



University of Guelph Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2012-15

The University Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

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Accessibility at the University of Guelph

In 2005, the province introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which seeks to ensure a fully accessible Ontario by 2025. This law moves from the concept of accommodation, where we make alterations on a per-person basis depending on that person's disability, to one of accessibility where process, procedures, and policies are designed to improve access to the University's people, goods and services. In 2010, the first phase of the AODA was implemented with the Customer Service Standard. The University developed an accessible service provision policy and implemented related training. Beginning July 1, 2011, work began on the implementation of phase two of the AODA, which includes accessibility standards for employment, information and communication, and transportation. The University recognizes that accessibility is everyone's responsibility and not solely the purview of disability offices whose main function is to facilitate accommodation plans for our students and staff with disabilities. It is imperative that we educate our community to recognize barriers to access and provide them with the tools to address them. By doing so, we will be more proactive in removing those barriers, and ensuring a workplace and learning environment that provides all with the opportunity to succeed.

The Year in Review

AODA Steering Committee

In its role to guide the University's accessibility mandate and put plans into action, the AODA Steering Committee (for Terms of Reference see Appendix), comprised of key decision makers and members with specific expertise, continued the process towards compliance with AODA. The Committee met seven times over the last year to review and recommend changes to University policies and procedures. This included drafting an overarching accessibility document that provides the foundation for the University's compliance with the AODA. Several area-specific working groups were created to address the legislated requirements including Website Accessibility, Library Accessibility, Employment, Training to Educators and Accessible Formats. These groups conducted a gap analysis to determine the AODA touch points and the extent of the requirements to meet compliance. The results of this analysis form the basis of the multi-year plan.

Customer Service Standard

In its second year of implementation, the University continued to meet its obligation under the AODA Customer Service Standard employing either its face-to-face training or the online training module for all new faculty, staff, and volunteers. Follow up continues with existing service providers who have yet to complete training. The result is a growing awareness that we

all play a role in ensuring an accessible learning and working environment. The University continues to refine its course registration and tracking process to ensure timely completion of this requirement by new faculty and staff.

Information and Communications Standard

As the University moves towards meeting its obligations under the Information and Communications standard, new processes were established to help ensure accessibility of both print and online content. For example:

- Web accessibility standards were developed;
- A website accessibility audit has been initiated and training to facilitate future accessibility is under development
- Accessible Information and Communications Policy and Guidelines are under development
- The Library has begun developing policy for procurement of accessible resources and, working in collaboration with other universities in the province, is exploring shared accessible text conversion services/repository

The University has been engaged for years in educating faculty around Universal Instructional Design for teaching. The University's Teaching Support Services dedicates a [website](#) to this initiative and offers workshops as requested. To extend this education component to meet further AODA requirements, the University was a partner in the development of the COU Toolkit for instructors. With the completion of this toolkit, the University is rolling out its orientation program for faculty which begins with a letter from the Provost directing all faculty to the COU toolkit as well as to the AODA [information update](#) posted on the University's homepage. In the winter semester, face to face training will occur at departmental meetings. In addition, an on-line module will be created and made available to all instructors.

Emergency Procedures

Over the last year, the University made its publicly available emergency procedures available in accessible or conversion-ready formats upon request. Statements have been posted on websites indicating that accessible formats and communication supports will be provided upon request. The University has also developed procedures to meet its obligation to provide individualized employee emergency planning. These procedures are publicly available on the accessibility website.

Employment Standard

Employment is addressed in the AODA legislation with the Employment Regulations of the Integrated Standard. The University sits fairly comfortably with respect to meeting its obligation in this area because of the employment systems review conducted and subsequent employment equity work undertaken to meet Federal Contractor Program requirements. Some

qualitative measures were enshrined as goals in the current Employment Equity Plan, 2008-2012. The Accommodation Partnership Program which outlines the University's obligations to its employees with disabilities from recruitment to retirement is being implemented for all employees. This policy sets the foundation for a series of procedures to assist employees in areas such as individual workplace accommodation plans, individualized workplace emergency response information, as well as performance management and career development plans that take individual accessibility needs into account.

Physical Facilities Accessibility

The Campus Accessibility Committee (CAC), with representation from the Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD), Physical Resources, Classroom Technical Support, Student Housing, students and faculty, continues to be responsible for the analysis of all major construction or renovation projects for accessibility features and for review of proposed smaller accessibility projects (retrofits) on the Guelph campus. Accessibility features addressed by the CAC this past year include:

- Renovation of the fifth floor Library washrooms to make them barrier free
- Completion of door modifications within the OVC complex to promote accessibility
- Completion of accessibility upgrades to the main reception counters within the Student Health Services Dept. on the first floor of the Powell Building
- Change of door knob to lever handles in the Stewart Building (OVC) Room 1549
- Re-deployment of an accessible teaching station from the Alexander Building extra inventory to the Crop Science Building room 116/117
- Provision of accessible seating and tables to meet the semester by semester need to accommodate individual student's barrier free classroom requirements
- Construction of a barrier free ramp off Reynolds Walk at the vicinity of the Richards and Crop Science Buildings
- Installation of power door operators on the first floor of the Animal Science Building
- Blackwood Hall ramp reconstruction

The University is preparing for the AODA Built Environment Standard and will be including those requirements into its processes. Additionally, as the University prepares a revised campus master plan, a human rights advisor participated on the planning steering committee to address issues of accessibility.

Centre for Students with Disabilities

The CSD and Library Accessibility Services continue to ensure those students with documented disabilities, and who are requesting support, are provided accommodations to assist in the removal of barriers to their learning. These accommodations can include for example, alternative formats, captioned videos, specialized software and equipment, counselling and advising, and notetakers. Almost 1400 students were served by this office. In addition, an exam centre specifically created to address the increasing number of exam accommodations for

students with disabilities held 10,277 exams in the last academic year, an increase of approximately 15% over the previous year.

Awareness

The training requirements of the AODA helped create awareness of disability and provision of accessible services. Other awareness initiatives include:

- Hosting the fourth annual Accessibility Conference on May 31 and June 1, 2012. This conference dealt extensively with the *AODA Integrated Accessibility Standard*. As in previous year, much focus was paid to information and communications; however, this year there were a number of sessions on employment. There were over 230 internal and external participants.
- The CSD and the Wellness Centre hosting the “One in Five Mental Health Campaign” and bringing to campus [Invisibilities](#), an organization that promotes awareness, education and support of young adults living with hidden, chronic illness.
- CSD staff continued to deliver its mental health awareness program called “ALERT” to faculty and staff as well as to a significant number of student staff. In total there have been 40 unique presentations with over 1000 participants involved since the program’s inception. To increase accessibility, the modules are also offered in an on-line format.
- The Multifaith Resource Team brought “To Write Love on Her Arms” to the University, a program to help people dealing with suicide, depression and self-injury take steps to get help.
- Occupational Health and Wellness launched a Mental Health Awareness Campaign and supports 3 programs: [Working Through It™](#) - a series of videos is designed to speak directly to people struggling with mental health issues; [Check-Up from the Neck Up](#) - a simple, online, private, mental health check-to identify some symptoms of common mood disorders; and the [Stress Management Clinic](#) – an on-campus program to help manage personal wellbeing.
- Student Life Centre for New Students with Student Housing Services initiated “Momma never told me” a program to discuss lifestyle-related issues that commonly fall out of balance in first year and that are strongly related to mental health. It includes things they can do to have less stress, feel better, learn more and have fun.
- Student Health Services extended its [FeelingBetterNow](#) online mental health care program for a second year in order to undertake a full assessment of its effectiveness.

Building Partnerships

The University of Guelph understands the importance of reaching beyond its walls to collaborate with other organizations to share and gain expertise. For example, the Library networks with other post-secondary libraries in Ontario to share expertise around strategies for copyright and other issues that may impact student accessibility. This includes participating in Alternate Educational Resources Ontario, a web-based digital text-book repository, and on the Ontario Council of University Libraries and its scholar’s portal project, a book-lending initiative. The University also sits on the Council of Ontario Universities Accessibility Advisory Group and AODA Administrators Group.

Looking Ahead

The requirements under phase two of the AODA are extensive and will affect most aspects of our operations at the University. The goal is to have accessibility as an integral part of our strategic planning and operational processes. This will include accessibility as a consideration in procurement, a revised feedback process, training, and policies and procedures.

Multi-year Accessibility Plan

As part of the mandate to improve accessibility, the University has developed a multi-year plan that is available online and in alternative formats as necessary. The primary goal is to develop a multi-year plan that lays out a roadmap to meet the obligations of the Integrated AODA standards. It incorporates existing and new initiatives into one overarching accessibility strategy. It includes the legislative requirement, the University's deliverables to meet that requirement, and a status update. This multi-year plan will be updated on a yearly basis.

January 1, 2012

Legislative Requirement	Deliverable	Progress to date
Individualized workplace emergency response information s.27	Protocol and plans developed for employees with disabilities	Protocol and plans developed
Emergency procedures available to public in accessible formats s.13	Ensure emergency procedures information available in accessible formats upon request	Emergency procedures materials available in accessible formats upon request. Relevant websites notify that procedures can be requested in accessible formats

January 1, 2013

Legislative Requirement	Deliverable	Progress to date
Develop policies outlining how U of G will implement legislation s.3	Develop U of G accessibility policies	Completed Policies: Accessible Service Provision, Purchasing Policy, Web Design Guidelines, Employment Policy 301, Employment Equity Policy, Accommodation Partnership Program, Human Rights Policy Policies under development (due Jan. 2014): Web Accessibility Standards, Accessible Information and Communications Policy
Statement of organizational commitment	Develop statement that will guide U of G's accessibility	Statement included as part of document describing

s.3	mandate	accessibility policies and on Accessibility website
Prepare written document describing policies, make publicly available, and provide them in an accessible format upon request. s.3	Write document describing accessibility policies, post on website	Document complete and posted on Accessibility website. Policies under development to be included once complete
Multi-year accessibility plan and annual status report s.4	Develop and post online a multi-year plan for achieving accessibility. Include a yearly update	Posted on the Accessibility website
Train educators in accessible instruction s.16	Information sessions on accessible instruction for instructors	<p>An accessible instruction toolkit has been posted on the Accessibility website and linked to the COLES website and faculty were sent a letter from the Provost referring them to the toolkit.</p> <p>In progress - Revision UOIT online module to prepare online courses</p> <p>In progress - make available online to instructors via CourseLink, Accessibility and COLES websites</p> <p>Beginning Jan. 2013 - Conduct face-to-face training for faculty; Enroll TAs and Sessionals in online course</p>
Provide educational resources in accessible formats as requested through procurement or by providing comparable resource in accessible format or conversion-ready format s.15	<p>Continue usual practice of providing comparable accessible formats through Library Accessibility Services</p> <p>Develop Library policy and procedure for the provision, procurement, or acquisition of print resources in an accessible format</p>	<p>Library Accessibility Services provides comparable resources each semester upon request.</p> <p>In progress – Policy development</p> <p>In progress - Exploring shared accessible text conversion service and /or repository: AERO (textbooks for purchase) and OCUL Scholar’s Portal initiative (textbooks for borrowing).</p>

		Information about accessible format materials included in Instructor training
Provide accessible student records, program requirements and descriptions upon request s.15	Place statement on web and other print and online documents about how users can contact UofG for accessible formats Ensure CourseLink and WebAdvisor accessibility	Registrar's office posted statement of accessible format availability on websites. In progress - Review recent accessibility audit of CourseLink and WebAdvisor and make any necessary changes
Procurement processes include accessibility criteria. s.5 Procurement of kiosks incorporate accessibility criteria s.6	Include accessibility Statement in Purchasing Policy RFPs & RFQs include language around accessibility as required Develop procedures to address accessibility requirements	Statement included in Purchasing Policy Appropriate language included in RFP/Qs Procedures developed as part of a larger procurement process Appropriate additions to purchasing policies/procedures at Physical Resources and Hospitality Services Changes being communicated and training being developed

January 1, 2014

Legislative Requirement	Deliverable	Progress to Date
Training on accessibility standards and human rights for all employees, volunteers, etc. Record all training s.7	Include as part of coordinated training on all AODA standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Accessibility • Accessible Formats and Communication Supports • Human Rights & standard Face-to-face or through CourseLink	CourseLink system already developed. Review effectiveness and revise as necessary Develop face-to-face and/or online modules Develop training implementation strategy and have coordinated trainings complete by 2014 Keep records of completion
Feedback processes s.11	Develop feedback processes for persons raising concerns	Feedback process available on accessibility website, in

	regarding accessibility	accessibility policies and documents, through training, Process should be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure effectiveness
Internet sites to conform to WCAG 2.0 Level A s.14	All U of G websites are to conform to WCAG 2.0 Level A Provide training to web developers and content providers External web developers to meet standards	Hire consultant to oversee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ownership audit • accessibility audit of websites and enterprise systems with issues remediated by January 2014 Develop training for website personnel to be completed by January 2014 as part of AODA coordinated trainings Include AODA requirements in contracts. Provide access to UofG online training
Communicate availability of accommodation in recruitment and hiring processes ss.22,23,24	Ensure policy to address Notification of policy to potential candidates	Included in Accommodation Partnership Program (APP) Duty to accommodate discussion with hiring managers in recruitment and selection orientation and at point of hire. Duty to accommodate discussed at search committee training for faculty and professional & managerial positions. Standard hiring practice for non-academic groups. Part of hiring policies and practice for Sessional Lecturers and GTAs. Statement on HR and FASR Careers websites. Short listed candidates are notified through HR, FASR or the unit
Inform employees of policies to	Communicate policies to	APP posted online in HR and

<p>support employees with disabilities</p> <p>s.25</p>	<p>employees</p>	<p>Faculty Relations and linked to Accessibility website</p> <p>Staff and faculty were notified about APP by email</p> <p>Updates will be posted online and sent by email</p> <p>Notice will be included in offer letters with program link</p> <p>Medical absence protocol will be prepared and posted online</p> <p>All policies include as part of AODA coordinated trainings (completed by January 2014)</p>
<p>Accessible formats and communication supports for employees</p> <p>s.26</p>	<p>Ensure process to provide supports.</p>	<p>Library Accessibility Services provides accessible formats and communication support. Employment Accommodation Fund funds accommodation</p> <p>Review procedure as required to determine long term capacity</p>
<p>Documented individual accommodation plans and return to work process</p> <p>ss.28, 29</p>	<p>Ensure process to create and maintain accommodation plans and return to work process</p>	<p>APP systematizes accommodation and return to work plans.</p> <p>Individual accommodation plans are documented using template and endorsed by University doctor. Plans are kept in Occupational Health.</p> <p>Written process outlining steps taken to facilitate return to work exists and includes how documented accommodation plans are used.</p> <p>In progress: Including means by which an employee is assessed, manner in which evaluation by a medical expert can be requested</p>

		at University's expense, and manner in which a denial will be provided
Accessibility becomes part of performance management, career development and redeployment ss.30,31,32	U of G to consider employee accessibility needs in these processes.	U of G takes into account the needs of employees with disabilities.

January 1, 2015

Legislative Requirement	Deliverable	Progress to Date
Provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request s.12	Develop of Accessible Information and Communication policy Develop Accessible Information and Communications Guide Provide training on policy and guide	In progress In progress Develop training to be completed as part of AODA coordinated trainings (by January 2014)
Publicize availability of formats and support s.12	Formalized processes to be developed	In progress
Library to provide, procure or acquire print materials in accessible or conversion ready format upon request s.18	Develop Library policy and procedure for the provision, procurement, or acquisition of print resources in an accessible	In progress – Policy development In progress - Exploring shared accessible text conversion service and /or repository: AERO (textbooks for purchase) and OCUL Scholar's Portal initiative (textbooks for borrowing). In progress – develop standards for digitization of special collections materials that comply with the AODA standards.
Provide U of G produced textbooks and print-based educational supplementary learning resources in accessible format upon request. s.17	Develop processes	

Conclusion

In conclusion, the University of Guelph is committed to creating a campus community that is inclusive of all individuals and ensures equal opportunity among its members to achieve success in their academic and employment endeavours. The University recognizes that successful learning and employment outcomes are the result of a shared responsibility and commitment on the part of students, faculty and staff, and expects that all members of the community will advance and contribute to the ongoing development of an environment that is accessible and inclusive, while actively working to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

Appendix

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Background

The University continues to strive to create an environment that supports the ability of all community members to live, work and study on campus. The University's work has been guided the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA - 2005). Arising out of the Act, a number of standards have been approved, with various compliance requirements, and implementation deadlines:

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Information and Communications Standard
- Employment Standard
- Accessible Built Environment Standard (still to be approved)

Some of the standards have overlapping requirements (e.g., training); some of the standards will be difficult to meet by the stated deadline; and for others, action could be taken now prior to compliance requirements (e.g., accessibility of new buildings). It is important that decisions regarding implementation be coordinated to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that the university is compliant with government standards.

Mandate

The Steering Committee is an adhoc committee that will oversee the strategic directions for implementation of the requirements arising out of the AODA and its standards. This includes establishing and setting expectations for working groups, ensuring University compliance, and overseeing government reporting. The committee will guide funding and evaluation, and make decisions regarding any systemic investments within the context of the AODA implementation.

Specific Duties and Responsibilities:

The Steering Committee will:

- review and approve an annual plan of action for AODA implementation issues which will include the assignment of duties to individuals, units or committees;
- oversee the communication strategy whereby information on disability issues is continuously gathered, assessed and acted upon, and the University community advised of measures already in place;
- develop a communications plan that informs the University of the process, and ensures appropriate stakeholders are informed of issues as they arise;
- review and recommend funding for systemic initiatives or implementation; and
- oversee the completion of required government reports.

The University's HREO will take a coordinating role to support the work of the Steering Committee, providing it with guidance on AODA requirements, and provincial initiatives.

Meetings

The Steering Committee will meet at least once per semester and more frequently if deemed necessary.

Membership

The membership of the Steering Committee will be comprised as below. Additional members can be added as necessary during the process.

Director, HREO (Chair)

CIO and Chief Librarian

Asst. V-P (Human Resources)

Asst. V-P (Financial Services)

Assoc. V-P (Student Services)

Assoc. V-P (Academic)

Director, Hospitality Services

Director, Communications & Public Affairs

Director, Faculty and Staff Relations and Executive Advisor to the Provost

HREO staff member(s) with expertise on the AODA