**Accessibility**

**and Disability**

**Inclusion Update:**

**2019 - 2020**

**Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2019-2020: Table of Contents**

[Introductions and Update Overview 2](#_Toc73112339)

[Warm Greetings from the McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC) and the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) 2](#_Toc73112340)

[Community Engagement 4](#_Toc73112341)

[Community Partnerships through Career Access Professional Services, Student Success Centre 4](#_Toc73112342)

[Design-Thinking Workshops with the Faculty of Engineering 4](#_Toc73112343)

[The AWE-SUM Optimist Club 5](#_Toc73112344)

[McMaster Museum of Art’s N Gillian Cooper Education Program 5](#_Toc73112345)

[Student Open Circles: Students Engaging with Hamilton’s Disability Community 6](#_Toc73112346)

[Accessibility in the NMR Lab: A Workshop from the NMR Lab in McMaster’s Faculty of Science 6](#_Toc73112347)

[The McMaster Institute for Research on Aging and McMaster Age-Friendly University Committee 7](#_Toc73112348)

[December 3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities Celebration 7](#_Toc73112349)

[Scholarly Community-Engaged Research & Publications 9](#_Toc73112350)

[Grants Won to Engage in Disability Justice and COVID-19 Research 9](#_Toc73112351)

[Self-Advocacy in the Developmental Disabilities in Ontario, 4th Ed. 9](#_Toc73112352)

[Distory Then and Now – A Community Engaged Research Project 10](#_Toc73112353)

[Enhancing Inclusivity and Accessible Education in McMaster’s Occupational Therapy Program 10](#_Toc73112354)

[Student Initiatives 12](#_Toc73112355)

[MSU Maccess – Staying Connected through Online Spaces 12](#_Toc73112356)

[Accessibility Guidebook for the Society of Arts and Science Students (SASS) 12](#_Toc73112357)

[Two-of-a-Kind Buddy Initiative and Disable the Difference 13](#_Toc73112358)

[Teaching and Learning: Accessibility and Disability Inclusion in Research, Instruction and Course-Level Enhancements 14](#_Toc73112359)

[Research Initiative: Adding Speech-to-Text as an Option for Accessibility Services 14](#_Toc73112360)

[A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Exercise Intensity in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury 14](#_Toc73112361)

[Centering Disability Justice in 4AR3: Advanced Research and Presentation in the Studio Program (SOTA) 15](#_Toc73112362)

[Software: Tool for Change – A Unique Program for Visually Impaired Students 15](#_Toc73112363)

[English and Cultural Studies SSHRC Insight Grant 16](#_Toc73112364)

[CMST 4D03 Final Project - Zine-Making for International Communication 16](#_Toc73112365)

[CMST 4M03 Mid-Term Project – Crip Camp & the Limits of Technological Benevolence 16](#_Toc73112366)

[English and Cultural Studies – Narratives of Health Elective Course Hosts Disabled Writer Dorothy Palmer 17](#_Toc73112367)

[Constructing ENG 2PC3: Popular Culture with Accessibility at the Forefront of Design 17](#_Toc73112368)

[The Faculty of Science – IDEAS Grants for the Continuation of Online Accessibility Audits and Remediation of Course Materials 17](#_Toc73112369)

[MacPherson Institute - Accessibility-Focused Educational Research and Development 18](#_Toc73112370)

[Teaching and Learning: Educational Technologies, Online Course Design, and Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Training and Resource Development 20](#_Toc73112371)

[Faculty of Social Sciences: Continuing to Enhance Web and Digital Media Accessibility 20](#_Toc73112372)

[Moving Forward to Web Content Accessibility in the Faculty of Science 20](#_Toc73112373)

[Accessible Online Course Design at Continuing Education 21](#_Toc73112374)

[The Introduction of the Accessible Documents Webinar Series 23](#_Toc73112375)

[Supporting Educators in Advancing Accessible Education 23](#_Toc73112376)

[Hippo-on-Campus 24](#_Toc73112377)

[Accessibility and Digital Pedagogy at the MacPherson 25](#_Toc73112378)

[Service Delivery 26](#_Toc73112379)

[Student Success Centre’s (SSC) One-on-One Virtual Service Delivery Model 26](#_Toc73112380)

[Going Global: Considering Employment Abroad - Student Success Centre 27](#_Toc73112381)

[Accessible Online Training for Archway – Housing & Conference Services 27](#_Toc73112382)

[Library Access for Student Learners with Disabilities During COVID 28](#_Toc73112383)

[Rethinking Peer Support in an Online Environment - MSU Maccess 29](#_Toc73112384)

[McMaster Museum of Art – An Accessible Virtual Experience 30](#_Toc73112385)

[Employment 31](#_Toc73112386)

[Advancing Accessibility for Employees with Disabilities 31](#_Toc73112387)

[Removing Barriers for Two-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary Employees - CUPE Local 3906 (Unit 1) 31](#_Toc73112388)

[Faculty of Health Sciences - Safety Office 32](#_Toc73112389)

[Employee Accessibility Network (EAN) 32](#_Toc73112390)

[Policies and Plans 34](#_Toc73112391)

[Accessibility Strategic Planning and Implementation 34](#_Toc73112392)

[Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education at the Provincial Level 34](#_Toc73112393)

[Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities 35](#_Toc73112394)

[Spaces and Environments 36](#_Toc73112395)

[Working Towards an Accessible Campus - McMaster Facilities Services 36](#_Toc73112396)

[Accessible Transportation On-Campus 36](#_Toc73112397)

[Making Accessible Spaces with McMaster Museum of Art 36](#_Toc73112398)

[Technology & Communications 38](#_Toc73112399)

[Working towards accessible, inclusive communication in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs 38](#_Toc73112400)

[Incorporating Accessibility into Microsoft 365 Platforms 39](#_Toc73112401)

[Transcribing Archival Documents to Enhance Digital Access for Assistive Technology Users 39](#_Toc73112402)

[Refreshing McMaster’s Central Accessibility Hub 39](#_Toc73112403)

## Introductions and Update Overview

### Warm Greetings from the McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC) and the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO)

#### What is the Update?

To celebrate [National Accessibility Week](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/national-accessability-week.html), the [AccessMac Program](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/services/#tab-content-accessmac) in the Equity and Inclusion Office and the [McMaster Accessibility Council](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/services/#tab-content-accessibility-council), are proud to present the Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2019-2020!

Summarizing the accomplishments and efforts of McMaster students, staff and faculty working to enhance and move forward accessibility and disability inclusion work at the University and in communities outside of the University, the full version of the Update expands upon highlights that were available in [2019-2020 Highlights Newsletter](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/12/VER5-retagged-ADIU-Newsletter-2019-2020.pdf), inclusive of the close to 70 submissions we received from a cross-section of faculties, services and individuals. Sincere thanks and appreciation to the campus community for your wonderful and thoughtful submissions – keep up the incredible work!

#### 2020 Reflections on the Update

The campus community’s relationship to accessibility and disability inclusion work shifted demonstrably during the 2019-2020 year, as work and study spaces shifted to remote spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These shifts are captured extensively in the submissions to this year’s Update, reflecting both a heightened awareness of, and commitment to, enhancing and addressing barriers to digital accessibility, as most campus community members suddenly found themselves existing exclusively in digital spaces. Academic courses, research, McMaster and community services, employment practices and more underwent sudden and transformative change to adapt quickly to our new collective realities and resultantly, accessibility to community, information, and services emerged as top priority for many areas across the University landscape. Inequities and barriers to access for persons with disabilities, already in existence, were amplified and exacerbated within the context of the global pandemic, and Disabled students, staff and faculty have become increasingly vocal about their collective experiences of inaccessibility within University work and study spaces, continuing to advocate for inclusion into the decisions that impact disability communities directly and indirectly.

#### Call for Submissions Process Moving into 2020-2021

The 2019-2020 Call for Submissions was impacted by the shift to remote environments, transforming from a 4-month call-out period over the summer semesters into a 6-week call-out period taking place in mid-fall 2020. As a result of the later and shorter process, the [Highlights Newsletter](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/12/VER5-retagged-ADIU-Newsletter-2019-2020.pdf) was able to be released quickly for a December 3rd celebration and commemoration, while this full version was intentionally delayed until summer, 2021.

Moving forward, the submission call-out period will revert to a summer schedule, however, we will retain our new practice of releasing the Highlights Newsletter on December 3rd, and reserving release of the full publication for the first week of June the following year to celebrate [National Accessibility Week](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/national-accessability-week.html). The Update will continue to ask for academic-calendar year submissions, and, as such, we will soon be seeking submissions to the 2020-2021 edition!

This edition could not have been finished without the efforts of the AccessMac Program team, so I will conclude this Update introduction with sincere thanks to the following people for their compilation, layout, graphic design, and editing efforts:

* Nusrat Mir, AccessMac Peer Educator
* Victoria Kren, AccessMac Program Assistant
* Emunah Woolf, AccessMac Placement Student

With continued thanks to the following persons / units for their historical and current contributions to the creation and support of the Update:

* Dr. Alise de Bie, Postdoctoral Fellow (MacPherson Institute) and Co-founder/Editor of the Update
* Dr. Arig al Shaibah, Associate Vice President, Equity and Inclusion and McMaster Accessibility Council Co-Chair
* Anne Pottier, Associate University Librarian and McMaster Accessibility Council Co-Chair

We would also like to provide special thanks to the Student Success Centre, and Career Access Professional Services (CAPS) Program participants, for the use of their wonderful imagery used for the title page of this community publication!

Sincerely,

Kate Brown, AccessMac Program Manager, Equity and Inclusion Office  
Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update Editor

## Community Engagement

### Community Partnerships through Career Access Professional Services, Student Success Centre

Throughout 2019–2020, the Student Success Centre (SSC) increased its campus partnerships focused on accessibility. [AccessMac (EIO)](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/accessmac-program/), [Career Access Professional Services (CAPS/SSC)](https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/careers-and-employment/advising-and-counselling/#collapseOneAbout-CAPS1), [Library Accessibility Services (LAS)](https://library.mcmaster.ca/spaces/las), [MSU Maccess](https://msumcmaster.ca/service/maccess/), and [Student Accessibility Services (SAS)](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) staff hosted an event for students and teachers from W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind. This event spearheaded by Katherine Hesson-Bolton, the Diversity Employment Coordinator, and the Career Access Professional Services Team provided a tailored campus tour and presentations for the group of potential McMaster students and community members. The CAPS team worked closely with the SAS transition program coordinator to connect with high school representatives and ensure a quality experience.

*Contributors: Student Success Centre (SSC), Katherine Hesson-Bolton, Library Accessibility Services (LAS), AccessMac, Career Access Professional Services (CAPS), MSU Maccess, Student Accessibility Services (SAS)*

### Design-Thinking Workshops with the Faculty of Engineering

The Experiential Program Coordinator from [Engineering Co-Op and Career Services (ECCS)](https://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/co-op-career/welcome-eccs) hosted a Design-Thinking workshop (October 2019) that focused on Accessibility on campus. Over 35 engineering students collaborated with McMaster students from the disability community to brainstorm creative design solutions to common problems they face while navigating campus. This 3-hour workshop came up with solutions from glasses that automatically reduce glare from overhead lights to developing more accessible emergency stations around campus.

During 2020, ECCS is designing an online workshop for engineering students that explores the topic of accessibility in an in-depth way using video interviews and animations. The expected launch date is the Winter 2020 term.

*Contributors: Louise Gazzola*

### The AWE-SUM Optimist Club

The AWE-SUM Optimist Club is made up of adults with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities and Autism, as well as their families. The mission of Optimist International is "by providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves". The purpose is to create a safe environment for individuals with intellectual and learning disabilities to learn leadership skills and create social opportunities, while simultaneously giving back to the community. The members create programs to serve their communities.

**AWE-SUM is in the process of implementing a workshop series that will teach important life skills such as:**

* Internet safety
* Managing money
* Resume and interviewing skills
* Dealing with anxiety

This club is an opportunity for members to learn, grow and contribute to their communities.

*Contributors: Denise Nacev, Housing and Conference Services*

### McMaster Museum of Art’s N Gillian Cooper Education Program

Throughout 2019-2020, the McMaster Museum of Art’s series of educational programs focused on community engagement, mental health, and wellness. Initiated in response to and collaboration with specific campus audiences, most of these popular activities were later delivered to the wider Hamilton community. Many of these activities were pivoted to, (and others created as), digital offerings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, meeting the need for technological accessibility.

**These activities included:**

* Employee Well-Being Program
* McMaster Museum of Art's Sketching Thursdays: September 3 - December 10 from 3:30 – 4:30 pm (excluding Reading Week)

Contributors: McMaster Museum of Art Education and Communications Staff

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

[Student Open Circles](https://opencircle.mcmaster.ca/) recruits and coordinates more than 300 McMaster students to volunteer as small groups each week at social service agencies in Hamilton. Each group additionally engages in weekly reflection on social issues related to their placement. In working directly through placements with Conway Opportunity Homes, 41 volunteers visited Conway Homes each week to assist and interact with residents living with physical disabilities. They did crafts, projects, provided computer help, played games, organized rooms or desks, and went for walks. This year, 985 hours of service was able to be provided. When in-person classes were canceled due to the pandemic, the volunteers quickly pivoted their Conway groups to online visits to address the heightened risk of social isolation among residents.

*Contributors: Jeff Druery, McMaster Student Open Circles*

Accessibility in the NMR Lab: A Workshop from the NMR Lab in McMaster’s Faculty of Science  
  
Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) is a technique invaluable to many scientists, especially chemists. The IVAN (Inspiring a Versatile and Agile NMR Community) NMR group is a worldwide consortium of NMR specialists who either use NMR as the basis for their research, or who manage NMR labs.

On October 15, 2020, Hilary Jenkins ([McMaster NMR Facility](https://www.chemistry.mcmaster.ca/services/nuclear-magnetic-resonance-facility-nmr.html)) chaired a new workshop, [“Accessibility in the NMR Lab"](https://ivanmr.com/2020/10/15/accessibility-in-the-nmr-lab/). Scientists from across North America and Europe gathered to hear five speakers, including scientists with disabilities, Kate Brown (Accessibility Program Manager, AccessMac Program), and instrument vendors. The result was a workshop that covered several perspectives and gave participants a view of the issues as well as success stories in [the NMR research lab](https://www.science.mcmaster.ca/tour/an-bourns-building/location-nuclear-magnetic-resonance-lab.html). The take home message: building an accessible lab helps everyone, especially persons with disabilities in STEM.

The Zoom meeting was recorded, and the [full meeting and chat transcript can be found here](https://ivanmr.com/2020/10/15/accessibility-in-the-nmr-lab/).

*Contributors: Hilary Jenkins, McMaster NMR Facility, Kate Brown, AccessMac Program*

### The McMaster Institute for Research on Aging and McMaster Age-Friendly University Committee

"In 2017, McMaster joined the [Age-Friendly University (AFU) Network](https://mira.mcmaster.ca/education/age-friendly-university-(afu)), a global body comprised of higher education institutions committed to becoming more universally accessible. After consultations led by the [McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA)](https://mira.mcmaster.ca/) with staff, faculty members, students, alumni and Hamilton’s community, it was determined that areas for improvement include:

* Targeted programming for older adults;
* Improved access to existing programs and events;
* And ongoing strategies to ensure McMaster is a welcoming space for older adults.

In 2019, the McMaster Age-Friendly University Committee was founded with representatives from more than 40 community and university groups. The committee has identified “bridging the digital divide” as its priority this year and will continue to focus on supporting older adults in accessing online platforms and programming at McMaster University. Improving access for older adults will improve access for everyone, thereby supporting the University's efforts to ensure an equitable, inclusive, and diverse university community.

*Contributors: Parminder Raina, Ine Wauben, Allison Ward*

### December 3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities Celebration

**Last year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated through several different events and platforms, including:**

* The co-development and launch of a Disability DIScussion on Self-Advocacy and Disability for all McMaster community members to attend on December 3rd, and with an additional hour included for students with disabilities to caucus and debrief with one another about the event. Special thanks to student self-advocacy researcher, Emunah Woolf, and the Human Rights and Dispute Resolution Program (EIO) for their support of this event.
* A launch party for the release of the print version of last year’s [Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2018-2019](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/01/ADIU2018-2019-FinalDigitalVersion.docx) on December 2, with over 50 contributors in attendance, ASL interpretation, and a keynote from the [Disability Justice Network of Ontario](https://www.djno.ca/).
* The release of the Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2018-2019 newsletter and full digital version to the McMaster campus community on December 3rd.

*Contributors: Victoria Kren, Kate Brown, Emunah Woolf, AccessMac Program*

## Scholarly Community-Engaged Research & Publications

### Grants Won to Engage in Disability Justice and COVID-19 Research

Dr. Ameil Joseph, Associate Professor in the [School of Social Work](https://socialwork.mcmaster.ca/), successfully won 3 grants this past year to engage in the following critical disability-related partnered research:

1. **Title: "What happened to you?": The disablement of youth across socioeconomic indicators**
   1. Type: SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant
   2. Agency: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
   3. Amount: $24, 984
   4. Recipients:  Ameil Joseph (PI) & the Disability Justice Network of Ontario
2. **Title: Grief, Memorials, and Loss through COVID-19: Resources for caring while physical distancing**
   1. Type: Mitacs Accelerate Research Grant
   2. Agency: Mitacs
   3. Amount: $45000
   4. Recipients: Ameil Joseph (PI), Shaila Kumbhare (Intern), CMHA Hamilton (Agency partner)
3. **Title: Grief, Memorials, and Loss through COVID-19: Resources for caring while physical distancing**
   1. Type: McMaster COVID-19 Research Fund
   2. Agency: McMaster University
   3. Amount: $29000
   4. Recipients: Ameil Joseph (PI), CMHA Hamilton (Agency partner)

### Self-Advocacy in the Developmental Disabilities in Ontario, 4th Ed.

A co-authored book chapter, articulating self-advocacy from the perspectives of people labeled/with intellectual disabilities, written by self-advocates Kelly MacDougall, Kerr Wattie, Romeo Pierre, Rainbow Hunt, O'Neil Allen and Robert Gray, with Ann Fudge Schormans and Carol Krause, has been accepted for publication in, [Developmental Disabilities in Ontario](https://oadd.org/publications/textbook/), 4th Ed., Ivan Brown & Maire Percy (Eds.), Ont: Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities.

*Contributors: Kelly MacDougall, Kerr Wattie, Romeo Pierre, Rainbow Hunt, O'Neil Allen, Robert Gray, Ann Fudge Schormans, Carol Krause*

### Distory Then and Now – A Community Engaged Research Project

Distory, Then and Now is an inclusive project led by Dr. Ann Fudge Schormans ([School of Social Work](https://socialwork.mcmaster.ca/)), that brings together institutional survivors and younger people labeled/with intellectual disabilities, artists, community members, and academic researchers to develop curriculum materials for postsecondary students to learn about institutionalization and the ongoing struggles and resistance of people labeled/with intellectual disabilities.

COVID-19 safety protocols and social isolation combined with a lack of access to technology for most of the disabled team members significantly impacted collaborative ways of working. In that so many team members are without access to computers, and/or support for learning new technologies, and/or unable to pay for internet fees, they have had to rely primarily on phone calls to continue to work collaboratively on the project. They are also working this way as they write co-authored blogs and journal articles documenting impacts of the pandemic on Disabled group members.

*Contributors: Dr. Ann Fudge Schormans, School of Social Work*

Enhancing Inclusivity and Accessible Education in McMaster’s Occupational Therapy Program  
  
The Accessible Education in Occupational Therapy (OT) Working Group at McMaster University has been exploring ways to enhance the inclusivity of the [Occupational Therapy Program](https://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/srs-ot) by:

1. Building faculty capacity in Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
2. Interviewing faculty about their perspectives around accessible education
3. Interviewing McMaster MScOT students about their perspectives around accessible education
4. Facilitating discussions with stakeholders around action planning to address common tensions identified by faculty and students

In October 2020, the working group hosted an online knowledge exchange event to discuss and brainstorm ways of improving the accessibility of the OT program at McMaster University. Participants at the event included a diverse group of stakeholders, such as representatives from the community, the MacPherson Institute, McMaster’s Equity and Inclusion Office, Student Accessibility Services, faculty, and students. This event produced many great strategies that will be brought forth to the curriculum planning committee.

*Contributors: Wenonah Campbell, Shami Dhillon, Rebecca Gewurtz, Jocelyn Harris, Lorie Shimmell, Brenda Vrkljan, Occupational Therapy Program*

## **Student Initiatives**

### MSU Maccess – Staying Connected through Online Spaces

[MSU Maccess](https://msumcmaster.ca/service/maccess/) and [AccessMac (EIO)](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/accessmac-program/) have developed community discussion sessions called [Disability DIScussions: Remote Access/ibility](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/events/disability-discussions-remote-access-ibility/), focused on the experiences of Disabled students during the COVID-19 pandemic and times of remote learning.   
  
As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, course instruction during the 2020 – 2021 academic year has largely taken place remotely, i.e. online. However, this process has taken place with little consultation of students, and in particular students with disabilities. This has been concerning to students with disabilities, as this approach contributes to a culture of academic ableism and inaccessibility in higher education where accessibility needs are not often centered in large-scale re-design efforts.   
These sessions have provided a safe(r) space for McMaster students who experience disability to share their experiences with in/accessibility and disability inclusion during remote learning. Additionally, they have allowed Maccess to report on the concerns arising from focus groups.   
  
**Our hope is that McMaster administration will use feedback from these sessions to:**

* Improve remote learning pedagogy and practices;
* Address ongoing and newly arising accessibility barriers;
* Commit to the continuation of accessibility principles that have been implemented during times of remote learning (ex. closed captioning, recorded lectures);
* And to ensure equitable access to education for students with disabilities.

*Contributors: Calvin Prowse, MSU Maccess*

### Accessibility Guidebook for the Society of Arts and Science Students (SASS)

With an online year comes many challenges, one of which is the lack of accessibility that online learning and communication might pose to McMaster students, especially those with disabilities. In response to this and as a Student Representative Assembly Arts and Science Caucus initiative, Adeola Egbeyemi and Vikita Mehta have designed an [Accessibility Guidebook for the Society of Arts and Science Students (SASS)](https://sway.office.com/F8NO9KxGErwsBcRF?ref=Link). This guidebook contains checklists to ensure that SASS is considering accessibility when hosting Zoom/Microsoft Team calls, creating social media posts, making videos, and more. SASS aims to mandate the use of the guidebook for all SASS Executive programming, and hope to extend the use of the guidebook to the wider McMaster Student Union in the future.

*Contributors: Vikita Mehta, Adeola Egbeyemi, Arts and Science*

### Two-of-a-Kind Buddy Initiative and Disable the Difference

The pandemic has brought many challenges, some disproportionately affecting the Disabled community. Many in-person support services for youth with disabilities have become suddenly inaccessible, causing severe social isolation. From this realization arose an idea: [The Two-of-a-Kind Buddy Initiative](https://www.toronto.com/community-story/10227262-king-vaughan-teens-create-two-of-a-kind-online-buddy-program/) – a virtual buddy program providing free online tools and virtual socializing to address loneliness and support youth from across the world.

Since August, Vikita Mehta and Mira Bhattacharya have fostered 50+ buddy friendships. Along with this program, they have created [Disable the Difference](https://disablethedifference.com/), a non-profit organization with 100+ volunteers, to support individuals with disabilities through awareness-raising, policy research, advocacy, and friendship. They are especially passionate about improving special education curriculum in schools and changing policy at a national level. To achieve this, they are currently developing a survey to send to parents and educators to better understand the barriers in special education to inform a policy proposal.

*Contributors: Vikita Mehta, Mira Bhattacharya*

## Teaching and Learning: Accessibility and Disability Inclusion in Research, Instruction and Course-Level Enhancements

### Research Initiative: Adding Speech-to-Text as an Option for Accessibility Services

In an initiative to augment the learning experience for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, on-line speech-to-text programs have been proposed for classroom use. However, there is much to consider before implementing such programs. This research project examines two automatic speech-to-text applications to determine how their advertised accuracy levels translate to real-time lectures and whether these applications are adequate for student accommodations. They observe how speaker variables (e.g. accents and regional differences) and discipline-specific vocabulary affect accuracy and analyze whether the technology lives up to the standards of McMaster University for student accommodation use.

Results of the project will have immediate effects: not only will their findings assist Student Accessibility Services in deciding whether to invest in and possibly adopt closed-captioning software, but, as the current pandemic has shown, there are wider applications of this project, with closed-captioned lectures serving the entire community.

*Contributors: Dr. Magda Stroinska, Dr. Daniel Pape, Carla Weigel, Linguistics and Languages*

### A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Exercise Intensity in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury

Sydney Valentino is conducting a research project to appraise and synthesize previous research using perceived exertion as a measure of exercise intensity in individuals with spinal cord injury through a systematic review and meta-analysis. The purpose of this review is to understand the effects of accessible and effective exercise interventions to improve the fitness of individuals with a spinal cord injury. The aims, eligibility criteria, and analytical methods have been decided a priori, registered with PROSPERO Electronic databases, and follow the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines for 2020. This research will inform the development of future exercise training interventions as part of their PhD research program.

*Contributors: Sydney Valentino, Dr. Maureen MacDonald, Faculty of Science*

### **Centering Disability Justice in 4AR3: Advanced Research and Presentation in the Studio Program (SOTA)**

Students in Carmela Alfaro-Laganse’s ([School of the Arts) course](https://sota.humanities.mcmaster.ca/), [*4AR3: Advanced Research and Presentation*](https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=38&coid=202064), explore, analyze, develop, and practice research and presentation methods that augment skills specific to communicating research/creation and practice. These students are learning how to develop different ways to communicate with audiences having accessibility centered as a guiding principle.

**They are involved in:**

* Research which includes readings regarding disability justice and Indigenous perspectives on disability justice;
* Various discussions about access to art and art making;
* Acquiring AODA certification online, and;
* Developing a group catalogue of their creative practices.
  + The catalogue is a project that applies accessibility principles to research and discussion, as well as approaches to group organization and collective work.

*Contributors: Students in 4AR3: Advanced Research and Presentation, School of Arts*

### Software: Tool for Change – A Unique Program for Visually Impaired Students

Gabrielle, Maryam, and Christopher are working towards a novel programming environment which will teach coding and math to visually impaired students using music. The [*Software: Tool for Change*](http://outreach.mcmaster.ca/) project arose from an undergraduate course project by a student team including a visually impaired student. The initial team created a proof-of-concept MacOS app. This identified two areas where more research and experimentation was required.

The first task, developing a formal language to represent music which matches their successful approach to graphical composition, was started in the fall of 2019, and is led by Gabrielle Gonsalves.

The second project, creating a projectional editor for the Elm programming language with interchangeable UI controls, was started in the winter of 2020 and is led by Maryam Kord, and is focusing on an initial keyboard-only set of controls suitable for visually impaired users. Both groups include a half-dozen volunteers including international collaborators.

*Contributors: Gabrielle Gonsalves, Maryam Kord, Christopher Anand, Department of Computing and Software*

### English and Cultural Studies SSHRC Insight Grant

Dr. Sarah Brophy’s ([Department of English and Cultural Studies](https://english.humanities.mcmaster.ca/2018/09/25/new-course-english-2nh3-narratives-of-health/)) Social Science and Humanities Research (SSHRC) Insight Grant funded research and generated a public film screening and panel discussion on “Social Media, Anxiety, and Feminisms" in the film "Eighth Grade”. The grant also funded a co-authored article "Encounters with Kusama: disability, feminism, and the mediated Mad art of #InfiniteKusama" in the peer-reviewed journal Feminist Media Studies, June 2020. Adan Jerreat-Poole, Dr. Brophy's RA and collaborator on these projects, successfully defended their dissertation "Bad Avatar: Mad/Crip Digital Identity Play" in August 2020 and has taken up a two-year Postdoctoral Fellowship in the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University.

*Contributors: Dr. Sara Brophy, Dr. Adan Jerreat-Poole, Department of English and Cultural Studies*

### CMST 4D03 Final Project - Zine-Making for International Communication

Dr. Lyndsey Beutin ([Communication Studies and Multimedia](https://csmm.humanities.mcmaster.ca/)) has designed zines as the final project for students in [CMST 4D03: International Communication](https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=38&coid=202579). Zines are a wonderful way to make final projects accessible to all because they are non-linear, can be made on paper or digitally, by voice or by hand, super low-tech or super high-tech, can use a screen or not, can be all pictures or all words or a combination, can incorporate all kinds of research methods (literature reviews, interviews, media analysis, poems) to suit a student's strengths, and can be done incrementally, individually, or collaboratively. The possibilities are endless!

*Contributors: Lyndsey Beutin, Communications Studies and Multimedia*

### CMST 4M03 Mid-Term Project – Crip Camp & the Limits of Technological Benevolence

Dr. Lyndsey Beutin has arranged a viewing of the documentary Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution for her students in [4M03: Communication, Culture and Technology](https://libguides.mcmaster.ca/CMST4M03) for their mid-term projects. This culminated the three themes of the course: reframing all technology as assistive; thinking about the limits of technological benevolence and tech "fixes" to structural inequities; and understanding the role and power of solidarity across difference for social change.

*Contributors: Lyndsey Beutin, Communications Studies and Multimedia*

### English and Cultural Studies – Narratives of Health Elective Course Hosts Disabled Writer Dorothy Palmer

Dr. Brophy's open elective course [Narratives of Health in English and Cultural Studies](https://english.humanities.mcmaster.ca/2018/09/25/new-course-english-2nh3-narratives-of-health/) hosted Burlington-based senior disabled writer Dorothy Palmer for a Q & A with students about Palmer's acclaimed memoir [Falling for Myself](https://bookstore.wolsakandwynn.ca/products/falling-for-myself) (Wolsak and Wynn 2019).

*Contributors: Dr. Sarah Brophy, Department of English and Cultural Studies*

### Constructing ENG 2PC3: Popular Culture with Accessibility at the Forefront of Design

The first course that Emily Scherzinger (PhD Candidate) from the [Department of English and Cultural Studies](https://english.humanities.mcmaster.ca/2018/09/25/new-course-english-2nh3-narratives-of-health/) has taught, ENG 2PC3: Popular Culture, was constructed with accessibility in mind. As someone who has extensive experience with course accommodations and disabilities, they aimed for the structure of their class to prioritize students' mental health. As a result, Emily has forgone stringent due dates for more lenient ones. Furthermore, they have incorporated untimed quizzes and a take-home final exam to offer students lots of time to think through their responses; transcripts for students who are deaf/Deaf or hard of hearing, like themselves; pre-recorded lectures to be watched at their own leisure, particularly with students working full-time jobs in mind; and kindness and honesty as a primary policy when interacting with students. Emily is open with their students about their stress level, need to step away from their email inbox, as well as why that is crucial for them, and their own personal experiences in academia that have led them to construct this course with accessibility as a priority.

*Contributors: Emily Scherzinger, Department of English and Cultural Studies*

### The Faculty of Science – IDEAS Grants for the Continuation of Online Accessibility Audits and Remediation of Course Materials

The Faculty of Science has applied for [IDEAS (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Sustainability) grants](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/ideas-grant/), organized by the MacPherson Institute and the Equity and Inclusion Office (AccessMac Program), to facilitate the continued audit and remediation of online course materials. The grants will allow the Faculty to hire teaching assistants, conduct training, and support instructors from within every department.   
  
Training on inclusive course design will be conducted by our Accessible Digital Media Specialist and will cover frequently used platforms such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Stream.   
  
A network will also be created within Microsoft Teams to allow for peer collaboration, problem-solving, and the creation of a knowledge base for future reference.   
  
For more information or to be included in our community of interest, please email Jessica Blackwood at [blackwja@mcmaster.ca](mailto:blackwja@mcmaster.ca).  
  
*Contributors: Greg Atkinson, Jessica Blackwood, The Faculty of Science, MacPherson Institute, Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO)*

### MacPherson Institute - Accessibility-Focused Educational Research and Development

#### Support for Educational Research and Development

* In December 2019, the MacPherson Institute’s annual [*Research on Teaching and Learning Conference*](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/news-and-events/research-on-teaching-learning-conference/) hosted two workshops on accessibility and Universal Design, and several research sessions on disabled student experiences, student mental health and wellbeing, inclusive pedagogy, and accessibility for educators.
* The [Accessibility Teaching and Learning Network](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/teaching-and-learning-networks/) aims to gather and share success stories, challenges and sources of support related to accessibility and equity in teaching and learning. The Network meets 2-4 times per year, most recently holding an open meeting in Fall 2019 on AODA compliance and training requirements and in Winter 2020 on the use of active learning technologies to enhance accessibility in large classes.
* The [Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Team](https://iqap.mcmaster.ca/#tab-content-cyclical-program-review) at the MacPherson Institute also works with departments as they complete the Accessibility and Inclusion section of their cyclical reviews (section 3.4 of the Self Study Document) or new program proposals (section 4.5 of the New Program Proposal).
* A new IDEAS grant (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Sustainability) to support instructors in making their online and virtual courses more accessible and equitable was also developed in collaboration with the Equity and Inclusion Office, with a launch in Fall 2020.

#### Student Partners Program

* [The Student Partners Program](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/student-partners-program/), supported by the MacPherson Institute, funded several educational research and development projects focusing on accessibility and equity in teaching and learning, including: disabled student experiences self-advocating for their learning needs; critical knowledge exchange of social justice teaching and learning scholarship; online mental health education for instructors; creating safety for marginalized students in social work pedagogy; the contribution of Mad student peer support to student learning experiences; and student desires for faculty diversity.

#### SSHRC-funded Equity Stream

* An SSHRC-funded project led by faculty and students working in partnership with the MacPherson Institute also piloted an equity-focused stream of the Student Partners Program during the Winter and Fall 2019 terms. Several faculty/student pairs (approximately 15 participants out of 26 total), including a number of students with disabilities, have enhanced attention to accessibility, disability inclusion, and mental health in the faculty member’s course in a range of ways. These include through educational technology, the implementation of Universal Design principles, and formal research into accessibility/disability/identity in active and team-based learning. The Equity Stream research team continues to analyze data on the impact/outcomes of the pilot, how partnership can contribute to greater equity/accessibility, and how equity-focused work might continue to be supported through the Student Partners Program.

*Contributors: The MacPherson Institute*

## Teaching and Learning: Educational Technologies, Online Course Design, and Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Training and Resource Development

### Faculty of Social Sciences: Continuing to Enhance Web and Digital Media Accessibility

**Faculty of Social Sciences Training: Accessible Digital Media - From June 2019 – June 2020:**

* Continued to offer training / workshops / presentations / consultations on various digital accessibility techniques and information on the Information Communication standards in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
* Training included digital accessibility core skills, document accessibility techniques, and the facilitation of accessible presentations.

**The Faculty of Social Sciences has enhanced website accessibility this year:**

* 70+ websites affected by accessibility remediations within the Faculty of Social Sciences after a preliminary template audit conducted the summer of 2019.
* Accessibility enhancements and remediation were a result of manual testing using automated and manual validation techniques. Template adjustments and findings / remediation efforts were shared with Branding and Media Production Services so enhancements could be made to centrally provided ‘Brighter World’ code-bases available to the campus community.
* Content level audit planned for department level website content (delayed due to pandemic).

*Contributors: Nick Marquis, Learning Technologies Consultant, Faculty of Social Sciences*

### Moving Forward to Web Content Accessibility in the Faculty of Science

With support from the Strategic Alignment Fund (“SAF”), the Faculty of Science has been converting our existing blended learning courses into more accessible formats to ensure adherence to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA.   
   
The development team has been working closely with instructional groups and accessibility experts on campus to complete this project by 2021. Additional priorities include incorporating research on best-practice, ensuring content can be updated and maintained sustainably, and using tools that are accessible to all members of the university. As the understanding of accessible best practices matures, efforts to disseminate tools, techniques and support across the Faculty and University follow-suit. In support of their SAF goals, the Office of the Dean worked with Kate Brown from the Equity & Inclusion Office to reimagine the Digital Media Specialist role for a more accessible future.   
  
The Faculty prioritizes student experiences and feedback and has partnered with a user-testing group organized by the Equity and Inclusion Office to ensure platform selection and content creation is accessible.   
   
For more information or to be included in our community of interest, please email Jessica Blackwood at [blackwja@mcmaster.ca](mailto:blackwja@mcmaster.ca).   
  
*Contributors: Greg Atkinson, Jessica Blackwood, Kate Brown, The Faculty of Science, MacPherson Institute, Equity and Inclusion Office, Student Accessibility Services*

### Accessible Online Course Design at Continuing Education

McMaster Continuing Education (MCE) continues to incorporate accessibility standards into its design of online course materials. Other strategies within the unit are also occurring so that resources and experiences are accessible. Below are some examples of this work as completed in 2019-2020:

#### Shifting Departmental Practices and Tools to Enhance Accessibility

* As a department, we are utilizing the tools/applications within Microsoft 365 to enhance our work and make content more accessible.
  + Using Microsoft Forms instead of Survey Monkey or fillable pdf forms; when applicable, a signature is not required.
  + Encouraging the use of Microsoft Teams for live events since it has a live captioning feature
  + Attending Microsoft 365 related training sessions to better understand the technologies available
    - Staff have attended sessions on Outlook, Teams, Whiteboard, Sway, and other.

#### Accessible Digital Media Updates

* MCE’s educational development team has eliminated the use of images embedded with text as they are non-readable with assistive technologies.
* The marketing team has significantly reduced the number of images with embedded text on our main website in preparation for a full website overhaul.
* The use of images/videos or other multimedia assets is restricted to pedagogical purposes and always complies with accessibility standards.
* We are simplifying our CRM Marketing Email templates:
  + We have eliminated a large portion of “decorative” and “invisible” images that do not aid or enhance the content.
* All videos uploaded to YouTube/on the MCE website include transcripts and captions. McMaster Continuing Education’s multimedia specialist works with Rev.com and Inclusive Media to ensure alternative formats are provided for all audio and video components.
* When required, videos include described-video captioning and transcription.
* The use of PDF format has been discontinued for MCE-produced course content in favour of Word documents which are more accessible.
* Templates and guidelines support the work of subject matter experts and instructors in their development of multimedia materials so that materials comply with provincial accessibility standards.

#### Accessible Course Design Updates

* Experimenting with new course content delivery methods (e.g., interviews) is central to the work of the educational development team. The multimedia specialist has designed new Brighter World templates to enhance interviews and display media in course content.
* Subject matter experts are informed of accessibility requirements, provided with resources, and asked to produce content that meets accessibility standards. Supporting materials are now available to SMEs and instructors. Examples include:
  + [Continuing Education Toolkit](http://libguides.mcmaster.ca/cceinstructors)
  + [Course Development Hub](https://sites.google.com/view/course-development-hub/home)
  + [Instructor Handbook](http://libguides.mcmaster.ca/cceinstructorhandbook/home)
* SMEs and instructors are encouraged to include open educational resources in course design to reduce students’ costs and increase access to study materials.
* Content writing and editing follow universal design for learning principles and provincial accessibility standards.
* The educational development team continuously reviews its design and development practices to discover opportunities to improve accessibility features in courses and programs.

*Contributors: McMaster Continuing Education Team, Jennifer Rutkowski*

### The Introduction of the Accessible Documents Webinar Series

To make the creation of inclusive materials, and particularly course content, accessible to all members of the McMaster community, the Faculty of Science has partnered with the Equity and Inclusion Office to create an Accessible Documents webinar series.   
  
This webinar is available asynchronously on [Pressbooks](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/accessibledigitalcontenttraining/), as well as being conducted live through several workshops supported by the MacPherson Institute.   
  
Available webinar topics include creating accessible content within Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint as well as accessible presentation techniques. A combination of legislative requirements and best-practice recommendations acquired from user-testing has been contextualized to the McMaster environment.   
  
For more information or to be included in our community of interest, please email Jessica Blackwood at [blackwja@mcmaster.ca](mailto:blackwja@mcmaster.ca). To book live training for your Faculty / unit, please email Kate Brown at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca).  
   
*Contributors: Jessica Blackwood, Kate Brown, Greg Atkinson, The Faculty of Science, MacPherson Institute, Equity and Inclusion Office*

### Supporting Educators in Advancing Accessible Education

#### Synchronous Sessions and Workshops

* The Provost’s Office, in collaboration with the MacPherson Institute, hosted several panels on [Teaching Remotely: Shared Experiences](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/teaching-remotely-shared-experiences/#tab-content-summer-2020-sessions) over Summer 2020, including sessions on Inclusive Spaces, Accessible Teaching, and Student Mental Health in a Remote Environment.
* The MacPherson Institute offers in-person education on accessibility in teaching and learning. The 2-hour Accessibility in Teaching and Learning [Educator Enhancement Series](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/eep/) for faculty and instructors ran in March 2020 (13 participants). A 90-minute workshop on Accessible Teaching Techniques was facilitated as part of the EDUCATN 600 course, part of the [Teaching and Learning Certificates of Completion P](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/whoweworkwith/students/teaching-learning-certificates-of-completion-program/)rogram for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, in Fall 2019 (11 participants), Winter 2020 (11 participants), and Spring 2020 (23 participants).
* The September [2019 Annual Teaching & Learning Forum](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/teaching-and-learning-forum/) for TAs, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and sessional instructors featured a 50-minute workshop on Accessibility and Accommodation (6 participants), as well as one on Teaching with a Disability (15 participants).
* The MacPherson Institute and Equity and Inclusion Office also collaborated to host two webinars on [applying accessible education principles to online teaching and learning](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/events/applying-accessibility-principles-to-online-course-design-session-1/) in August 2020 (approximately 250 participants).
* Virtual training sessions offered in response to teaching and learning remotely included content on accessible teaching practices such as Universal Design for Learning, and accessible features and functionalities of the institutionally-supported and open source tools.

#### Asynchronous Resources Developed

* A section on accessibility and accommodation was added to MacPherson’s [New Instructor Handbook](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/newinstructorhandbook/).
* Collaboratively designed by the Equity and Inclusion Office and MacPherson Institute, [McMaster’s Inclusive Teaching and Learning Guide](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/inclusive-teaching/) was launched in the summer of 2020.
* The MacPherson Institute collaborated with the Equity and Inclusion Office to develop supports for the [Teaching Remotely](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/teaching-remotely) website as well as to provide information for the Accessibility Hub’s [COVID response web resource](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/covid-19-response/faculty-and-instructors/) for faculty. There is a comprehensive section on Accessibility in our [Teaching Remotely Guide](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/04/Teaching-Remotely_Final-1.pdf) for educators.
* Theself-enroll, asynchronous *Learning to Teach Online* course developed and available on Avenue to Learn for all educators includes a module on “Ensuring Inclusivity”, which centers accessible teaching practices and UDL.

*Contributors: The MacPherson Institute*

### Hippo-on-Campus

Launched in 2018, the [Professor Hippo-on-Campus: Student Mental Health Education Program for Educators and Navigators](https://mi.mcmaster.ca/professor-hippo-on-campus/) consists of 8 online e-modules hosted on Avenue to Learn. Created by Dr. Catharine Munn, the overarching purpose of the Professor Hippo-on-Campus initiative is to engage and educate faculty, staff, and navigators to better understand and support students who are stressed, distressed, and/or experiencing mental health or substance use problems, and to support faculty in this process within the boundaries of their roles as instructors. It is also dedicated to helping educators cultivate more inclusive, accessible, and positive classroom environments attentive to mental health and well-being needs. All educators, navigators, and staff at McMaster can register to complete the Professor Hippo on Campus training and receive their certification. **Since January 2020, when program registration opened on Mosaic, 393 individuals have enrolled in the program, and 243 of these have been fully certified.**

*Contributors: Dr. Catharine Munn, The MacPherson Institute*

### Accessibility and Digital Pedagogy at the MacPherson

* MacVideo’s upgraded caption interface “REACH” was enabled in March 2020, providing [automated captions for every video uploaded](https://macvideo.mcmaster.ca/knowledge-base/exec/how-to-add-auto-captioning-to-your-video/) through the video hosting/streaming platform.
* The Avenue to Learn support team completed the technical integration of [Sensus Access](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/digital-accessibility/sensusaccess/), a tool that creates alternative formats for users, and made it available for use in every Avenue course shell.
* A Learning Management System Review was completed, which included a focus group convened by the Equity and Inclusion Office, with McMaster community members with disabilities to help shape recommendations included in the report.
* MacPherson staff collaborated with D2L Accessibility Specialist, Sam Chandrashekar, including a presentation to librarians, accessibility staff and teaching and learning support staff on D2L (Avenue) disability support process, services and [accessibility interest group](https://www.d2l.com/blog/gaad-the-important-story-of-d2ls-accessibility-interest-group/).
* MacPherson staff offered a presentation for Student Accessibility Services to provide a foundational overview on the various technologies that instructors would be using in the fall 2020 term.

*Contributors: MacPherson Institute*

## Service Delivery

### Student Success Centre’s (SSC) One-on-One Virtual Service Delivery Model

During the rapid shift to remote work and online environments this year, shifting to virtual service delivery and continuing to provide quality service was essential to the SSC. This was able to continue with the introduction of several online options:

* Students can self-select their preferred platform (including phone, Zoom, teams, etc.), as well as their preferred date and time. During appointments, students are encouraged to copy and save information shared in the chat. They are also sent information via email, depending on their preference.
* In addition to bookable appointments, drop-ins are now offered virtually. Three times a week, students can drop in to meet with SSC staff on Brazen, an accessible, text-based platform with video option.
* Additionally, all workshops have now transitioned to an online format. In addition to offering live webinars, workshop recordings and presentations are shared through email communications and on the SSC website.
* Accommodation processes for SSC events are now more widely available across our platforms. An accommodation statement has been added to each event, including company information sessions and staff-led sessions, encouraging students to email [careeraccess@mcmaster.ca](mailto:careeraccess@mcmaster.ca) if they require information in an alternate format.
* Asynchronous options are now available through Avenue to Learn, as Career Planning Groups transitioned from in-person to virtual service delivery. This self-paced option is an alternative way to engage with our career services, with support from career counsellors offered on a weekly basis in a virtual drop-in format.
* SSC resources, including tip sheets, brochures, postcards, and an interactive notebook which were available in their Student Success Centre space prior to March 2020 in print, underwent review and were transitioned to accessible digital formats. Now available on the website, these resources offer an asynchronous and digital accessible method of accessing important information.
* New tip sheets were created and added to the website with accessible formatting to address the pandemic, including:
  + Job Searching During a Pandemic
  + How to Prepare for Virtual Interviews
  + Virtual Job Opportunities
  + Career Planning Guide
  + Virtual Job/Volunteer Preparation
  + Online Learning Opportunities (professional development)
* Virtual postcards were developed to continue promotion of the Career Access Professional Services program and sent to Student Accessibility Services for continued referrals.

*Contributors: Gisela Oliveira, Associate Director, Career & Employment and Anna Magnotta, Manager, Employment and Experiential Learning*

### Going Global: Considering Employment Abroad - Student Success Centre

To support students in learning another culture and language, enhance their academics, and gain employment experience to heighten their curiosity, resilience and understanding of the world, SSC staff from the [Global Experiences Program](https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/global-opportunities/global-experience-program/) worked with the diversity employment coordinator to revise student resources and provide relevant and detailed information related to accessibility, accommodations, safety and more. For example, the Global Experience Checklist, which supports students in their global and provincial travel planning, was updated to include:

* Accessibility travel resources
* Accommodations while abroad
* Health/medications/devices and service animal considerations
* Travel check ins/screenings/pre-departure boarding
* Ontario Disability Support Program considerations

*Contributors: Student Success Centre Global Experience Team, Katherine Hesson-Bolton*

### Accessible Online Training for Archway – Housing & Conference Services

Pivoting the community building structures of the Residence Life curriculum to online delivery in the [Archway program](https://archway.mcmaster.ca/) included intentional measures to ensure the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion.

Two opportunities for professional staff members to train with the Manager, Accessibility Services on technologies were offered to help build online training content. A direct outcome of this training was a commitment to incorporate multiple delivery methods to meet accessibility standards including:

* Majority of training was delivered asynchronously to allow flexibility of scheduling for all Mentors and Coaches
* Recorded training videos were captioned in English using Echo 360 and MacVideo Software
* Ensured all digital elements including infographics and other material were created to ensure font size, contrast and other considerations met highest accessibility standards.
* All documents were formatted to meet screen reading capability requirements

To learn more about the Accessible Online Training for Archway, check out their [Student Development Theory](https://www.macvideo.ca/media/Student+Development+Theory+Part+1/1_0haoiper).

*Contributors: Archway Program Leads and Facilitators*

### Library Access for Student Learners with Disabilities During COVID

**With the exceptional growth in all their services this first semester,** [**Library Accessibility Services (LAS)**](https://library.mcmaster.ca/spaces/las) **have:**

* A record number of students registered with LAS/CATS.
* A roll-out of their lecture captioning strategy through Echo 360. Deaf and hard of hearing students in Echo enabled classes can now obtain human-edited captions for their lectures.
* Continued to seek out and form partnerships with departments on campus such as SAS, Maccess, and EIO along with off-campus alliances through visits with institutions like the University of Guelph, Mohawk College and the W. Ross MacDonald School.
* Taken the opportunity to ensure their services were available to students, both in-person and online.

While LAS continues to offer their core services, it is not business as usual. The pandemic has led to the library's closure, and in turn, CATS, the Campus Accessibility Technology Space. While they cannot use the space at this time, watch for exciting changes when they are able to reopen.

**During the shutdown, their student assistants have been able to shift to project-based work. Since March, they have worked on:**

* Contributing library material scanned in-house to the [Accessible Content ePortal (ACE)](https://library.mcmaster.ca/services/alternate-format): this helps students with print disabilities across the province by adding content to the collection
* An accessible database project which provides accessibility information for the various databases the library subscribes to for their users
* A captioning project: ensuring their videos are captioned or captionable (have permission to caption) to satisfy the requirement under AODA
* Moving their video files to a new storage system: the old system will be phased out and the new system will be more efficient for users

*Contributors: Nancy Waite, Paige Maylott, Library Accessibility Services*

### Rethinking Peer Support in an Online Environment - MSU Maccess

In the shift to remote learning, [MSU Maccess](https://msumcmaster.ca/service/maccess/) needed to rethink their services for use within a virtual context. Maccess community members often talk about the benefit of being around their peers in Maccess, even if they are not actively contributing to conversations. Because of this, they wanted to ensure it was possible to engage in their drop-in space passively, without feeling pressured to be actively engaged the entire time. They also recognize that students are experiencing Zoom Fatigue daily and wanted to ensure the drop-in space was created in a way that gave students a break from Zoom Fatigue, instead of contributing to it.   
  
Maccess created a [Discord server for their Drop-In Space](https://l.instagram.com/?u=http%3A%2F%2Flinktr.ee%2Fmaccess&e=ATMUr3kY8RH8rCliaKqC-GOpTomr4Mg7YCESVyJ4Gx9_9_5F7Zi8wGdEpsSpW80foNz6cq9g9BmPPJPxMobnyw&s=1), through which community members could connect via text, voice, and video. This drop-in space is used for one-on-one peer-support, sharing memes and pets, and casual conversation. They also have a dedicated voice channel for community members to “co-work” together with the presence of others.

Additionally, this year Maccess has launched three collaborative peer support and community groups, in addition to our volunteer-selected groups. These groups include:

* Disabled Queer & Trans ([with the PCC](https://msumcmaster.ca/service/pcc/))
* Disability in Colour ([with WGEN](https://msumcmaster.ca/service/wgen/) and [Diversity Services](https://msumcmaster.ca/service/diversity-services/))

The Disabled Queer & Trans and Disability in Colour groups were developed with the intention of creating dedicated spaces for disabled students with intersecting identities. Navigating Health/Care was developed to create space for students to discuss their experiences accessing health, care, disability, and accessibility services, and to share their techniques for navigating ableism, inaccessibility, and other barriers within these services.

Their groups are hosted through Microsoft Teams to ensure captioning is available.

*Contributors: Calvin Prowse (MSU Maccess Coordinator)*

### McMaster Museum of Art – An Accessible Virtual Experience

Closed captioning updates and corrections are underway for all videos uploaded to the museum’s Youtube channel to support people with hearing impairments, diverse learning styles, and those who do not speak English.

In addition, for COVID-19 pandemic responses, the Museum programming continues to pivot to virtual and digital formats (where possible) to serve audiences while closed to the public.

*Contributors: Museum of Art Education and Communications Staf**f*

## Employment

### Advancing Accessibility for Employees with Disabilities

McMaster University is committed to removing barriers to employment for persons with disabilities and promoting inclusive workplaces. Human Resources Services in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the McMaster Accessibility Council and the Equity and Inclusion Office, undertook the following programs and initiatives to advance employment equity for employees with disabilities:

* Ongoing accessibility training and awareness initiatives for staff and faculty to integrate accessibility into our day-to-day work responsibilities
* Collaboration with the Equity and Inclusion Office to facilitate [Accessible Workplace Accommodation Training](https://mcmasteru365.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/AccessMacProgramAssistant/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B18DAFAAD-8685-40D4-8AC9-4B916E89A667%7D&file=2019-2020%20Accessibility%20Update%20Full%20Version_COPY.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&cid=c3567069-98e3-4ffb-b26d-f484b33ac520) for managers, staff and faculty
* Ongoing development of [Individual Accommodation Plans](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/05/Workplace-Accommodation-Policy-2015.pdf) for employees requiring accommodation
* Continue to support and manage return to work and redeployment processes available for employees
* Ongoing support to [Employee Accessibility Network](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/services/), as needed

*Contributors: May-Marie Duwai-Sowa, Employee Equity, Human Resources Services*

### Removing Barriers for Two-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary Employees - CUPE Local 3906 (Unit 1)

[The Gender Affirmation Fund](https://cupe3906.org/tas-unit-1/gender-affirmation-fund/) was won by [CUPE 3906, Unit 1](https://cupe3906.org/tas-unit-1/) (representing TAs and RAs in-lieu) in 2019. The purpose of this fund is to help Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary Unit 1 members offset the costs associated with gender affirmation, including every day medical, administrative, legal, (and other) expenses. Given that the fund is still rather modest, the annual cap per member is currently $1250/academic year (September – August), while the lifetime cap is set at $2500. CUPE 3906 hopes to increase this through future collective bargaining.  
  
The financial costs associated with gender affirmation can vary greatly from person to person. The Union holds an expansive, open definition of what constitutes gender affirmation. There is no predetermined list of eligible expenses. The only requirement is that the cost(s) for which one is seeking reimbursement be incurred for the purpose of affirming one’s gender identity, however you so chosen.   
  
Explore the [Gender Affirmation Fund](https://cupe3906.org/tas-unit-1/gender-affirmation-fund/).

*Contributors: Mollie McGuire, Vice-President, CUPE 3906, Unit 1*

### Faculty of Health Sciences - Safety Office

The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) Safety Manager, Adam Palmer, has been moving forward the accessibility of Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS) online training for workers with disabilities. WSPS offers health and safety expertise, consulting, training, and resources to workers in Ontario.

WSPS shared the need for better supporting workers living with disability. In connecting with Kate Brown, Accessibility Program Manager at AccessMac, it was recommended WSPS build accessible program design features into the online training that WSPS offers. Kate shared her expert knowledge of accessibility, course design, and accessible technology, as well as provided additional resources that WSPS will use to advance their training. The details Kate shared were invaluable and WSPS now has a clear path forward to better accessibility.

*Contributors: Faculty of Health Sciences, Adam Palmer, and Kate Brown, Equity and Inclusion Office*

### Employee Accessibility Network (EAN)

Established in 2017, the [Employee Accessibility Network (EAN)](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/services/employee-accessibility-network/) was created for employees with disabilities at the University to connect, network and collaborate. The Network was also developed to act as one of the main accessibility consultative groups to the McMaster Accessibility Council, and the University at large, in areas of:

* Disability Inclusion,
* Accommodations,
* Accessibility compliance,
* Aspirational planning, and
* To offer a lens of lived experience to institutional work carried out which may disproportionately impact employees with disabilities in the absence of consultation.

**This past year, the Network has worked together to consult and provide feedback in several areas, including:**

* COVID-19 and the shift to remote environment impacts on employees with disabilities (feedback delivered to the AVP EI to share with the Return to Campus Oversight and Employee Return to Campus Committees).
* Completing a full-scale employee accessibility audit of McMaster’s current [McMaster’s AODA Compliance Plan 2012-2025](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/legislation/#tab-content-accessibility-plans), with a focus on auditing the AODA Employment Standard Plan.
* Additionally, the Coordinator of the Employee Network works continuously to report concerns and experiences to relevant McMaster staff and units that Network members have anonymously discussed during meetings.

**Frequently discussed examples during this year’s meetings have included:**

* New accessibility barriers experienced resulting from the pandemic, as well as barrier removal that has resulted from the shift to remote environments;
* Continued inconsistency in the knowledge and implementation of workplace accommodations across the institution through all stages of an employee’s career journey;
* Considerations for Return to Campus from Disabled perspectives
* Inconsistency around dissemination and take-up of obligations and responsibilities regarding accessibility / accommodation compliance within the McMaster learning and working environment.

To join the Network, please contact (confidentially) Kate Brown, EAN Coordinator, at [access@mcmaster.ca](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca) - or visit the [Employee Accessibility Network](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/services/) webpage for more information.

*Contributors: Employee Accessibility Network (EAN), Kate Brown, AccessMac*

## Policies and Plans

### Accessibility Strategic Planning and Implementation

* The McMaster Accessibility Council has been working with the AVP Equity & Inclusion on incorporating aspirational accessibility priorities and goals into the institution’s strategic [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Planning](https://equity.mcmaster.ca/strategy/towards-inclusive-excellence/).
* McMaster’s Policy on Accessibility is currently under review, and the revised Policy will be instrumental in mobilizing actions to meet compliance measures as well as aspirational goals. This Policy will undergo consultation and review with communities of persons with disabilities in its re-development.

*Contributors: McMaster Accessibility Council, Equity and Inclusion Office*

### Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education at the Provincial Level

The [McMaster Accessibility Council](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/services/#tab-content-accessibility-council) has continued its participation vis a vis the Accessibility Council Chair on the provincial [AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard Development Committee](https://www.ontario.ca/page/standards-development-committee-meeting-minutes#section-0). The work of this Committee was on hiatus during the transfer between the two provincial governments but resumed its work in the Fall of 2019, continuing into 2020. The goal of the Committee is to develop recommendations for a standard to reduce accessibility barriers in all aspects of post-secondary education, and transition to PSE from high school, with a draft Standard to be ready for public consultation in late 2020.

**Areas of focus include:**

* Attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, and assumptions
* Awareness and training
* Assessment, curriculum and instruction
* Digital learning and technology
* Organizational barriers
* Social realms / campus life

*Contributors: Anne Pottier, Chair, McMaster Accessibility Council, Kate Brown, Accessibility Program Manager, Equity and Inclusion Office*

### Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities

A presentation of the [Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-accessible-education-students-disabilities), released by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in March 2018, was presented to the McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC) by Kate Brown, Accessibility Program Manager, during the MAC’s 2019 spring meeting.

**The significance and relevance of this Policy cannot be understated, most evidently in areas of:**

* The widespread provincial failures to accommodate and meaningfully include students with disabilities in educational environments, levels K - Post-secondary;
* The undue burden of responsibility to disclose disability status and self-advocate for accommodation and accessibility support placed on students with invisible disabilities, in particular where those disabilities are highly stigmatized (e.g. mental health disabilities);
* The differential and negative impacts that students with disabilities with complex intersectional identities (perceived race/ethnicity; gender; income level; rural vs. urban, etc.) experience (e.g. Indigenous and Black students with disabilities when compared to non-racialized students with disabilities), and;
* The need for accessible education and disability-inclusion training to be mandated / emphasized at all levels of education (K - Post-secondary).

*Contributors: Kate Brown, Accessibility Program Manager, Equity and Inclusion Office*

## Spaces and Environments

### Working Towards an Accessible Campus - McMaster Facilities Services

This year, [McMaster Facilities Services](https://facilities.mcmaster.ca/) completed many accessibility-related projects as part of the [Campus Accessibility Action Plan (CAPP)](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/11/Campus-Accessibility-Plan-2018-2013-V5-20Apr2018.pdf) – a summary of these projects can be found in Appendix A of McMaster's Annual Accessibility Report.   
  
In addition to specific requests for accessibility upgrades in several departments and campus buildings, plans are underway for the addition of an elevator to the Applied Dynamics Laboratory building.

**This was the year of accessibility audits for many buildings on campus, including:**

* Accessibility audits for Mills Memorial Library and the H.G. Thode Science & Engineering Library. Recommendations from these audits are being reviewed and prioritized action plans are being developed to address many of the issues raised.
* An audit of accessible entrances for all buildings on campus was undertaken as part of the development of a virtual campus map.
* An audit of all washrooms on campus was undertaken to determine which washrooms are accessible, barrier-free and/or All Genders. Recommendations from this audit have been reviewed and a prioritized action plan will be developed to address issues raised.

*Contributors: George Vadakken, Facilities Services*

### Accessible Transportation On-Campus

The Parking Office replaced the two existing campus shuttle buses with accessible shuttle buses which went into operation for the Fall 2019 term. The shuttle bus service is currently on hiatus, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, but shuttle service delivery will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

*Contributors: Parking and Security Services, Facilities Services*

### Making Accessible Spaces with McMaster Museum of Art

[McMaster Museum of Art](https://museum.mcmaster.ca/) is committed to working proactively and creating welcoming and accessible spaces to ensure visitors of all abilities are able to access their galleries and events.

**In 2018/19 it introduced:**

* A new multi-level accessible reception desk to better welcome and accommodate a variety of heights and mobility devices
* New seating, both portable and stationary easy access chairs, in all public spaces
* Large font versions of interpretive texts and object labels in galleries
* A safe, private space for McMaster Student Open Circles sessions, exploring mindfulness practice, creative expression, and discussion
* Welcome text in lobby
* All gender washroom signage

*Contributors: McMaster Museum of Art Education and Communications Staff*

## Technology & Communications

### Working towards accessible, inclusive communication in the Office of Communications and Public Affairs

**The** [**Office of Communications and Public Affairs**](https://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/main/index.html) **continues to work towards providing accessible, inclusive content in many ways, including:**

* Highlighting stories on accessibility, disability, assistive technology, and other relevant topics, including these recent articles:
  + **Daily News**
    - [Teams with McMaster connections place first and third in international Digital Inclusion Challenge](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/mcmaster-teams-place-first-and-third-in-international-digital-inclusion-challenge/)
    - [Soldiers’ letters home now available digitally, thanks to lockdown transcription project](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/soldiers-letters-home-now-available-digitally-thanks-to-lockdown-transcription-project/)
    - [Engineering startup, ImaginAble, to compete for $30K in LiONS LAIR competition](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/engineering-startup-to-compete-for-30k-in-lions-lair-competition/)
    - [“No hard work is ever wasted”](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/no-hard-work-is-ever-wasted/) (profile of electrical and biomedical engineering graduate Hisham Mohammed)
    - [Can’t stop the music](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/cant-stop-the-music/) (article about Hamilton Parkinson’s Choir)
  + **Brighter World**
    - [COVID-19 has isolated people with disabilities from family, love, sex](https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/covid-19-has-isolated-people-with-disabilities-from-family-love-sex/)
    - [Children with disabilities face health risks, disruption and marginalization under coronavirus](https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/children-with-disabilities-face-health-risks-disruption-and-marginalization-under-coronavirus/)
* Ensuring that content and social media managers across campus have training in accessible content and social media posts through virtual training sessions
* Captioning each of the videos they produce and post, and adding alternative text to images on websites and social media
* Remaining open to and eager for feedback, consultation, and collaboration around issues of digital accessibility and inclusive content

*Contributors: Sara Laux, Daily News*

### Incorporating Accessibility into Microsoft 365 Platforms

Since the move to online learning, it has been imperative that the university has identified accessibility and inclusivity challenges that are prominent throughout the [Microsoft 365 Platform](https://office365.mcmaster.ca/). McMaster has worked diligently with Microsoft to provide training opportunities for those that need to enhance their skillset. Beyond this, the [University Technology Services (UTS)](https://uts.mcmaster.ca/) Team has now offered personalized training with our Business Systems Specialist [Christa Morrison](mailto:morric17@mcmaster.ca) (and Sue McKinlay). By accessing the McMaster Office 365 Hub, individuals can book customized Microsoft 365 consultations with Christa to better their knowledge. Additionally, upon request, Christa can share resources developed by the McMaster/Microsoft 365 Support Team that is dedicated to assisting those with accessibility and disability concerns.

The Microsoft 365 Platform is constantly looking to improve their application experience for everyone, and both the 365 Hub and Class Teams (located in Microsoft Teams, added available per request) act as resources that can provide assistance regarding accessibility/disability updates.

*Contributors: Sue McKinlay, Christa Morrison, Nicholas Davison, UTS Services*

### Transcribing Archival Documents to Enhance Digital Access for Assistive Technology Users

The Digitization Centre within the McMaster University Library continues to transcribe hand-written content and correct text of scanned documents in [the Digital Archive](http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/) to improve searching and make content legible to screen readers, as well as other assistive technologies.

An example of this is the transcription of a soldier’s letters home by library staff, story can be found [here](https://library.mcmaster.ca/news/library-staff-students-transcribing-soldiers-letters-home-and-other-historical-gems).

*Contributors: Krista Jamieson, Bridget Whittle, McMaster Libraries*

### Refreshing McMaster’s Central Accessibility Hub

After undergoing extensive user testing for accessibility, the AccessMac Program officially relaunched the [McMaster Accessibility Hub](https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/11/Campus-Accessibility-Plan-2018-2013-V5-20Apr2018.pdf) on Media Production Service’s (MPS) [new Macsites platform](https://macsites.mcmaster.ca/) in September 2019. The website has a clean, rebranded Brighter World look and feel to it, and in accordance with WCAG 2.0 AA guidelines for extensive refresh of a website, is moving closer and closer to a goal of complete AA compliance, including the extensive remediation of current PDF resources (including McMaster policies) into HTML or Microsoft Word formats by January 1, 2021. User testing carried out in partnership with the MacPherson Student Partner Program underpins the enhanced accessibility of the website, and special thanks and recognition goes out to the students with disabilities who participated as partners and testers in this ongoing project. MPS and AccessMac will continue to work closely with campus partners and users of assistive technologies to iteratively incorporate accessibility criteria, testing and feedback mechanisms into MPS templates and platforms.   
  
Moving forward, the Accessibility Hub, which is linked to a variety of other online platforms and list serves for accessibility and disability inclusion, will be one of the main driving communication and branding components of the AccessMac Program.

*Contributors: Kate Brown, AccessMac Program, Media Production Services (MPS)*

*Sincere appreciation and thanks to our wonderful campus community for your accessibility and disability inclusion work, scholarship, community organizing and continued efforts!*

*Please connect with Kate Brown, AccessMac Program Manager, for any questions, comments, or contributions you may have regarding the Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update:* [*access@mcmaster.ca*](mailto:access@mcmaster.ca)