

Accessibility cafe will examine barriers, from application to graduation

2013-04-04



An accessibility café planned for April 10 will consider the accessibility barriers Queen's students might face during their time at the university.

"We want to engage people in a discussion about how the university can better enable the success of all of its students," said Heidi Penning, an Equity Advisor at Queen's who is working with departments across the university to raise awareness and find solutions to accessibility issues. "Queen's academic programs, and the many other services the university offers, should be accessible to all students."

The café, featuring a panel discussion entitled "Creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities: from application to graduation," will open a dialogue about how the university can eliminate barriers to access and build a more inclusive community.

The panelists, who are students, faculty and representatives from university service departments, will consider the Queen's experience through the perspectives of a student with vision loss, a student with hearing loss, and a student with a learning disability. These scenarios will help understand the potential barriers to accessing information, services and physical spaces at Queen's.

The event is part of the university's strategic accessibility framework, which aims to reduce barriers and to raise awareness of accessibility issues. The framework sees accessibility as an integral part of building an inclusive campus community.

"Queen's has taken significant steps forward with its strategic accessibility framework and is currently developing a longer-term accessibility plan," says Ms Penning. "Events like our accessibility cafés allow everyone to take part in the discussion."

This accessibility café is hosted jointly by the Senate Library Committee and the accessibility framework's Information & Communications Working Group. Martha Whitehead, University Librarian, sees this partnership as representative of the increased awareness of accessibility issues at Queen's.

"Members of the Senate Library Committee were eager to participate in this café," says Ms Whitehead. "There is recognition across campus that we all must actively ensure the work we do and the services we provide are accessible for everyone."

The accessibility café will take place on Wednesday, April 10, from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm at Speaker's Corner in the Stauffer Library. Everyone from the Queen's community is invited to attend.

Source URL:

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