BCIT®

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2026-2029

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Acknowledgements and Key Information

Territory Acknowledgement

The British Columbia Institute of Technology acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh).

We recognize that colonial systems and structures have contributed to ongoing inequities, including the disproportionate impacts of disability, health disparities, and barriers to access experienced by Indigenous Peoples.

Advancing accessibility is part of our shared responsibility toward reconciliation. This includes removing barriers, honouring diverse ways of knowing and being, and supporting the dignity and inclusion of Indigenous persons with disabilities.

Through this work, we commit to fostering environments that are accessible, inclusive, and respectful for all.

Accessibility of This Document

This document is accessible to PDF/Universal Accessibility (UA) standards. For alternative formats, please email the BCIT Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion department at rdi@bcit.ca.

Give Feedback About Accessibility at BCIT

If you have feedback about barriers and accessibility at BCIT, tell us through our accessibility feedback form. Feedback can be provided anonymously.

Our Thanks

Thank you to everyone who supported the development of this plan. To members of our Accessibility Steering Committee and working groups, thank you for your guidance and dedication to this work. To everyone who engaged in consultation sessions and provided feedback, thank you for taking the time to share your input. We are particularly grateful to those who identify as persons with a disability who took the time to contribute, provide feedback, and share their lived experiences. Lastly, thank you to everyone who shared their feedback via the accessibility feedback form.

We'd also like to thank Untapped Accessibility for their expertise and support in developing this plan.

Language in This Plan

We understand that disability language is constantly evolving and is nuanced. We also know that people have different preferences for how they describe their lived experiences. In respect of these preferences, we use person-first and identity-first language in this plan.

- **Person-first language** names the person before the disability, for example, saying "person with a disability". Some people use this language because it positions disability as something that's separate from who they are. They find this empowering because they see disability as only part of their identity.
- **Identity-first language** names the disability before the person, for example, saying "disabled person". Those who prefer this language appreciate that it positions disability as an inherent and inseparable part of their identity. For some, this reflects how central disability is to their experience of the world.

When communicating directly with disabled people, we understand that it's best practice to use the language they prefer.

Social Model of Disability

Similar to our first accessibility plan, this plan focuses on the social model of disability. The social model sees disability as something that's **created by the barriers in society**. Under this model, society must remove barriers to improve access for people with disabilities.

The social model contrasts with the **medical model**, which sees disability as a **problem with the disabled person**. The focus is on fixing, treating, or accommodating them so they can overcome the barriers in our inaccessible systems. From this perspective, the person with a disability must advocate for and secure their own access.

Our accessibility commitments are rooted in the social model of disability.

Message from the President

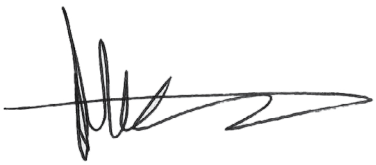
I am pleased to introduce the BCIT Accessibility Plan 2026–2029.

Accessibility begins with identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to ensure that all members of our community have equitable opportunities to succeed at BCIT. This plan reflects our ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive learning and working environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and supported.

As the only post-secondary institution in the province with a mandate for workforce development, we have an important role to play in helping shape accessible and inclusive workplaces that reflect the diversity of our communities. By removing barriers and creating opportunities, we help learners pursue their goals, realize their potential, and make a meaningful impact locally and beyond.

This plan supports the *BCIT Strategic Plan 2025-2030: Future Ready: Student Success for a Complex World* and was developed using the BCIT IDEAS Lens that guides how we relate to one another in advancing principles of Indigenous Reconciliation, inclusion, diversity, equity, access, sustainability, and student wellbeing at the Institute.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed their perspectives and experiences to help inform this plan. Accessibility is a shared responsibility, and meaningful progress happens when we work together. We welcome feedback from students, employees, and our broader community as we strive to create a more accessible and inclusive environment for all.



Dr. Jeff Zabudsky

President, BCIT



Introduction

The BCIT Accessibility Plan 2026-2029 is our second plan. Our first was published in 2023 and focused on key milestones such as the development of our Accessibility Steering Committee and Accessibility Feedback Form. The first plan also highlighted barriers and solution opportunities, as identified through early consultation with the Committee and our BCIT community.

This plan reports on recent progress and highlights tangible accessibility commitments for the next three years.

Skip to the action plan section.

Accessibility at BCIT

Our work is to prepare graduates for a dynamic global workforce. This requires innovation, flexibility, and resilience across the Institute.

Accessibility is an important part of this work. It creates space for diverse minds, bodies, and brains to collaborate and learn together — bringing new insights, skills, and life experiences into all levels of our Institute. With the complex and layered challenges facing industry and the workforce, this is a critical advantage to realizing our mission, vision, and values.

Accessibility also helps us attract and retain a broader range of students and employees to support this work. It's a key part of our commitment to continue being a leader in applied education and workforce development.

Disability at BCIT

According to a 2023 survey we conducted with Veza Global:

- **17%** of student respondents identified as "a person with a disability"
- **24%** of student respondents identified as "neurodivergent"
- **9%** of employee respondents identified as "a person with a disability"
- **9%** of employee respondents identified as "neurodivergent"

Although the response rate for these surveys was low and not reflective of all BCIT students and employees, it shows that disability is an important part of our community. To support full and equal access for everyone, we must prioritize accessibility across the Institute.

What's Guiding This Plan?

Accessible BC Act

This accessibility plan is part of our continued compliance with the Accessible BC Act. This legislation requires prescribed organizations to:

- Establish an accessibility committee
- Develop an accessibility plan—and update it every three years
- Establish a mechanism for public feedback on the accessibility of the organization
- Comply with relevant accessibility standards as they become available

Guiding Principles

The Accessible BC Act identifies six guiding principles to inform an organization's accessibility work:

1. **Inclusion** – ensuring everyone can access and fully participate by building spaces, products, and services around a diversity of needs and experiences.
2. **Adaptability** – understanding that accessibility isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires the creation of flexible and responsive spaces, products, and services that can adjust to different needs.
3. **Diversity** – recognizing that disability is diverse, often overlapping with other identities and life experiences. Accessibility work requires solutions that recognize and address how multiple forms of discrimination overlap and intersect.
4. **Collaboration** – working with people at all levels of the organization to create and deliver truly inclusive and equitable solutions. Accessibility work involves close collaboration between the disability community and organizational staff, including leadership and decision-makers.
5. **Self-determination** – designing for accessibility in a way that provides disabled people with control over their own experience. This creates space for people to have the freedom to navigate spaces, products, and services on their own terms.
6. **Universal design** – emphasizing proactive, inclusive design from the start to minimize the need for individual accommodations.

IDEAS Lens



This plan is guided by our IDEAS Lens, a framework that helps us embed equity-related concepts and goals into our work at BCIT. The lens recognizes the interconnected nature of:

- Indigenous
- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Equity
- Access
- Sustainability
- Student Wellbeing

It's informed by other BCIT visions, strategies, plans, and audits, including:

- Accessibility Hub and Plan
- Anti-Racism Framework
- Student Success for a Complex World: BCIT Strategic Plan 2025-2030
- Campus Plan
- Canada Research Chair Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan
- Future-ready: Education plan 2026-2031
- Indigenous Vision
- People Plan
- Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion Annual Report (2023)
- Student Wellbeing and Resilience Framework
- Sustainability Vision

BCIT Strategic Plan

The BCIT 2025-2030 Strategic Plan highlights four commitments, each with important implications for accessibility.

Transform teaching and learning

Transform teaching and learning experiences to continuously equip students with future-proof skills for a rapidly changing world.

Accessibility implications:

- Mental health is part of the legislated disability definition. This means support must go beyond wellness campaigns to include accommodations, flexibility, and barrier removal. There should also be a focus on proactively identifying situations and barriers where support should be available before a crisis occurs.
- If curriculum integrates real-world realities, accessibility must be part of the discussion. It should be treated as an important part of industry success. This might involve teaching relevant compliance frameworks, like the Accessible Canada Act or the Accessible BC Act, as well as skills including inclusive and universal design thinking.

Catalyze digital transformation

Catalyze digital transformation to modernize and streamline systems, secure data, and improve experiences and efficiency.

Accessibility implications:

- If digital transformation prioritizes speed, cost savings, and standardization without embedding accessibility, it can create barriers. Accessibility should be treated as a design requirement from the start of any transformation project. This includes considering things like ensuring multiple pathways for user engagement and designing around a diversity of human needs.
- Increased institutional accountability requires clear and accessible communication, simple and transparent processes, and accessible feedback tools and reporting pathways.
- Accessibility work cannot sit solely with one department, it must be integrated across all departments with a shared commitment to create accessible learning and environments.

Foster vibrant and inclusive communities

Foster vibrant and inclusive communities—on and off campus—to enhance experiences of connection, wellbeing, and belonging.

Accessibility implications:

- Efforts to enhance the BCIT community should address stigma around disability and academic and workplace accommodations. Appropriate accommodations have a big impact on student success and employee retention.
- Support systems, like accommodations, need to be clear and easy to navigate. They also need to be timely and responsive.
- Fostering a culture of accessibility across BCIT is integral to inclusive communities, and to ensure a shared responsibility to accessibility.

Enrich partner experiences

Enrich partner and industry experiences to amplify student learning and real-world impact.

Accessibility implications:

- Graduates will enter workplaces governed by accessibility legislation. To prepare students for real-world industry needs, they should learn about accessibility, including applicable standards and regulations. The diversity of disability should also be part of intersectional curriculum development.
- Accessibility extends beyond the BCIT campus boundary. It should be part of the student experience for co-ops, practicums, internships, and field placements — and should be a focus for how BCIT collaborates with industry partners.

Consulting the BCIT Community

To inform key priorities for this plan, we engaged various community partners across BCIT. Discussions occurred with:

- Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion department
- Accessibility Services
- Accessibility Steering Committee
- Accessibility working groups
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee
- Employees
- Students
- BCIT Student Association

These conversations allowed us to leverage internal experience and expertise to create a plan rooted in organizational realities. They also allowed us to uncover barriers impacting the BCIT community. Below is a summary of what we learned.

Barriers at BCIT

The barriers fall into five main categories:

1. **Physical inaccessibility** – for example, built environment barriers across campuses, including building design and furniture.
2. **Administrative policy and process complexity** – for example, unclear processes, limited resources, and slow and inconsistent responses to student accommodation requests.
3. **Digital and information barriers** – for example, outdated systems, inaccessible software, lack of audio recording equipment in learning spaces, and unclear communication from instructors and departments (such as unresponsiveness to student emails, lack of follow-up to verbal conversations, unclear or missing instructions, and conflicting information about accommodations).
4. **Attitudinal and cultural barriers** – for example, stigma around disability, lack of staff and faculty education on accessibility, inconsistent understanding of shared responsibility with accommodations among managers and faculty, and other equity-related topics.

5. **Discrepancies in campus experiences** – for example, those at the Burnaby Campus have greater access to support and resources.

Opportunities

Key opportunities arising from conversations include:

- Reducing stigma through more proactive accessibility across BCIT.
- Introducing a clear process for employee workplace accommodation requests.
- Offering employees increased education on accessibility and disability stigma, as well as Universal Design for Learning.
- Transparency in how the student accommodation policy is implemented across the Institute.
- Normalizing disability disclosure and earlier student accommodation requests.
- Strengthening collaboration between faculty and Accessibility Services to enhance a shared commitment to accessibility.
- Increase awareness of campus resources and assisted referrals to Accessibility Services and Disability Management.



Actions and Commitments

The following actions shows our accessibility commitments across priority areas from the Accessible BC Act.

Employment

1. **Offer education to employees about disability and accessibility.**

   Attitudinal barriers are a major concern for our disability community. Educating employees will be part of how we address these barriers. Employee learning and resources will set the foundation for an institutional understanding and approach to disability that's rooted in the social model and shared accountability.

2. **Create and maintain an accessibility resource hub.**

   As an extension of our first commitment, we'll create and maintain a resource hub to distribute to employees on accessibility at BCIT.

3. **Review and align employee accommodations processes with upcoming provincial standards.**

   We will work to review our employee accommodation processes against coming standards. Although employment standards under the Accessible BC Act have yet to be released, we expect that they will align with the Employment Standard from Accessibility Standards Canada.

Delivery of Services

1. **Review and align student accommodations policy and procedure with upcoming provincial standards.**

   Student feedback focused heavily on barriers in our accommodations process. In response, we'll review our Accessibility Services department processes for service delivery, and the student accommodations policy and procedure against coming standards and best practices.

2. **Act on recommendations from the 2025 BCIT Burnaby Library Accessibility Audit and explore how key learnings can inform work in other areas.**

   The recommendations from this library audit extend beyond accessibility compliance and explore how universal design can be embedded into the library's current and future planning. They focus on four key learnings that we can apply to our work in other areas:

- Accessibility is most effective when it's integrated into space and services, rather than positioned as a special or separate offering.
- Offering choice and flexibility is critical to supporting diverse needs.
- Clearly visible accessibility features and tools that are easy to access are most effective. For example, tools that are available without requiring a special request.
- Environments where support is accessible without disclosure or formal registration fosters the strongest sense of inclusion and equity.

3. **Promote a culture of shared responsibility and accountability to support student accommodations across the Institute.**

   Feedback from students highlighted a disconnect between faculty and Accessibility Services. We'll work with our Schools, Student Success, and administration to identify gaps and opportunities for better communication, collaboration, and a shared commitment to supporting student success and wellbeing.

4. **Promote accessibility to industry partners for work-integrated learning.**

   To ensure accessibility support remains with students beyond the BCIT campus boundary, we need to support continuity of accommodations for co-ops, practicums, internships, and field placements. This will involve:

   - Discussing resourcing and collaboration required at BCIT to enable enhanced engagement with industry partners in advancing accessibility.
   - Offering guidance and support to industry partners to support individual student accommodations as needed.
   - Exploring with industry partners how to socialize common accommodation needs for students and getting early buy-in for continuing support during employment experiences, including trialling new industry partnerships.

Information and Communications

1. **Communicate the availability of student accommodations widely.**

   To ensure more students know support is available, we will improve how we communicate our accommodations policy and process and how to access services, including ensuring accommodation and accessibility information are located in course outlines, syllabuses, and program orientation. Communication will be frequent and used to normalize accommodation and encourage earlier student requests for support.

2. **Embed accessibility into considerations and criteria for digital transformation projects.**

   For our digital transformation projects, accessibility cannot be a post-launch fix. We'll work with subject matter experts, end users, school representatives, and relevant departments to embed accessibility principles into BCIT's governance, processes and management decisions as required.

Education

1. **Maintain and promote resources on Universal Design for Learning.**

   Extensive feedback from the BCIT community focused on the value of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In particular, the positive impact of UDL principles on accessibility for students. In response to this feedback, we'll maintain a dedicated website to serve as a central hub for UDL at BCIT. The hub will provide employees with resources and guidance on how to implement UDL principles into the physical and virtual classroom.

2. **Review the Learning Hub to enhance accessibility.**

   We will review our Learning Hub for opportunities to improve accessibility for digital learning. This review will focus on appropriate and consistent use of alternative text and captions, referencing the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 when appropriate.

3. **Incorporate accessibility into curriculum and program design.**

   As part of BCIT's strategic goals, we aim to better reflect the realities of students' future workplaces in curriculum design. This work needs to involve accessibility. Where relevant, we will work to incorporate principles from the Accessible BC Act including increasing flexibility in program delivery, offering assessment variety, removing barriers for students with disabilities, and embedding UDL.

Next Steps

Implementation Plans

The commitments in this plan are high level. They will guide our work over the next three years. To ensure meaningful progress, each commitment will be supported by a detailed implementation plan that outlines more specific actions, timelines, responsibilities, and metrics. We will use these implementation plans to track progress and adjust our approach as needed.

Progress and Oversight

Progress will be monitored by the Accessibility Steering Committee, which will liaise with other departments as needed.

Annual progress updates will be published by on the Accessibility Hub.

What You Can Do to Support Accessibility

Accessibility is more than large-scale initiatives. Although these are critical to ensuring meaningful progress, accessibility is also supported by our everyday actions. Individual commitments can make a meaningful difference. For example:

- Using plain language
- Checking documents for accessibility
- Creating inclusive meetings
- Listening to diverse experiences
- Challenging barriers when we see them

Advancing accessibility is a shared responsibility, and each of us has a role to play. By working together, we can foster a community where everyone feels valued, supported, and able to fully participate.

Appendix A: Accessibility Progress to Date

Since releasing our first plan, we:

- Established **five accessibility-focused working groups** to ensure successful completion of accessibility projects:
  1. Built environment working group
  2. Communication, information, and technology working group
  3. Employment working group
  4. Education working group
  5. Accessibility feedback working group
- **Created** **Campus Design Guidelines** to ensure all future campus development projects include accessibility and inclusivity requirements.
- Completed significant **physical upgrades** across campus, including:
  1. Improved accessible parking
  2. Automatic doors
  3. Elevator replacements with audible and visual indicators
  4. Enhanced pedestrian routes
  5. Updated accessible signage
  6. Inclusive washroom conversions
  7. Accessible student housing
- Delivered **workshops, presentations, and community events** to students and employees to advance inclusive teaching practices, student accommodations, and broader awareness of accessibility, equity, and inclusion.

For more information, see our full progress updates on our Accessibility Hub.

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EDUCATION
FOR A COMPLEX WORLD.

bcit.ca/accessibility-hub