

Multi-Year AODA Accessibility Plan 2020-2025 Annual Status Report May 2023 – April 2024

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Introduction

Background

This report is a collaborative effort between the multiple units represented on the university-wide [Accessibility Working Group](#) (AWG). The AWG was established at Ontario Tech University in September 2010 to create an inclusive and barrier-free campus for all individuals with disabilities. In response to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and, more recently, the Integrated Accessibility Standards and Regulations (IASR), which mandated province-wide accessibility planning to address the staggered implementation of the accessibility standards. The Ontario Tech AODA Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (“Multi-Year Plan”) published in 2020 reaffirms the university’s commitment to developing and maintaining a study and work environment that is inclusive and facilitates the full participation of all students and employees with disabilities.

Statement of Commitment

Ontario Tech University is committed to creating a campus community that includes all individuals and ensures equal opportunity among its members to succeed in their academic and/or employment endeavors. The university recognizes that successful learning and employment outcomes result from shared responsibility and commitment by students, faculty and staff. Therefore, the university expects all community members to advance the ongoing development of an accessible and inclusive environment while actively working to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Feedback

Ontario Tech University recognizes community feedback as a critical process in identifying, removing and preventing barriers in its accessibility strategy. Feedback is essential to the University’s plan to improve how we deliver our services and encourage inclusive community participation. Feedback may be given by emailing the Office of Risk Management at aoda@ontariotechu.ca or by telephone at 905.721.3201. You may also send feedback by completing our [Accessibility Feedback Form](#) or by mailing us:

Office of Risk Management
2000 Simcoe Street North
Oshawa, Ontario L1G 0C5

Institutional Achievements and Accomplishments

General

Initiatives related to accessibility may or may not be directly associated with a regulatory requirement or initiatives that do not fall within a particular standard.

- The Accessibility Working Group (AWG) had three (3) meetings in the 2023-2024 year, where members participated in strategic discussions and accessibility priority planning.
- The Athletics and Recreation department is finalizing a partnership with the YMCA downtown area to provide access to their fitness center for our downtown Oshawa location students.
 - ◆ The FLEX Centre at the North Oshawa location is still available for our downtown students; however, we recognize that access to downtown space is minimal.
- The annual Health, Safety and Wellness Fair included vendors specializing in ergonomics and preventive strain injuries.
 - ◆ A therapy dog attended the fair and was a comforting presence for all those who attended.
- We are in ongoing collaboration with The Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB), a non-profit organization that advocates for and empowers those impacted by blindness.
 - ◆ CNIB and Ontario Tech are conducting a new research project exploring accessible forms of explainable artificial intelligence (AI).
 - ◆ Ontario Tech regularly participates in Phone It Forward, a CNIB Foundation Program that collects gently used smartphones. The smartphones are then refurbished and equipped with accessible apps, technical training, and discounted maintenance costs for those with sight loss.
 - ◆ Ontario Tech has donated twenty-five smartphones to CNIB.
 - ◆ The Campus Library and Human Resources (HR) departments work closely to ensure the Phone It Forward program remains well-known in the university community.
- The Durham College and Ontario Tech University disability management Community of Practice group has accepted an offer for the Wellness at Work team to host the next annual conference in June 2024. Planning for this event started in November 2023, and key stakeholders across the university will be involved as the planning continues over the next six months.
- The Ontario Tech Campus Library has been engaging (along with other Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) members) with the [proposed postsecondary education standards — final recommendations report 2022](#) and their implications in our contexts.
- The Human Resources, Office of Risk Management and Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging teams collaborated to celebrate our first Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) at Ontario Tech University.
 - ◆ We promoted and celebrated the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and recognized all individuals who live with a disability.

- ◆ The Accessible Instruction for Educators module was launched to all faculty members on campus and updated with the support and assistance of the Teaching & Learning Centre, Human Resources and Learning Management System teams.
 - ◆ The team created activities to engage our community and bring awareness to DEAM with a Spot the Difference activity using social media platforms and the Phone it Forward campaign with the HR and Library departments. We showcased our support and strengthened awareness by wearing purple and blue on October 19, 2023.
 - ◆ We worked with the Campus Library team to create collections of accessibility and disability representation through media and art available at our north and downtown campus libraries.
 - ◆ A webpage was developed on our Accessibility Hub for DEAM, showcasing all the activities and awareness at a central spot, and provided all resources available at the university as a refresher.
- The Office of Risk Management, with the support of key stakeholders and the AWG, submitted the 2023 Accessibility Compliance Reporting Form, which was due by December 31, 2023.

Customer Service

Initiatives implemented related to the Customer Service Standards. For example, this can include training employees, updating/establishing policies and following up on feedback received.

- The Organizational Development Specialist from the HR department worked in partnership with the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) to promote and register for the Lunch & Learns—Creating Accessible Documents workshop.
 - ◆ This lunch-and-learn workshop was included in HR's Learning and Development catalog and was well recognized and received by staff.
- The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies team worked with the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office to develop an intake tool regarding accessibility services at the university and create specific support mechanisms while working and aligning with the SAS Manager for our graduate students.
- Student Accessibility Services continues to work with university stakeholders on policies and processes to ensure they are student-focused and inclusive.
- The Academic Advising team opened more online appointments for the winter semester.
- The Records and Registration team moved the deferred exams to a first-floor room, which allowed easy accessibility. They also worked with Student Accessibility Services and academic faculties to ensure that students with mobility concerns had classes scheduled in specific buildings/floor levels when required.
- The Records and Registration team provided early registration for specified students.
- The Student Awards and Financial Aid team implemented customer service change initiatives, including:
 - ◆ The team continued work with SAS to support students with bursary assistance via TSA (Technical Support Analysts) or the provincial BSWD (Bursary for Students with Disabilities) program.

- ◆ We returned to in-person, virtual, or phone appointments (from virtual only).
 - ◆ PDF forms were modified into online forms and continued to improve our internal processing, such as refund submissions, bursary reviews and the University Works program.
 - ◆ At the direction of the federal and provincial government, students are now considered prolonged or persistent disabilities (vs just permanent).
 - ◆ We have eliminated the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP) feature for students to receive grocery assistance. As we return to being on campus, we are requesting students to visit in person.
 - ◆ A new process, to provide students with an on-campus food card for those in immediate need.
- The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) continues to provide reviews of all content concerning AODA compliance and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles for all micro-credentials and Continuous Learning modules.
- ◆ Two TLC team members participated in additional workshops to enhance their skills and knowledge related to UDL, which helped them provide comprehensive training for others in our university community.
 - ◆ TLC provided regular workshops on UDL as continuing education and training for our university members, which expanded UDL training to non-academic staff.
 - ◆ TLC included UDL training as part of the TLC Certificate in University Teaching program.
- The Vice-President, Research and Innovation (VPRI) department hosted accessible hybrid events “Undergraduate Research Awards” and “All About Nuclear Hydrogen Production” to increase accessibility.
- The Campus Library offers access support for printing, photocopying, extended loan periods, in-depth research support and online appointment booking.
- The Campus Library team members routinely attend professional development opportunities offered via webinars offered by members of OCUL’s accessibility community. Recent examples include a Queen’s presentation on Dragon Naturally Speaking within Omni (our Library Services Platform) and an NYPL presentation on tactile graphics.
- The Campus Libraries continuously provide support and assistance regarding the availability of adaptive equipment. The Assisted Use Carrel Room includes a computer with ZoomText, Read&Write, a 22” LCD Monitor which may also be used with a laptop and a height-adjustable table.
- Students can borrow equipment from the Campus Library, including headphones, a high-contrast wireless keyboard, adaptive and ergonomic computer mice, laptops, portable DVD players, Christie Brio electronic pen and energy lights.

Information and Communication

Initiatives implemented related to the Information and Communications Standards. For example, this can include creating accessible documents, updating websites to meet accessibility

requirements, developing new policies to ensure information/documents are provided in alternate formats, and following up on feedback.

- Communications & Marketing (C&M) has been proactively implementing accessibility monitoring and striving to comply with WCAG, AA and AODA standards. Ensuring that digital content is accessible to all users is a legal requirement and a fundamental aspect of inclusivity and fairness.
 - ◆ The team implemented a new accessibility wayfinding software, [GoodMaps Explore](#), launched in collaboration with the Partnership Office and members of the AWG.
 - ◆ We have developed a webpage to encourage our university community members to download and use the app while hosting a booth event to showcase how to use the app and gather feedback in person.
 - ◆ GoodMaps Explore is an accessible navigation app designed to provide an inclusive experience for all individuals on our campus, including those who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, or mobility impaired.
 - ◆ The wayfinding project has updated the ERC (Energy Research Centre) and SIRC (Software and Informatics Research Centre) buildings, making all installed signage accessible.
 - ◆ The signage in each building complies with AODA standards (font, height, contrast) while embracing best practices.
 - ◆ We have taken a proactive approach by projecting signage and braille on each door-side sign in both the ERC and SIRC buildings.
 - ◆ We have increased consistency in signage-type locations. Expectations are set as to where to find essential information such as the building directory, floor directories, Health and Safety (Staff) board, Areas of Refuge, etc., while noting all signs are contrast compliant.
 - ◆ Emergency signs and services are now located in a central location on every floor of each building.
 - ◆ Each elevator is equipped with an Emergency Health and Safety Centre that displays information, including First Aid, AED and Bleed Control Kits (or a sign that indicates the nearest location).
- The Office of the Registrar enhanced accessibility standards in communications, social media platforms, advertising, print and the web.
 - ◆ The Admissions and Recruitment team continued to include alternative text with all images on all future student social platforms and videos, use inclusive language on all content, use CamelCase in hashtags, remove infographic PDFs from the website and use pages and alternate web tools that are AODA compliant.
 - Closed captioning on all organic and paid social/ad videos.
 - Email image headers were changed, and consistent web layouts were utilized to ensure full AODA compliance.
 - Webpages were created that offer multiple ways of accessing content through text, audio, and video.
 - ◆ The team initiated a revamp of the Equity Admissions process with the AVP Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. We developed an initial rubric to assess

submissions. A strategic framework is established, and further work on front-end applications is required.

- Issued fifty equity admission offers to Bachelor of Education
 - Issued two Indigenous admission consideration offers to Bachelor of Education
 - ◆ The International Office made a considerable amount of website changes which included adding descriptions to images, changing content located in a table format to a more accessible format for reader technologies (standard text, accordion style, etc.), simplifying the tab/navigation menu on the website for easier user experience and adding a mega menu to the website to make the tabular content have an expanded view.
 - ◆ The Enrolment Services team enhanced accessibility information and communication in their area by creating an online query submission form for students who may be unable to easily send or access email, converting online PDF documents into MachForms, increasing access and readability, and allowing for larger copy and inclusion of hyperlinking actions.
 - ◆ The Enrolment Services team also ensured consistent web layouts and formatting and provided holistically accessible communications to students (in as many accessible mediums as possible, i.e., email, mobile app, MyOntarioTech and the Ridgeback Report).
 - ◆ The Records and Registration team posted content for students and instructors on multiple platforms for accessibility.
 - ◆ The Student Awards and Financial Aid department adapted several PDF forms into online forms and continued to make improvements with internal processing (i.e., refund submissions, bursary reviews and the University Works program).
- The Vice-President Research & Innovation (VPRI) department has reviewed and implemented information and communication standards throughout its website and documents.
- ◆ The VPRI team conducted a complete web analysis of the VPRI website to correct accessibility issues while ensuring any new files uploaded to the website were reviewed for accessibility.
 - ◆ Historical Research Committee minutes and agenda from 2021 onward were updated to accessible PDFs.
 - ◆ We converted all agendas and minutes to an accessible format for our internal team meetings.
 - ◆ The Research Ethics Board (REB) Standard Operating Procedures, Terms of Reference and Animal Care Committee (ACC) Standard Operating Procedures were revised from Word files to accessible web pages.
 - ◆ We modified IP disclosure forms to accessible Word files.
- The Campus Library continues to provide alternate formats, on request, for print material held in our collections via the [Accessible Content E-Portal](#) (ACE). An assessment of the ACE portal is being conducted by the Ontario Council of University Libraries ACE working group to discern. This assessment project's goals are to identify barriers to usage of the ACE service and to understand the alternate format service landscape, ensuring that ACE's continuing development aligns with anticipated policy changes as well as the needs of end users and local library staff.

- The Campus Library is partnering with the College Libraries Ontario (CLO) and Ontario College Library Service to expand the [Library eResources Accessibility Portal](#) (LEAP) to include Ontario universities. This resource is a collaborative database where libraries evaluate and share standardized accessibility scores for popular library databases.
- The Campus Library continues to offer a transcript or closed-captioned version of any DVD in its collection.

Employment

Initiatives implemented related to the Employment Standards. This can include, for example, accommodating all candidates during the recruitment process and employment life cycle, steps taken to ensure accommodation plans, and ensuring employees have accessible emergency information.

- The Recruitment and Compensation Specialist provided input and was part of the “Spot the Difference” activity during Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM).
- The Health and Disability Management Specialist worked in collaboration with the Recruitment and Compensation Specialist on the creation of a Manager’s Guide to Recruitment Process and Manager’s Checklist for Supporting Job Applicants.
- A new partnership was formed with Homewood Health Inc., which will provide support with the university’s process for supporting an employee seeking an accommodation based on disability. Homewood brings a vast amount of experience and expertise to disability management and is highly focused on inclusivity and equity.
- [Ergonomic resources](#) for employees have been enhanced and a stronger emphasis has been placed on the importance of conducting self-assessments of workstations and identifying issues that may lead to pain and discomfort.
- The Human Resources team enhanced the Rookie to Ridgeback employee orientation program to further promote the role that all university members play in making a campus community more inclusive and accessible.
- The Records and Registration team worked with the Academic Faculty to schedule classes to meet specific instructor accessibility and accommodation needs.

Design of Public Spaces

Initiatives implemented related to the Design of Public Spaces Standards. This can include, for example, installing accessible playgrounds, tactile walking surface indicators, and establishing design guidelines that consider accessibility.

- Ontario Tech’s Campus Infrastructure & Sustainability (OCIS) continues to work towards enhancing physical space throughout the university as outlined in IASR. In 2023-2024, the focus was improvements through deferred maintenance and capital initiatives, including:
 - ◆ The exit signs were changed out for the running-man sign in the following buildings: Science, ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel & Engineering, 151 Athol, Clean Energy Research Laboratory (CERL), Campus Fieldhouse (CFH), Pavilion and Campus Ice Centre (CIC).

- ◆ Continuous lighting upgrades occurred throughout 2023, bringing several areas back to design levels.
 - ◆ The stairwell tactile walking surface indicators (TWSI) and stair nosing upgrades were completed in the following buildings: ACE - Stairwell #3, 4, 5 & 6, CIC stair locations #1 - 19, as well as Baagwating Indigenous Student Centre (UBISC) 151 Athol Street East - Stairwell #1.
 - ◆ The Wayfinding Signage Upgrade was carried out in collaboration with Communication & Marketing, taking the lead role in the following buildings: ERC & SIRC.
 - ◆ 38 Automatic Door Operators (ADO) in the Science building under deferred maintenance (continued reliability) were upgraded. This was done as a high priority over replacing the round ADO activation switches.
 - ◆ Eleven new ADOs were installed in the washrooms at Bordessa Hall, and two were installed in the Science building.
 - ◆ Ten new accessible picnic tables were added between the Science and the Business & IT buildings.
 - ◆ The Software and Informatics Research Centre (SIRC) Concrete Ramp was replaced due to structural damage.
 - ◆ Several Textile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSI) were replaced that were damaged or removed by snow clearing.
 - ◆ Ball Diamond - The elevator was installed in the press box.
 - ◆ In collaboration with Durham College, ongoing capital investments were made to repair the hardscape in various locations on the north Oshawa location.
- In 2023, a physical space audit continued, completing the draft audits in the following areas: CFH, CIC, CERL and exterior at the downtown facilities against the Design of Public Spaces, an amendment to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).
 - The Athletics department has renovation plans approved for three all-gender washrooms to be added to the CRWC. These will also act as a universal changing space while the scope for a larger project is prepared.
 - The Athletics department and team will be adding a lactation space to the CRWC to make nursing more accessible to mothers on campus by making the space accessibility friendly.
 - The CRWC updated accessible equipment in the FLEX center.
 - The Campus Libraries continue to recognize individual needs and support equitable access to a full range of services, resources, and facilities for all.
 - ◆ The Assisted Use Carrel Room is located on the fourth floor of the North Oshawa Library. Ontario Tech and Durham College students can book this space on the [Library's website](#).
 - ◆ The Campus Library began collecting usage statistics on the Assisted Use Carrel Room in the fall of 2023. From September to December 2023, 99 unique users accessed this space, with 311 total bookings.
 - ◆ The Campus Library facilities include an automatic door at building entrances, desk-height countertops at service desks, wheelchair-accessible elevator services in all multi-floor libraries and wheelchair-accessible washrooms, including an all-gender accessible washroom with wheelchair-access and a change table located on the second floor of the North Oshawa Library.

- ◆ Adjustable height desks are now available in all open study spaces on each library floor on the north campus.
- ◆ Two height-adjustable desks are available at the Social Science, Humanities, and Education Library at Charles Hall.
- The International Education team participated in a health and safety inspection in U5, and no accessibility issues were identified.
- The Student Accessibility Services team initiated the creation/renovation of additional multi-purpose accessible space for students on the second floor in Shawenjigewining Hall.

Next Steps

The university's multi-year plans emphasize investing in new technologies and continuously updating policies and processes in line with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Ontario Tech is committed to creating a respectful and accessible environment, supporting all community members to reach their full potential, thereby strengthening the university community as a whole.

As we gear up to complete the final year of our accessibility multi-year plans, we are preparing to produce a refreshed report for the next five years. We will take this opportunity to review the following as our next steps in preparation:

- Review and update all accessibility-related policies and procedures.
- Review and update our current Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- Develop a new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the next 5 years.
- Monitor and propose any changes based on 'proposed postsecondary education standards — final recommendations report 2022.'

For more information

For more information on this Annual Status Report, please contact:

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Attention: Compliance Officer

Standard and accessible formats of this document are available upon request.