



VANCOUVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Accessibility Plan



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1. INTRODUCTION

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that Vancouver Community College (VCC) is located on the traditional unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilw̴ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples who have been stewards of this land from time immemorial.





MESSAGE FROM VCC PRESIDENT

Dear VCC community,

VCC has been a leader in providing innovative post-secondary education in British Columbia for over 50 years, and remains steadfast in its commitment to creating accessibility and supporting students, employees, and the community with disabilities. We value our rich legacy and strive to have an even greater impact in the years to come.

Our Strategic Innovation Plan has been thoughtfully developed to address the changing needs of our students and the sector, ensuring a learning environment that will benefit our community and province for generations. Central to this plan is our unwavering dedication to fostering accessibility. We take full responsibility for promoting inclusivity and, through this strategy, we embark on a journey to integrate accessible practices and values across our organization.

At VCC, we firmly believe that progress is intricately linked to advancing equity, accessibility, and reconciliation. These principles profoundly shape our plan and will continue to guide our path in the future.

Thank you to all the Accessibility Committee members for your dedication, time, and collaboration on this accessibility plan.

Together, we can make a lasting difference that positively impacts the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajay Patel".

Ajay Patel
President and CEO
Vancouver Community College





MESSAGE FROM ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Dear VCC community,

The newly formed Accessibility Committee is proudly comprised of a cross section of faculty, staff, administrators and student representatives. Committee members were self-selected and excited to contribute their lived experiences towards ensuring an accessible institution for people with disabilities. Meeting quarterly, the committee uses their valuable time together to share personal or observed experiences of barriers and successes while accessing the college.

Significant insights have been shared, and the committee's consultative work with VCC now forms the basis of this accessibility plan. VCC has been committed to improving accessibility and removing barriers for people with disabilities for many years; however, this new committee, and subsequent plan, have provided a way for more voices to be heard, especially from those with lived experience.

While VCC Disability Services has proudly served the community in addressing accessibility barriers, the department welcomes the college's shift in having accessibility be a shared responsibility across the institution. The establishment of the Accessibility Committee and the development of this plan are excellent examples of this new perspective.

The Accessibility Committee fully endorses and supports the accessibility plan and the actions identified to reduce attitudinal, information and communication, policy and practice, environmental, and technological barriers at VCC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brianna Higgins".

Brianna Higgins
Department Head – Disability Services
Accessibility Committee member
Vancouver Community College



ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

VCC – the first choice for innovative, experiential learning for life.

Located in the heart of the city, Vancouver Community College (VCC) offers academic, cultural, and social environments that inspire relevant real-world training. With over 13,700 students, including a growing number of Aboriginal and International learners, 1,100 employees and an annual budget of \$105 million, VCC is a key player in the post-secondary landscape in B.C.

VCC is committed to educational quality, student support, and college operations that are responsive, innovative, and relevant.

One of the college's core values is to create an accessible environment where students build the skills, develop the attributes, and gain the experience in the classroom, industry, and community needed for success now and in the future.

VCC is proud to inspire a new generation of students to discover their passions, gain essential skills, and learn what it takes to succeed in a competitive workforce.

OUR ACCESSIBILITY STORY

For over 50 years, VCC has been committed to providing high quality, experiential learning for all students who come to the college. Part of this commitment has included specific programming to support students with disabilities. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program provides educational upgrading, as well as communication and employment skills to the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. The Visually Impaired Program provides upgrading, computer skills and Braille training for blind and visually impaired adults. Additionally, the Community and Career Education program provides skills and practical experience to students with cognitive disabilities to access the job market.

VCC also provides supports to students with disabilities to access all VCC programs, services, and events. Disability Services has expanded over the years to ensure all students with disabilities have full access to their learning. Interpreting Services is uniquely positioned to support Deaf students and employees as the only post-secondary institution with a department consisting of full-time Registered Sign Language Interpreters on staff.

VCC continues to write its accessibility story. Innovative program development, such as access to trades programs for Deaf students, has expanded opportunities for foundational learning for students with disabilities. VCC was also thrilled to obtain Rick Hansen Certification on all its campus buildings.

VCC also recognizes the importance of inclusivity in employment and provides support for employees with disabilities. In alignment with the Accessibility Act, VCC has made strides to ensure that employees with disabilities have equal access to employment opportunities and a barrier-free work environment. VCC offers accommodations and support services to employees with disabilities so they can navigate and participate in all aspects of their worklife.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF KEY CONTRIBUTORS

The College would like to acknowledge the indispensable contributors that have made the development of this plan possible. We would like to thank VCC Senior Team members Kate Dickerson and Clayton Munro, who have sponsored this work and have guided its development. Student and Enrollment Services representative Nigel Scott and People Services representative Raksha Topiwala have taken on the work of forming and facilitating the Accessibility Committee, as well as being key developers of this document and accessibility plan. Lastly, the college would like to recognize the Accessibility Committee's members for their valuable insights and advice.

DEFINITIONS

Barrier	Essentially, anything that stops those with disabilities from being included.
	Specifically, anything that hinders the full and equal participation of a person with an impairment.
Disability	An inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.
Impairment	A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment which is permanent, temporary, or episodic.



2. FRAMEWORK GUIDING OUR WORK

ACCESSIBLE BC ACT – PRINCIPLES

The legislation requires adherence to the following principles when developing or updating this accessibility plan:

- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Self-determination
- Universal design

RELATED LEGISLATION

In the development of this plan VCC has been mindful of ensuring that we are adhering to the following legislation:

- Accessible BC Act
- Accessible Canada Act
- BC Human Rights Code
- Canadian Charter of Rights
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



EXISTING POLICIES

VCC has a Students with Disabilities Policy (2007) which states as its purpose:

To ensure that academically qualified students with disabilities are afforded full, fair and equal access to all college services, programs and facilities.

This purpose has informed work on this plan as its aspirational, overarching goal. The need for renewal of this policy is addressed in the action plan.

OUR APPROACH

In developing the accessibility action plan, the college was intentional about leveraging our existing strengths and the good work already being done to remove barriers.

Our approach was also informed by conversations with the VCC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) co-chairs to ensure that EDI principles were central to our work.

The first step the college took in developing this plan was to form the Accessibility Committee. This committee served as an advisory body. VCC also conducted a number of consultations to ensure that broader ideas and experiences from across the institution were considered.





3. ABOUT OUR ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

RECRUITMENT

Initial recruitment discussions occurred between the Senior Team sponsors, representatives from Student and Enrollment Services, People Services, and the EDI co-chairs. From these consultations, it was determined that the best approach would be a process of self-selection onto the Accessibility Committee.

A call was put out for prospective committee members. All interested parties were invited to two introductory meetings where they had the opportunity to learn about the scope of the committee's work and determine if the committee was the right fit for them.

The meetings and transparency of the selection process allowed prospective committee members to self-assess their experience and perspectives to ensure the diversity of the composition of committee members.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND BACKGROUND

The Accessibility Committee consists of 14 members and two facilitators. These members each come to the committee from different departments and services areas including the student union. There is also equal representation between the VCC FA, CUPE 4627 and administrative employees. Finally, the committee also meets the composition requirements of the Accessible BC Act, which are:

- At least half of the members are (i) persons with disabilities, or (ii) individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities, and these members reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia;
- At least one of the Committee members is an Indigenous person; and
- The Committee reflects the diversity of persons in British Columbia.



4. CONSULTATION CONDUCTED

CONSULTATIONS TO DATE

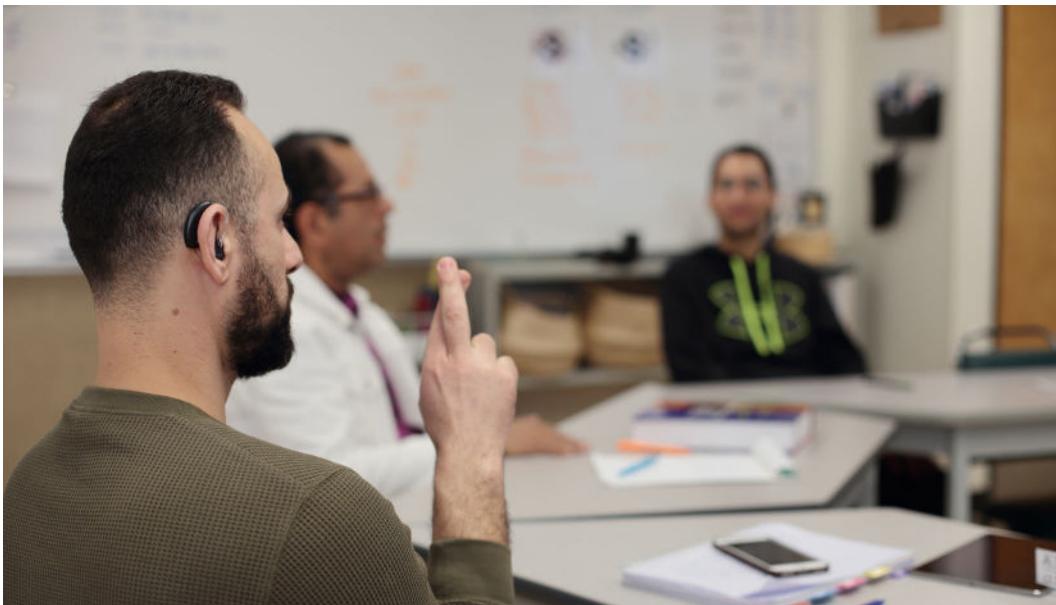
In developing the action plan below, a number of consultations were conducted with internal partners. Areas consulted included:

- Community and Career Education department
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing department
- Visually Impaired Program
- Arbiter of Student Issues
- Disability Services
- Interpreting Services
- People Services
- Student Conduct and Judicial Affairs
- Student Union of VCC
- Accessibility Committee representing 14 additional VCC departments
- VCC leadership

Prior to individual consultations with each of the groups above, four questions were sent to the departments for consideration before meeting.

The questions focused on what worked well in supporting students/employees with disabilities, what challenges were experienced by departments in supporting students/employees with disabilities, what barriers students/employees with disabilities faced at VCC, and finally, what the departments felt were priorities for the College in addressing accessibility barriers.

The Accessibility Committee facilitators then met with each area's representatives to hear their perspectives and insights in response to these questions. Notes were taken and consolidated after all the consultations were completed. The common themes identified from these discussions were then used as the basis for the action plan.



KEY DISCUSSION THEMES

The themes that emerged from the consultations were then grouped into five categories:

Attitudinal Barriers

Information and Communication Barriers

Policy and Practice Barriers

Environmental Barriers

Technological Barriers

One of the main themes that surfaced was that many of the partners felt that VCC is already actively working on projects and processes to improve accessibility and remove barriers. Many of the areas were in fact, very proud to share their accessibility initiatives. However, gaps were found in how information was being disseminated across the college about many of these initiatives. Further themes that were identified are addressed in the action items found in the action plan.

REPORTING ON PLAN PROGRESS

Progress made on the actions identified in this plan will be reported annually. Reports will be reviewed by the Accessibility Committee and posted publicly on the VCC website by September of each year. Any proposed changes to the action plan will be made in consultation with the identified Senior Team sponsor, the Accessibility Committee and approved by the Accessibility Committee sponsors.



5. ACTION PLAN

Building on the good work VCC has already initiated to address accessibility barriers, this action plan has categorised future work into five groups: attitudinal barriers; information and communication barriers; policy and practice barriers; environmental barriers; and, technological barriers.

Each group identifies a specific barrier type experienced by students or employees at VCC. Within each category, a goal and achievable actions are highlighted to address each of these barriers. Senior team members will sponsor the implementation of these actions, providing support and guidance. While these actions may appear to lack specificity, they were developed such that the approach to their implementation is flexible and subject to the expertise of those working on them.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

Goal

To see VCC employees further shift their perspective on disability and acknowledge it as a natural and valuable aspect of a diverse work and learning environment. This will enable staff to appreciate the unique contributions that individuals with disabilities can bring, adding richness to the overall environment.

Actions

- Develop and offer employee training on supporting students with disabilities
- Research ways to improve orientation for students and employees
- Develop a toolkit to integrate and foster on-going education and learning

Sponsor

Kate Dickerson - Vice President, People Services

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Goal

Employees and students know where to locate information and resources necessary for establishing an inclusive and accessible institution.

Actions

- Conduct an inventory of what information and resources are available at VCC
- Build centralized hub for accessibility information
- Create a communication and awareness building plan to increase employee's knowledge on how to locate accessibility resources

Sponsor

Tannis Morgan – Associate Vice President, Academic Innovation

POLICY AND PRACTICE BARRIERS

Goal

VCC policies and practices are regularly evaluated to identify and remove barriers to accessibility.

Actions

- Renew Student with Disabilities Policy
- Develop a toolkit to facilitate accessibility audits of college operations

Sponsor

Clayton Munro – Associate Vice President, Student and Enrollment Services

5. ACTION PLAN (CONT'D)

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

Goal

VCC will strive to ensure that its campuses are as accessible as possible for individuals with disabilities.

Actions

- Identify and implement further solutions to make emergency alerts accessible for Deaf employees and students.
- Form a consultation group of internal partners to support accessibility of new buildings.
- Improve wayfinding on campuses.

Sponsor

Ian Humphreys - Vice President, Administration & International Development

TECHNOLOGICAL BARRIERS

Goal

VCC will consider the impact on individuals with disabilities, and overall accessibility requirements, in identifying and implementing technological resources and infrastructure.

Actions

- Improve website navigation and accessibility.
- Support accessibility in the rollout of new technology requirements or software.

Sponsor

Karen Wilson – Executive Director, Marketing and Communications
Elmer Wansink – Associate Vice President, IT and CIO

TO CONTACT VCC REGARDING THIS PLAN OR ACCESSIBILITY,
PLEASE EMAIL ACCESSIBILITY@VCC.CA.

VCC is committed to building an accessible institution for people with disabilities and would like to thank those that have helped develop this Accessibility Plan.