

Thompson Rivers University Students' Union

805 TRU Way, Kamloops BC, V2C 0C8



Monday, November 03, 2025

TRU Accessibility Committee
Thompson Rivers University
805 TRU Way
Kamloops, BC V2C 0C8

Re: Developing a Campus-Wide Accessible Events Policy

Dear Members of the TRU Accessibility Committee,

Across Thompson Rivers University, countless events bring our campus to life; lectures, celebrations, forums, and gatherings that connect students, staff, faculty and the broader community. Yet accessibility in these spaces remains inconsistent. While TRU has made strides in accessible facilities and services, the same care is not always extended to the events that define campus life.

When accessibility isn't built into event planning, the result is unintentional exclusion. Members of our community may find themselves unable to attend, participate, or even learn about opportunities that others take for granted.

As the Students' Union, we've witnessed firsthand the difference that accessible event design makes. Earlier this year, we introduced our own Accessible Events Policy (Appendix A) to ensure that all Union-hosted events are inclusive and welcoming for everyone. Simple measures, like ensuring accessible venues, clear communication, and the ability to request accommodations, have transformed participation. Students who previously couldn't attend due to barriers have shared that, for the first time, they felt included outside of just the classroom but to the broader campus community. This experience reminded us that accessibility is more than just compliance where required, it's about integrating mechanisms where there is barrier-free opportunities for everyone to participate in any capacity of campus.

We believe TRU can extend this same commitment across the institution by developing an Accessible Events Policy that ensures consistent accessibility standards for all campus events; whether hosted by departments, faculties, student groups, or external partners. TRU has already demonstrated its dedication to inclusion through its *Accessibility Action Plan (2025–2028)*, which highlights adaptability, diversity, and universal design. Expanding accessibility practices to campus events would strengthen that plan by addressing an area not yet explicitly covered.

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While there is currently no legislative mandate requiring universities to apply accessibility standards to events, the absence of such a mandate does not diminish the importance of doing so. Accessibility in events is an opportunity to move beyond compliance and embody the university's values of inclusion and equity in every aspect of campus life.

This proposal directly aligns with the goals of TRU's Accessibility Action Plan and the purpose of the Accessibility Committee; to identify, remove, and prevent barriers within our campus community. Implementing accessibility standards for events would bring those principles to life, ensuring that inclusion is not only experienced in classrooms and services but also in the gatherings and shared experiences that shape campus culture.

When we developed our own Accessible Events Policy, we were surprised to discover that this wasn't standard practice across post-secondary institutions. However, it is quickly becoming one. Several universities in British Columbia have already established frameworks for accessible event planning. Simon Fraser University requires accessibility to be considered from the outset of every university-sponsored event, while the University of British Columbia provides detailed guidance for inclusive event design that covers promotion, registration, and venue selection. Even Okanagan College—an institution similar in size to TRU—has committed to creating an Accessible Event Planning Tool, noting in their accessibility plan that leading universities are prioritizing event accessibility as a key component of inclusion.

The benefit for TRU is that this path has already been paved. The frameworks and resources exist, making implementation both feasible and efficient. The risk, however, lies in falling behind. As event accessibility becomes standard practice across BC post-secondary institutions, TRU has an opportunity to be among other leading institutions, rather than following. Showing that inclusion extends beyond compliance to community and what is mandated.

We respectfully encourage the Accessibility Committee to consider this issue at an upcoming meeting and to recommend that the university develop a campus-wide Accessible Events Policy. Doing so would reaffirm TRU's role as a leader in inclusion and set a clear standard for our community.

Sincerely,

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Policy Manual

Operational Policy

Operational Policy 33 (OP-33): Accessible and Inclusive Events

Adopted by: Board of Directors

Adopted on: January 14, 2025

Summary:

This policy ensures that all events of the union are accessible and inclusive for participants of all abilities. It establishes a framework to remove barriers to ensure that accommodations are seamlessly integrated into event planning and execution. This commitment guarantees that every participant can fully engage and enjoy the event without barriers, reflecting the union's dedication to inclusivity and accessibility.

Policy:

- I. It is the responsibility of the individual committee and their staff person to ensure that all their events adhere to the following policy.
 - i. Any costs incurred in providing accommodations shall be considered activity expenses and covered by the Union as part of the activity to which it applies.
 - ii. Promotional materials shall indicate that the activity is accommodation-friendly and specify a contact person for accommodation requests.
- II. Registration forms shall include clear options for participants to request specific accommodations and capture detailed accommodation needs and sensitivities as well as include reminders in registration confirmations to inform attendees about accommodation options and who to contact.
- III. Detailed directions, including accessibility information, shall be distributed in writing prior to the activity.
- IV. Activities shall include:
 - i. Wheelchair-accessible entrances, pathways, and washrooms.
 - ii. Availability of a gender-neutral washroom.
 - iii. Proximity to accessible parking and public transportation.
 - iv. Allowances for guide dogs and medical support animals
 - v. Digital platforms that allow for closed captioning.

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- vi. Food items clearly labelled with food allergen and dietary options
- V. This policy shall be communicated to all activity partners during the partnership agreement process and partners shall be required to adhere to this policy and ensure their contributions align with TRUSU's accessibility standards.
- VI. Compliance with this policy shall be monitored, and guidance shall be provided as necessary.