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Rising Together: Building a Better Future Through Excellence and Inclusion

LA&PS Academic Plan 2021-2026

Land Acknowledgement

La Faculté d'arts libéraux et d'études professionnelles, en tant que partie intégrante de l'Université York, reconnaît sa présence sur le territoire traditionnel de nombreuses nations autochtones.

La région connue comme Tkaronto a été préservée par la nation Anishinabek, la Confédération Haudenosaunee et les Hurons-Wendats. Elle est désormais le foyer d'un grand nombre de communautés autochtones, inuites et métisses.

Nous reconnaissons les titulaires actuels du traité, la première Nation des Mississaugas de Credit. Ce territoire est soumis au traité de la ceinture wampum (« Dish with One Spoon »), entente définissant le partage et la préservation pacifiques de la région des Grands Lacs.

The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, as an integral part of York University, recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

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Dedication

This Academic Plan belongs to everyone in LA&PS. It is the product of the combined input of hundreds of voices from across the Faculty and has benefitted considerably from feedback received over a period of several months.

Whether you are a transfer student passing through for a term, a Program Assistant helping students navigate degree requirements, or a professor creating course learning outcomes, we hope you will see yourself reflected in the academic mission articulated in these pages.

We are a diverse Faculty, we are dynamic, and we are exemplary. Over the next five years, we will continue to share our research and teaching strengths with the communities we serve. It is a journey we take together in the pursuit of lifelong learning and academic excellence.



Values

Home to a rich diversity of people and programs in the social sciences, humanities, and professional fields, LA&PS is strongly committed to:

- student-centered accessible education
- preparation for professional careers
- excellence in research and teaching
- innovative academic programs
- experiential learning
- community engagement
- internationalization
- accountable governance

Through its endeavours, LA&PS strives to promote social justice, the recognition and valuing of diversity, and a sustainable environment. These values are not just legacies of our past, but the foundation for our future.



Mission

Guided by its values, the mission of LA&PS is to strive for:

Academic Excellence

- Through high quality programs and innovative teaching grounded in our commitment to student success, community engagement, social justice, and global connections, as well as sustainability and stewardship for future generations

Education of the Whole Student

- By fostering an academic culture that supports students' social and cultural learning and personal growth with academic programs, experiential education, and co-curricular activities that prepare students to be engaged citizens who are effective in their future careers

Leadership in Research

- Through encouraging intellectual curiosity and investigator-driven research, promoting community engaged and industry-partnered scholarship, and supporting knowledge mobilization and dissemination

Access and Inclusion

- By promoting principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in our academic endeavours, maintaining effective support services, and reducing barriers to access and academic success for all students



Overview

The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies (LA&PS) at York University is the largest and most diverse Faculty of its kind in Canada. Currently, more than 22,000 students pursue studies here in one or more of our 90+ undergraduate degree and certificate options, and our 22 Master's and 16 PhD programs. Hundreds of faculty members bring their outstanding research into the classroom, teaching across our three areas of scholarly focus: humanities, social sciences, and professional studies.

History

The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies was created on July 1, 2009 with the unification of the Faculty of Arts and the Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies. This merger produced a vibrant teaching and research space with 21 academic units and 4 colleges, offering disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs across the humanities, social sciences, and professional studies. With more than 27,000 students enrolled in the new Faculty at the time of its inception in 2009, LA&PS quickly established itself as an integral part of York University.

The consultation process

The task of developing and monitoring the Faculty's Academic Plan is one of the primary responsibilities of the Academic Policy & Planning Committee (APPC), a standing committee of LA&PS Faculty Council. Under the committee's [mandate](#), APPC is to work "in tandem with the Dean and in close consultation with Departments/Schools & Colleges [to] oversee the development of the Faculty Academic Plan, oversee coordination/implementation of the plan, and report to Council on its initiatives".

Following Senate approval of [Building a Better Future: York University Academic Plan, 2020-2025](#) in June 2020, APPC began developing the first Academic Plan for LA&PS. To this end, APPC hosted a number of virtual consultation sessions during the 2020/21 academic year, including 3 Town Halls and 21 unit-level visits to LA&PS Schools, Departments, and Colleges. The committee also conducted 2 online surveys, maintained a dedicated email address for inquiries and suggestions about the Academic Plan, and hosted an eClass site, the "LA&PS Academic Plan Consultation Repository," where participants could engage in discussion forums and access documents relevant to the planning process. These opportunities, as well as the Town Halls, were made available to all students, staff, and faculty in LA&PS. The unit-level visits were attended by YUFA and CUPE instructors, student representatives, and staff.

The consultation sessions focused on three main themes:

1. Recognizing historical strengths within the Faculty, as well as areas for further growth.
2. Identifying opportunities for alignment with *Building a Better Future: York University Academic Plan, 2020-2025*.
3. Establishing guiding principles to direct our academic mission over the next five years.

APPC analyzed the data received, identifying common themes that resonated across a number of units. Some of the recurring topics of our collegial consultations included the following:

- enhancing student supports
- building on our capacity for interdisciplinarity
- supporting internationalization
- addressing the needs of non-traditional students
- maintaining our commitment to social justice
- improving the digital infrastructure
- supporting access initiatives
- improving our physical spaces
- promoting experiential education

Drawing on these common themes, APPC drafted a preliminary set of principles and shared them for feedback with members of Faculty Council in April 2021. The committee also undertook a cover art contest, encouraging LA&PS students to use the common themes gleaned from the unit-level consultations as inspiration for artwork to include on the cover of the Academic Plan. That contest ran concurrently with the drafting work done by APPC.

Because the Academic Plan was developed in consultation with all of the constituent units of LA&PS, the principles contained in these pages represent our collective aspirations for enhancing the strengths of our Faculty and identifying areas for further growth.



Academic planning in context

This academic plan was developed in the context of three significant areas of social challenge and opportunity:

1. The **global Covid-19 pandemic**, which necessitated a period of intensified remote learning and working beginning in March 2020 and extending into the 2021/22 academic year.
2. Worldwide **solidarity against anti-black racism**, initiated mainly in response to repeated incidences of entrenched and persistent police brutality, but also as a reaction to institutional violence more generally.
3. The ongoing commitment to centre **reconciliation** efforts to promote the resurgence of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all Indigenous peoples.

Accordingly, this Academic Plan focuses on healing and recovery in myriad ways. We have heard from colleagues that building connections will be important for our academic work in the years to come. In the short term, this will help us recover from our extended period of isolation and social distancing. On a more profound level, building connections will be an important first step in confronting the twin legacies of settler colonialism and the forced migration of peoples of African descent through enslavement and colonization. These particular histories inform the institutional choices that we make in terms of curriculum; hiring and representation; and funding and resource allocation. In our consultation visits, colleagues expressed a desire for LA&PS to address anti-black racism, support Indigenous scholars, and enhance inclusion as foundational principles within our academic mission. We take up that challenge here.

Related planning documents

The LA&PS Academic Plan 2021-2026 is one of two key documents that shape the academic mission of the Faculty. While the Academic Plan is a statement of principles outlining the values we collectively determine, the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) is the administrative planning and implementation document that guides resource allocation on the basis of the principles set down in the Academic Plan.

The LA&PS Academic Plan 2021-2026 also exists in relationship to a number of other important institutional frameworks. It is guided by [Building a Better Future: York University Academic Plan, 2020-2025](#), and aligns with the goals set out in that foundational document. These include the Six Priority Areas for Action and the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Six Priority Areas for Action are: living well together; 21st century learning; knowledge for the future; from access to success; advancing global engagement; and working in partnership.

YORK UNIVERSITY
2020-2025 UAP PRIORITIES



The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are as follows:

- No Poverty
- Zero Hunger
- Good Health and Well-Being
- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Clean Water and Sanitation
- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Reduced Inequalities
- Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action
- Life Below Water
- Life on Land
- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Partnerships for the Goals



Just as the UAP influences the Academic Plans of the 11 York Faculties, the LA&PS Academic Plan inspires planning documents at the unit-level for the 20 schools and departments in the Faculty, as well as the colleges and Organized Research Units. Thus, the LA&PS Academic Plan bridges the macro, meso, and micro levels by establishing guiding principles to inform institutional planning for our constituent LA&PS units.

In addition, the following important documents inform the goals and principles set out here, and express the vision of the university at the present juncture relative to teaching, learning, research, and community outreach.

Addressing Anti-Black Racism: A Framework on Black Inclusion



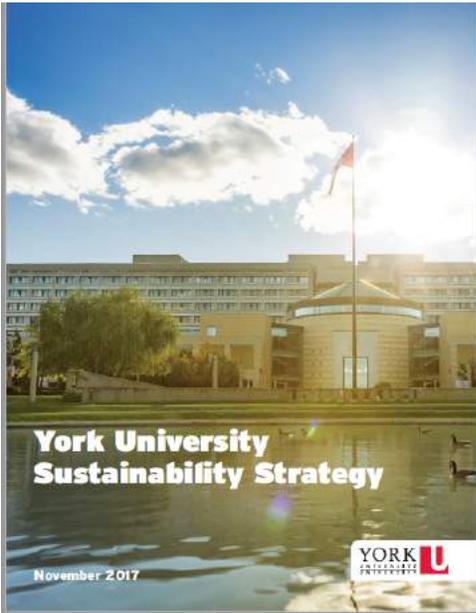
Opportunities for alignment

- eliminate barriers to access and academic advancement for Black scholars
- support the recruitment and academic success of Black students
- ensure that Black scholarship is represented in the curriculum
- include, acknowledge, and elevate Black perspectives within research, information resources, and collections across all disciplines
- promote a climate of respect and support for Black students, staff, and faculty
- enhance representation of Black tenured faculty, instructors, staff, and senior administration, and support the emotional labour that they often undertake

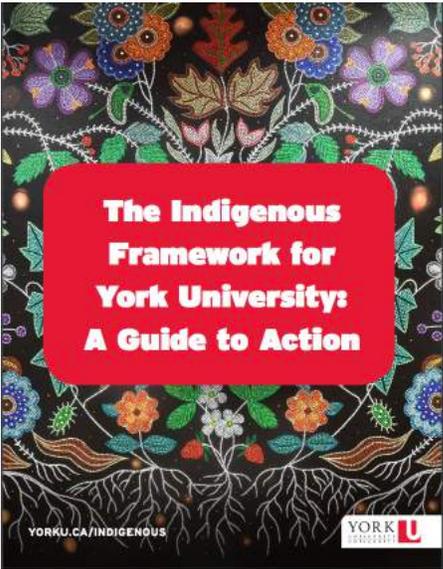
York University Sustainability Strategy

Opportunities for alignment:

- enhance options for studying sustainability within LA&PS academic programs, including experiential education opportunities that focus on sustainability
- include learning outcomes in undergraduate and graduate programs that address the sustainability challenges facing our world
- foster a culture of sustainability within our spaces of academic learning
- integrate sustainable practices into our roles as researchers and scholars



The Indigenous Framework for York University: A Guide to Action



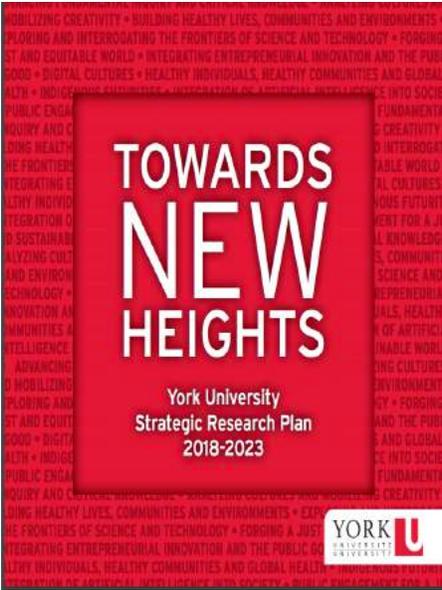
Opportunities for alignment:

- work with the Indigenous Council to expand Indigenous programming and curricular offerings
- seek guidance from the Indigenous Council in the hiring of Indigenous faculty and support the inclusion of more Indigenous instructors generally
- support the recruitment and academic success of Indigenous students
- enhance outreach to Indigenous communities to build reciprocal learning relationships and promote academic opportunities

Towards New Heights: York University Strategic Research Plan 2018-2023

Opportunities for alignment:

- foster research excellence and the development of new knowledge and creative activities
- support research initiatives that cross disciplinary boundaries
- develop and implement knowledge mobilization strategies
- deliver research that positively affects the communities we serve
- maintain our commitment to social justice and responsibility in our research endeavours



Guiding principles

Principle 1: Prioritize student learning, excellence, and success

- a) Engage in a sustained effort to enhance the **academic experience of LA&PS students**, supported by co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives, including those led by the Colleges, and build up students' skills in critical thinking, effective communication, digital fluencies, information literacies, and evidence-based scholarly inquiry
- b) Foster a **sense of connection for students** through such means as smaller class sizes, more interaction with peer mentors and professors, and an impactful affiliation with one of the LA&PS Colleges
- c) Create **safe and welcoming spaces** where students can study and learn, surrounded by facilities and resources that are responsive to their academic needs and where their presence is acknowledged and respected
- d) Maintain a seamless model of **student advising, services, and supports** to ensure students' successful engagement with both in-person and online learning
- e) Support **mental health initiatives** and a commitment to **sustainable development** to encourage students' sense of security and optimism for their future, and to promote their academic success overall

Vision 2026:

Students will be attracted to LA&PS because they will receive a positive and engaged academic experience that nurtures the whole person, with readily identifiable and effective supports for the obstacles they face, and will graduate with 21st century skills and competencies to ensure their future success.

Principle 2: Enhance connections and collaborations

- a) Build on our shared history to encourage **integration ‘across the ampersand’** of LA&PS while also recognizing the specific strengths and needs of both the liberal arts and professional studies areas of the Faculty
- b) Increase engagement with **LA&PS Alumni**, College Fellows, and research partners in industry, government and the community to promote learning opportunities for all LA&PS students
- c) Promote collaborations with Toronto, Peel Region, and York Region (including Markham) to make a **positive local impact** on the communities we serve
- d) Build on our longstanding alliance with the **Black Creek community via the York U – TD Community Engagement Centre** to promote pathways for collaboration between local neighbourhoods and LA&PS Units and Colleges
- e) Support initiatives within and beyond LA&PS to advance the UN’s 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** through cross-unit collaboration

Vision 2026:

LA&PS will be an integrated Faculty where members from all areas of study will be able to participate fully, maximizing their academic potential and collaborating on initiatives to engage local communities and promote sustainability.

Principle 3: Promote excellence in research

- a) Foster a strong and active research culture that emphasizes **internationally, nationally, and locally impactful** research; recognizes the diversity of approaches to theory and fieldwork; and supports intellectual curiosity and investigator-driven inquiry
- b) Support innovative and **cross-disciplinary research clusters** across and within the various Schools, Departments, Colleges, and Organized Research Units in LA&PS to better reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the Faculty, while maintaining research excellence in specific disciplines
- c) Promote **research, knowledge mobilization, and dissemination** that responds to emerging issues and changing needs in society, including opportunities to collaborate with community, industry, government, and other public and private partners
- d) Honour the importance of conducting research within the protocols set down by participating communities, and advance principles of **reciprocity and sustainability in research endeavours**
- e) Recognize the contributions that **graduate students** make to the diverse research pursuits of the Faculty, and build on the foundation of research excellence demonstrated by our existing graduate programs

Vision 2026:

LA&PS will be a research leader, recognized for innovative and impactful interdisciplinary inquiry; ethical community engagement and collaboration; and effective dissemination and knowledge mobilization, and will nurture intellectual curiosity and investigator-driven inquiry.

Principle 4: Foster innovation in teaching and curriculum development

- a) Offer a broad range of **rigorous curricular programs** that engage with emerging and longstanding local and global concerns and needs, including education for sustainable development
- b) Promote and support **curricular and pedagogical innovation** across all units and all levels of study, with particular **attention to the first-year experience** and **experiential learning** opportunities for students in all programs
- c) Provide a framework for **general education** that focuses on critical skills building, breadth, and interdisciplinarity, including qualitative methodologies and quantitative skills that incorporate emerging technical methods
- d) Support opportunities for **professional development** and **curricular collaboration**, where colleagues from different units can advance their skills and work together on options to enhance student engagement
- e) Ensure **high-functioning technological infrastructure** to support in-person, blended, and online learning

Vision 2026:

LA&PS will be a leader in pedagogical innovation, offering dynamic curricular options that give students the knowledge, competencies, and experiential learning opportunities needed to become effective scholars and professionals, and curious and critically minded lifelong learners.

Principle 5: Recognize, value, and support diversity

- a) Building on our leadership role in promoting principles of **equity, diversity, and inclusion**, develop and support sector-leading policies and practices in both research and teaching that will enhance the lived experience and intellectual vitality of LA&PS students, staff, and faculty
- b) Recognize the **diversity of the LA&PS student body** and the valuable insights provided by domestic students, international students, self-identified Black and Indigenous students, LGBTQ2S+ students, students with disabilities, and students from other equity-seeking groups
- c) Extend initiatives to **diversify and decolonize the curriculum** to recognize and benefit from a plurality of voices, perspectives, and worldviews, and to acknowledge in our practices, teaching, and curriculum the legacies of settler colonialism
- d) Enhance our outreach to **Indigenous communities** to promote the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada's goal of inclusive education for Indigenous students
- e) Build on efforts to **diversify our faculty** by actively recruiting and hiring qualified applicants from historically underrepresented groups

Vision 2026:

All members of LA&PS will feel recognized and included in the academic work, priorities, and vision of the Faculty, and will see their communities reflected in curricular offerings, among the student body, and across the teaching spectrum.

Principle 6: Connect students and faculty scholars to global opportunities

- a) Enhance internationalization opportunities for LA&PS students, including **study abroad** options, **exchanges**, and other **immersive experiences**, and promote cultural sensitivity awareness
- b) Promote the integration of **global fluencies and mindsets** into LA&PS undergraduate education by both supporting language learning and building competencies for working effectively in diverse and intercultural environments
- c) Develop **local opportunities to internationalize a LA&PS degree** through outreach with community organizations that connect with regions around the globe
- d) Continue to establish and strengthen **partnerships with other universities**, faculties, and postsecondary institutions around the globe to enhance learning and research opportunities for LA&PS students, staff, and faculty
- e) Build on global research initiatives that advance the UN's 17 **Sustainable Development Goals**

Vision 2026:

LA&PS will be a key hub for international activity, both as a destination for scholars from around the world and as a source of expertise, as students pursue careers and civic engagement opportunities drawing on their global fluencies and mindsets.

Principle 7: Promote access, social justice, and community engagement

- a) Fully realize the commitment to **social justice** that is a defining feature of our Faculty by eliminating barriers that may hinder the full involvement of LA&PS students, staff, and instructors in the academic life of the Faculty
- b) Enhance **access initiatives** and **academic bridging opportunities** for local community members, non-traditional students, mature students at various stages of their lives and careers, first generation students, part-time students, students with precarious immigration status, students from across the ability spectrum, and students from equity-seeking groups
- c) Build on our regional partnerships with the City of Toronto, Peel Region, and York Region/Markham to provide high-impact **community learning opportunities** for LA&PS students and eliminate barriers between the Faculty and our surrounding communities
- d) Support the creation of **non-profit, for-profit, and social enterprise opportunities** by LA&PS Schools, Departments, and Colleges to promote community engagement and mobilize transformational knowledge and research
- e) Advance our commitment to **knowledge dissemination**, supporting researchers in efforts to bring their scholarship into the classroom and out to local and global communities

Vision 2026:

LA&PS will be a place where access initiatives are supported and barriers are dismantled, allowing for greater research and teaching engagement with the communities we serve.

Principle 8: Strengthen collegiality, accountability, and communication

- a) Enhance **collegiality** and **willingness to listen and learn from others**, recognizing that the university is a space where a diversity of perspectives can be expressed and discussed within an environment that upholds academic freedom
- b) Prioritize **transparency** and **accountability** in all aspects of academic governance, from curricular development to budgetary decisions
- c) Build on the tradition of the **LA&PS Colleges** as places where faculty, staff, and students can come together over shared academic and extracurricular interests to build a sense of belonging and identity
- d) Recognize the valuable teaching, research, and service contributions to the Faculty of both **contract faculty and teaching assistants**
- e) Sustain and renew the ideals and practices of the modern university by drawing from our own tradition of **self-examination** and **reflection**

Vision 2026:

LA&PS will be a space where academic planning and governance are collegial, democratic, and inclusive processes, and where a commitment to respect others and care for their well-being guides Faculty endeavours.

Implementation

The principles detailed in this LA&PS Academic Plan are the product of considerable collegial consultation. Together with the Priority Areas for Action in the University Academic Plan, they provide a guiding framework for the Dean with respect to the allocation of resources within the Faculty. Drawing on these principles, the Faculty's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) is created in accordance with institutional-level requirements.

The IRP does not replace collegial governance procedures. It is a long-range planning document that ensures the Faculty has the resources set aside to fulfil the will of the Faculty in terms of existing and proposed initiatives. Examples of this type of undertaking include major curricular proposals and new programs or units. Preliminary planning with resource implications in mind will ensure that the Faculty has the capacity to launch such initiatives, following all established collegial governance procedures for review and approval.

The Academic Policy & Planning Committee (APPC) of LA&PS Faculty Council is mandated to regularly review the implementation strategies outlined in the IRP and advise the Dean on the interplay of academic and budget issues within the Faculty. At regular intervals, but at least once annually, the Dean and APPC will report to Faculty Council on the scope of activities being undertaken to align the work of the Faculty with the principles, objectives, and visions set out in the Faculty Academic Plan. The Dean's reports will explain how progress on implementing the Faculty Academic Plan is being monitored and evaluated, and preview major initiatives at the planning stage.

While regular updates at Faculty Council will be necessary to implement the principles in the Academic Plan, this is not the only place where such work can occur. At the unit-level, colleagues can –

- review their own governance documents to find areas of alignment and inspiration,
- reinvigorate curricular offerings to ensure that academic planning principles are reflected in the content of courses,
- promote pedagogical and research initiatives that reflect these principles, and
- continue to contribute toward a sense of belonging and connectedness for their students through initiatives such as mentoring, providing safe spaces and opportunities for student gatherings, and prioritizing access.

The LA&PS Academic Plan 2021-2026, Rising Together: Building a Better Future Through Excellence and Inclusion, presents an opportunity for individual students, staff, and faculty to contribute toward our shared academic mission. A common theme that emerged across our consultations was the need for the York experience to be both positive and transformative. Each one of us can contribute to this goal by working together to co-create a culture of excellence and inclusion, and to prioritize community engagement and social justice. Our research, classroom practices, and frontline actions can foster the positive and transformative environment we seek, as can our reactions and interactions every day and at every level.

In fulfilling our academic mission, we have the opportunity to lead with receptive listening, open engagement, and transparent practices that value and enhance the contributions of all members of both the academic and the broader York communities. The principles outlined here provide a framework for change that will inform our teaching practices, administrative policies, research proposals, and funding applications, and will be the basis for setting priorities within LA&PS and for aligning those priorities with those of the University. This is our journey to 2026.