



Ontario Tech University

Multi-Year AODA Accessibility Plan 2020-2025

Annual Status Report May 2020-April 2021

ontariotechu.ca

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.
Please contact us at 905.721.3173 or by email at aoda@ontariotechu.ca.

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Introduction

Background

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and its regulations (AODA), Ontario Tech University is required to establish, implement, maintain, and document a multi-year accessibility plan. The AODA also requires public sector organizations to prepare an Annual Status Report (“the Report”) relative to the [Ontario Tech University Multi-year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025](#) (“Multi-Year Plan”). This Report documents the planning and implementation activities undertaken by Ontario Tech University as part of the Multi-Year Plan, for the period May 1, 2020 to April 30, 2021.

Statement of Commitment

Ontario Tech University 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/or employment endeavors. 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 the ongoing development of an environment that is accessible and inclusive, 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 an essential part of the University’s plan to improve on how we deliver our services and encourage inclusive community participation. Feedback may be given by emailing the University Secretariat and General Counsel’s office at aoda@ontariotechu.ca, or by telephone at 905.721.3173. You may also send feedback via mail to:

Office of the University Secretariat and General Counsel
2000 Simcoe Street North
Oshawa, Ontario L1G 0C5

Section One: Status Update

Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Pandemic

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a world-wide pandemic due to the COVID-19 virus. Following this declaration, the Ontario Provincial government ordered all non-essential services, including universities, to shut down. As a result, all non-essential staff, faculty and volunteers had to work remotely and virtually. In addition, students shifted to online and remote learning for remaining courses, assignments and exams. Ontario Tech University created a [COVID-19 information webpage](#) and used its social media platforms to notify and share information with the Ontario Tech University community. More recently and to prepare incoming students for the Winter 2021 and Fall 2021 semesters, the University created a [“Ready for You” website](#) and continues to use social media and other avenues to communicate and share information to the University community. Remote learning and working have revealed many accessibility successes for persons with disabilities including flexible work schedules, ability to manage disability related symptoms and flexibility with course load and work load. We would be remiss not to identify the challenges for persons with disabilities during the pandemic such as captioning videos for student learning, virtual events, document and website accessibility to name a few. Many of these challenges have been resolved and we look forward to continuing to discover and develop solutions that will extend beyond the timeframe of this report and further drive and shape accessibility at Ontario Tech University for the future.

In the Multi-Year Plan, Ontario Tech University identified the priorities that will help it continue to meet the requirements under the AODA and eliminate barriers by 2025. The points below will summarize the achievements from identified priorities and other key accessibility accomplishments over the last year:

General

- Established a compliance risk management framework to support accessibility compliance.
- Continuing assessment of the accessibility environment on campus.
- Invited the City of Oshawa’s Accessibility Program Coordinator to present the city’s multi-year plan implementation strategy and best practices.
- Coordinated and held Accessibility Working Group meetings to organize and record institutional accessibility-related activities.
- Conducted various institutional events and activities to broaden and diversify the University community through the celebration and promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- The addition of the Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the Office of the Provost, as a member of the Accessibility Working Group (AWG) will enable the campus to further explore the intersectional needs of members of the university community who have disabilities, as it relates to race, gender, sexuality, among other shared identities.
- Supported the creation of subcommittees to enhance compliance-related activities in specific roles and functional areas.
- Engaged a 3rd party consultant to conduct equity climate assessments in order to provide the tools to address items such as (but not limited to): hiring, recruiting, promotions, and job postings.
- The Director, EDI has conducted EDI workshops for faculty and staff hiring committees that includes best practices for recruiting and supporting applicants who identify as persons with disabilities.
- Finalized an Employment Equity Survey that includes questions about disability status with disaggregated categories.
- Persons with disabilities were included in the EDI considerations for the disbursement of Canada Research Chair COVID-19 Emergency Funds for researchers.
- Created the Human Rights Office and the Director of Human Rights with a focus on ensuring accessible and transparent human rights complaint and dispute resolution processes and updated associated university policies including the Respectful Campus Policy.

Customer Service

- Various departments participated in the review of technologies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Guidance materials have been published or presented to support community members in this endeavour.
- Community members have continued to have access to campus services by shifting in-person services to virtual offerings.
- Established a student online portal to support student registration with Student Accessibility Services. An electronic document and record keeping system was also utilized to support increased access, while protecting the security of sensitive data.
- Student Accessibility Services has worked closely with students to support a sharp increase in alternate format and accessibility supports requests.
- The Campus Library created an accommodation process to support private study spaces for community members who required mask accommodations.
- Student surveys were conducted by the student union to collect feedback on their student experience, course design, transcripts of lectures, and other student centric issues.

Information and Communications

- Achieved WCAG 2.0 Level AA on the learning management system and on the University's public-facing website.
- Hired a Digital Media Specialist to support ongoing WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliance of public facing websites, social media websites, and web content.
- Institutional support provided to various departments in maintaining AODA compliance by fulfilling requests to update, change, or add to web content.
- University staff tested the compatibility and functionality of the Read & Write and Kurzweil software applications. Both software upgrades included the read the web version that is compatible and accessible for students to use with the virtual assessment platforms.
- University staff completed 49 alternate format requests have for the Fall 2020 semester through AERO, Access Text, and publishers directly.
- University staff managed an increase in computerized note taker requests to support students who identify as a person who is DHH – Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.
- University staff managed an increase in captioned media requests to support students who identify as a person who is DHH – Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.
- University staff and the Ontario Tech University Student Union worked directly with students to address accessibility related requests and feedback regarding the institutional use of the Learning Management System.
- The Ontario Tech Student Union revamped the Ontario Tech Student Union website in compliance with the AODA.
- The University maintained campus emergency plans, procedures, and public safety information in compliance with AODA.
- Student Accessibility Services and The Teaching & Learning Centre provided accessibility-related professional development workshops and presentations to members of the University community.
- Establishment of an Educator's Accessibility Training subcommittee to identify and support institutional accessibility training initiatives.
- The Campus Library provided students with accessible or conversion ready format of print, digital or multimedia resources and materials for people with disabilities, upon request.

Employment

- The Human Resources Accessibility Working Group subcommittee identified and addressed opportunities to enhance employee accessibility including: the development of an employee accessibility-related website, forms, guidance materials, manager tool kit, disability accommodation procedure and emergency response procedures.
- The Disability Management Specialist and Health & Safety Office supported ergonomic accommodations for employees working from home. Ergonomic assessments and supports were provided (when needed).
- Human Resources supported employees with information and communication supports (when requested).
- Faculty specific workshops for all hiring and promotion review committees in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Design of Public Spaces

- Campus accessibility improvement audits are ongoing to maintain and identify improvement opportunities.
- Installation of height adjustable tables in the Campus Library.
- On campus physical support spaces including “The Wellness Centre” and “Zen Zone” transitioned to virtual support spaces for people with disabilities.
- Stair tread noising and landing textile strips were installed in the Science Building.
- Areas of refuge have been re-carpeted at the North campus to be visually consistent for the university community.

For more information

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

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Attention: Manager, Compliance Risk and Ethics

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