Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre Accessibility Plan 2025-2028

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Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre (Sask DLC) is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible learning and work environment for our students, their families and our employees.

Accessibility benefits everyone. By removing barriers, we create opportunities for students to learn without limits, for families to engage with confidence and for employees to thrive in a supportive environment. Together, we will continue to build a culture where inclusion is not just a goal, but a standard.

Our Accessibility Plan, developed in alignment with *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act*, supports our collective efforts to create and maintain an accessible work environment where everyone feels safe, respected and empowered to reach their full potential.

This plan highlights the steps we will take to remove barriers. Over the next three years, we will focus on actions that strengthen digital accessibility, improve the physical and technological environments that we use and build a culture of inclusion.

This is an ongoing process, and we will work together to carry out these actions and build greater awareness of the importance of accessibility across our entire organization.

Our students and staff are - and continue to be - essential as we work toward a future where every student has the tools and support they need to succeed.

I welcome your feedback on this plan and any accessibility-related matters.

Sincerely,

Darren Gasper
Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre

About Sask DLC

Sask DLC is a Treasury Board Crown corporation established to deliver high-quality online learning opportunities for Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) students across Saskatchewan.

Operating under *The Education Act, 1995*, Sask DLC adheres to the Ministry of Education's *Quality Assurance Framework*, which sets the standards for all online learning providers in the province. Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation is the organization's legal name and operates as Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre.

Sask DLC's centralized online learning platform provides students and families with greater choice and flexibility in their education while ensuring a consistent, high-quality user experience. Students may choose to study full-time online, or high school students around the province may take one or more online courses to supplement their in-class learning at their local school.

Students and families are provided with options to choose the learning model that works best for them, including daily live classes in our synchronous courses, regular scheduled meetings with their teacher in Guided Learning courses or studying at their own pace in asynchronous courses. This flexibility allows students and families to select the learning environment that best suits their needs, while being supported by their teacher.

Sask DLC offers K-12 online courses, with a wide range of resources for students and teachers, including instructional videos and lesson plans. High school students may choose from more than 150 courses including many unique elective options in subject areas such as agriculture, business, creative arts, technology, trades and wellness. Additionally, students may enrol in dual credit courses, which provide both post-secondary and high school credits, or take part in hands-on learning opportunities in trades, agriculture, tourism or power engineering. This extensive range of course options gives students access to classes they may not have in their local schools, allowing them to explore their interests, consider future career opportunities and support their graduation plans.

Sask DLC's head office is in Kenaston, with an administrative office in Regina and regional campuses in Estevan, La Ronge, Kenaston, Neilburg, Nipawin, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current and Yorkton.

Sask DLC provides online education to thousands of students annually, including those that choose to learn online full-time as well as grade 10-12 students who choose to take one or more online courses in their local school.

Additional information on Sask DLC is available at saskDLC.ca.

Introduction

The Accessible Saskatchewan Act requires provincial government and public sector bodies to develop and publish an accessibility plan. This plan is intended to help identify accessibility barriers for people who are in, or interact with, an organization and describes the actions that will be taken to remove and prevent accessibility barriers.

Sask DLC is committed to identifying, removing and preventing accessibility barriers for individuals who work at or access online school operational facilities, programs and services. Sask DLC is committed to Accessibility for All guided by all people protected under the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* and recognizing that accessibility is good for everyone.

Sask DLC is also committed to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* and seeks culturally responsive solutions to all aspects of the accessibility plan.

Engagement Plan

To inform this plan, Sask DLC formed an internal working group with staff from across the organization. The group was tasked with assessing accessibility and identifying organizational barriers.

Additionally, Sask DLC sought feedback from employees, full-time online students and their parents/guardians regarding their experiences with accessibility at Sask DLC. To collect feedback, we conducted anonymous surveys to gather insights on perceived or personally experienced barriers.

What Did We Learn?

We received over 260 responses. The working group considered the feedback received and identified potential actions that can be taken over the next three years to improve the accessibility of our operation's facilities, programs and services.

Student and Parent Survey Highlights

- 68 per cent of respondents found it easy to navigate physical or online learning space
- 76 per cent found Sask DLC communication and learning materials easy to understand
- 20 per cent reported trouble using online platforms, websites or tools

- 83 per cent felt included and respected at Sask DLC

Areas for improvement:

- Simplifying learning interfaces and platforms to improve usability
- Optimizing communication with students and families to ensure clarity and consistency
- Reviewing course materials to ensure alignment with accessibility standards
- Raising awareness of available accessibility adaptations and support services
- Fostering peer connections in the online learning environment

Respondents shared the following positive impacts of the online education model:

- Flexibility to balance personal priorities
- Safe learning environment for students facing bullying
- Ability to create adaptive learning spaces
- Opportunity for adult learners to pursue graduation and future career goals

Employee Survey Highlights

The following highlights reflect key results and themes we learned from the employee survey:

- 57 per cent of employees rated their workspaces as very accessible
- 60 per cent found tools and technology they use at work to be accessible
- 65 per cent felt that Sask DLC fosters accessibility for staff and 71 per cent echoed this feeling for students

Our employees expressed the need for raising awareness of accessibility procedures and processes and exploring options to further improve accessibility across Sask DLC campuses. Priority should be given to continue offering accessibility and inclusion focused professional development opportunities.

Definitions: Accessibility Barriers

The Accessible Saskatchewan Act defines a barrier as "anything that hinders or challenges the full and equal participation in society of persons with disabilities".

There are many types of barriers that persons with disabilities may experience, including physical barriers, information and communications barriers and attitudinal barriers. Definitions and examples of each barrier type are outlined below to help people understand the experiences of people with disabilities.

Physical barriers

Physical barriers exist when spaces are designed in ways that prevent or limit mobility or access. For example:
- Hosting a public event at a venue that is only accessible by stairs.
- Parking lots with no curb cuts that make it difficult to access sidewalks.
- Washrooms that lack accessible stalls or automatic door openers.

Information and communications barriers

Information and communications barriers exist when information or material is shared in a way that is not accessible to all people. For example:
- Using small print that is hard to read.
- Websites and documents that are not accessible for screen readers or convert text to multiple languages.
- Videos that do not have closed captioning.

Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers exist when people act or think based on false assumptions. For example:
- Not including persons with disabilities in decisions that impact them.
- Making assumptions about a person's ability to communicate or do things for themselves.
- Avoiding a person with a disability for fear of offending them.

Sask DLC's Accessibility Goals and Actions

Since beginning operation in 2023, Sask DLC has taken steps to improve the accessibility of our campuses, programs and services. We recognize that progress will be ongoing as we aim to become more inclusive. This plan outlines the actions that our organization will prioritize over the next three years to remove accessibility barriers that people with disabilities experience.

Through collaborative efforts across our organization, we aim to execute the actions outlined in this plan to improve student and employee experience while raising awareness about the importance of accessibility throughout the organization.

Goal 1 – Build a More Inclusive Workforce by Improving Knowledge and Awareness of Accessibility Practices and Resources

Increasing employee awareness about accessibility and understanding the importance of inclusion are key to improving the quality of services provided to our students and their families, including persons with disabilities.

Achievements to date:

- Offering specialized training for staff working with neurodivergent students on self-regulation, executive functioning and social competency. These sessions help build staff capacity to support diverse learners and promote inclusive practices across our online school.
- New Sask DLC self-declaration tool allows employees to voluntarily self-identify as a member of one or more equity groups, including persons with disabilities.
- Sask DLC supports teachers, parents, students and community members through an online Resource Bank, which houses a dynamic collection of free K-12 digital educational resources on variety of topics. The Resource Bank includes curriculum and professional development materials on accessibility for teachers, learning resources on accessibility and disability for students, and guidance resources for parents on supporting learners with specialized needs.
- Sask DLC's policies on Respect for Human Diversity, Employee Accommodation, and Respectful Workplace and Anti-Harassment collectively strengthen our commitment to accessibility. These policies set a commitment that everyone at Sask DLC is respected, barriers to participation are removed and inclusive practices are embedded across our learning and working environments—supporting equitable access for all students, staff and community members.

- Medical accommodation supports for staff are outlined and easily accessible through an online Human Resources Service Catalogue, helping employees navigate the process and receive timely workplace adjustments.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Integrate disability awareness content into corporate learning offerings to cultivate an accessibility-informed workplace.
- Explore options to provide tailored accessibility and inclusion training opportunities for all staff, with a focus on specialized training for teachers.
- Continue to raise awareness of various accessibility procedures, tools and supports available to staff, students and their families.
- Increase awareness among staff of existing Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) offerings.

Goal 2 – Improve Physical and Technological Environment

Sask DLC recognizes that accessible buildings and well-designed workspaces are essential to delivering inclusive services. While Sask DLC does not own or solely lease most campus buildings, which limits direct control over physical improvements, we continue to prioritize accessibility within our operational spaces. As an online learning provider, most of our work takes place in a digital environment. This creates specific needs for ergonomic workstations and reliable technology for staff.

Achievements to date:

- Sask DLC prioritizes workplace safety with health and safety committees established across campuses to ensure safe and secure environment for all staff.
- Sask DLC started to provide sit/stand desks as standard new equipment for staff at Sask DLC operated facilities.
- Following Ministry of Education policy direction, new school builds with high school-aged students must include a designated space for distance learning. This will enhance the quality of services for Sask DLC students while improving workspace conditions by increasing privacy and reducing noise.
- Sask DLC implemented a series of technology enhancements aimed at improving access, efficiency and support for both students and staff. Students benefited from simplified login processes, automatic account setup upon course enrolment and expanded in-person student information technology support services by offering walk-in assistance at Sask DLC campuses. For staff, Sask DLC streamlined onboarding procedures through automation, strengthened device management to enhance remote support capabilities and launched a centralized organizational site

and a support portal to improve access to resources and streamline technical assistance. These initiatives contributed to a more connected and responsive work environment across the organization.

- Sask DLC started offering a Kindergarten to Grade 9 student and family online orientation to support a smooth transition to online learning.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Continue to review existing assessment process for employee requests of ergonomic and supportive equipment.
- Continue exploring opportunities to improve Sask DLC workspace setups to foster employee focus and productivity.
- Increase awareness of alternative meeting room spaces available to Sask DLC employees within our own spaces and across Government of Saskatchewan facilities.
- Explore ways to improve printer access and connectivity for all Sask DLC staff.
- Develop hardware lifecycle management plan to ensure timely replacement of aging hardware.
- Continue enhancing Sask DLC systems to simplify platform transitions and reduce login requirements, improving access for staff and students.
- Enhance digital literacy and technical skills by providing education and tips to staff, students and families on use of Sask DLC platforms.
- Encourage greater use of the Student Support Portal with students and families and raise awareness of the tools provided by Sask DLC that support online student learning.

Goal 3 – Improve the Accessibility of Sask DLC Programs and Services

Sask DLC is taking steps to remove accessibility barriers that limit access to online learning programs and services. We are also focusing on strengthening accessibility of our educational frameworks, approaches and procedures.

Achievements to date:

- **Intake and Support Systems:** Sask DLC supports students and families through a personalized onboarding process that includes an orientation module, documentation of learning needs and identification of required adaptations. Academic Advisors, Student Support Teachers and Classroom Teachers collaborate with families to ensure appropriate supports are in place.
- **Expanded Access to Technology and Resources:** Sask DLC provides technology to

families based on need and resource availability to ensure students can participate in online learning.

- **Inclusive Course Delivery and Resources:** Sask DLC courses are offered with a variety of learning models including synchronous live class, guided learning and asynchronous to support the diverse learning needs of students. Printed resource packages are provided to specific groups of students to support the learning process. Procurement of online and physical resources for students and teachers is ongoing. Sask DLC provides students with a variety of digital and physical resources to support learning and accessibility. Supports include the Sora digital library with ebooks and audiobooks available in English and French, opportunities to attend virtual English Language Arts performances without travel, physical copies of novels on request and Microsoft Accessibility tools such as Read Aloud and Dictate.
- **Structured Literacy Framework:** Implementation of universal screening practices in specific grades help guide instruction and adapt teaching to student needs.
- **Student Services and Supports:** Sask DLC provides coordinated support for full-time and part-time online students. Academic Advisors support full-time online students and work with families to support course selection, graduation planning and access to resources. Online Learning Facilitators (OLFs) offer in-person support to part-time online students and maintain communication between students, families, local schools and instructional staff. Additional supports available to full-time online students include psychologist, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, social workers and online educational assistants. Inclusion and Intervention Plans are developed collaboratively for students requiring intensive support.
- **Instructional Supports:** The Student Programming Department assists teachers with curriculum design, instructional strategies and assessment practices to support all students.
- **Modified Programming:** Sask DLC provides a range of modified high school courses that students may take based on results of a comprehensive assessment or expert recommendation. Modified courses help to meet diverse student's needs and achieve students' graduation plans.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Continue to assess and improve phone and registration systems for families, local schools and the public.
- Review student accommodation and adaptation procedures to improve staff and parent understanding and ensure consistent student check-ins.
- Increase consistent application of student onboarding process to identify and support accessibility needs.
- Continue to explore and provide sustainable specialized supports to students.
- Embed accessibility considerations into policy and process design.
- Implement Guided Learning Framework to foster meaningful teacher-student

relationships and inclusion.

- Provide staff with guidance on creating accessible communications.
- Review communications to students and parents aiming to optimize volume and standardize content.
- Review and update Sask DLC documents and content to ensure information is easy to find, read and understand.
- Enhance and expand student social clubs, moderated spaces, and group activities to foster stronger connections and inclusion for Sask DLC students.

Goal 4 – Make Digital Content More Accessible

As an online learning provider, Sask DLC's core learning environment is digital. This means that students, families and staff rely heavily on digital platforms—from course materials and registration systems to communication tools and support services. If digital content is not accessible, it can create significant barriers for individuals.

Achievements to date:

- Sask DLC has implemented a centralized course development model supported by policies and procedures to ensure the creation of high-quality, accessible online courses.
- Sask DLC formalized a course development and maintenance framework, as well as enhanced course maintenance request processes so that courses are updated and renewed on a regular basis.
- Sask DLC has implemented a robust program review that provides ongoing course reviews that are informed by teacher and student feedback to drive continuous improvement.
- Adoption of course development standards promote clarity and accessibility for both students and teachers.
- Sask DLC continues to develop new courses and update existing ones in response to curriculum changes and evolving student needs.

Actions for 2025-28:

- Continue to refine Sask DLC's course development and accessibility standards as needed.
- Promote awareness and understanding of accessibility standards in course and content development among staff to support student learning.
- Conduct regular assessments of Sask DLC web content to ensure alignment with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- Regularly review and enhance educational materials and online courses to align with accessibility best practices.

- Ensure all content uses accessible templates, including recommended fonts, formatting and colour schemes.

Goal 5 – Provide Leadership to Promote Accessibility and Inclusion

Guided by *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act*, Sask DLC has committed to following any new requirements created by the Act and the regulations created under it.

Achievements to date:
- Establishing accessibility advisory working group to guide creation of this plan.

Actions for 2025-28:
- Continue to strengthen relationships with partner school divisions, the provincial government, training institutions and industry to advance accessibility of online education in Saskatchewan.
- Establish a staff Accessibility Advisory Group at Sask DLC to support work outlined in this plan.
- Develop a guide for hosting accessible events in Sask DLC facilities and online.
- Adopt accessibility requirements to be used during the procurement and tendering processes. Including accessibility considerations will ensure that Sask DLC proactively considers accessibility when purchasing goods and services.

Conclusion

Sask DLC is committed to improving accessibility in our online school and will review and update this plan every three years. The actions outlined in this plan are intended to improve the accessibility of Sask DLC services and remove barriers that persons with disabilities experience.

As we move forward, we want to continue to hear from members of our community about accessibility barriers that impact the lives of persons with disabilities.

Contact Us

Please contact us to share any feedback, questions, or comments you have on our accessibility plan.

accessibility@saskDLC.ca