

RHF launches Experiential Online Course with Athabasca University to Improve Building Accessibility in Canada

New course uses Immersive Technology to give participants first-hand experience navigating buildings.

June 7, 2019 (Richmond, British Columbia) – Today, the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) and Athabasca University (AU) are announcing their partnership to offer the first of its kind online RHFAC Accessibility Assessor training course. The new online course will use immersive technology to train individuals to improve the accessibility of buildings and spaces across the country using Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC).

Similar to the existing course offered at bricks-and-mortar post-secondary institutions across the country, this new online course will provide participants with the fundamental skills and knowledge required to rate a building using RHFAC - a rating system that helps both owners and tenants measure the level of meaningful accessibility of their sites. The online course will allow participants who would not otherwise be able to physically attend the in-person course with a digital training option.

The innovative online course incorporates virtual reality into its curriculum including:

- A *'Virtual Reality (VR) Accessibility Simulation,'* which uses 360-degree footage so participants can experience how a person with a disability navigates buildings. This simulation will be accessible via mobile phones and Virtual Reality headsets.
- *'Virtual Field Work Interactive'* where participants rate real-world environments to evaluate the meaningful access of commercial, institutional, and multi-unit residential buildings. The buildings showcased will be captured using a 3D laser scanning tool to create a virtual floor plan for learners to engage with, accurately scaled to the millimetre.

These virtual reality exercises—all offered in a coached digital environment—will provide participants with a higher degree of immersion, and allow participants to check their own work against that of expert professionals.

Rick Hansen, Founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation, says, “Athabasca University is a leader in digital learning and I’m thrilled we are partnering to deliver an online version of RHFAC Accessibility Assessor training. Athabasca’s focus on accessibility and innovative technology advancements will ensure people have access to high quality learning and are equipped with the standardized, professional skills to rate buildings on their level of meaningful access for people of all abilities. Thank you for helping make this important training accessible for all.”

“At Athabasca University we are committed to leading the way in digital accessibility and inclusivity,” says Dr. Neil Fassina, AU President. “By working with partners, like the Rick Hansen Foundation, we share a greater purpose to elevate the social good and remove barriers in our communities for a diverse array of learners. By presenting digital and distributed educational options in collaboration with the Rick Hansen Foundation, we’re helping to transform communities and empowering individuals to realize their true potential.”

Jessica Scott, Director, Professional and Corporate Relations, Athabasca University, says, “We are excited to partner with the Rick Hansen Foundation to develop and deliver an enriched digital offering of the RHFAC Accessibility Assessor training course. Through our partnership, we will provide RHFAC with the digital infrastructure to expand their reach to offer the training across Canada and globally, to help identify physical barriers in public places and spaces, and improve accessibility in our communities.”

RHFAC Accessibility Assessor training is currently offered at post-secondary institutions across the country including Vancouver Community College, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, George Brown College, Nova Scotia Community College and Carleton University. The new online course offered through Athabasca University will be available this Fall to individuals meeting pre-requisites including experience working in the built environment, particularly architects, engineers, urban planners, and design-builders.

To learn more about RHFAC Accessibility Assessor training, visit: [RickHansen.com/Training](https://rickhansen.com/training)

About the Rick Hansen Foundation

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) was established in 1988, following the completion of Rick Hansen's Man In Motion World Tour. For over 30 years, RHF has worked to raise awareness, change attitudes, and remove barriers for people with disabilities. Over 1,200 buildings have been rated through the RHF Accessibility Certification™ program to-date. Visit www.rickhansen.com to learn more.

About Athabasca University

Athabasca University (AU) has a long history of being a leader and innovator in distributed learning. Today, AU is one of the world's fastest growing digital education institutions, serving over 40,000 students worldwide. AU offers over 900 courses at the undergraduate, graduate, diploma and certificate program level in addition to online professional development. Disciplines include arts, business, health, education, and science. Committed to advancing research, AU is home to Canada's only UNESCO Chair in Open Education, four Canada Research Chairs, and two Campus Alberta Innovates Program Chairs. As one of the world's first online universities, AU's flexibility, openness, and accessibility gives learners control over their educational journeys and removes barriers that restrict access to and success in university-level study no where they may be located. Visit www.athabascau.ca to learn more.

About Professional and Corporate Relations at Athabasca University

Professional and Corporate Relations (PCR) is an entrepreneurial, start-up unit that builds on AU's rich history of creating digital learning opportunities. Embracing innovation, PCR provides fully digital, on-demand, just-in-time learning for corporate, non-profit organizations, and individual learners. PCR is focused on assisting organizations to develop and deploy their digital learning strategies.

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