NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2023 - 2026

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

NIC

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Accessibility Plan
2023-2026

This document is available in alternate formats.
Please contact us at 250-334-5000 x4327 or email **accessibility@nic.bc.ca**

More information about accessibility at North Island College (NIC) can be found at
www nic.bc.ca/about-us/accessibility-at-nic or by emailing **accessibility@nic.bc.ca**

Need Support?

If you are looking for individual support or advice on disability services and/or accessibility at NIC, please contact sherri.wilson@nic.bc.ca (employees) or Accessible Learning Services (students).

The North Island Students' Union (NISU) is a student run organization that focuses on Advocacy, Community, and Services. All credit earning students are members of NISU. NISU administers the student extended Health and Dental plan and can help students navigate Health and Dental questions. The Students' Union can help students understand NIC policies, deal with conflict in the classroom as well as provide events and connections for students. Visit nisu.ca to learn more and email theoffice@nisu.ca for support.

How are we doing?

NIC recognizes that feedback is vital to the process of identifying and removing barriers to participation as well as improving how we deliver our services to persons with disabilities. Please submit feedback via email at accessibility@nic.bc.ca or call 250-334-5000 x 4327.

You may also send feedback via regular mail:

Sherri Wilson, Human Resources Advisor, Employee Wellness & Culture
North Island College
2300 Ryan Road, Courtenay, BC V9N 8N6

Territorial Acknowledgment

North Island College is honoured to acknowledge the traditional territories of the combined 35 First Nations of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional and unceded territories the College's campuses are situated.

Accessibility Plan 2023-2026

Contents

In Appreciation

With thanks to the **Accessibility Advisory Committee** and members of the
North Island College community who contributed to the development of this plan.

Message From Chairs of NIC's Accessibility Advisory Committee

We are incredibly pleased to introduce NIC's first-ever Accessibility Plan.

While this plan was developed with provincial legislation in mind, it is much more than just an Accessibility Plan. It is the realization of NIC's longstanding commitment to accessibility and a path toward improvement.

At NIC, accessibility is in our DNA. We believe in providing the best individualized education and learning experience for students.

Our commitment to accessibility began in our very first years of operation. It was evident in our purchasing of a former whaling boat, camper and school buses to deliver programs to students in remote logging camps.

It continues today by including Rick Hansen certifications for accessibility in NIC's Student Housing Commons. This plan ensures future spaces, programs and delivery methods will continue to be built with that same accessibility in mind.

We did this work long before it became a legal requirement, and we look forward to continuing to be accessible for many years to come.

Accessibility means every member of the NIC community can experience what we have to offer – without limits. This includes every aspect of NIC, from spaces to program delivery to orientation, and so much more.

The NIC Accessibility Plan represents an ambitious but realistic path to improvement. It builds on our past, to ensure that when we know better, we can do better.

With each passing year, we are increasingly aware of how access, barriers and disability affect each community members' experience. This plan is our commitment to continue this journey of learning and doing alongside the diverse communities we serve.

We are excited to see this plan come to life over the coming months and years, through the inspiring work of a number of individuals with both professional and lived experiences.

Further, we would be remiss if we did not express our gratitude to the people of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish traditions, upon whose unceded lands we are lucky to live, work and play.

We are thankful for their inspiration through the creation of this plan and hope that our ongoing focus on community and humanity reflects their valued insight.

With gratitude,

Ken Crewe, Associate Vice President, People, Equity and Inclusion

Craig Whitton, Director, Student Affairs

Accessibility Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

About North Island College

North Island College (NIC) is a comprehensive community college, which serves the people and communities across approximately 80,000 km2 of Vancouver Island and parts of the British Columbia (BC) Central Coast from Bamfield to Bella Coola. With 169,000 people in its region, NIC serves the largest population of all BC rural colleges.

NIC is honoured to acknowledge operations within the traditional and unceded territories of 35 First Nations inclusive of the Nuu- chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish traditions.

NIC's story is one of innovation, change, challenge and success. Established in 1975 as a distance education institution, NIC originally served residents in remote logging camps and coastal communities through 24 learning centres . In the 1990s, as population in resource-dependent communities declined, NIC moved to a campus- based model at four sites in Campbell River, Comox Valley (main campus and NIC@ St.Joe's at the former St. Joseph's General Hospital), Port Alberni (main campus and Tebo Road), the Mixalakwila campus in Port Hardy as well as a learning centre in Ucluelet and rural training at the request of community partners. In response to the pandemic, NIC delivered in person, digital and hybrid learning to meet the needs of students across the region – a commitment which continues today.

Port Hardy

Campbell River

Comox Valley

Port Alberni

Ucluelet

Accessible BC Legislation

The [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) was passed on June 17, 2021. This legislation is designed to support over 926,000 people living with a disability in BC and ensure meaningful participation in their communities.

The Accessible BC Act came into effect on September 1, 2022. The regulation requires post-secondary institutions and other public sector organizations to meet the requirements of the Accessible BC Act by September 2023. These requirements include the establishment of an accessibility committee, the development of a plan and a mechanism to receive feedback on accessibility at NIC.

NIC welcomes the Accessible BC Act and the opportunity to identify the significant work that is already being done at our institution to support students and employees with diverse abilities and to build on our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion

Definitions

Accessibility means that all people can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities. Accessibility is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone.

Barriers includes anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment. Barriers can be (a)caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and (b)affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Disability means an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.
Impairment includes a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

(Accessible British Columbia Act, 2021)

Accessibility Standards

The BC government has indicated they will be developing accessibility standards to provide clear expectations and guidance for public-sector organizations. As the accessibility standards are released, they will be integrated into NIC's Accessibility Plan.

Area the standards cover, include:

- **Employment** (hiring, workplace standards, etc.)
- **Service delivery** (getting goods, services, or programs)
- **Built environment** (buildings, places, and spaces)
- **Information and communications** (the way people interact and share information in person and online
- **Transportation** (buses, ferries, trains, etc.)
- **Health** (hospitals, clinics, services)
- **Education** (early childhood education, kindergarten to grade 12, post-secondary education, etc.)
- **Procurement** (buying goods and services)

NIC's Commitment

Diversity, equity and inclusion are core values at North Island College, and are key components of *BUILD 2026*, NIC's strategic plan. NIC is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for everyone. Creating an accessible and inclusive environment is more than simply fulfilling the requirements of the Accessible BC Act. It requires institutional commitment and an on-going process of review and development as we move toward competence. Consultation and feedback from key participants, including persons with disabilities, will inform each stage.

Commitment

Compliance

Review, consultation and learning

Competence
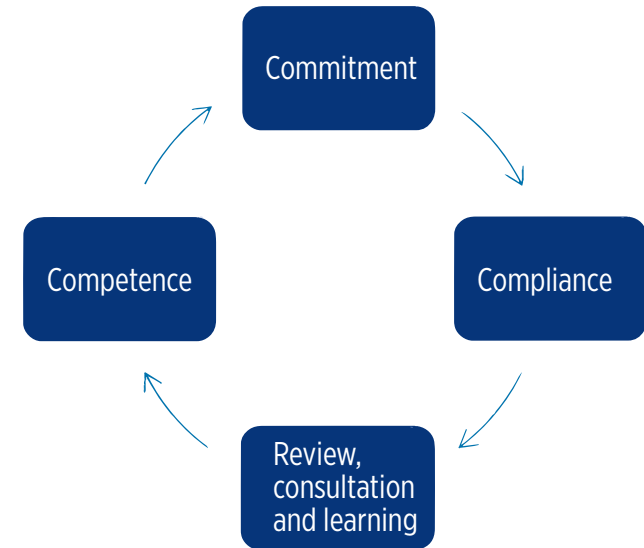
Everybody has the right to see themselves respectfully represented in the NIC community and its places. This is a core value, central to our mission, and integral to students and employees alike. We will meaningfully foster diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating safe learning and workplaces and eliminating the inequities in NIC classrooms, systems, and structures (BUILD 2026).

Accessibility at North Island College (NIC):

PROGRESS TO DATE

Significant and on-going efforts have already been made to enhance accessibility at NIC. The focus on equity, diversity and inclusion has resulted in increased attention to Universal Design for Learning Guidelines and best practices in accessibility across all areas of the institution. For NIC students, this is reflected in the 2020 Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS) responses.

When asked if NIC valued diversity, 88% of the 708 student respondents felt that they were 'respected regardless of personal characteristics, identity or background (e.g., gender, ethnicity, international status or disability).' In response to the question, are 'Difficulties associated with a disability or chronic health condition an obstacle to your academic progress', 91% of respondents indicated a 'minor obstacle' or reported 'no obstacle'.

In Appendix B, we provide a detailed report on the many recent and current initiatives that enhance accessibility at NIC. While we celebrate our successes, we still recognize that fostering inclusion and accessibility is an on-going and evolving undertaking and responsibility.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee

In February 2023, NIC established its first Accessibility Advisory Committee. The committee consists of NIC community members including students, staff and faculty. Membership includes those with lived experience of disabilities and those who support persons with disabilities. The North Island Students' Union Accessibility and Equity Director has a seat along with NISU staff to represent student voices at the table. This supports the identification, removal and prevention of digital and physical barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities including NIC students, employees and visitors.

The Accessibility Action Plan

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The consultation process was designed to be accessible and inclusive. The NIC community was offered several different ways to provide feedback on the question below, including email, in-person feedback and through the Engage platform. The initial consultation took place during March 2023.

> **WHAT BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION**
> **ARE PRESENT IN OUR INSTITUTION?**

This plan included feedback gathered from the community engagement consultation process (spring-fall 2022) and the former Diversity Matters Working Group (2018).

[We will] "Review policies and operational practices to ensure they support the recognition of Indigenous people's human rights and the equity and inclusion of Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and community members."

Working Together, 2022

The Accessibility Action Plan

OVERVIEW

NIC's Accessibility Plan supports the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities "in or interacting with the institution" (Accessible BC Act, 2021). The following have been considered in developing the accessibility plan:

1. The key principles of inclusion adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination and universal design. Disability Alliance BC (2023) defines these principles as:

- **Inclusion:**
  All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.

- **Adaptability:**
  Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

- **Diversity:**
  Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.

The Accessibility Action Plan

OVERVIEW

- **Collaboration:**
  Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.

- **Self-determination:**
  Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

- **Universal Design:**
  The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines universal design as "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to interact with the organization.

The Accessibility Action Plan

OVERVIEW

2.   The Plan describes the measures NIC intends to take in the coming years to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities. These measures will be informed through feedback and consultation with key participants including persons with disabilities.

3.   The plan will be public.

4.   Opportunities to provide feedback on the plan and to identify barriers to accessibility will be available on the NIC website www.nic.bc.ca/about-us/accessibility-at-nic

5.   Progress reports will be available each year and posted on the website www.nic.bc.ca/about-us/accessibility-at-nic

6.   The Plan will be reviewed every three years.

The Accessibility Action Plan

THE FRAMEWORK

In March 2023, feedback was received from employees, students, North Island Students' Union, and the wider community from across the region. This feedback supported an overarching goal: NIC will provide an inclusive and accessible environment for students, employees and visitors.

Several themes, listed below, became evident. Together, they provide the framework for NIC's three-year action plan.

1. Education: Increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and accessibility, and reduce stigma related to different abilities.

2. Policies and procedures: Ensure policies and procedures are accessible and inclusive.

3. Program and service design and delivery: Ensure daily operations, program and services are accessible and inclusive.

4. Employee services and recruitment: Increase accessibility for current and future employees throughout the career cycle.

5. Information, communication and technology: Ensure information and the way that it is shared is clear and available in multiple formats, and that technology is optimized so all users have equal access.

6. Facilities and the built environment: Ensure internal and external spaces are accessible and easily navigated on all NIC campuses.

NIC's Accessibility Action Plan 2023 - 2026

The following Action Plan depicts the priorities identified after the consultation process in winter 2023. As our accessibility literacy evolves, so will a greater understanding of the barriers that exist and how they affect NIC student and employee participation and satisfaction. Consequently, we anticipate that this plan will evolve during its first iteration.

Implementation of the Accessibility Action Plan will require a budget, time and leadership from those responsible for specific areas; it is recommended that costing the action items and finding sufficient resources should be a first priority for Year 1 of the plan.

LEGEND

Goal Area And Statement

1. Education: Increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and accessibility, and reduce stigma related to different abilities.						
Action	**Description and Progress Update**	**Lead**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Status**
1.1 Promote the Accessibility Advisory Committee as a resource for NIC community members seeking support and knowledge related to accessibility.						

Lead:
Team(s) responsible for completing the action and reporting back

Year:
Year 1 – Sept. 2023 – Aug. 2024
Year 2 – Sept. 2024 – Aug. 2025
Year 3 – Sept. 2025 – Aug. 2026

1. Education: Increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and accessibility, and reduce stigma related to different abilities.

Action	Description and Progress Update	Lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Status
1.1 Promote the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) as a resource for NIC community members seeking support and knowledge related to accessibility	Provide regular communications about the committee and its work/role. Acknowledge AccessAbility Week and use the event as a platform to raise awareness.	Accessibility Advisory Committee	●			On-going
1.2 Provide opportunities for employees to increase awareness and understanding of barriers and how to enhance accessibility.	Develop an employee SharePoint for resources related to accessibility.	Human Resources, AAC			●	Not started
	Curate accessibility and inclusion resources and offer workshops, speakers and professional development (PD) opportunities to employees	HR, AAC		●		In-Progress
1.3 Develop employee training to improve awareness, understanding and responsibilities related to accessibility for persons with disabilities.	Create training for current and new employees as part of on-boarding and transition into new roles. Training modules may include Duty to Accommodate, Human Rights, Accessible BC legislation, DALS and HR services and supports.	HR with AAC input		●		Not started

1. Education: Increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and accessibility, and reduce stigma related to different abilities.

Action	Description and Progress Update	Lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Status
1.3 (continued) Develop employee training to improve awareness, understanding and responsibilities related to accessibility for persons with disabilities.	Provide training for all managers in staff accommodations and the return-to-work process.	HR with AAC input		●		Not started
	Create an accessibility-lens tool (checklist).to help identify and assess potential barriers to accessibility.	AAC		●		Not started
	Create an NIC handbook with information and guidelines about how to increase accessibility within daily operations and communications, e.g., accessible meetings, alternate formats, style guides.	HR with input from AAC and other divisions.			●	Not started
1.4 Promote a broader understanding of accessibility needs in the community.	Establish connection with community accessibility committees e.g., school districts, municipalities.	AAC chairs and community engagement lead	●			In-Progress
1.5 Develop additional readiness strategies specific to students with disabilities.	Students with disabilities may need additional support in all aspects of their journey and interactions at NIC. Offer students support to ensure they are prepared for the start of classes.	AAC, Student Affairs, Department of Learning Accessible Services (DALS)			●	Not started

2. Policies and procedures: Ensure that policies and procedures are accessible and inclusive.

Action	Description and Progress Update	Lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Status
2.1 Review current and new policies and procedures to ensure accessibility.	As policies are developed and revised, use an accessibility lens to ensure they are inclusive and accessible .	Leadership Team to determine priorities and timeline. EdCo, Planning & Standards		●		Not started
2.2 Develop an NIC Accessibility Policy	The purpose of an accessibility policy is to provide clear guidance on how the college will achieve the applicable obligations and responsibilities under the Accessible BC Act (2021)	HR and Students & Community Engagement with input from AAC	●			Not started

3. Design and Delivery of programs and services: Ensure that daily operations, programs and delivery of services are accessible and inclusive.

Action	Description and Progress Update	Lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Status
3.1 Identify barriers to accessibility across the institution and create divisional goals to alleviate barriers and enhance accessibility.	Division leaders to add accessibility goals to annual strategic planning and share the goals (and progress) with AAC chairs to include in annual reports	Leadership Team to work with teams to determine priorities and timeline.	●			In progress (informally)
3.2 Continue to assist instructors in designing accessible and flexible courses and teaching pedagogies that encourage many students to access learning without barriers	Develop resources, supports and learning sessions to support instructors in the design of accessible learning experiences in alignment with Accessible BC Legislation.	Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation (CTLI)			●	Not started

4. Employee Services and Recruitment: Increase accessibility for current and future employees throughout the career cycle.						
Action	**Description and Progress Update**	**Lead**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Status**
4.1 Review recruitment processes for accessibility.	Review recruitment platforms and processes to ensure ease of access and awareness of supports for candidates with disabilities.	HR		●		Not started
4.2 Review and update accommodation processes.	Review medical accommodation process for employees .	HR	●			In progress
4.3 Undertake an assessment of workplace disability management program.	Access services from the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) to review NIC employee disability management program with the aim to identify and make improvements. Government grant funding available.	HR		●		Not Started

5. Information, Communication and Technology: Ensure that information and the way that it is communicated is clear and available in multiple formats so that all users have equal access.

Action	Description and Progress Update	Lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Status
5.1 Audit NIC website and other platforms for accessibility.	Use Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) or the equivalent standard as determined by Accessible BC (pending release) to ensure web content, websites and web applications are accessible.	Future Students and Community Engagement (Marketing) with support from IT Services		●		Not started
5.2 Increase awareness of resources for students, employees and visitors, and provide a mechanism for community members to provide feedback on barriers to accessibility.	Developed webpages with information and resources about accessibility at NIC www.nic.bc.ca/about-us/accessibility-at-nic/ Created a new email accessibility@nic.bc.ca to receive feedback and questions about accessibility	HR	●			On-going
5.3 Offer alternate formats for documents (as requested)	Common Accessible Formats include: • Large Print (font size 16 or greater) • Braille (printed tactile documents) • Audio • Electronic We will continue to evaluate accessible formats while exploring new alternative formats as they become available.	HR and AAC	●			On-going

6. Facilities and the built environment: Ensure accessible internal and external spaces and easy navigation on all NIC campuses.
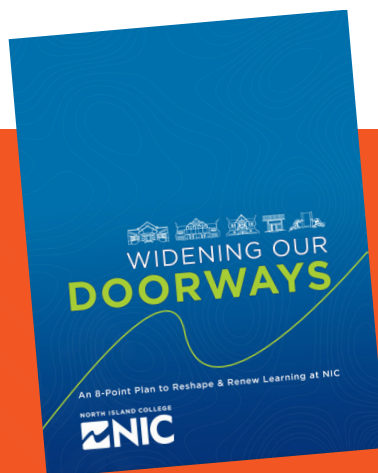
Action	Description and Progress Update	Lead	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Status
6.1 Review emergency response plan to ensure accessibility compliance	Determine gaps in CR and PA (year 1) and CV (year 2) and implement changes with relevant training. See Federal guidelines https://accessible.canada.ca/resources/creating-accessible-emergency-response-plan-guidelines	Facilities, Health and Safety		●		Not started
6.2 Ensure all new builds and renovations are Rick Hansen Certified (where possible.)	Tyee and Discovery buildings (CV Campus) were audited (F2022) using Rick Hansen Certified process.	Facilities			●	On-going
6.3 Improve wayfinding signage on each campus to help people locate elevators, ramps, designated smoking areas etc .	Review signage on each campus and add signage as required. Develop campus maps to help locate accessible features.	Facilities with support from Marketing, AAC		●		Not started
6.4 Review existing and future audits to assess and remediate gaps in building accessibility on each campus.	Year 1 - review the Tyee & Discovery audits to understand gaps and discuss possible corrections. Year 2 - CR and PA Year 3 - review the balance of the CV buildings, look at gaps from CV, CR and PA	Facilities	●			In progress

REFERENCES

Accessible British Columbia Act, 2021 https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019

Developing Your First Accessibility Plan: A Guide for BC Prescribed Organizations, 2023, Disability Alliance BC 2023

Faulkner, G., Weatherson, K., Joopally, H., & Wunderlich, K. (2020). Provincial Deployment of the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS) in British Columbia – 2019-20: Final Report for the Ministry of Advanced Skills, Education and Training. CCWS Technical Report Series 2020; 2. Vancouver, BC: The University of British Columbia. Available at: www.ccws-becc.ca.
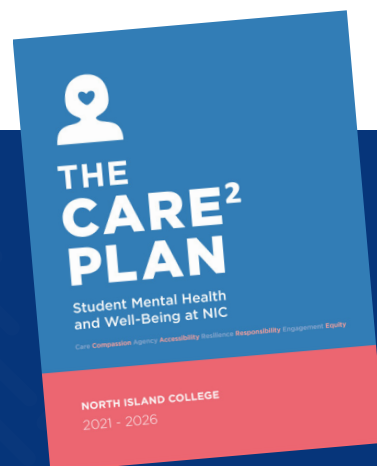
WIDENING OUR
DOORWAYS

An 8-Point Plan to Reshape & Renew Learning at NIC

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE
NIC

[We will] "Address structural racism and inequality by improving completion rates of black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC), women and students with accessibility needs."

Widening our Doorways
Academic Plan 2020

Appendices

THE CARE² PLAN

Student Mental Health and Well-Being at NIC

Care Compassion Agency Accessibility Resilience Responsibility Engagement Equity

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE
2021 - 2026

"Addressing diversity, equity and inclusion is essential to the health and well-being of our college community. This includes awareness and consideration of the historical, social and cultural factors that impact mental health and well-being."

Appendix A

ACRONYMS

NIC – North Island College

CR – Campbell River Campus

CV or CVC – Comox Valley Campus

AAC – Accessibility Advisory Committee

BC – British Columbia

CCWS – Canadian Campus Wellness Survey

CTLI – Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation

DALS – Department of Accessible Learning Services

DALP - Department of Accessible Learning Programs

HR - Human Resources

LLC – Library and Learning Commons

LMS – Learner Management System

NISU – North Island Students' Union

PD – Professional Development

PLAR - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Appendix B

ACCESSIBILITY AT NIC: DETAILED PROGRESS TO DATE

Assessment Services

Accommodated assessments are available as required through the Department of Accessible Learning Services. Accuplacer assessments are untimed which makes them more universally accessible, and all assessments can be done remotely which improves accessibility to individuals with mobility issues and anxiety. Feedback is provided in writing and can be discussed over the phone or in person by request.

SkilledTradesBC-accommodated exams are now administered at the Comox Valley, Campbell River and Port Alberni campuses. This service is regularly evolving as SkilledTradesBC adapts their delivery. NIC updates, processes and retrains staff and faculty as these changes are made.

All students applying for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) credit are informed that supports are available to them throughout the assessment process.

Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation

NIC's Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation (CTLI) employs principles and practices of universal design for learning to enable accessibility. Inclusive practices are shared with faculty via multiple learning opportunities and the Teach Anywhere website (developed and maintained by CTLI). Some recent provisions for greater accessibility include:

- Workshops/learning sessions in a variety of formats (face-to-face, virtual, hybrid), at various campuses and at various times and in accessible locations.

- Providing recordings, summaries, digitizing content to supplement and provide greater accessibility for some who prefer reading or longer times to access content via Teach Anywhere.

- Closed captioning: all videos are created via Kaltura with the closed captioning tool, and then edited for accurate transcription.

- Providing multiple formats for various digital technologies (e.g., PDFs, Word documents, HTML web pages, video recordings) so that while the content is digital – there are various digital competencies with technologies to know how to download, open, access, edit a document or content.

In 2022, NIC moved to a new Learner Management System (LMS) – Brightspace, which is compliant with accessibility standards and use of adaptive software for all learners. More information about Brightspace and accessibility can be found here.

DALP (Department of Accessible Learning Programs)

NIC's Department of Accessible Learning Programs supports individuals with disabilities to develop employment skills.

DALP offers three certificate programs as well as two cohort-based certificate programs. In the certificate programs, students work toward their learning goals at their own pace, resulting in a certificate in Employment Transitions, Practical Academics for the Workplace or Workplace Professionalism. The Employment Transition Kitchen Assistant and Employment Transition Grounds & Custodial Assistant programs have been offered on Port Alberni and Campbell River campuses for the past eight years. Work study courses, where students are supported in doing a work experience placement in the community, are offered on each campus. Face-to-face and online courses provide students with new ways to participate in courses.

NIC Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Human Service Worker students regularly have practicums with DAL programs. This builds bridges between programs and provides opportunities for social integration on campus between DALP students and students from other programs

Department of Accessible Learning Services

The Department of Accessible Learning Services (DALS) provides support to NIC students who identify as having a disability which may impact their ability to study. DALS Faculty work to identify accommodations needed by students to enable them to fully participate in their classes and help implement these accommodations so that students do not face disability-based exclusion in any component of their courses.

NIC students have access to assistive technology including reading and writing software: Read and Write Gold, Dragon Naturally Speaking and visual access: JAWS, ZoomText, Kurzweil 3000.

The department provides flexible options for appointments (method, time and location); and a streamlined process for students to access temporary accessible parking through DALS and a move to electronic files (Clockwork) which streamlines processes and removes barriers for staff/faculty.

Facilities

In February 2023, Rick Hanson-certified organization, 'Step by Step Accessibility Consulting,' carried out accessibility audits on three buildings on the Comox Valley Campus: Tyee, Raven and Discovery. The results indicate where improvements can be made, and these will be included in the action plan

Human Resources

The Division of Human Resources and Organizational Development is committed to providing an equitable and accessible work environment. As per Human Rights legislation, the College takes reasonable steps to accommodate employees and prospective employees who have medical conditions, injuries or disabilities whose participation in the workforce is otherwise affected by employment-related barriers.

The Human Resources Advisor, Employee Wellness and Culture works with the employee, their medical professional and their manager to identify accommodations needed by the employee to enable them to be successful at work. These accommodations may include, but not limited to, such measures as changes to physical workspace, adaptations to equipment or tools used, adjustments to working conditions and/or reallocation or exchange of some non-essential tasks. Accommodations can be temporary, periodic or long term, depending on the employee's medical condition and individual needs.

Human Resources supports employees who become unwell and require time off work to support their illness or injury. Short-Term (STD) and Long-Term Disability (LTD) insurance is part of employee's group benefits plan. If employees become unable to work for a period of time due to an illness or injury (while insured), and their paid sick leave is ending, employees may be eligible to apply for STD benefits that will provide income replacement. Manulife provides STD/LTD benefits according to the terms of the employee's group benefits eBooklet.

In 2021, a fund was created to support employee training and development initiatives that specifically target the development of knowledge, skills and abilities that directly improve services to students. Examples include Indigenous intercultural training, diversity and equity training, conflict resolution and customer service skills. Over 150 employees have accessed the fund over the past two years.

Support for Employee Mental Health and Wellness

Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP): NIC employees and their dependent family members have access to Homeweb anytime for a wealth of expert tools and resources, including e-learning courses and a library of health and wellness articles which keep you informed about where you are in your journey and what's available to enhance your experience and outcomes. Employee and Family Assistance Program confidential service available 24 hours per day/7 days per week:

- 1-800-663-1142 (toll-free)
- International Calling (call collect) 604-689-1717
- TTY: 1-888-384-1152

Other initiatives include Mental Health Week and Thrive activities for students and employees. Thrive is an initiative that takes place twice per educational year to celebrate community, encourage self-care and promote mental health literacy with the goal of reducing stigma.

Indigenous Education

North Island College's Indigenous Education team support accessibility through a number of initiatives including flexible scheduling and delivery of programs and services (including local and remote communities and Nation offices).

Information Technology (IT) and Business Application Services (BAS)

Several changes have been made (and continue to be made) to enhance accessibility.

All of the following are part of Ellucian's WCAG 2.1 enhancements (www.ellucian.com/blog/wcag-21-accessibility):
- Ellucian Experience replacing myNIC landing pages + mobile app.
- Continued migration of NICCONNECT/WebAdvisor workflows to Self Service
- Ongoing Ellucian software updates (applied quarterly)
- Long-term, Colleague UI functions transition to Ellucian Experience platform

All of the following are part of Microsoft accessibility enhancements (https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility
- Migration from SharePoint 2013 to SharePoint online
- Migration from Exchange 2013 to Exchange Online
- Migration from Skype for Business to Teams
- Upcoming Windows 11 rollout (www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/accessibility-features?r=1)

Library and Learning Commons (LLC)

The Library and Learning Commons (located on each campus) continues to work to improve accessibility. Recent highlights include:

- Creating a Library Accessibility Committee (focused on: Increasing awareness, auditing spaces and services, making connections with larger North Island College (NIC) community on accessibility issues and learning from other BC Post Secondary Libraries regarding accessibility in libraries).
- Representation on the NIC Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Librarian Faculty dedicating Professional Development time to opportunities related to accessibility content.
- Using an accessibility lens in the design and development of every space and service decision.
- Building collections of resources and creating accessibility tools for NIC community to access, such as the Basic Guide for Web Accessibility.

North Island College Foundation

The process to apply for bursaries and scholarships has been made more accessible to students with disabilities through collaboration with the Department of Accessible Learning Services (DALS). This collaboration/referral ensures the provision of resources that may be needed to complete the application (reading software, quiet space, adaptive computer hardware).

Two specific awards have been granted to students who have used learning support services – Ray Hughes Bursary and PEO Chapter BM Reach for the Stars Bursary. Thirteen NIC students have received over $7,000 in financial support thanks to these bursaries.

Student Affairs/Student Life

In addition to counseling, advising and traditional support services, NIC has a Student Outreach and Liaison to guide students who are experiencing challenges that may be affecting their personal and academic lives. The Liaison also oversees Early Assist (early identification of students needing additional support), outreach to students in crisis and ongoing student case management. In addition, NIC employs student Campus Life Engagement Assistants who work with the Student Life team to develop a range of events and initiatives to support, engage and celebrate diversity at NIC.

Student life events are designed to empower students to prioritize mental health, well-being and self-advocacy while educating, informing and supporting students through their learning journeys at NIC. One initiative was the Brave Space conversations which provided a forum for students and employees to engage with complex social issues such as ableism, white privilege, racism, gender-based violence and climate change.

Student Housing

Work has started on the new NIC Student Housing Commons at the Comox Valley campus. With a projected opening of Fall 2025, the commons will include 217 beds for students and 20 family suites in a dedicated family building. The student housing project will be Rick Hansen Foundation certified and will include a total of 10 accessible suites, 2-bedroom suites, a mix of quads and several single student suites. The housing is designed to be multi-generational, inclusive, accessible, Indigenized and a welcoming space for all students.

For more information about the student housing project, visit www.engage.nic.bc.ca/housing-commons

DIVERSITY
EQUITY
INCLUSION

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE
Accessibility Plan 2023-2026
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