



The University of Western Ontario's
Accessibility Plan

September 2007 to August 2008

Prepared in accordance with the *Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001*

30 September 2007

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Objectives	3
Western's Commitment to Accessibility Planning	3
Barrier-Removal Initiatives in 2006/2007	4
Plan for Removal of Barriers 2007/2008.....	9
Review and Monitoring Process.....	11
Appendices	12
Appendix A	Members of WODAC

The University of Western Ontario's Annual Accessibility Plan
September 30, 2007

Introduction

In December 2001, Ontario passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (the "Act"). The purpose of the Act is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the Act mandates that every university, including The University of Western Ontario ("Western"), prepare an annual accessibility plan.

Despite the passage of the Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the requirements under the former Act, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force.

This is the fifth such plan to be prepared on behalf of Western.

Objectives

The purpose of an accessibility plan is to document barriers to accessibility that have been removed to date and identify those barriers that will be removed in the coming year. A plan must also identify how the barriers will be removed and present a plan for identifying and removing barriers in the future, and preventing the development of new barriers. Plans must be made public and accessible to allow for input from the broader community.

The purpose of this plan is to update the last report, prepared in September 2006 (available at <http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/wodac.htm>).

Western's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

As is stated in *Engaging the Future*, the University's Strategic Plan:

Diversity: as part of our commitment to excellence, we seek to recognize and remove the obstacles faced by traditionally under-represented groups in order to facilitate their access to and advancement at Western. We respect and celebrate the diversity of people who make up our community.

The University of Western Ontario has been committed to accessibility planning for some time now and has recommitted itself to such planning under the Act.

Through the formation of Western's Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee ("WODAC"), Western has committed itself to meeting its obligations under the Act, as well as to achieving the following goals:

- The continual improvement of access to University premises, facilities and services for all persons with disabilities;
- The participation of persons with disabilities in the development and review of its annual access plans; and
- The provision of quality services to persons with disabilities.

Barrier-Removal Initiatives in 2006-2007

1. Physical and Architectural Barriers

At Western, a number of departments and/or groups are committed to the removal of physical and architectural barriers:

- The student-funded Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee ("CARE") continued efforts to address barriers on campus that have been identified by students. While the accessibility enhancements are focused on improving student experience, there is a beneficial impact for all members of the university community and for visitors to campus.
- The Department of Physical Plant plays a large role in addressing physical barriers identified on campus and has also displayed a strong commitment to addressing physical barriers that are brought to its attention and to maintaining accessibility-related improvements such as door openers. In addition to addressing issues as they arise, Physical Plant continues to make available the amount of \$50,000.00 per year in its budget to direct toward projects to increase accessibility on campus. It should be noted as well that additional sums are committed by other departments on campus.
- All plans for new buildings and major renovations to existing buildings on campus are reviewed to ensure that barriers are addressed at the planning and design stage, and that no new barriers are created. Accessibility standards set by the University often go beyond the standards found in the Ontario *Building Code* (which are acknowledged as a base only) and it is an expectation that contractors bidding on and completing work at the University will meet these higher standards. The Barrier-Free Access and Safety Committee (the "BFASC") was established at Western in order to ensure the accessibility of new and renovated buildings.
- Training on the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) continues for university members. Although the focus of the training is preventing crime on campus, participants are also trained in accessibility

considerations. When participants conduct CPTED audits of various campus buildings, they will also make accessibility recommendations, as appropriate.

Initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus in the past year include:

- The accessible campus transportation service for students has undergone several improvements over the last few years. It was further enhanced for 2007-2008 following an extensive review of the service during the spring and summer of 2007. In September 2007, a new provider of accessible van service began at Western. The service will continue to provide reliable, safe, and comfortable transportation for students who have disabilities.
- At the request of Services for Students with Disabilities, the classroom management team (Institutional Planning and Budgeting), reassigned classrooms to allow students with disabilities to attend classes in accessible classrooms.
- Rehabilitation Services continued to offer its assistance to individuals for attaining parking permits for persons with disabilities, creating ergonomically correct workstations and accessing buildings on a case-by-case basis.
- A new service desk has been constructed in The D.B. Weldon Library that features a lowered counter area to accommodate persons who use wheelchairs.
- The CARE committee approved funds to support the following projects:
 - Installation of barrier free doors at the Medical Sciences Building
 - On-going installation/improvements to make the entrance to the Grad Club accessible
 - Purchase of CCTV equipment for the Music Library
 - Purchase of computer equipment and upgrades for the The D.B. Weldon Library Access Lab
 - Purchase of assistive technologies for Western Libraries
 - Installation of a barrier free washroom at Talbot College
 - Purchase of specialized equipment for a barrier free suite at London Hall Residence
 - Purchase of accessible computer equipment for King's University College
 - Installation of wheelchair lift at Althouse College (Faculty of Education)

2. Information and Communications Barriers

Initiatives to remove information and communication barriers across campus in the past year include:

- Services for Students with Disabilities coordinated convocation assistance for graduating students who have disabilities.
- Services for Students with Disabilities facilitated the transition to university for many students by:
 - Providing a summer transition program for students with learning disabilities who were about to enter university from high school.
 - Working with many students prior to their arrival at Western in order to ensure that accommodation and other supports were in place at the beginning of the term. This work was especially important for the students who would be living in residence.
 - Assisting Admissions at Western with their review of applications from individuals who requested special considerations because of health or disability-related issues.
- Services for Students with Disabilities provided services for 944 students with disabilities in 2006-2007. These services included the following:
 - The arrangement of academic accommodation;
 - The provision of alternative format text (e.g. electronic, Braille);
 - Training in the use of adaptive technology and adaptive facilities on campus in which students may work and receive assistance with trouble shooting, etc.;
 - Training in learning strategies and skills, e.g. the allocation of OSAP's Bursary for Students with Disabilities to students who used it for a variety of items and services that were required because of a combination of their disabilities and their academic programs; and,
 - Assessment and referral services that facilitate students' understanding of their abilities and allow them to engage in effective educational, psychological, and medical interventions.
- Services for Students with Disabilities worked with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to host and participate in a regional meeting regarding the transition from post-secondary education to work for individuals who have disabilities.
- A staff member from Services for Students with Disabilities gave a presentation entitled, "Teaching Diverse Learners" during the Fall Perspectives on Teaching Conference at Western. This conference is intended for faculty and teaching assistants who wish to improve their classroom skills.

- Western Libraries continued its attention to web accessibility as outlined in the report found at: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/accessibility/>.
- The availability of enhanced library services available for students with disabilities are now more prominently featured on Western Libraries' website.

3. Attitudinal Barriers

This type of barrier is the most difficult of the barriers to identify and address. Western is fortunate to have a large number of interested and concerned individuals in its community who regularly take on the task of educating others about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in our community, both formally in the work that they do and informally.

Some initiatives completed in the past year to move forward in addressing these barriers include:

- Services for Students with Disabilities worked with faculty and staff at Western to raise awareness about issues concerning accessibility, to remove barriers for students with disabilities, and to enhance the University's accessibility. This work included presentations about adaptive technology, available services and learning disabilities as well as individual discussions with members of the University community regarding the duty to accommodate, the rationale for particular accommodations, the relationship between accommodation and academic integrity, the need to delineate between essential and non-essential course and program requirements, etc.
- A mental health awareness program for campus leaders and managers is being developed by Human Resources (Rehabilitation Services). A pilot group has completed the program and it is expected that the program will be launched in early 2008.

4. Technological Barriers

Efforts to remove technological barriers on campus are on-going. Initiatives from the past year include:

- Through a WODAC-initiative, a website dedicated to accessibility at Western has been established. Its aim is to provide a one-stop location for information related to accessibility to students, staff, faculty and visitors. Website: www.accessibility.uwo.ca

- An additional reader/magnifier has been purchased for Western Libraries and will be allocated to The D.B. Weldon Library for use by patrons with low vision.
- Western Libraries continued its attention to adherence to the W3C's 3 Priority Levels. These are 3 levels of specifications that are required, desired, or optional in order to adhere to web accessibility. For a site to be considered accessible, it is required to meet the 1st priority of items. The 2nd is desired. The 3rd (which is hard to achieve) is optional. Western Libraries adheres to all 3 levels!
- Rehabilitation Services has provided assistance for persons with visual impairment, text and voice-activation.
- Information Technology Services ("ITS"), in collaboration with the Department of Communications and Public Affairs, consults with and supports campus departmental web maintainers of official departmental websites to create and maintain barrier free web accessible websites. Communications and Public Affairs has created and distributed accessible Western website templates which are used by many faculties and departments.

5. Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

With an organization the size of Western, there are a great number of policies and practices, both formal and informal, which require review. By promoting Western's obligations pursuant to the Act, it is anticipated that many of these will be reviewed by the appropriate departments, and barriers will be identified and brought forward, either by those departments or by individuals impacted. Resources such as Staff Relations, Rehabilitation Services, Services for Students with Disabilities and Equity & Human Rights Services are available to receive concerns and provide advice. These resources also continue to review policies and practices as part of their work on campus.

Some specific initiatives in the past year undertaken to address policy or practice barriers included:

- Services for Students with Disabilities worked with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Provost to develop and formalize procedures by which graduate students may access funding to support additional years of study in cases in which they require the additional year(s) to complete their degrees because of their disabilities.
- Human Resources partnered with contact groups in the community which serve persons with disabilities. Some of the agencies that Western has connected with are Leads Employment Services Inc., ATN and Goodwill.

- Rehabilitation Services continues to be a resource/consultant for Faculty/Staff to provide help with illness/injury.

Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2007-2008

What follows is a list of recommended actions to be undertaken in the upcoming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers at Western.

1. Physical and Architectural Barriers

- The Archives and Research Collections Centre at The D.B. Weldon Library would benefit from the installation of accessible door openers.
- Western's Accessibility Maps are being redesigned and expanded. The accessibility maps are being redesigned using newer technology and will include many of the more recent buildings on campus. Additionally, internal building maps will be provided for a growing number of buildings on campus. These maps will indicate the locations of accessible doors, routes, washrooms and elevators. Additional maps will be added as they become available.
- Continue the work done by the BFASC to review all new projects and major renovations to ensure accessibility.
- Post signage in the form of the International Symbol of Accessibility to mark all accessible entrances, elevators, washrooms and routes through buildings (CARE funded).
- Continue to incorporate accessibility considerations through the training and subsequent audits undertaken by the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) team.
- Continue to address physical barriers as they are identified by members of the community. The community currently has a number of different committees and departments that may be approached with concerns. Discussions are currently underway to improve communication and/or amalgamate the work done by these various committees and departments in order to better serve our community and respond more effectively to concerns regarding physical barriers.
- Continue to support the Campus Accessibility Evaluation and address barriers as they are identified.

2. Information and Communications Barriers

- Services for Students with Disabilities provided its second annual **Summer Transitions in Education for Students (STEPS)** program at Western for students with learning disabilities who are making the transition from high school to university.
- Services for Students with Disabilities, in partnership with Career Services, will be putting on a panel and discussion session during Western's Career Week that will provide information to students and employers regarding the ways to facilitate the transition from university to employment for students with disabilities.
- Western Libraries, in collaboration with Services for Students with Disabilities, will continue in their work to improve access to research materials for students, including examining the Access Code for potential barriers and supporting SSD initiatives regarding alternative text formats
- Creation of mp3 versions of library help guides currently accessible through the library website.
- Western Libraries will collaborate with Services for Students with Disabilities in their work to improve access to research materials for students, including examining the Access Code for potential barriers and supporting Services for Students with Disabilities initiatives regarding alternative text formats.
- The Classroom Management Group within Institutional Planning and Budgeting is currently surveying the accessibility of general use classrooms. The data will be posted to their website as it becomes available. The information will indicate which rooms have hearing assist systems, designated wheelchair accessible desks, as well as which entrance(s) may be best to use for accessibility.

3. Attitudinal Barriers

- Continue to improve understanding and awareness of mental health and mental illness across campus, especially among managers and supervisors, through further education and training initiatives. A pilot workshop on Mental Health Issues has been conducted for Leaders and Managers (in September 2007) and it is expected that a learning program will commence in early 2008.
- Bring learning opportunities to campus which bring together persons with disabilities from across the Western community, their supporters and administrators to discuss accessibility issues, highlight existing barriers and brainstorm ways to remove and prevent further barriers.

- Completion of the employment equity guide for use by those responsible for staff hiring and promotion, which would include considerations for hiring and promoting persons with disabilities.
- Continue to develop and present various educational programs across campus (for example, a duty to accommodate workshop for staff, faculty and students).

4. Technological Barriers

- Continue to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for adaptive technology to assist members of the community.
- Continue to monitor and ensure all official Western websites are accessible according to standards approved by ITS.
- Creation of mp3 versions of library help guides currently accessible through the library website.

5. Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

- Consider a review of the existing policy on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.
- Consider collaboration with the City of London's Accessibility Committee.
- Communicate about the new Ontario legislation when it is passed and Western becomes aware of its roles and responsibilities arising under that legislation.
- Human Resources will continue its e-recruitment and outreach efforts to recruit persons with disabilities to Western's workforce.
- Formalizing and publicizing enhanced library services available for students with disabilities through Western Libraries

Review and Monitoring Process

WODAC continues to take an active role in identifying and addressing barriers. This identification of short term and long term goals will be reflective of the obligations that are anticipated under the forthcoming Ontario legislation. We look forward to the upcoming year.

Appendix A

Members of WODAC

The following members of the University community served as members of WODAC between September 2006 and August 2007:

Functional/Administrative Group Members (one representative each):

Department	Committee Member	Contact Information
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett (Chair) Terri Tomchick	(519) 661-2111 x83334 (519) 661-2111 x81428
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence	(519) 661-2111 x85978
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien Veronika Elsie	(519) 661-2111 x84261 (519) 661-2111 x85580
Information & Technology Services	Merran Neville	(519) 661-3976 x83976
Office of the Ombudsperson	Adrienne Clarke	(519) 661-2111 x83573
Physical Plant Department	Flemming Galberg	(519) 661-2111 x88880
Rehabilitation Services	Barbara Froats	(519) 661-2111 x81398
Services for Students with Disabilities	Deborah Stuart	(519) 661-2111 x82147
Western Libraries	Jennifer Robinson	(519) 661-2111 x82229
Western Faculty	Lisa Klinger	(519) 661-2111 x88963
King's University College	Joan Aldis	(519) 433-3491 x4316
Brescia University College	Vacant	
Huron University College	Vacant	

(The functional/administrative group member shall represent and take the necessary action in accordance with his or her university role or position. The functional/administrative member may be, from time to time, required to research, consult with University leadership or administration, and take immediate or intermediary action in order to respond to issues raised at the committee meetings by the stakeholder/expert group members or other Western members).

Stakeholder/Expert Group Members:

Group	Committee Member	Contact Information
Society for Graduate Students (SOGS)	Brent Sherar	
University Students' Council	Pedro Lopes	
Student Member-at-large	Lorin MacDonald (until March 2007)	
Student Member-at-large	Jeff Preston	
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson	
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Vacant	