**C. ACCESSIBILITY**

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|---|---|
| Responsible person | Director of Operations |
| Responsible committee | Resources |
| Date approved | 2023 |
| Next review – cycle 5 years | 2028 |

**ACCESSIBILITY POLICY**

2023

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**:

1. McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to accessibility as expressed in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (hereinafter referred to as the AODA), which places a legal obligation on organizations to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and to complete and submit AODA Compliance Reports every three years as required.

2. McMaster Divinity College is committed to fostering, creating, and maintaining a barrier-free environment for all individuals providing equal rights and opportunities, including:

   a. promoting a respectful attitude for persons with disabilities;
   b. promoting awareness of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities;
   c. informing the MDC community about the services available to persons with disabilities and seeking to ensure that such services are delivered in ways that promote equity; and
   d. providing support services, subject to certain limitations.

3. McMaster Divinity College recognizes that barriers to participation exist and that adjustments to policies and practices of MDC are required. This is accomplished through the prevention, identification, and removal of barriers within the MDC systems, structures, and policies. It is understood that where this Policy refers to "barriers" it is referring to barriers such as a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, and information or communications barrier, an

attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, or a policy or practice.

4. The commitments in this Policy are intended to ensure that accessibility remains a priority in McMaster Divinity College's decision-making process and will serve to assist in ensuring that decisions are improving accessibility and not inadvertently creating barriers.

**PURPOSE & SCOPE:**

5. This Policy provides a framework within which the MDC Accessibility Plan and other initiatives are to be created in order to move the Divinity College towards the goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. It is also the purpose of this Policy to endeavor to provide the foundation to create an environment that provides the widest feasible scope of access, which is the right or opportunity to reach, use or participate in MDC's systems, facilities and services.

6. This Policy applies to:

- McMaster Divinity College students,
- McMaster Divinity College employees,
- Applicants for employment with McMaster Divinity College, who may require employment accommodation through the recruitment, assessment, selection, and hiring process,
- Visitors and volunteers, and
- Contractors and subcontractors engaged by McMaster Divinity College.

**PRINCIPLES:**

7. In order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, the principles of approach are:

- Dignity – service is provided in a way that allows the individual to maintain self-respect and the respect of other persons.
- Independence – when a person is able to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- Integration – service is provided in a way that allows the individual to benefit from equivalent services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other individuals, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the individual to access goods or services.
- Equal Opportunity – service is provided to individuals in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods or services equal to that given to others.
- Reasonable Efforts – taking approaches that meet the required needs of the individual.

**ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

8. McMaster Divinity College will work to improve accessibility by maintaining an Accessibility Plan that conforms to this Policy. As part of this plan, MDC has identified e targets and goals related to improved accessibility.

9. McMaster Divinity College will identify and implement training and education requirements or opportunities to increase the awareness of accessibility and remove attitudinal barriers.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

10. All members of the McMaster Divinity College community are responsible for adhering to and following the commitments set out both in this Policy, and the Accessibility Plan.

11. McMaster Divinity College will monitor and evaluate current accessibility initiatives and changes to applicable legislation and/or regulations. Changes to policies and plans, will be incorporated as required. MDC will also report on performance in relation to the accessibility goals and targets of the Accessibility Plan.

12. Both the Policy and the Accessibility Plan will be communicated to the McMaster Divinity College community and MDC will make them publicly available on its website.

**CORE GUIDELINES:**

McMaster Divinity College provides core guidelines on specific accessibility considerations with respect to the application of this Policy. Additional guidelines and policies are outlined in greater detail in the Accessibility Plan.

**1) Use of Assistive Devices Guideline**

Personal assistive devices are often used by persons with disabilities to help them with daily living. They are usually devices that people bring with them to MDC and may consist of any auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, and/or medical aids.

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, people may use their

own personal assistive devices while accessing goods and services at MDC, subject to certain limitations.

Assistive devices may include but are not limited to:

- Manual and motorized wheelchairs, scooters, canes, crutches, walkers,
- hearing aids and personal TTYs
- magnifiers,
- oxygen tanks,
- computers and adaptive technology.

**Principles:**

McMaster Divinity College is committed to enhancing the accessibility of its education delivery, websites, telecommunications, and other infrastructure. As part of this commitment, MDC will ensure that persons with disabilities are permitted to use their own assistive devices to access goods and services of MDC, subject to reasonable limitations.

**Protocol:**

Upon request, McMaster Divinity College will be prepared to assist, or arrange for assistance, while individuals are using goods or services of MDC, subject to reasonable limitations.

**Availability of Assistive Devices:**

McMaster Divinity College provides measures to assist persons with disabilities to benefit from the equivalent level of service, in the same place and in a similar way, as other individuals. Where an assistive device or support does not exist on campus, MDC will make reasonable efforts to ensure that appropriate devices or supports are made available, subject to reasonable limitations.

## 2) Guidelines for Service Animals & Support Persons

**Purpose:**

Service animals and support persons required to assist a person with a disability will be present and welcome at campus locations except where excluded by law.

**Definitions:**

Service Animal: Any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals. A service animal is not a pet.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that the person with a disability cannot perform for themselves.

For example, guide dogs used by some individuals who are blind, alerting persons with hearing impairments to sounds, pulling wheelchairs or carrying and picking up things for persons with mobility impairments, assisting persons with mobility impairments with balance.

Support Person: Any person who provides assistance to a person with a disability.

**Principles:**

McMaster Divinity College shall not prohibit the use of a service animal by a person with a disability in the conduct of regular business or activities except where excluded by law.

**Protocol:**

Within the parameters of the Principles noted above, the service animal or support person must be permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of McMaster Divinity College where members of the public (as applicable) are normally allowed to go. An individual with a service animal may not be segregated from other individuals.

If goods, services, or facilities are defined as off-limits to service animals or support persons, McMaster Divinity College will make every effort to provide alternate ways for persons with disabilities to access such goods, services, and facilities.

In order to respect employees or students whose health may be impacted by the presence of service animals at MDC, these individuals may request reasonable accommodation suitable to their health needs.

## 3) Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Service

**Purpose:**

McMaster Divinity College will provide appropriate notice to members of the public when there is a temporary disruption of facilities or services (planned or unexpected) that are usually used by persons with disabilities at MDC.

**Scope:**

Service disruptions shall include information related to facilities (e.g. elevators, building ramps, accessible washrooms) or goods/services (e.g. events, lectures, amplification systems, TTY services).

Disruptions to all services, such as during a power outage or during a labour dispute, do not require this special notice.

For information relating to closure due to inclement weather, McMaster Divinity College follows the McMaster University policy, and up to date alerts are broadcast as part of the McMaster Safety App, and various social media accounts of both MDC and the University.

**Protocol:**

Where a service disruption is unavoidable McMaster Divinity College shall:

- Post a notice at the location, for example if an elevator disruption then a notice will be posted at the site on both floors,
- Provide advance notice, where possible, to all building occupants and/or affected participants with methods that may include email distribution lists, website announcements, internal signage, or the McMaster Safety App.

All service disruption notices shall include:

- Name of the service/event impacted
- expected duration of disruption,
- any alternate means of accessing the facility or service,
- who to contact for assistance, and
- any other relevant information for accessing the facility or service

In such cases, the person may be offered the following as a means of accessing the facility, event, or service, such as:

• the goods and service delivery agent may provide the goods or service directly to the person with a disability at an alternate place and time, as deemed appropriate; or

• any other assistive measures available and deemed appropriate to deliver goods and services.

## 4) Guideline for Providing Feedback & Complaints

**Purpose:**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, McMaster Divinity College has established a mechanism for receiving and responding to feedback from persons with disabilities about accessibility in relation to the way MDC provides its services to them.

**Protocol:**

Concerns or feedback regarding access to the building or services provided by McMaster Divinity College may be submitted to the Director of Operations.

– John Steadman
Room 125
Phone: 905-525-9140, ext. 23225
Email:steadmanj@mcmaster.ca
MDC Website form: “MDC Accessibility Feedback”

Any feedback provided by an individual will be addressed in a timely manner. All responses and resolutions will be conveyed to the originator in a format which meets their needs.