

Royal Roads University Accessibility Plan

Last updated: August 2, 2023

Royal Roads University is located on the traditional Lands of the Lekwungen Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

1.0 Introduction

About Royal Roads University

Royal Roads University was established in 1995 with a mandate to focus on applied and professional programs and research, delivered in a blended format, on campus and online. For over 25 years the University has established a strong reputation as an institution that delivers high-quality, life-changing education and research.

Through the *Royal Roads University Act*, RRU was created with a unique mandate and governance structure to:

- offer certificate, diploma and degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the applied and professional fields;
- provide continuing education in response to the needs of the local community;
- deliver an educational experience through an online learning model that blends on-campus and distance learning to allow people to pursue education from anywhere on the globe; and
- maintain teaching excellence and research activities that support the university's programs in response to the labour market needs of British Columbia.

Our Accessibility Story

Since its inception, Royal Roads University has worked to create accessible, flexible, learning opportunities. Our *Flexible Assessment Policy* creates access for qualified candidates who otherwise may not meet traditional admission requirements. Our delivery methods, which include both face-to-face and online instruction, provide increased access to a diverse student population. Our [Learning, Teaching and Research Model](#) identifies inclusivity as a core element. Ongoing efforts to inform knowledge and practice include Royal Roads' participation in the *Intermunicipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues*, which draws membership from Colwood, Langford and Metchosin, as well as active membership within the *BC Disability Service Providers Articulation Group*.

In 2018, RRU invited the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) to complete an accessibility assessment of garden spaces and all buildings on campus (except for two that were under construction) and evaluate the spaces based on RHF certifications [1]. Notwithstanding the age of the University's infrastructure and that interior and exterior spaces were not originally constructed with barrier-free access in mind, several buildings were successfully certified. One of the benefits of this evaluation has been development of a comprehensive and prioritized plan to address accessibility challenges on the Colwood campus. RRU has committed that all major renovations and new construction will be designed to achieve RHF gold certification; recent examples of this commitment in action include the Dogwood

auditorium, upgrades to Rose Garden Cottage and construction of the West Shore Initiative Phase I building on the new campus in Langford. The University continues to explore all funding opportunities to accelerate its infrastructure investments in keeping with accessibility objectives.

In 2019, RRU hosted the [Pan Canadian Conference on Universal Design for Learning](#), that brought students, service providers, instructional designers and educators together for a multi-day conference on the principles of Universal Design for Learning. The conference was co-hosted by Royal Roads Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies whose instructional designers and learning technologists continually review ways to make learning more accessible. Most recently, Royal Roads Office of Research developed the [Accessibility in Research Toolkit](#) as a resource for students and faculty. Royal Roads' [Academic Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#) identifies a commitment to enhance the inclusion and engagement of people of diverse backgrounds and ideas in all aspects of university life.

Definitions

The terms **accessibility plan, barrier, disability, impairment, and Indigenous person** take their meaning from the definitions in the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#).

University Community means students and employees of the University and persons officially associated with the University, including associate faculty, former students, and alumni.

2.0 Frameworks Guiding our Work

Development of the Royal Roads Accessibility Plan has aligned with the expectations of the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) and [Accessible British Columbia Regulation](#).

The Royal Roads Accessibility Plan is supported by the [University's core values](#) of *caring, courageous and creative*, and the University's [critical commitment](#) to *enhance the inclusion and engagement of people of diverse backgrounds and ideas in all aspects of university life*.

Royal Roads [stated commitment to diversity and inclusion](#) includes the objective: *engage in shared leadership with open, inclusive, accountable, respectful and equitable conditions where ideas and people can flourish*. To achieve this, we are guided by the principles of [Universal Design](#), [Universal Design for Learning](#) and the framework of [Social Disability Theory](#). Social Disability Theory suggests an individual's limitations are not the cause of a disability, but actually society's failure to facilitate appropriate services and environments to meet the needs of people with different abilities.

Related Royal Roads Documents and Policies:

- [Academic Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#)
- [Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Accessibility for Students with a Disability Policy](#)
- [Diversity Policy](#)
- [Flexible Assessment Policy](#)
- [Learning, Teaching and Research Model](#)
- [Student Rights and Responsibilities | Royal Roads University](#)

Related Legislation:

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

3.0 About Our Committee

Authentic representation matters. RRU acknowledges lived experience as expertise and recognizes everyone is unique. We understand one individual cannot speak on behalf of an entire group or community.

The Accessibility Committee is composed of 13 members. Six members are RRU employees who have been appointed by the RRU Executive and are in positions at the University with work plans that include meeting accessibility objectives. One member is a student representative, appointed by Accessibility Services. The remaining non-appointed members were recruited by a call for expressions of interest. In the application form associated with the expressions of interest, applicants are asked if they self-identified as having a disability or with an equity-deserving group (e.g., visible minorities, 2SLGBTQI+, religious minorities, marital status, family status).

The purpose of the Accessibility Committee is to identify ways in which accessibility can be improved at the University and to ensure that Royal Roads continues to be compliant with the *Accessible BC Act*. The Accessibility Committee provides guidance, recommendations, and advice to Royal Roads University about accessibility. The Committee also recommends to the RRU Executive the approval of the University's Accessibility Plan and the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Accessibility Committee meetings will be scheduled on a quarterly basis (i.e., four meetings per fiscal year). The meeting schedule will be set by the Chairs in advance for the upcoming fiscal year. The Accessibility Committee may assemble working groups or special subcommittees to receive feedback, conduct research into a specific topic, undertake a particular piece of work, or provide specific guidance to the University or expertise in decision-making for the University.

4.0 Consultation Conducted

A variety of consultation methods were employed to gather input for this plan. Two information sessions were hosted for the RRU Community to learn about the legislation and development of the plan. A survey was then distributed to all members of the Royal Roads University community. Respondents were asked to identify any barriers that they either experienced themselves or observed others experience. Specifically, they were asked about physical or architectural barriers, technology-related barriers, information and communication barriers, systemic barriers, and attitudinal barriers. Survey respondents were invited to share additional information through email or through an individual interview. Finally, a focus group was facilitated to gain deeper understanding of the experiences of RRU community members.

Consultation timeline:

July 17, 2023	Information Session (Online)
July 18, 2023	Information Session (In-Person)

July 19 – 30, 2023	Survey Open* (Digital and Print) *Respondent follow-up conducted as requested
July 25, 2023	Focus Group (Online)

Over 120 individuals participated in the information sessions, and 162 surveys were completed. Approximately 30% of survey participants identified as having a disability.

Survey and Focus Group results were reviewed and themed in August 2023 as preparation for submission to the Accessibility Committee.

5.0 Identified Barriers and Priorities

Key themes from consultation to be inserted here

6.0 Feedback Mechanism

Royal Roads University is committed to achieving barrier-free access for persons with a disability who are working, learning or visiting the university. With that in mind, a feedback mechanism has been developed to help us understand disability-related barriers that members of our community, and visitors to our community, experience. Feedback will be gathered through multiple channels, including an online form, dedicated email address, phone, and mail.

Through the online form, individuals are asked to identify their relationship to the institution (as student, staff/faculty, alum or visitor), and are then guided through a series of questions, including:

- What were you trying to access? (Response required)
- What was the barrier that you experienced? (Response required)
- What (if any) recommendations do you have on how to remove the barrier (response optional)

Information about these feedback channels is made available through the RRU website. It will also be included in orientation information for new students, staff and faculty and in general information for visitors. This webpage also provides information about why we are gathering feedback, what happens to the feedback once it is submitted, and how feedback will be addressed. It also includes a *Frequently Asked Questions* section. This web presence will also include a section that summarizes action that has been taken in response to feedback that has been shared.

7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

A scheduled annual review of this plan will align with the fiscal year, so that the university can adjust any budget-related requests.

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