

French-language Services Plan

2023–2024

Advanced Education



French-language Services Plan 2023-24

Department of Advanced Education

Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2023-2024 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2023-24 French-language Services Plan for the Department of Advanced Education.

The past year was busy, challenging and rewarding as we, as a department, established and began to grow into our new vision, mission, and mandate. While focused on facilitating a proactive and inclusive post-secondary system through which people learn, grow, and thrive, we dedicate – and will continue to devote – significant energy to:

- supporting improved health care in the province.
- fostering an accessible post-secondary education system.
- supporting diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action for post-secondary education.
- advancing research and innovation.
- facilitating a high quality, accountable post-secondary education system that furthers the social and economic growth of the province.

The accountability that is both explicit and implicit in our priorities depends upon us doing our utmost to ensure that members of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone communities can access the department's information and services in French. We will continue to support the Provincial Strategic Plan for French-language services for 2018-2023.

In the course of 2023-24, we will continue to grow internal awareness of the *French-language Services Act*, its regulations, and of the department's obligations thereunder. We will encourage more staff to undertake French language training in order to expand departmental capacity, identify potential work opportunities for greater use of French, and develop informal means for staff to use their French skills in the workplace. Finally, we will remain openly and respectfully engaged with our Acadian and Francophone stakeholders to ensure the French-language services offered meet or exceed expectations and that we act on all opportunities for improvement.



*Nancy MacLellan, Deputy Minister
Advanced Education*

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

Advanced Education recognizes the importance of French-language services and we endeavour to fulfil our responsibilities under the [French-language Services Act](#) and [regulations](#). We believe in the importance of supporting the maintenance and growth of Canada's other official language in Nova Scotia and in the right of Nova Scotians who desire services in French to be able to access them. This plan demonstrates a commitment to ensuring Advanced Education's policies, programmes, and services address the needs expressed by the Acadian and francophone communities.

To achieve this aim, we collaborate with other government departments and agencies through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee chaired by the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie. We value this partnership, which ensures a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and francophone communities, provides a forum for sharing knowledge and best practices, and helps define French-language services in the provincial government context.

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

2) Services we offer in French

Advanced Education offers some services directly to the public, primarily via the Student Assistance and Post-Secondary Accessibility Services divisions. Other stakeholders include post-secondary institutions, student advocacy groups, community-based organizations, and other government departments.

Services may also be described in terms of those offered externally and those available internally.

Externally,

- the Student Assistance division's client service centre employs staff who can assist students in French in person, over the phone and via e-mail.
- the Private Career Colleges division provides private career college operators access to an online platform – LaMPSS – for administration and reporting transactions, which has some French language supports.
- The Universities and Colleges division often receives communication and documentation from Université Sainte-Anne in French. Rather than expecting the university to submit all materials in English, it will have translations prepared instead.

Internally,

- a list of employees with French skills who can informally assist with translating email, correspondence and other documents has been compiled and shared with department staff.
- for more official, time sensitive and/or rigorous translation needs, staff are aware of the professional translation services offered by Communications Nova Scotia.

3) 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*.

Advanced Education believes that the principles of this policy can continue to guide the department'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 encourages and promotes the use of French and provision of French services for all Nova Scotians who request it. Some examples are:

- Staff who are willing display the Bonjour! sign to let co-workers 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 employees with responses to requests (whether face to face or via phone, letters, or emails) that come into AE in French.
- Supporting staff to participate in French-language training.

4) What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2022-23

A few goals were identified for AE under the three core French-language services (FLS) objectives listed in last year's plan. Progress against them was modest and some 2022-23 objectives appear again in section 5 of this year's plan.

The Student Assistance division continued to rely on its bilingual staff to assist in serving the public in French and aiding other areas of the department in responding to French correspondence.

- At the end of 2022-23, the number of staff self-identifying as having French-language skills increased from 2 to 3: all in the Student Assistance division.
- These individuals were called on to translate just a handful of messages, originating from various parts of the department (the number was not tracked, but it was in the single digits).

Management across the department encouraged all interested staff to undertake French language training, appropriately accounting for operational demands.

- No staff undertook such training in 2022-23.

The FLS Coordinator provided advice to colleagues regarding the types of translation requests that could be managed internally and which are more appropriately suited to professional translation at Communications Nova Scotia.

5) How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2023-24

Objective 1: Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks.

- Review the LAE FLS policy as a resource and develop a new AE FLS policy that more specifically meets the needs of Advanced Education and its stakeholders.
- Promote FLS awareness and objectives via the department's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public.

- Enhance 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 in order to improve departmental capacity, particularly in public-facing roles.
 - Ensure staff are aware of colleagues who have French language capabilities whose expertise can be drawn on when needed.
 - Make the department's commitment to French language more visible, potentially via the installation of bilingual signage at AE office locations.
- Ensure key departmental materials are available in French.
 - This might entail taking an inventory of key departmental publications and web pages and assessing/prioritizing them for translation if not already available in French.

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:
 - 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.