Aesculapian Society Accessibility Policy

School of Medicine, Queen's University

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Adapted by Jordana Waserman (Meds 2021) with permission from the UOttawa Aesculapian Society Accessibility Policy authored by Julia Hanes (2018)[1].

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Feedback on this policy is welcome to the Aesculapian Society (AS) Equity Officer Senior at equity@qmed.ca or to the Disability & Accessibility Subcommittee (qmed.disability.accessibility@gmail.com). This document will continue to be revised and updated in-line with community feedback.

Queen's University is situated on the territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek. We recognize the past and ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples on these lands, and are grateful to live, learn and grow here.

Background:

The Queen's University Aesculapian Society recognizes the need to reduce and remove the barriers associated with, and experienced by, persons with disabilities. As such, this policy is to establish the implementation of an accessibility standard that is necessary for some and to the benefit of all. The present Accessibility Policy was prepared in Spring 2021, adapted with permission from the University of Ottawa Aesculapian Society's Accessibility Policy.

This policy will act as a critical step in calling for the integration of disability into diversity and inclusion discussions at Queen's School of Medicine. Its purpose is to maximize inclusivity by facilitating a shift in how accessibility and students with disabilities are understood and accommodated at Queen's School of Medicine. We encourage event organizers to shift their mentality from "how much does it cost, or how much effort is required, to make this event accessible?" to "what is so unique about this event that justifies exclusion?".

Definitions:

● Accessibility[2]: Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities. Ontario has laws to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Ontario Building Code.

- AODA[2]: The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) seeks to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and equitable access to programs and services and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act addresses barriers in Customer Service; Information and Communication; Employment; Transportation; the Design of Public Spaces.
- Barrier[2]: A barrier is a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people apart. For people with disabilities, barriers can take many forms including attitudinal, communication, physical, policy, programmatic, social, and transportation.
- Disability[2]: A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. The AODA uses the same definition of disability as the Ontario Human Rights Code:

The term "disability" covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. Section 10 of the Ontario Human Rights Code defines "disability" as[3]:
1. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
2. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
3. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
4. A mental disorder, or
5. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

- Standard[2]: Accessibility standards are laws that individuals, government, businesses, nonprofits, and public sector organizations must follow in order to become more accessible. The accessibility standards contain timelines for the implementation of required measures and help organizations identify, remove, and prevent barriers in order to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Closed Captioning: The text alternative for the audio portion of a video program. They are usually shown at the bottom of the screen (in the lower third) as light text on a dark background, but most video players allow them to be customized.
- Image Descriptions: Image descriptions provide textual information about non-text content that appears on a website or social media, allowing it to be presented auditorily, as visual text, or in any other form that is best for the user. For more information, please refer to Stanford University's Image Descriptions page).

Policy:

This policy will apply to any and all events hosted by or under the Queen's University Aesculapian Society, including but not limited to, meetings, social events, orientation events, Class Council events, interest group events, as well as in the preparation or

release of any documents or promotions. Interest group ratification, interest group funding and reimbursement, use of the AS Event Calendar and use of the AS Zoom account are contingent upon adherence to the present policy statement.

1. Accessibility Standard and Checklist

All events must be accessible according to the accessibility standard set forth by the Accessibility Checklist (Appendix B). When preparing for an event or meeting, organizers will use the Accessibility Checklist to confirm that the venue, promotions and event are as barrier-free and accessible as possible. All event organizers must complete the checklist and receive approval from the AS prior to advertising the event.

Compliance with the Accessibility Checklist will proceed as follows:

a. Event organizers will complete the Accessibility Checklist through an electronic form made available at the beginning of the year. All Accessibility Checklist submissions will be sent to the AS Equity Officers and the Disability & Accessibility Subcommittee.

   If you are unsure if your event meets the AS accessibility standard, please consult the list of resources in Appendix A or reach out to the AS Equity Officer (equity@qmed.ca) or Disability and Accessibility Subcommittee (qmed.disability.accessibility@gmail.com).

   Please contact the AS Equity Officer (equity@qmed.ca) or Disability & Accessibility Subcommittee (qmed.disability.accessibility@gmail.com) if you require an alternative format of the Accessibility Checklist.

b. If no accessibility concerns are raised, organizers will submit proof of successful Accessibility Checklist completion to the Student Interest Group Coordinator (SIGCO; sigco@qmed.ca) in order to have their event added to the AS calendar and obtain access to the AS Zoom account, if applicable. Without proof of successful completion (e.g. screenshot or email confirmation), organizers will not be able to add their event to the AS calendar nor access the Zoom account.

   Alternatively, any accessibility concerns raised on the Accessibility Checklist will be directed to the Equity Officers and Disability & Accessibility Subcommittee for support in improving event accessibility. These concerns must be addressed prior to proceeding with event promotion. If an event does not meet the accessibility standard, the event must be made accessible, replaced by an accessible event, or cancelled.

c. When submitting receipts for reimbursement to the AS Treasurer after completion of the event, organizers will also submit proof that they have met the

accessibility standard and addressed additional accommodation needs. Reimbursement is contingent upon the above.

Event organizers are encouraged to apply for funding to compensate for potential costs involved in improving event accessibility. Please see Appendix A for a list of potential funding sources.

2. Accommodation Requests and Centralized Accommodation Form

A centralized form through which medical students can request accommodations above the standard will be available on an ongoing basis (e.g. American Sign Language interpreter, Braille materials, documents in accessible and/or alternate formats). Submissions will be collected on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, submissions will be reviewed and collated by the two AS Equity Officers and identified members of the Disability and Accessibility Subcommittee at the beginning of Fall and Winter terms and upon request. The information shared through the form will remain confidential and be de-identified, unless students prefer to identify themselves and share contact information.

A document outlining the additional accommodation needs for preclerks and clerks will be compiled and made available to event organizers. All required accommodations listed under the cohorts invited to the event must be addressed.

In the case where a Queen's University medical student requires specific accommodations above the standard, a single request will establish the need for accommodation at all invited events and promotional activities for the duration of the academic year or the student's undergraduate medical education, if they so choose.

Of note, this centralized accommodation mechanism does not replace the need for event organizers to directly invite accommodation requests in advance of their events, particularly for events that are marketed to audiences beyond Queen's Medicine.

Upon request, accessible formats and communication supports will be made available in a timely manner. Please see the [Accessibility Hub page on Alternate Formats](#) for further information about accessible formats, and the [Resources for Accessible Events](#) document for a listing of contact information for equipment or services available in the Kingston region (e.g. English/ASL interpretation, FM system bookings, note-takers, captioning services, etc.). Andrew Ashby, the Accessibility Coordinator at Queen's Equity Office (ashby@queensu.ca, 613-533-6000 ext. 75734), is an excellent contact to help with accessible formats and communication supports.

"Accessible formats" may include, but are not limited to:
● Large print (minimum 18-point font with good colour contrast)
● Recorded audio
● Electronic formats that are compatible with screen readers

- Written transcripts
- Braille

"Communication supports" may include, but are not limited to:
- Plain language (e.g. short sentences, simple grammar, and everyday vocabulary)
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter

3. Accessibility Feedback Mechanism

An anonymous method by which complaints and feedback regarding accessibility can be submitted will be available. These will be addressed by the Junior and/or Senior AS Equity Officers, as well as identified members of the Disability & Accessibility Subcommittee.

Accessibility Checklist Resources:
- New Medical Building building accessibility guide: Building accessibility guide to the New Medical Building, published by Physical Plant Services. Includes information about accessible entrances and building accessibility features, including corridors, elevators, washrooms and parking.
- New Medical Building directory entry: New Medical Building directory entry on the Physical Plant Services website. Includes hyperlinks to the New Medical Building building accessibility guide, as well as floor plans and site plans.
- Queen's University detailed building accessibility map: Includes information on campus accessible entrances, accessible sidewalks, curb ramps, accessible pay parking, etc.
- Queen's University building directory: Information on the accessibility of many bookable campus buildings.
- Queen's University classroom list: Information on the accessibility of many bookable campus classrooms.
- Resources for accessible events: A listing of contact information for equipment or services available in the Kingston region
- Accessible Event Planning Checklist: A detailed checklist of things to consider when planning events, produced by Queen's Accessibility Hub.

Supplementary Resources:
- Queen's University Accessibility Hub "How-to Guides"
- A Checklist for Planning Accessible Conferences
- A Planning Guide for Accessible Conferences
- City of Peterborough Guide to Accessible Documents
- Guidelines for Creating Accessible Printed Posters
- 6 Posters for Approaching Digital Accessibility
- AccessAbility: A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design

Funding Sources:
- Queen's University Inclusive Community Fund: Eligible expenses include service costs that make the event or initiative accessible
- AMS Accessibility Queen's (AQ) Grants: Accessibility Queen's(AQ) is a student-government committee responsible for allocating funds from student fees towards initiatives and projects that will enhance student life accessibility. You can reach AQ at accessibility@ams.queensu.ca, or contact the Social Issues Commissioner who oversees AQ at sic@ams.queensu.ca.
- AMS Social Issues Commission (SIC) Equity Fund: Clubs and student groups can apply to receive funding for equity-oriented projects at https://queensuniversityams.formstack.com/forms/equity_grant_2021
- Other general student initiative grants and funding are available through the Aesculapian Society (AS), Ontario Medical Student Association (OMSA), Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS), and Society of Graduate and Professional Students at Queen's (SGPS)

References:

[1]University of Ottawa Aesculapian Society (2018). Aesculapian Society Accessibility Policy. Ottawa, ON. (Adapted from Council of Ontario Universities. A Checklist for Planning Accessible Conferences. Toronto, ON; [cited 2018 May 13]. Available from: http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2016/12/A-Checklist-for-Planning-Accessible-Events-1.pdf).

[2]Accessibility Services Canada. (2016, April 05). Definitions. Retrieved from https://accessibilitycanada.ca/aoda/definitions/

[3] Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). What is disability? Retrieved from http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability

[4]Leary, A. (2020, April 28). How to Make Your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community. Retrieved from https://rootedinrights.org/how-to-make-your-virtual-meetings-and-events-accessible-to-the-disability-community/

[5]Respect Ability. (2021, January 11). Ensuring Virtual Events Are Accessible for All. Retrieved from https://www.respectability.org/accessible-virtual-events/

[6]NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. (n.d.). Accessible Virtual Meetings Guide. Retrieved from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/virtual-meetings-accessibility-guide_05-01-2020.pdf

Appendix B: Accessibility Checklist

The following Accessibility Checklist can be completed through an electronic form that will be made available at the beginning of the year. Please contact the AS Equity Officer (equity@qmed.ca) or Disability & Accessibility Subcommittee (qmed.disability.accessibility@gmail.com) if you require an alternative format of the accessibility checklist.

If you are unsure if your event meets the AS accessibility standard or encounter any accessibility concerns in the process of completing this form, please consult the list of resources in Appendix A or reach out to the AS Equity Officer (equity@qmed.ca) or Disability and Accessibility Subcommittee (qmed.disability.accessibility@gmail.com).

Upon successful completion of the form, you will be invited to send confirmation of your Accessibility Checklist submission to the SIGCO (sigco@qmed.ca) in order to add your event to the AS calendar.

Event Name:

Event Organizer (Interest Group/Organization):

Event Type:
❏ Interest group event

❏ Class Council event

❏ Aesculapian Society event

❏ Other; Please specify: _____

Contact Person:

Email Address:

Date of Event:

Time of Event:

Event Format:
❏ In-person [Skip 'Virtual Events' section]

❏ Virtual synchronous [Skip 'Venue' and 'Hotel and Lodging']

❏ Virtual asynchronous [Skip 'Venue' and 'Hotel and Lodging']

Event Location and Address (including floor and room number if available and applicable):

Who are you inviting to your event?

❏ Year 1

❏ Year 2

❏ Year 3

❏ Year 4

❏ Queen's Medicine graduate students

❏ Faculty and/or staff

❏ Public (i.e. individuals not associated with the School of Medicine)

❏ Other (e.g. Queen's undergraduate students, Queen's graduate students, Faculty of Health Sciences, other Canadian medical students, etc.):
_____

General:

1. I confirm that I have reviewed and addressed all accommodations above the standard for each group of students I am inviting to my event.

   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

Before the Event:

1. I will ensure that promotional materials for the event includes information about who to contact regarding accessibility questions and/or specific accommodations above the standard. I will offer at least two methods of contact (e.g. email and telephone), and will respond to accommodation requests within two business days.

   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

2. I will provide a date by which attendees should contact me with their accommodation requests that will allow me enough time to make appropriate arrangements. I recognize that certain accommodation requests, such as ASL interpretation, may take 2-3 weeks' time to arrange.

   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

3. I will make medical students aware of the centralized form by which accommodations above the standard can be requested (with an option for anonymity) and carried forward for all events throughout the student's undergraduate medical degree?

   ❏ Yes

❏ No

4. If food is provided, I will give participants the opportunity to indicate any dietary needs in advance and accommodate these needs appropriately.
    ❏ Yes

    ❏ No

    ❏ Not applicable

5. I will ensure that promotional materials have image descriptions (e.g, alt text) for pictures, graphics and posters and/or closed captioning of videos.
    ❏ Yes

    ❏ No

    ❏ Not applicable

6. I will ensure that promotional posters feature large font size, good colour contrast and a linear, logical layout. I acknowledge that I can consult AccessAbility: A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design as a starting point.
    ❏ Yes

    ❏ No

    ❏ Not applicable

7. I will clearly outline the length and format of the event in promotional materials.
    ❏ Yes

    ❏ No

8. I will ask event participants if they require accessible transportation to and/or from the event locations when transportation is being provided or coordinated. I will coordinate accessible transportation options as needed.
    ❏ Yes

    ❏ No

    ❏ Not applicable

9. I will remind speakers and/or organizers to make materials (e.g. slides, notes, links) available to participants in advance of the event, if possible.
    ❏ Yes

    ❏ No

    ❏ Not applicable

10. I will ensure the event agenda takes into account the need for adequate breaks and time between sessions, travel between events, and health breaks. I recognize that one option to do so includes booking events in 50 minute blocks to ensure 10 min breaks every hour.
   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

11. If my event involves audience participation, I will provide multiple means for attendees to submit questions and comments both in advance and during the event (e.g. in writing, orally, anonymously).
   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

   ❏ Not applicable

12. I will ensure that any presented text (e.g. in slides or videos) is in a large, easy-to-read font with good colour contrast. I recognize that I can refer to the Queen's Accessible PowerPoint Presentations Checklist as a starting point.
   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

   ❏ Not applicable

13. I will make invited guests and presenters aware of accommodation requests as appropriate.
   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

   ❏ Not applicable

14. I will consider offering a financially accessible option (e.g. free, low cost, pay what you like, sliding scale) if appropriate and feasible.
   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

   ❏ Not applicable

Venue:
[Skip section for virtual events. For events held at NMB, skip questions 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]
   1. I will visit the location before booking it, in order to check the location's accessible features myself. If visiting was not feasible (e.g. the venue is outside

of Kingston), I have gone through this accessibility checklist with a venue manager.

❏ Yes, I visited the location.

❏ No, I did not visit the location but I have gone through the accessibility checklist with someone from the venue.

❏ No, I have neither visited the location nor gone through the accessibility checklist with someone from the venue.

2. I will ensure that entrances (especially the main entrance) are barrier-free (e.g. flat or ramped, and wide-enough for people using a wheelchair or scooter). If the main entrance is not accessible, I will locate and share an alternative accessible entrance with clear signage as to its location.

❏ Yes, there is an accessible entrance.

❏ No, there are no accessible entrances.

3. I have inquired about whether any renovations or construction work are scheduled during my event, and have considered how I will mitigate their impact on accessibility features, if applicable. I recognize that these renovations could introduce barriers to accountability such as noise, limited space for movement and the unavailability of building accessibility features.

❏ Yes

❏ No

4. I have ensured that there are elevators or lifts to access the specific location(s) of the event.

❏ Yes

❏ No

5. I have ensured that there are accessible washrooms at the event location (e.g. on the same level(s) as the event without a stepped entrance) that are large enough to accommodate people who use scooters and power wheelchairs.

❏ Yes

❏ No

6. I have ensured that facility staff are aware that the entrance way must be free of snow, ice, wet leaves and standing water, and that sidewalks, ramps and curb cuts are clear (e.g. free of vehicles)?

❏ Yes

❏ No

7. I have determined the location and approximate distance for the nearest accessible parking, and will provide this information to attendees.

❏ Yes

❏ No

8. I have ensured that there is a curb cut or level access from the parking area to the main entrance.

❏ Yes

❏ No

9. I have ensured that the doors are easy to open (i.e. operable with one limb, without much force, and without tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist). Most lever handles, U-shaped handles and push-type doors meet this criteria, in contrast to traditional door knobs. Ideally, doors should also be equipped with automatic openers.
N.B. Some doors in NMB have automatic openers while others do not. The study room doors require significant force to open; you may want to consider propping them open. There are a few corridor doors throughout the building (some of which are without automatic openers) that can act as barriers, and you may also want to prop these open. Most doors throughout NMB have lever handles.

❏ Yes

❏ No

10. I will ensure that cables, wires and microphones are well-secured and away from aisles and other traffic areas.

❏ Yes

❏ No

11. I will ensure that food has been labeled with allergens and dietary restrictions (when ambiguous).

❏ Yes

❏ No

❏ Not applicable

12. I have arranged the space so that pathways (e.g. aisles, space around tables) are wide enough for people using mobility aids to move easily.
N.B. Within NMB, please pay particular attention to the width of passageways in study rooms, the Simulation Lab and Clinical Teaching Centre, as these tend to become crowded with chairs, stretchers, etc.

❏ Yes

❏ No

13. [Strongly recommended] I have identified an accessible gender-neutral bathroom at the event location (e.g. on the same level(s) as the event without a stepped entrance), and will provide this information to attendees.

❏ Yes

❏ No

Hotel and Lodging:
[Skip section for virtual events or if not applicable]
1. I will ask event participants if they require an accessible hotel or lodging room, and identify/book lodgings with accessible rooms as needed.

❏ Yes

❏ No

❏ Not applicable

Virtual Events[4-6]:
[Skip section for in-person events]
1. I will provide real-time closed captioning. (Please note that real-time automated captioning is currently available on the AS Zoom account. If closed captioning is requested by an attendee, automated captioning is insufficient; manual captioning should instead be implemented.)

❏ Yes

❏ No

2. I will include an option to dial-in by phone for guests who do not have access to video conferencing, in addition to a link. (Please note that this is enabled in Zoom meetings).

❏ Yes

❏ No

3. I will provide adequate time for breaks (10 minutes incorporated into every 60-minute timeslot).

❏ Yes

❏ No

4. I will ensure that events do not overlap live classes, in order to afford students the option to attend events in realtime and benefit from any live supports or interactive features available.

❏ Yes

❏ No

5. I will inform speakers and organizers of the below best practices for virtual meetings and events, and support them in following them:
   a. Read comments from the chat aloud, including when responding to typed questions. Some people with attention deficits or who use screen readers may find the chat function distracting.
   b. Ensure that important chat content is shared in other ways (for example, distribute links shared in the chat before and/or after the meeting).
   c. Ask meeting participants to state their name each time they speak. This can help blind and low vision attendees know who is speaking.
   d. Describe on-screen visuals before or slide content before you start talking about your slide.
   e. Minimize background noise to the best of your ability and mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
   f. Offer multiple ways for attendees to engage with the event, and outline what these will be (for example, the 'raise hand' function, unmuting, typing in the chat, etc.).
   g. Encourage participants to turn on their cameras (this can help some deaf or hard of hearing people by reading lips), while recognizing that many may not be able to or feel comfortable turning them on for any number of reasons? If participants plan to have their cameras on, it is helpful to be in a well-lit space and avoid having a window behind them. Again, we recognize that this is not possible for all individuals.

   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

After the Event:
1. I will provide an anonymous mechanism to solicit feedback about the event, including about accessibility features and responses to requests for accommodations.

   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

2. I will make participants aware of the anonymous method by which complaints and feedback regarding accessibility can be submitted through a centralized form.

   ❏ Yes

   ❏ No

3. I will offer to provide participants with recordings, chat transcripts, clean captions and transcripts, PowerPoint slides, links shared in the chat, notes and/or other

alternative formats of the event content, and provide these in follow-up as requested.

❏ Yes

❏ No

Appendix C: Selected School of Medicine Accessibility Features

Accessible Entrances
The Stuart St (South), Arch St (West) and Barrier St (North) entrances of NMB are all accessible and equipped with power doors. There are curb cuts at all three entrances.

Accessible Parking
There is one on-street accessible pay parking spot on Stuart St, at the corner of George St (southeast corner). There are curb cuts that allow access from the on-street accessible parking spot at Stuart and George to all three NMB entrances.

Elevators and Lifts
The North elevator in NMB is equipped with audible announcement systems and Braille buttons. Its dimensions (66" wide x 92", with 48" wide entryway) are sufficient to allow for at least a single wheelchair passenger (the minimum dimensions outlined by the City of Kingston are 60" x 68" with a 37.5" wide entryway as of May 2019). There are ramps in the first-floor main corridor and both large lecture halls.

Accessible Bathrooms
All floors in NMB have multi-user accessible bathrooms. There are also two gender-neutral single-user accessible washrooms equipped with power doors in the basement, and single-user accessible bathrooms in the Clinical Teaching Centre (first floor).

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms
There are two gender-neutral single-user accessible washrooms equipped with power doors in the basement of NMB.