



Coordinated Accessibility Strategy

**Annual Report
2024**

Carleton
University





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Algonquin Territory Acknowledgement

Carleton University acknowledges the location of its campus upon the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin nation. We recognize that the implementation of the Coordinated Accessibility Strategy must reflect the values of the Algonquin people. Accordingly, we must strive to further strengthen relationships between Carleton and the Algonquin communities and endeavor to accelerate the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in our campus practices.

From the **Coordinated Accessibility Strategy Implementation Team**

Carleton University continues to lead from a place of service and commitment, encouraging us to acknowledge the humanity in all of us and, by doing so, make space for dignity, recognition, understanding and compassion.

Our committed community working on the implementation of the Coordinated Accessibility Strategy (CAS) continues to evolve as the post-secondary education sector faces resource constraints. Our continued success is reflected in the steadfast commitment from senior-level management and our community. This commitment is evidenced through the efforts reflected in this year's annual report and unprecedented levels of engagement from individuals and units across campus.

2024 represents the penultimate year of our five-year strategic plan. As we progress, we remain committed to a reflective process that embraces community feedback to identify our strengths and areas for enhancement. In the coming year, we will actively facilitate community consultations that

contribute to the evolution of the CAS. This transition to a forward-thinking approach is essential to ensure that Carleton remains an inclusive environment where individuals of all abilities enjoy the freedom and empowerment to participate fully in campus life.

On behalf of the CAS implementation team and the teams advancing our strategy, thank you for your continued advocacy and leadership for a more accessible world.

To our continued success,



Cathy Malcolm Edwards
CAS Implementation Lead

Executive Summary

Carleton University's [Coordinated Accessibility Strategy](#) (CAS) was officially launched in June 2020 under the guidance of the university's four vice presidents. Through the cross-representational steering committee, the first phase of implementation brought together diverse voices and perspectives to draft proposed action plans. The CAS is now in its action phase, with many projects and initiatives underway across the university. Each project considers the voices of lived experience to guide the path forward. There is also an intention for equitable representation that reflects the diversity of our campus community.

The CAS implementation team continues to make progress towards its intermediary outcomes, such as internal recognition of accessibility as part of our culture, embedded in roles and with greater representation. The team is also working with units on campus to support coordination and leadership, policy reviews and building competencies and capacity in accessibility. These outcomes are the result of continued consultations and feedback from the Carleton community. This report outlines specific actions taken in service of these outcomes in each of the CAS areas of focus.

Over the past year, 19 of the total 40 recommendations in the CAS have the status of continuous, meaning that key targets have been accomplished although work continues; 8 recommendations are considered complete; 8 recommendations are underway; 4 recommendations are in the planning phase; and 1 recommendation is upcoming (Figure 1). Since the launch of the CAS, definitive action has been taken on 39 of the 40 recommendations.

Figure 1: The status of CAS recommendations for the year 2023-2024

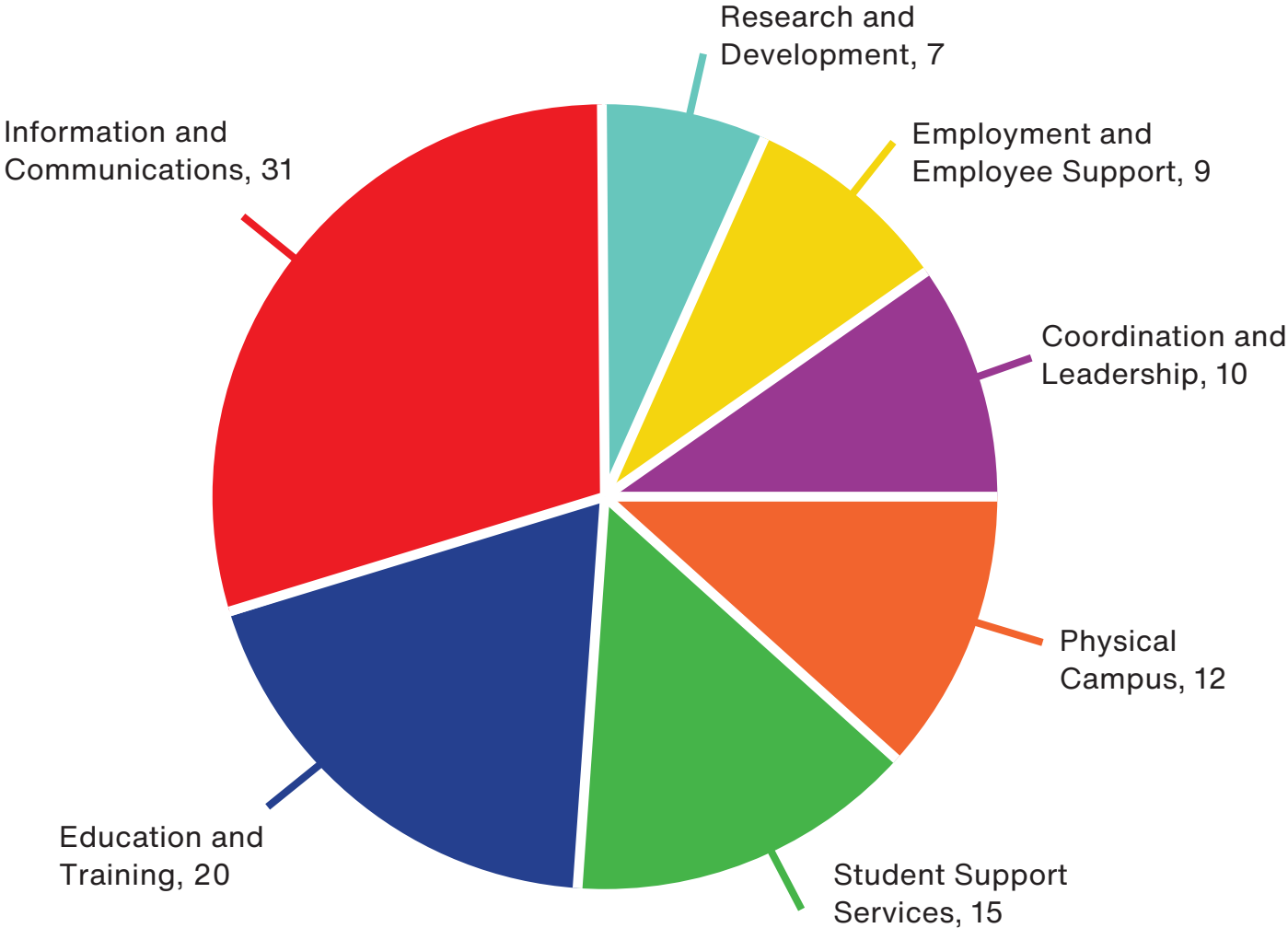


Since its inception, the CAS has inspired more than 80 different initiatives across 7 areas of focus, with several activities spanning multiple areas and recommendations (Figure 2). The majority of actions map to the areas of focus for Education and Training and Information and Communications. This focus of effort reflects the desire of the Carleton community to learn with and from each other in creating more accessible environments and finding ways to share

the knowledge gained. Information and communication also plays a significant role in removing barriers, fostering collaborations and cultivating a more inclusive understanding as a community.

This annual report is respectfully presented to the Board of Governors and the Carleton University community as part of the CAS’s ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability.

Figure 2: CAS Activities by Area of Focus, 2020–2024



Context

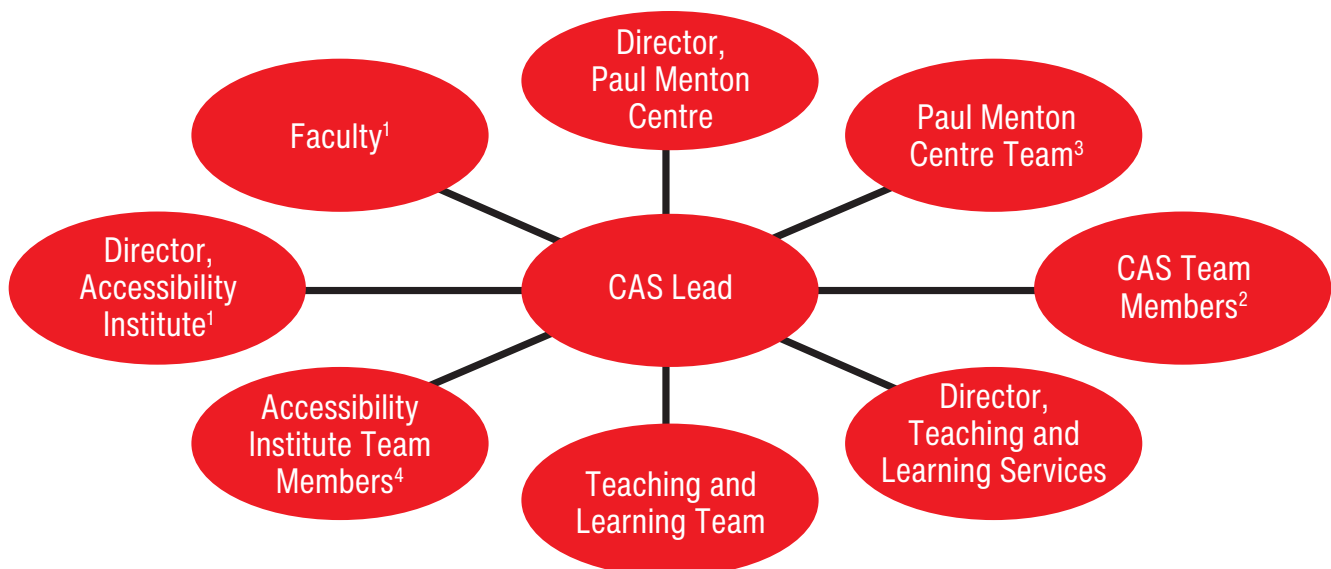
Carleton University strives to be an inclusive community. This aspiration allows us to form deeper connections with one another as we work through barriers of language, stigma and biases.

In 2018, Carleton undertook a collaborative process to develop its first Coordinated Accessibility Strategy (CAS). After extensive consultations with the community, where an emphasis was placed on listening to and reflecting on experiences, 7 areas of focus emerged, each with a set of objectives and recommendations. Collectively, these serve as pathways to a more accessible campus for all. Continuing with a human-centered approach for the implementation of the CAS, the first year (2020-2021) focused on activities and efforts in planning the implementation.

The CAS is governed by a distributed leadership team that is responsible for the overall coordination and leadership (Figure 3). The CAS Lead interfaces with the distributed team as well as executive champions to ensure access and support to coordinate cross-functional initiatives. Activities are informed by a theory of change that was developed in 2021-2022.

In 2022-2023, the increased engagement of the CAS leadership team led to a broader, more nuanced understanding of the university's state of accessibility. This created a more authentic picture of our institution's commitment to accessibility and also set the stage for effective, grounded action.

Figure 3: Team supporting coordination and leadership



1 CAS co-chairs

2 Part-time CAS coordinator and student resources

3 Paul Menton Centre CAS Liaison (on leave)

4 Access to staff members at the Accessibility Institute for coordination and communications

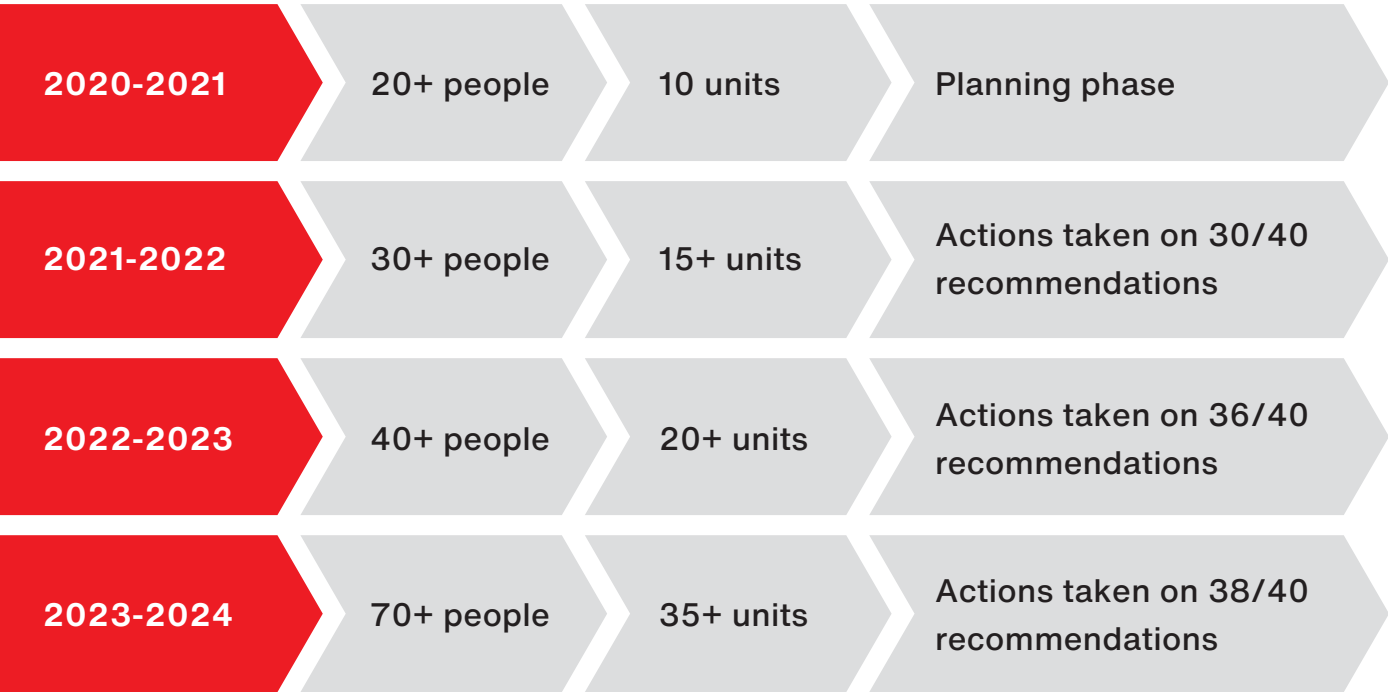
Reporting Back

Highlights of Progress in the Areas of Focus

Since 2020, engagement in accessibility activities has more than tripled (Figure 4), with 70+ people across more than 35 units on campus contributing to the CAS. Approximately 40% of the people involved in 2023-2024 were in leadership roles,

guiding and influencing the state of accessibility on campus. The following section provides an overview of the exceptional work being done in our community.

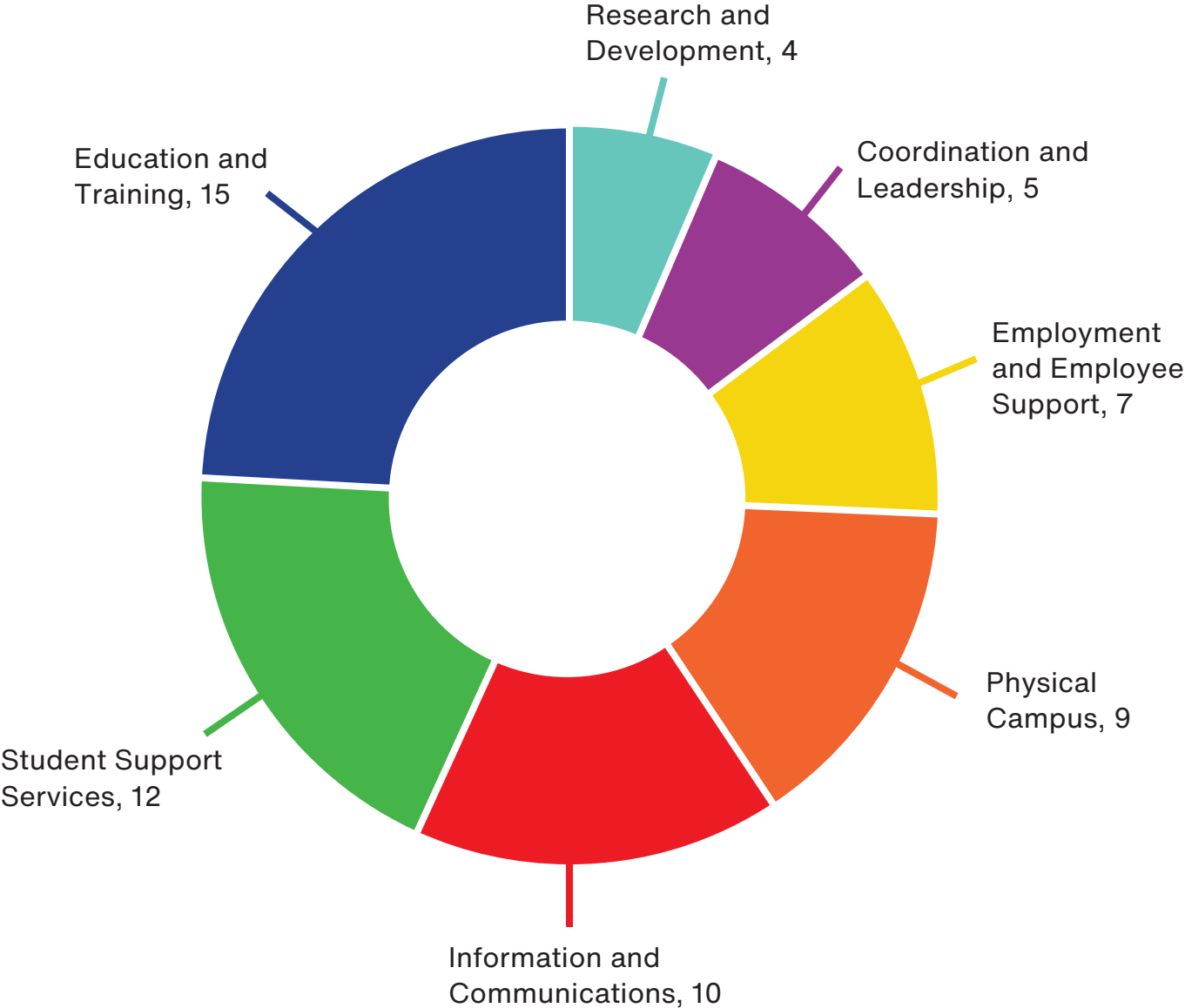
Figure 4: Chart that shows the increasing number of people and campus units actively engaged in accessibility on campus



Through the accessibility champions across campus, the implementation team has learned about the many types of accessibility initiatives happening in our community over the past year. While initiatives are continuing to happen across the university, the majority of the activities reported have supported the Education and Training area of focus (Figure 5). Improvements to Student

Support Services represented the next area of focus with significant activity. This is in part due to the commitment and leadership of units within the Students and Enrolment division towards increasing student success in all aspects of campus life. These efforts across the campus not only build capacity but strengthen our culture of accessibility.

Figure 5: Active projects by Area of Focus, 2023-2024



Note that the following highlights map to the CAS recommendations. Please see Appendix 1 which contains a table of all of the objectives and recommendations, as outlined in the CAS per area of focus and related recommendation status.

Area of Focus #1: Coordination and Leadership

The Accessibility Institute plays a strong leadership role at Carleton by emphasizing the confluence of disability, accessibility and inclusion. Carleton's commitment is also exemplified in the CAS reporting to the vice presidents of the university, with the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment) as the primary executive champion. Having accountability for accessibility entrenched at the senior levels of leadership promotes a culture of service, commitment and innovative thinking.

Highlights:

- Carleton's leadership continues to be reflected in the growth of the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) which houses its national office at Carleton's Accessibility Institute. CAN brought 30 new collaborator organizations on board, bringing the total number of collaborator organizations to 100. The bi-monthly newsletter has grown to a readership of over 600 individuals. Additionally, the Communities of Practice are actively involved in 8 projects aimed at addressing key issues and advancing the cause of accessibility. ([Area of Focus 1, R.f](#))
- The University Secretary completed a benchmarking project on university accessibility policies which will inform the renewal of Carleton's accessibility policy in 2024. This effort will be led by Equity and Inclusive Communities.
- Environmental Health and Safety reviewed all training to identify and address systemic barriers. ([Area of Focus 1](#))
- Sprott's student, faculty and staff equity, diversity and inclusion committee examined overall ways for the Faculty itself and the Nicol Building to be more inclusive and accessible. ([Area of Focus 1](#))

Area of Focus #2:

Education and Training

Over the years, Carleton has committed to better practices in Education and Training as well as mobilizing knowledge, skills and attitudes. In both formal academic programs and professional development training environments, the goal remains to educate our community about how to make campus and campus life more accessible by learning with and from one another.

Highlights:

- Members of the Accessibility Institute provided learning opportunities and supports around accessible communications to Faculty Affairs, the Joint Health and Safety Committee and Residence Life Services. ([Area of Focus 2, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 2, R.b](#); [Area of Focus 2, R.e](#))
- Teaching and Learning Services engaged with Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC), the Paul Menton Centre (PMC) and the Accessibility Institute on the Experiential Learning Hub project. ([Area of Focus 2, R.a](#))
- The Disability Justice & Crip Culture Collaboratory (DJCCC) hosted a roundtable on teaching, accessibility and disability. ([Area of Focus 2, R.e](#))
- EIC facilitated a cross-campus workshop focusing on accessible and equitable practices in post-secondary education. ([Area of Focus 2, R.e](#))
- The Student AccessAbility Program (formerly the Student Accessibility Champions program) challenged students to engage personally in experiences that expanded their knowledge, awareness and understanding of accessibility. ([Area of Focus 2, R.a](#))



Area of Focus #3:

Information and Communications

Information and communications content and technologies, including websites, documents and events, are critical to the accessibility of our university community. They are essential tools for learning, teaching, research and administration. Over the past year, there has been significant activity advancing this area of focus.

Highlights:

- The Disability Justice & Crip Culture Collaboratory (DJCCC), the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN), and a collaboration between Conference Services, Paul Menton Centre (PMC), and the Accessibility Institute have resulted in the creation of guiding documents for accessible events on and off campus. ([Area of Focus 3, R.d](#); [Area of Focus 3, R.e](#))
- The DJCCC hosted a workshop on producing effective image descriptions/ alt text for visuals. ([Area of Focus 2, R.e](#); [Area of Focus 3, R.e](#))
- Spratt launched an initiative to create accessible event policies. ([Area of Focus 3, R.d](#); [Area of Focus 3, R.e](#))
- The CAS created a single-source email to serve as a reporting protocol to identify barriers and areas for improvement. ([Area of Focus 3, R.c](#); [Area of Focus 4, R.d](#))
- Human Resources assessed all web-based information for AODA compliance and ensured that all forms and documents meet electronic and physical accessibility standards. ([Area of Focus 3, R.a](#))
- The Awards Office reviewed all forms and documents under its purview to ensure they meet electronic and physical accessibility standards. Responding to the review involves significant training of dedicated staff members in the use of appropriate software tools. ([Area of Focus 3, R.d](#); [Area of Focus 3, R.e](#))



Area of Focus #4:

Physical Campus

By adopting the Rick Hansen Foundation's (RHF) Accessibility Standard, as well as Brock University's accessibility design guidelines, Carleton continues to challenge its standard of excellence, which far exceeds compliance with codes and regulations. Leadership in this space ensures Carleton remains an inviting and inclusive community.

Highlights:

- Campus Safety Services (CSS) continued its proactive work with OC Transpo and Facilities Management and Planning (FMP) to develop better facilities for bus stops with an eye to accessibility for all users, especially those using devices or having any physical limitations to environment/terrain. Additionally, the group is committed to ensure that accessible parking is maintained in the campus core. ([Area of Focus 4, R.f](#))
- [Fire safety and emergency procedures for persons with disabilities](#) were created in partnership between the Emergency Management and Continuity of Operations (EMCO) Office, the Paul Menton Centre (PMC), the Carleton Disability Awareness Centre (CDAC) and Attendant Services. ([Area of Focus 4, R.f](#))
- Audits and registration are complete for 22 buildings with 18 additional audits to complete by the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. The RHF has completed an update of the assessment to version 4, adopting the revised CSA/ASC B651:23 National Standard of Canada. ([Area of Focus 4, R.a](#))



Area of Focus #5:

Employment and Employee Support

While Carleton University is well known as a leader in accessibility, the CAS highlights the need for further attention to services and support for Carleton employees with disabilities. We continue to take steps towards addressing structural inequities that may exist inherently, particularly in our practices and processes.

Highlights:

- Faculty Affairs provided training for academic hiring committees and is integrating consideration of accessibility in all aspects from training, job advertisements and communication with potential candidates and new hires. They are beginning work on a recruitment strategy to highlight Carleton's accessibility initiatives as they relate to potential hires. ([Area of Focus 5, R.b](#))
- Human Resources developed a new medical accommodations process and associated training and web materials. ([Area of Focus 5, R.a](#))
- Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) launched the self-identification survey (Be You@CU) that will build a picture of the diversity and representation on campus. Analysis of the data will help identify gaps and inequities across campus for persons with disabilities. ([Area of Focus 5, R.b](#); [Area of Focus 5, R.e](#))



Area of Focus #6:

Student Support Services

Carleton strives for excellence in services for students with disabilities across all units to support success in every aspect of campus life. By striving for excellence, space is created for innovative thinking. Examples of this can be seen in the work of the library and the New Sun Joy Maclaren Adaptive Technology Centre addressing gaps in services and supports as well as exam accommodations and the launch of a more accessible campus map.

Highlights:

- The library added new accessible group study rooms to accompany the New Sun Joy Maclaren Adaptive Technology Centre (JMC). This filled a significant gap as previously there were not dedicated accessible group study rooms in the library. Additionally, all assistive software in the JMC was updated. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 6, R.b](#); [Area of Focus 4, R.f](#))
- There was installation of new computer labs in the library with accessibility features, including voice-lift technology, assisted exits/entrances and height-adjustable surfaces. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 6, R.b](#))
- An Alternate Format Working Group was formed to streamline workflows for producing accessible documents and integrating accessibility features and services into the library system. For example, alternate formats of library materials can now be requested directly in Omni, the library's discovery layer. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 6, R.b](#); [Area of Focus 3, R.d](#))
- An innovative system, Ventus, has been launched by Scheduling and Exam Services to assist students in efficiently managing their accommodations for exams. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 6, R.b](#))
- In collaboration with the Accessibility Institute, Strategic Initiatives (Students and Enrolment) has included accessibility information as part of the new campus map in Carleton Mobile. When tapping on a building, users are presented with information regarding elevators, accessible entrances and accessible washrooms available in the building. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 4, R.f](#))
- In partnership between the Accessibility Institute, PMC and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, an action project was launched to look at accessible practices in graduate studies. Focus groups were conducted with graduate studies supervisors and administrators to identify gaps in graduate student services programming and delivery for students with disabilities. ([Area of Focus 6, R.a](#); [Area of Focus 6, R.b](#); [Area of Focus 6, R.d](#))

Area of Focus #7:

Research and Development

Research plays a vital role in advancing inclusion of persons with disabilities. In the last calendar year, more than \$1.1M in funding was awarded representing areas such as the development of improved access on campus and research enabling independent living. While newly approved research funding in the area of accessibility decreased in the past calendar year, the amount does not reflect the multi-year funding secured in previous years.

Highlights:

- The Collaborative Master's program in Accessibility includes 16 different departments on campus. It was launched in the fall 2023, with 7 students enrolled in the first cohort. ([Area of Focus 7, R.e](#); [Area of Focus 2, R.e](#))
- The Accessibility Institute and the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) both launched projects to develop tools that support and enable resources related to accessibility in the research ecosystem. ([Area of Focus 7, R.c](#))
- Carleton committed 4 positions and subsequent Canada Research Chair (CRC) allocations in accessibility and disability to enhance research capacity throughout the university. ([Area of Focus 7, R.d](#))



What is Next?

At Carleton, we are united by a clear vision to enhance accessibility, aiming to foster a community that fully supports the inclusion and participation of all its members.

We have made significant strides toward the intermediary goals of the CAS by responding effectively to the needs of the Carleton community. This progress is evidenced by the buy-in and active support from our leadership, a heightened awareness and understanding of accessibility culture on campus, and the allocation of resources to diminish barriers, especially for students with disabilities. Moreover, we have seen an encouraging increase in the representation of persons with disabilities in the design and planning of our services and offerings.

Striving for excellence in accessibility contributes to our external reputation as an institution. Our leadership is a differentiator. We are attracting research funding, engaging in international collaborations and leading a national network. To continue to lead, we also must continue to embrace the opportunities to grow in our commitment. We must continue to underscore the imperative for innovative thinking, reinforcing our belief that championing accessibility is not only necessary but

fundamentally the correct path forward. For example, the completion of physical campus audits by the end of the 2024-2025 academic year is a noteworthy milestone. Yet, these audits alone do not equate to a more accessible campus without a dedicated plan to address and prioritize identified needs, including wayfinding. Our extensive benchmarking project has outlined pathways to better support employees with disabilities, including faculty members. Furthermore, while we have made progress in the past year in identifying barriers faced by graduate students with disabilities, we next need to turn our attention to determining how to dismantle them.

Looking ahead to the next year, insights from the self-identification survey are expected to enable us to offer more targeted support for employees with disabilities. Additionally, a continuous environmental scan of campus services and resources has culminated in the creation of an information commons for accessibility at Carleton which will be launched in 2024. Our proactive approach to on-demand training requests in recent years is set to launch a first-of-its-kind learning and professional development opportunity at Carleton, available to all faculty and staff by late March 2024, along with an Accessibility Certificate for professionals in the spring of 2024.

The coming 12-18 months present a vital opportunity to develop strategies to meet these objectives. We aim to create a tactical blueprint that will guide our actions beyond 2025. This period invites us to embrace institutional vulnerability

and discomfort as we delve into the complexities of the barriers we face. By thinking long-term, we continue to make sustainable progress on our priorities and Carleton's leadership in accessibility.



Appendix 1:

Areas of Focus and Recommendations Status

This appendix contains the objectives and recommendations directly outlined in the [Coordinated Accessibility Strategy \(CAS\)](#). A status column has been added with the following indicators:

- **Planning:** Activities (e.g., planning, coordination) are initiated in the current reporting cycle.
- **Underway:** Activities are currently underway and being implemented.
- **Continuous:** Activities are complete, but implementation is an ongoing process with no definitive end date.
- **Complete:** Activities have been completed with no further implementation required.
- **Upcoming:** Activities are planned in the near-to-mid term.

The table below can be summarized as follows:

- 19 recommendations are in a continuous state;
- 8 recommendations are considered complete;
- 8 recommendations are underway;
- 4 recommendations are considered in the planning phase; and
- 1 recommendation is in the upcoming phase.

As recommendations are actioned, it is worth noting that the implementation is an ongoing process with no definitive end date. This is reflective of accessibility not being an end state but instead a continuous state of adaptation. Since the original launch of the CAS, definitive actions have been taken on 39 of the 40 recommendations.

Area of Focus #1: Coordination and Leadership

Recommendations	Status
a. Conduct a thorough environmental scan and create a living document of all accessibility initiatives at Carleton.	Continuous
b. Establish an interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence in Accessibility that provides leadership, coordination, best practices, research, support, training, and knowledge mobilization.	Complete
c. Formalize the senior leadership responsibility for accessibility across the university's portfolios.	Complete
d. Increase depth of accessibility training of people in leadership positions.	Underway
e. Expand university-wide and community events and campaigns to increase awareness and foster a culture of accessibility.	Continuous
f. Develop membership and contributions to accessibility partnerships, organizations, and consortium, partnering at the local, provincial, national, and global level.	Continuous
g. Establish a central resource to disseminate and receive information on accessibility.	Complete

Area of Focus #2: Education and Training

Recommendations	Status
a. Increase the number of in-depth training opportunities in accessibility on campus that are relevant to different settings and exceed minimum requirements.	Continuous
b. Increase the number of community activities that build greater awareness and understanding of accessibility and disabilities, barriers, and exclusion, as well as opportunities for change.	Continuous
c. Provide educators on campus with incentives, skills, and resources to consider accessibility in the design of academic activities and experiential learning, including the principles of universal design.	Underway
d. Include persons with disabilities and value their lived experiences as a source of knowledge in the design of teaching and learning.	Continuous
e. Expand interdisciplinary academic programming and professional development in accessibility and disabilities for members of the internal and external community.	Continuous
f. Address issues of accessibility and disabilities within the Faculties and Departments and encourage faculty to utilize relevant teaching and learning services.	Planning

Area of Focus #3: Information and Communications

Recommendations	Status
a. Perform system audits for accessibility, driven by individual units.	Continuous
b. Establish a process for support for providing accommodations, and adaptive and assistive devices for Carleton events.	Underway
c. Establish a reporting protocol to identify information- and communication-related accessibility barriers and areas for improvement.	Complete
d. Establish best practices for accessibility in all knowledge creation and sharing (e.g., documents, presentation, websites, social media, conferences), which are shared internally and externally.	Continuous
e. Provide guidelines and training opportunities on accessibility in knowledge creation and sharing for faculty and staff.	Continuous
f. Ensure accessibility to be part of the procurement requirements.	Complete

Area of Focus #4: Physical Campus

Recommendations	Status
a. Create a Carleton University standard for accessibility of physical spaces based on best practice guidelines and certifications that surpass minimum requirements.	Complete
b. Perform a full accessibility audit of the physical campus with input from the campus community, particularly persons with disabilities.	Continuous
c. Undertake systematic retrofitting to address current problems and meet the new standards for the physical campus.	Planning
d. Establish a reporting protocol to identify accessibility barriers and areas for improvement.	Continuous
e. Establish a permanent university budget and related supporting resources for accessibility of physical spaces.	Continuous
f. Review university policies and practices to consider accessibility where relevant to the physical campus.	Continuous

Area of Focus #5: Employment and Employee Support

Recommendations	Status
a. Institute effective processes and go-to resources on campus for disability-related accommodations and supports for employees across all levels and stages of employment.	Underway
b. Review and identify gaps in employment-related policies, practices, and training that support accessibility, accommodations, and disability-competent inclusion.	Continuous
c. Provide targeted opportunities across campus that promote career development and training for Carleton employees with disabilities.	Upcoming
d. Include employees with disabilities for input and participation to improve accessibility in employment for persons with disabilities.	Planning
e. Review Carleton's rates of employment of persons with disabilities and address gaps in representation where they exist.	Planning

Area of Focus #6: Student Support Services

Recommendations	Status
a. Optimize resources through an accessibility lens to be responsive to the growing needs for accommodation and support of students with disabilities.	Continuous
b. Review and identify gaps in student services programming and delivery with consideration of both undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities.	Continuous
c. Provide accessibility- and disability-related training specific to different student services programs.	Underway
d. Build knowledge, awareness, and attitudes in accessibility and accommodations across all student-facing services and points of contact on campus.	Continuous
e. Establish formal student feedback and program evaluation protocols for disability-related student services for continuous quality improvement.	Underway

Area of Focus #7: Research and Development

Recommendations	Status
a. Develop a strategic plan for accessibility and disability research and knowledge mobilization (e.g., research informed campus initiatives).	Continuous
b. Create a university-wide network of researchers in accessibility and disability.	Complete
c. Grow the research capacity in accessibility and disability, including increasing the number and retention of researchers, research funding, research infrastructure, and community partnerships.	Underway
d. Pursue research chair(s) in accessibility and disability.	Underway
e. Establish academic programming to support research in accessibility and disability.	Complete





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