

French-language Services Plan

2022–2023

Advanced Education

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French-language Services Plan
Department of Advanced Education
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Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2022-2023 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2022-23 French-language Services Plan for the Department of Advanced Education. As a department that was newly established in Fall 2021, this is Advanced Education's first FLS Plan.

Working collaboratively with all Nova Scotians, our mission is to facilitate a proactive and inclusive post-secondary system through which people learn, grow and thrive.

Taking a broad view that emphasizes partnership and collaboration, Advanced Education facilitates an accessible post-secondary education system – that is equitable, diverse, inclusive, and actively advances Truth and Reconciliation calls to action – in which learners receive a high quality education that allows them to thrive in vibrant communities. We support research and innovation and work to ensure the system proactively addresses the changing needs of Nova Scotia's economy and contributes to positive social and economic growth.

As a department, Advanced Education is dedicated to providing a variety of French-language services to our clients. We recognize the importance of providing French services to Nova Scotians and are committed to preserving and promoting the province's Acadian and Francophone culture and heritage.

Advanced Education will support the Provincial Strategic Plan for French-language services for 2018-2023. Over the next year we will focus on increasing internal awareness of the *French-language Services Act*, its regulations, and of the department's obligations thereunder. We will work on expanding departmental capacity by encouraging more staff to undertake French language training, identifying relevant work opportunities, and incorporating informal means for staff to use their French-language skills in the workplace. Finally, we will maintain an open dialogue with our Acadian and Francophone communities to ensure the French-language services offered meet expectations and that we act on all opportunities for improvement.



*Nancy MacLellan, Deputy Minister
Advanced Education*

What we're doing to contribute to the growth of the Acadian and francophone community

Advanced Education (AE) recognizes the importance of French-language services and we endeavour to fulfil our responsibilities under the [French-language Services Act](#) and [regulations](#). We believe Nova Scotians should have access to quality government services in French, and this plan demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our policies, programmes, and services address the priorities expressed by the Acadian and francophone communities. To achieve this aim, we will collaborate with other designated public institutions across government – including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie – through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee. We value this partnership, which ensures a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and francophone communities.

We encourage Nova Scotians to request services from government in French. We also encourage Acadians and francophones to have their voices heard by participating on agencies, boards and commissions, which are regularly advertised by the Executive Council Office. As we continue to maintain and improve our French-language services, we welcome feedback on our progress both from internal and external stakeholders. Comments or questions can be shared by contacting our French-language services coordinator, whose contact information is below. Anyone wishing to make a formal complaint regarding Advanced Education's French-language services should contact the [Office of the Ombudsman](#).

French-language services coordinator:

Peter Armstrong, Student Assistance Division

peter.armstrong@novascotia.ca

(902) 424-1745

Services we offer in French

- Private Career Colleges (PCC) Division provides private career college operators access to LaMPSS for administration and reporting transactions, this online platform has some French Language supports.
- The Student Assistance Office's client service centre employs staff who can assist students in French in person, over the phone and via e-mail.

How we communicate with the public in French

In April 2019, when Advanced Education was the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE), LAE implemented a French-language Services Policy that outlined the regulatory obligations to be met and best practice guidelines to be followed by the department. It also provided direction and guidance to LAE staff to support compliance with the requirements of the *French-language Services Act*.

Though no longer directly applicable to Advanced Education, until such time as AE may develop its own comparable guidance, the principles of this policy can continue to guide AE's interactions with the French-speaking public. The policy's directives and guidelines provide details to staff on managing written correspondence received in French, spoken communication in French, communication with the public, interaction with Acadian and Francophone service providers, committees and working groups, and public consultations.

AE continues to encourage communications to promote the use of French and to provide French programs and services for all Nova Scotians who request it. Some examples are:

- Where applicable, the Bonjour! sign is displayed to let staff and the public know that French-language service is offered to the best of the staff-person's ability.
- Distribution of an annually updated volunteer resource list of departmental staff able to speak, read and/or write in French. The list helps anglophone employees with responses to requests (whether face to face or via phone, letters, or emails) that come into AE in French; and
- Supporting staff to participate in French-language training.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2021-22

- **Goal:** The Student Assistance (SA) Office will continue to rely on its bilingual staff to assist in responding to French correspondence. SA management will also encourage all interested staff to undertake French language training, appropriately accounting for operational demands.
 - Student Assistance Office staff were called on to translate just a handful of messages (the number was not tracked, but it was in the single digits).
 - One staff-person was on French language training in 2021-22.
- Though not a declared goal in 2021-22, Student Assistance led all provinces and territories in retweeting posts from the Canada Student Financial Assistance (CSFA) program. These posts cover a range of topics related to federal student assistance, including how to successfully manage debt and loan repayment. Parallels between the federal and Nova Scotia assistance programs makes the tweets relevant for recipients of provincial assistance and the fact they are bilingual means students can access them in the official language of their choice.

How we plan to maintain or improve French-language services in 2022-23

Objective 1: Build internal structures to support awareness of French-language services obligations and opportunities

- Develop a French-language services policy specific to Advanced Education.
- Establish a French-language services committee with representation from each division of AE.
- Increase internal awareness of the department's obligations under the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations.

Objective 2: Deliver quality French-language services and programmes to the public

- Enhance and expand departmental capacity to offer French-language services to the public.
 - Identify areas where service could/should be made available to the public.
 - Encourage all interested staff to undertake French language training. Prioritize training for those in public-facing roles.
 - Ensure staff are aware of colleagues who have French language capabilities whose expertise can be drawn on when needed.
 - Promote the department's available French-language services to the public.
- Ensure key departmental publications are available in French.
 - Student Assistance is collaborating with other assistance offices across Canada to develop consistent messaging in shared priority areas. This will include the development of a process for each jurisdiction to share its outreach materials, both to avoid duplication of work and to share best practices. Since the government of Canada, as well as provinces where all materials are available in French as a matter of course, are participants, Nova Scotia Student Assistance will have a wealth of materials that are already translated and ready to use, adapt, or adopt for Nova Scotia students.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community

- Create and promote a mechanism for the Acadian and francophone communities to provide feedback to the department on its French-language services to foster continuous improvement.
- Ensure the Acadian and francophone communities are made aware of opportunities to:
 - apply for positions on agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs) overseen by the department;
 - participate in discussions/consultations regarding post-secondary education in Nova Scotia, particularly those organized or sponsored by government;
 - offer feedback on the department's provision of services in French and work collaboratively to improve them when necessary.