkZ-iYppFR1FgQA2hkYs/edit?usp=sharing) (Samahra Zatzman, University of Toronto)

## Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Pedagogical Partnership and Research

The [Student Partners Program (SPP)](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/student-partners-program/) hosted by the MacPherson Institute seeks to contribute to the development of equity and inclusion on campus through meaningful, collaborative partnerships between faculty, staff, and students who work together on teaching and learning projects. Students are engaged as full members of project teams, and work—in paid positions—for approximately 3-5 hours a week on initiatives including course (re)design and teaching and learning research.

### Student Partner Projects on Accessibility

Some projects funded by the SPP in 2017-2018 focused on issues directly relevant to accessibility and inclusion for disabled students, including work focused on: evaluating the accessibility of assessments, enhancing and promoting resources for instructors pertaining to accessible education, developing a plan for implementing further Disability Studies courses on campus, and user testing technology to support accessible teaching and learning. A grant was also received from SSHRC to develop and investigate a new stream of the SPP in 2018-2019, which will focus specifically on establishing student-faculty partnerships intended to enhance equity and inclusion in courses at McMaster.

### Pedagogical Research on Accessibility and Inclusion

* For the last several years, [‘social justice, inclusion, and critical pedagogy](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/research/palat-grant/)’ has been named as one of the MacPherson Institute’s priority research areas, which permits scholars on campus to apply for small grants (due each spring) connected to research on these topics.
* In 2017-2018, a pilot project conducted by McMaster faculty and students in collaboration with colleagues at Bryn Mawr and Haverford colleges began to explore more fully how the egalitarian ethos underpinning partnership can contribute to equity and justice in higher education, especially by involving Student Partners from equity-seeking groups (Cook-Sather, Krishna Prasad, Marquis, & Ntem, *forthcoming*; de Bie, Marquis, Cook-Sather, & Luqueño, *forthcoming*).
* Institute scholars are also collaborating with staff from the Equity and Inclusion Office to design and develop a research project that will investigate the factors that promote and/or discourage instructors from changing their teaching to make it more accessible, including the role that the FLEX Forward resource on Accessible Education may play. This project stands to generate meaningful data that can be used to evaluate existing educational development offerings and support the growth of increasingly accessible and inclusive teaching and learning.

## Including Critical Disability Studies in the Course Curriculum

Over 2016-2017, the Accessibility Working Group of the President’s Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC) has been actively exploring possibilities to advance and further developing Disability Studies curriculum on campus, in response to requests by students over the last several years and as documented in McMaster Student Union reports and policies.

In 2017, the following Disability/Mad Studies courses were offered at McMaster:

* [GSFR 705 - Embodiments: Disability, Subjectivity, and Visual Representation](http://gsfr.humanities.mcmaster.ca/graduate-programs/m-a-program/core-courses-and-gsfr-electives/) with Dr. Janice Hladki
* [SOC SCI 1SS3 - Inquiry in the Social Sciences (theme: Madness, Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion)](http://libguides.mcmaster.ca/SocSci1SS3deBie) with Alise de Bie
* [SOC WORK 3S03 - Social Work, Disability and Dis/Ableism](https://socialwork.mcmaster.ca/courses/social-work-disability-and-disableism) with Dr. Ann Fudge Schormans
* [SOC WORK 4Y03 - Critical Issues in Mental Health and Addiction: Mad & Critical Disability Studies Perspectives for Social Work](https://socialwork.mcmaster.ca/courses/critical-issues-in-mental-health-and-addiction) with Dr. Ameil Joseph
* [GEO 4D03 - Geographies of Disability](https://www.science.mcmaster.ca/geo/images/outlines/GEOG-4HD3-T2.pdf) with Dr. Vera Chouinard (Winter 2018)

## Students’ Thesis Research on Disability Studies

There are a number of graduate students at McMaster working in the fields of Disability and Mad Studies. Some recent work includes the following:

* Adan Jerreat-Poole, PhD Candidate in English and Cultural Studies and [Graduate Resident with the Lewis & Ruth Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship](https://scds.ca/projects/graduate-residents/), studies the intersection of Mad Studies, auto/biography and digital media
* Alan Santinele Martino, PhD Candidate in Sociology, is co-editing a special issue of the [*Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*](http://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/announcement/view/14) on the intersections of Critical Disability Studies and Animal Studies
* [Emily Scherzinger](https://english.humanities.mcmaster.ca/people/emily-scherzinger/), PhD student in English in Cultural Studies, is working on a thesis in the area of Mad Studies, Feminist Theory, and Critical Theory titled, “The Construction of Nonsense within the Shadow of Sense”
* Madhav Khurana completed his 2017 MSW thesis on [Good Kids, Mad Schools: An Analysis of strategies to improve on student mental health in Ontario secondary schools](https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/handle/11375/20962)
* Amy Rector completed her 2017 MSW thesis titled, [“Because Life is Shitty”: Reconsidering suicidal distress and imagining humanizing responses](https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/handle/11375/22148)
* Amanda Suleiman completed her 2017 MSW thesis titled, [Both and Either: Navigating the experiences of recent social work alumni who experience mental health disabilities and/or madness](https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/handle/11375/20885)

## Engineering Students Design Community-Engaged Accessible Devices for Course Credit

### IMPACT Initiative

[The IMPACT Initiative](https://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/programs/impact) is an interdisciplinary collaboration that engages undergraduate and graduate students from Engineering, Biology/Science, Occupational Therapy and Medicine, McMaster Alumni, Community Healthcare Partners, and volunteer clients. Since 2011, the IMPACT team has provided collaborative teaching and learning opportunities that encourage faculty, students, and healthcare partners to apply their knowledge and creativity to invent customized accessibility devices. IMPACT co-leaders Dr. Robert Fleisig (Engineering), Dr. Lovaye Kajiura (Biology/Science), Dr. Brenda Vrkljan (Occupational Therapy), and Dr. Liz Hassan (Engineering) teach students how to improve the lives of our aging population and that of people with disabilities.

This year our 780 engineering (ENG 1P03) students designed devices for a community client with a disability who wanted more independence for activities of daily living such as eating, using the phone privately, taking out garbage, and independently selecting clothing from her closet. The client visited students in lecture and let them into her life and home through videos, photographs, and her stories. Students then worked in teams of four or five to frame a problem, sketch designs, and iteratively build prototypes. Their design process was informed by in-class collaborations with several hundred volunteer mentors from Science, Rehabilitation Science and Medicine. [Ten prototypes from more than 150 teams were selected for a public showcase and presentation to the client, her family and community partners.](https://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/sept/news/connecting-hearts-and-minds)

### Design Thinking at the W Booth School

[Master of Engineering Design students enrolled in the Design Thinking course](https://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/sept/news/students-w-booth-school-practice-design-thinking) were tasked with finding a client and then working with them to identify a mobility challenge they face, design a device to address the challenge, test it, and deliver a working solution over the course of 13 weeks. One of the teams, two engineers and an industrial designer, found a client who has had rheumatoid arthritis for over five decades. Their ‘a-ha’ moment came from a long interview with her discussing her difficulties in shopping for groceries on her own. They discovered she was unable to use the store’s grocery carts because the coin-operated lock on the carts was too difficult for her to use. The students then worked with her to design a solution and were able to deliver a finished and fully functional device that makes one of her everyday tasks much easier.

## Universal Design and Accommodation in Level 1 Chemistry

### Roundtable on Accommodation in Science

We organized a roundtable/workshop event with Tim Nolan, Director of Student Accessibility Services, as a guest speaker so that teaching faculty and instructional assistants within the Faculty of Science could share ideas and strategies to best support students who require accommodations. It was a great session!

### Accommodation in Labs

We continue to accommodate students with accessibility needs in the lab by having a chemistry-specific personal support worker in place. We hired a TA (who demonstrated exceptional professionalism) to carry out experimental steps under student direction. This allows students with limited mobility/vision to more actively participate in the lab component of the course.

### Marking Schemes

For 2017-2018, Level 1 Chemistry decided to change our grading policy to encourage students not to file MSAFs for situations where they were overwhelmed by anxiety about the assessment:

* Our prior policy was to move the weight of the missed / MSAFed test onto the final exam.
* Our new marking scheme was to drop students’ lowest test mark should they perform better on the final exam. The hope was that this would bypass the MSAF paperwork, alleviate some of the anxiety around test time, and encourage more students to sit for both tests (which we believe is to their academic benefit in the end).
* We think it worked! Our “Do Not Write” / MSAF rate dropped from 7.1% in both Winter 2016 and 2017 to 3.7% in Winter 2018 for CHEM 1AA3.

## Implementing Universal Design for Learning in a Professional Graduate Program

Over the past two years, faculty from McMaster’s Occupational Therapy graduate program have engaged in a participatory action research initiative to incorporate [Universal Design for Learning (UDL)](https://flexforward.pressbooks.com/chapter/universal-design/) in their teaching approaches and evaluations. UDL is a framework for enhancing the accessibility of curriculum, instruction, and evaluation for all students. The OT program’s initiative in UDL emerged after faculty noted that requests for accommodations were increasing in the OT program and they wondered if exploring accessible teaching practices might offer a proactive approach for addressing students’ learning needs.

The OT program partnered with a faculty member in the Speech-Language Pathology program, Dr. Wenonah Campbell, whose program of research includes use of UDL to increase inclusion in educational settings. Dr. Campbell has collaborated with several OT faculty members who are part of a UDL Working Group that leads professional development activities, trials and reports back on UDL strategies, and guides the overall direction of the project. This group includes Professor Shami Dhillon, Professor Nancy Pollock, Dr. Rebecca Gewurtz, Professor Lorie Shimmell, and Dr. Brenda Vrkljan.

Evaluation of the initiative has been supported by funding from a Faculty of Health Science Education Innovation Award. Individual interviews completed with faculty at the end of the first year of the project revealed several benefits as well as considerations for implementing UDL in a professional graduate program. Importantly, faculty members were unanimous in reporting the benefits of the initiative in providing them with an opportunity to critically reflect on their teaching and ask themselves “why we do what we do” and “where is change needed.” Already, faculty are mobilizing to act on the findings from interviews as they continue to examine how to incorporate accessibility into their curriculum, instruction, and evaluations.

## Developing and Progressing on a Departmental Accessibility Plan

The School of Social Work’s [Action Plan for Accessibility and Disability Inclusion](https://macdrive.mcmaster.ca/f/fca3b066a7/) reflects an ongoing commitment to learning about and enhancing accessibility and disability inclusion at the School and in the broader community, and is being updated over time. Here are some examples of actions taken and in process:

* Changed the process of the Social Work Admissions Test to reduce accessibility barriers created by the testing situation
* Created course outlines in accessible formats
* Changed the Undergraduate handbook and student orientations towards more transparent processes, and clearer communication, with respect to accommodation and accessibility
* Established the undergraduate Chair as the ‘point person’ (for both students and instructors) when classroom accommodations require coordination/negotiation across multiple instructors, or if accommodations are not working
* Clarifying essential learning experiences and outcomes in each of the School’s courses so that these expectations are transparent for students and pathways to success in the courses are clear
* Extending universal design: exploring more ways, in more courses, to proactively design assignments to reduce barriers
* Exploring access and accommodation for graduate students, and more consistently articulating options for accommodations
* Undertaking a project to increase the accessibility of social work field placements

## Establishing an Accessibility & Equity Teaching Network

The MacPherson Institute’s newly launched [Accessibility & Equity Teaching Network](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/tln/) hosted two accessible education debriefs at the end of May 2018. Further events will be planned for the fall.

# Technology

## Accessible Technology Training and Design in Social Sciences

Accessibility/AODA compliance in digital accessibility in the Social Sciences continues to grow in several key areas and with much leadership from our Learning Technologies Consultant and regular support from our Dean. Several examples include:

* The development of digital accessibility workshops and tools, including the *Making Student Digital Content Accessible* workshop during 2017’s [TechLit Week](https://www.msumcmaster.ca/posts/803) (Nick Marquis [Social Sciences] and Clark Cipryk [SAS]) and the development of [accessible Microsoft Word document](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-YRYzXs9S8ZaehvpUVptR44GMntVbChIYiiszXm_63o/edit?usp=sharing) training for all Soc Sci faculty and staff (PDF accessibility training is coming soon!).
* [Accessible Web Content Editor](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TYGHRbTFqRVBy2IoT8FJUf_rh0fWbl-ZY9ps_XB6LmU/edit) training for the Faculty Website Content Management System (Plone) is given regularly to Social Science web content developers and administrators to ensure accessible content design from the outset. Highly accessible Plone designs have been developed, standardizing web publishing tools to enhance accessibility foci and compliance on Faculty websites.
* IT Analyst Courtney Sheppard has been responsible for re-deploying furniture in the active learning/technology enhanced classrooms in the new LR Wilson Hall to address accessibility issues with the built environment.

## Accessibility Online Course Design at the Centre for Continuing Education

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) has been actively incorporating accessibility into their design of online course material. Below are some examples of the work underway:

### Captioning

* McMaster Online Resource Essentials (MORE), a platform for communicating important information to McMaster employees, makes all of CCE’s webcasts accessible through closed captioning and Word scripts (for screen readers).
* CCE’s educational development team has been eliminating the use of images/photos embedded with text as they are non-readable with assistive technologies.
* All videos uploaded to YouTube/on the CCE website for this past year have been captioned, with a turnaround time for captioning and addition to website normally less than 24 hours.

### Email Accessibility

* New photos/media added to emails now use “alt tag” descriptions (written descriptions of image “behind” the image). Email content is condensed and communicated in an enlarged font size.

### Accessible Online Course Design

AODA and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A & Level AA](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/) requirements have been incorporated into the course development process:

* Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are informed of accessibility requirements, provided with resources and asked to produce content to the required accessibility standards
* Instructional Designers (IDs) advise and confirm that accessibility requirements have been met by SMEs, and produce content to the required accessibility standards
* Learning Systems Technologists (LSTs) and Web Content & Course Developers (WCCDs) advise IDs and incorporate accessibility into the course during integration
* Multimedia Specialist works with Rev and Inclusive Media to ensure alternative formats are provided for all audio and video components.
* Online course content is created based on an HTML template that is fully WCAG 2.0 AA compliant (conforms to Level A and Level AA). Content added to the template, including multimedia content, is checked and modified for accessibility as it is incorporated.
* Upon completion, along with manual accessibility-focused quality assurance checks, webpage content is tested with both the W3C Markup Validation Service and AChecker.  
  Internal course documents are created and tested for accessibility (e.g., PDFs are tagged and a Full Check is performed with the built-in Accessibility tool, MS Office documents are based on a fully-accessible template and then tested with the built-in Check Accessibility tools).

## Enhancing Accessibility Through Avenue to Learn and Open Access Textbooks

The large LINGUIST 1A03: *Introduction to Linguistics* course, taught by Dr. Catherine Anderson, is offered in a blended format with a sizeable online component. The following are some accessibility strategies we have been incorporating:

### Avenue to Learn

* Avenue has been used to set a custom extended quiz duration for each eligible student, as well as to [develop checklists to help students keep track of the readings, videos, exercises and quiz for each week](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=0PFWHGIm4IE).
* Students can ask questions during class using the Avenue Chat tool if they don't feel up to raising their hand in front their 599 classmates, and our Avenue Discussion Board is staffed daily by TAs.

### Captioning

* This past summer, video captions were updated and corrected, to support students with hearing impairments as well as students who aren't native speakers of English (among others).

### Online Textbooks

* Another major accessibility barrier identified for this course was the high price of the commercial textbook. In 2017-2018, Dr. Anderson received a grant from eCampusOntario to create an Open Access eBook that will be freely available - not just to McMaster students, but to anyone. *Essentials of Linguistics* will be piloted in the spring session and fully rolled out in the Fall of 2018!

## Accessible Formats and Creating Disability Space at Library Accessibility Services (LAS)

### Converting Course Material to Accessible Formats

[Library Accessibility Service (LAS)](http://library.mcmaster.ca/las) is continuing to meet student demand for textbooks and classroom readings in alternate formats, producing content in PDF, Word and Braille to name a few. To do this, we continue to work with ACE (Accessible Content e-Portal), a provincial group that provides access to alternate format library material. Within a global context, Canada has committed to the Marrakesh treaty, which was created to facilitate the sharing of accessible content across borders. LAS also captions classroom videos and encourages instructors to upload [captioned video content](http://requestcc.mcmaster.ca/view.php) to contribute to a collaborative project with OCUL (Ontario Council of University Libraries) on the development of a shared caption file repository. All students in Ontario will benefit from this important project!

### Creation of an Assistive Technology Lab

This summer, Library Accessibility Services (LAS) opened a new Assistive Technology (AT) Lab in a quieter area of the second floor next to the LAS Coordinator’s office in Mills Library. This exciting new space houses a mixture of private and collaborative spaces, as well as a lounge area. Integral to the AT Lab is the offer of new technology. **We are seeking input from students with disabilities about what they would like to see in this space. If you are interested in helping, please contact**[**Library Accessibility Services**](https://library.mcmaster.ca/spaces/las)**or**[**complete a short survey at Survey Monkey**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/63QNMGD)**.**

# Community-Engagement

## Facilitating Transitions from High School to McMaster

In April 2018, the Faculty of Social Sciences hosted a third annual workshop for regional high school teachers and guidance counsellors who teach in the social sciences. This workshop focused on the difficulties in the secondary-to-post-secondary transition, and the discussion highlighted some of the structural and institutional differences that complicate questions surrounding deadlines, expectations, and disability-related accommodation. The collaboration will continue, in order to explore whether increased alignment is desirable, and how it might be achieved, or whether the impact of the disjuncture between high school and university simply needs to be better recognized, and students better supported.

In May 2018, staff from the Office of Community Engagement, Student Accessibility Services, the Student Wellness Centre, and the Equity and Inclusion Office also met with representatives from the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board’s [HWDSB’s Kids Need Help](https://www.facebook.com/HWDSBKids/) advocacy group to discuss barriers high school students with disabilities are facing in the transition to postsecondary.

## Student Open Circles: Students Engaging with Hamilton’s Disability Community

[Student Open Circles](https://opencircle.mcmaster.ca/volunteer) recruits and coordinates more than 300 McMaster students to volunteer as small groups each week at social service agencies in Hamilton. Our volunteers at Conway Opportunity Homes assist and interact with residents living with physical disabilities through crafts, projects, providing computer help, games, organizing rooms or desks, going for walks, and visiting. This year, an average of 20 volunteers visit Conway Homes each week, giving 632 hours of their time so far.

## Disability and Accessibility in Connection to the McMaster Discovery Program

The 2017 iteration of the [McMaster Discovery Program](https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/mcmaster-discovery-program/), a free, non-credit course offered to Hamilton residents facing barriers to post-secondary education, was on the theme “Diversity and Resilience: Human Differences and our Ability to Overcome Challenges”. Taught by Prof. Anju Joshi and supported by students from the Arts & Science Program, the course created space for talking about how society’s “one size fits all” philosophy alienates certain groups of people through a lack of recognition and respect for diversity and attention to systemic barriers. A number of community members with disabilities were able to participate.

## Recreation Camps for Children with Disabilities

Each summer, McMaster Athletics and Recreation runs a [ParaSport Fitness School](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/camps/parasport-fitness-school), an accessible sports camp for children 10-14 years old. In partnership with ParaSport Ontario, Athletics is able to provide all equipment for campers to participate in a multi-sport showcase, including Wheelchair Basketball, Sledge Ball Hockey and Senior ParaSport. Outside of this session, ParaSport equipment is also brought to Sport Fitness School Campers for a day to increase exposure and awareness.

Throughout the summer, Athletics provides a [One to One Support Program](https://rec.mcmaster.ca/programs/youth-camps/special-needs-one-one-support) for children with disabilities/exceptionalities so that campers are integrated into Sport Fitness School and Mini-University programming with their peers at no additional cost to families. For the summer of 2018, the enrollment capacity for the 1:1 program has been expanded.

## MOMENTUM: A Disability Justice UnConference

Held December 1, 2017 in commemoration and celebration of the International Day of People with Disabilities, the [MOMENTUM Disability “Unconference”](https://www.facebook.com/events/175201599724881/) aimed to provide space for activists, community members, academics, and service providers to gather for discussion. Held at the Lincoln Alexander Centre in downtown Hamilton, participants and speakers alike experienced a day of presentations, networking, and community-building to keep the “momentum” of disability organizing going for the upcoming year. The event was organized by staff from the [Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion](http://hcci.ca/) (HCCI), the McMaster [Equity Inclusion Office](https://equity.mcmaster.ca/), and Hamilton disability activists, and was sponsored by the Laidlaw Foundation and the [President’s Advisory for Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC)](https://pacbic.mcmaster.ca/). Many warm thanks to everyone who participated and presented at this event.

## Community-Engaged Disability Research

The [Partnering for Change (P4C) Research Project](https://p4c.mcmaster.ca/news-events/updates-for-city-committee) is a community-engaged participatory project exploring the intersections between disability and homelessness among young people in Hamilton, Toronto, and Niagara. Led by Drs Stephanie Baker Collins and Ann Fudge Schormans (School of Social Work) and supported by several McMaster graduate students and alumni (Tina Wilson, Becky Idems, Lisa Watt, Katie McCrindle), this project brings together community partners from the education, employment, disability, and homelessness sectors, youth co-researchers with lived experience of disability and homelessness, and students to work collaboratively to address how to better support the educational, employment, developmental, and housing needs of disabled youth experiencing homelessness.

A key objective of P4C is to build community capacity and foster mutual learning. Being involved in the entire research process, youth co-researchers have developed research skills, and community networks. They led the development of a Forum Theatre scene, presented in workshops and a conference to share findings from this project and engage the community to collectively imagine different responses and ways of supporting disabled youth experiencing homelessness.

## Disability-Related Presentations at Conferences

Students, staff, and faculty have been presenting about Disability Studies and Accessibility at several conferences over 2017-2018. Some highlights:

* Faculty member Dr. Vera Chouinard (Geography) gave a plenary lecture on the state of Disability Geography at the [2017 annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers](http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/rtcrural-at-aag/).
* Faculty members Dr. Ann Fudge Schormans (School of Social Work) and Dr. Janice Hladki (School of the Arts; Gender Studies and Feminist Research) presented their research at the annual [Canadian Disability Studies Association Conference in May 2017](https://www.congress2017.ca/sites/default/files/sites/default/uploads/Programs/293-cdsa-acei-2017-05-29-final.pdf) at Ryerson University - on the topics of “Making the *My Life in the City* Documentary” and “Fears of Futurity: The Sutured Organization of Madness, Gender, Heteronomativity and Apocalypticism” respectively.
* Dr. Rebecca Gewurtz (School of Rehabilitation Science) and Dr. Rob Wilton (Geography) presented at the 2017 CMHA Ontario “Mental Health for All Conference” - on the topics of [“Employment and Disability Benefits for People with Mental Illness” and “Mental Health and Paid Work in the Social Economy”](https://conference.cmha.ca/events/benefits-program-lessons-learned-in-the-consumer-survivor-business-employment-and-disability-benefits-paid-work-in-the-social-economy/) respectively.
* Alex Wilson, 2018 graduate from the Integrated Science Program, presented on “Student Narratives: (In) Access to Accommodations” at the [Guelph Accessibility Conference in May 2018](http://opened.uoguelph.ca/student-resources/Accessibility-Conference---Schedule).

# Employment

## Employment Equity Strategy Launches

McMaster held [Employment Equity Forums](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/employment-equity-open-forum/) on November 20 and December 4, 2017 to update the broader campus community on the implementation of our [Employment Equity Framework](http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/link.php?link=employment-equity%3Aeeframework) and Strategic Plan, including the recruitment, retention and advancement of employees with disabilities. Based on the Equity Census that has been conducted, 3.3% of McMaster employees identify as persons with disabilities.

## Collective Bargaining Wins for Workplace Accessibility

Below are noteworthy Unit 1 [Collective Agreement provisions](https://cupe3906.org/tas-unit-1/collective-agreement/) related to workplace accessibility that were achieved during the last round of negotiations and came into effect September 2017. While the Union recognizes that we made some gains, we are aware that there is much more ground to be made.

### No Discrimination and/or Harassment

* Improved definitions of discrimination, sexual harassment and workplace harassment
* New language that expands the definition of harassment to include a single instance (as opposed to a repeated pattern of behaviour) or an online instance
* Clarified process for addressing harassment and discrimination that clearly outlines members’ rights under the Collective Agreement and clear indication that Collective Agreement rights govern over university policies

### Benefits

* All Unit 1 Employees will have access to the [Employee Family Assistance Plan](http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/efap/) (“EFAP”), which gives members access to counselling and mental health services beyond what is offered by OHIP or UHIP

### Medical Accommodation

* Employees can no longer be asked to provide a “medical diagnosis at the outset of a request for medical accommodation or sick leave”
* Diagnosis can only be provided with the Employee’s consent in the case of arranging accommodations
* As always, if you require a workplace accommodation, please contact your CUPE Representative (staff@cupe3906.org) for support

### Letter of Understanding: Unpaid Personal Leave

* TAs or RAs in lieu can request up to 12 months of unpaid personal leave (e.g., for health or mental health reasons, other personal reasons) without losing access to guaranteed or deferred TAships
* Dental benefits will not be affected by a Personal Leave
* This is a limited “pilot project” that expires before the expiration of the Collective Agreement

## Accessible Transitions to Employment for Students with Disabilities

In October 2017, [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) and the [Student Success Centre](https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/) began a review to evaluate the Accessible Career Transition Program (ACT), which was implemented between 2008-2010. Upon reviewing the outcomes, student survey data, and feedback from campus and community partners, the ACT program has been re-ignited and re-envisioned as the Career Access Program for Students (CAPS).

The Career Access Program for Students (CAPS) provides a customized approach to skill building and career development for students and alumni who identify as women, persons with disabilities, First Nations, Metis and Inuit persons, members of racialized communities, and LGBTQ+- identified persons. The program instills optimism and confidence to guide students in their career journey by offering multiple ways to access its services, through a flexible time commitment that meets individualized needs.

By participating in CAPS services and activities, students can choose to receive career guidance in areas such as career exploration, strategic goal setting, personal branding, employment opportunities, and the development of an Individualized Employment Action Plan. Student will also build a network of career mentors who will provide tools, advice, and shared experiences. Students and alumni are free to participate in as few or as many services as they choose.

To gather input on employment readiness skills, a survey of students with disabilities was circulated via SAS and interviews were conducted. **There is still an opportunity for students with disabilities to offer their input into this program. Please contact Anna Magnotta at**[**nealean@mcmaster.ca**](mailto:nealean@mcmaster.ca)**or 905-525-9140 ext. 26137.**

## Network Established for Employees with Disabilities

In response to Section 4.2 of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* that requires McMaster to establish an accessibility advisory committee, a new [Employee Accessibility Network](https://equity.mcmaster.ca/events/announcing-a-new-accessibility-network-for-mcmaster-employees-with-disabilities-accessibility-mcmaster.ca) was established in September 2017 for staff and faculty who experience disability, disablement, and/or accessibility barriers in the workplace. The Network meets monthly to discuss and act on a range of accessibility and employment equity priorities (e.g. the workplace accommodation process, career advancement, creating greater awareness/training on workplace accessibility). A Terms of Reference has been developed and outreach material is being circulated across campus. [New members can join via this form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfEd0zQp9ean6jl2Uut65ZKpGs9BgBEwQYoQm0WlwS1DkAVEQ/viewform?usp=sf_link).

# Resources

## AODA and Human Rights Code Training

[AODA and Human Rights Code Training](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/aoda-human-rights/) for staff, students and faculty is an ongoing requirement of the AODA. As of 2016, **all members of the McMaster community are required to take this training** - no longer just those working in customer service roles.

This year, with funding from the [President’s Advisory Community for Building an Inclusive Community](https://pacbic.mcmaster.ca/) (PACBIC)’s accessibility working groups (ADA/MEDS), McMaster’s previous 90 minute AODA training was reconceptualised and rebuilt through the collaborative efforts of the Equity and Inclusion Office and MacPherson Institute staff. This updated training consists of **5 short videos and an accompanying quiz**, which are available through MOSAIC / Avenue to Learn, but are also available for “open viewing” on YouTube and through the Training section of the Accessibility Hub. This abbreviated **30 minute training** summarizes key areas of AODA and Ontario Human Rights Code responsibilities for McMaster community members, encompassing such areas as:

* [Who are people with disabilities at McMaster?](https://youtu.be/N52alhBPppI)
* [What is accessibility at McMaster?](https://youtu.be/ir1F7P__W70)
* [Summary of Accessibility Requirements at McMaster University](https://youtu.be/FyB1Ps3Cux4)
* [Be an Accessibility Ambassador](https://youtu.be/47GSb7z3yqo)
* [Ableism](https://youtu.be/wpnD5NLKCBA)

## New Acquisitions to the McMaster Library

The following Disability Studies-related books have been added to the McMaster library collection over the last year:

* [All the Weight of Our Dreams: On Living Racialized Autism](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3449374__Sracialized%20autism__Orightresult__X4?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Critical Inquiries for Social Justice in Mental Health](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3448277__Ssocial%20justice%20mental%20health__Orightresult__U__X2?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Searching for a Rose Garden: Challenging Psychiatry, Fostering Mad Studies](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3465092__Srose%20garden__P0%2C1__Orightresult__U__X6?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Psychoanalysis and Holocaust Testimony: Unwanted Memories of Social Trauma](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3314300__SPsychoanalysis%20and%20Holocaust%20Testimony%3A%20Unwanted%20Memories%20of%20Social%20Trauma__Orightresult__U__X4?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Disability in Higher Education: A Social Justice Approach](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb2514567__Sdisability%20in%20higher%20education%3A%20a%20social%20justice%20approach__Orightresult__U__X4?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Psychiatry Interrogated: An Institutional Ethnography Anthology](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb2486243__SPsychiatry%20Interrogated%3A%20An%20Institutional%20Ethnography%20Anthology__Orightresult__U__X4?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3467289__SAcademic%20Ableism%3A%20Disability%20and%20Higher%20Education__Orightresult__U__X4?lang=eng&suite=def)
* [Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education](https://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3467290__SNegotiating%20Disability%3A%20Disclosure%20and%20Higher%20Education__Orightresult__U__X4?lang=eng&suite=def)

To request other books, complete the [McMaster Library Request Form](https://library.mcmaster.ca/forms/).

## Accessibility Hub

McMaster’s Accessibility Hub website was redesigned this year. The following resources can assist any member of the McMaster community in meeting AODA/Human Rights Code compliance and the spirit of accessibility. Regardless of our role on campus, accessibility intersects with our work, and we can all use tips and tricks for fulfilling our responsibilities: in instruction, communication (emails, electronic document creation, presentations), employment/hiring, event-planning, and navigation of the McMaster campus.

* [Accessibility Hub](http://accessibility.mcmaster.ca)
* [AODA and Human Rights Code Training](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/aoda-human-rights/)
* [FLEX Forward Accessible Education Training](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/accessible-teaching-and-learning-project/)
* [Creating Accessible Electronic/Word Documents](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/tools/)
* [Captioning Videos and Creating Transcripts for Audio](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/captioning/)
* [How to Create More Accessible Presentations](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/presentations/)
* [How to Make Images Accessible to Assistive Technologies (Alternative Text)](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/graphics/)
* [Tips for Auditing/Creating AODA Compliant Websites](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/websites/)
* [Service Disruption Template](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/closures/)
* [Planning an Accessible Event Checklist](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/accessibility/)
* [Maps and Transportation](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/resources/)