The University of Western Ontario's

Accessibility Plan

September 2008 to August 2009

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

30 September 2008

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The University of Western Ontario's Annual Accessibility Plan
September 30, 2008

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 *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005,* the requirements under the former Act, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force. On January 1, 2010 the University will report on customer service accessibility standards as required pursuant to Ontario regulations 429/07 and 430/07 which came into force in 2008 promulgated under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* ("AODA").

This is the sixth such plan to be prepared for 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 2007 (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;
- Compliance with accessibility standards consistent with regulations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005,* as they come into force;
- 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 2007-2008

1. Physical and Architectural Barriers

A number of departments and/or groups are committed to the removal of physical and architectural barriers at Western.

- The Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee ("CARE"), chaired by the University Students Council, continues to allot funding, made available annually through the Department of Physical Plant, to address barriers on campus. While the accessibility enhancements are focused on improving the student experience, there is a beneficial impact for all members of the University Community as well as visitors to campus.

- The Department of Physical Plant plays a large role in addressing physical barriers and is committed to addressing physical barriers on campus. The department provides funds to the CARE in its annual budget for projects to improve accessibility. Other sums are committed by other departments. All physical and architectural accessibility enhancements are coordinated through the Department of Physical Plant.

- All plans for new buildings and major renovations to existing buildings are reviewed to ensure that barriers are addressed at the planning and design stage where possible. Standards used by Western often go beyond the standards found in the Ontario *Building Code* (which are acknowledged to be a base only). It is expected that contractors bidding on and completing work at Western will meet higher standards. The Barrier-Free Access Committee ("BFAC") assists the Department of Physical Plant in reviewing the accessibility of new and renovated buildings.
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- Training on the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design ("CPTED") continues for members of the University community. While this training is focused on preventing crime on campus and promoting safety, participants are also trained on accessibility considerations. This enables participants to make recommendations on accessibility as appropriate when they undertake CPTED audits.

The initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus include:

- CARE approved funds to support the following projects relating to physical barriers:

  - o Installation of accessible doors at Talbot College;
  - o Installation of two automatic door openers for the Western Science Building; and
  - o The installation of an automatic door opener for the Social Science Building.

- Various renovation projects took place across Western Libraries' resulting in the removal of physical barriers for Western Libraries' patrons during 2007/08. Specifically:

  - o Business Library: In conjunction with a major renovation project to the library an automatic door was installed to provide a more accessible entrance. In addition, a new Service Desk was constructed to accommodate wheelchair access.

  - o Education Library**:** A reconfigured shelving in the Curriculum Resource Centre provided for wider aisle space to improve access to this collection.

  - o Music Library**:** In conjunction with a major renovation project, the Choral/Band/Orchestral Collection ("CBO"), located in Talbot College 134, was completely re-done. The Service Desk was rebuilt and the room layout redesigned to allow for greater wheelchair mobility (i.e. enough room to turn, making tables and shelves accessible). The desk no longer has a raised counter, allowing students in wheelchairs to be visible. The removal of the counter is also an ergonomic feature as staff members no longer have to reach up and across to hand music to students. The entrance to the CBO has also been made accessible with the installation of an automatic door opener. These changes were funded through the CARE Committee.

- o Ten study carrels along the west wall of the Music Library (TC234) were replaced with smaller desks to allow for increased aisle space (now 37.5 inches).

- o The D.B. Weldon Library: Wall mounted shelving was removed on the Main Floor in the Government Publications area to improve access to the collection. It was found that wheelchair movement was restricted in this area. As such, in order to facilitate free movement and the space to turn easily at the end of an aisle, 45 bays of shelving were removed.

- Service for Students with Disabilities worked with architects, the Department of Physical Plant, Office of the Registrar and Student Services on the floor design and space planning of a new student services building.

- A new accessible stall was installed in the women's washroom at Saugeen-Maitland.

- Housing and Ancillary Services continued to support and provide the necessary facilities to students requiring changes to their accommodations within residence rooms/suites.

- The following departments: Human Resources, Finance, Information Technology, Institutional Planning and Budgeting, Physical Plant and Research Services moved to the fully accessible Support Services Building.

King's University College:
- Renovations were completed in the Alumni Court Residence in August 2008. Automatic door openers were installed at the front entrance, the main floor washroom and student room. A main floor washroom was upgraded and made accessible. Upgrades were also made to the student room including a sound-proof doorway, and lowered shelving units.

Huron University College
- With assistance from the CNIB, Huron University College is investigating appropriate changes to a residence room for use by members of the college with visual impairments. These measures will address fire safety. The college already provides a residence room designed to address accommodation requirements relating to mobility.

Campus Wide:
- Accessibility Maps for the interior of most campus buildings were posted on the accessibility website at http://accessibiltiy.uwo.ca/maps/htm

- The 2008 report on assessment of physical accessibility at Western has been finalized. The report evaluates the accessibility of 12 buildings on campus and represents the third and final report in a series describing the physical accessibility of the campus.

- An ad hoc committee continues to review classroom design and provided input on how to make classrooms more accessible.

- The Department of Physical Plant and the BFAC reviewed architectural plans for a number of buildings, to ensure that buildings would be accessible as possible. BFAC also studied the City of London's Facilities Accessible Design Standards to determine whether these might be appropriate as guidelines for Western.

Accessible Transportation

- An extensive review of the transportation service, with a view to the needs of the student riders, took place during the spring and summer of 2007. In September 2007, a new provider of an accessible van service began at Western. The number of students who used the accessible transportation service increased dramatically over the last two years (391% since 2005/06).[1] In 2007/08 54 students were using the accessible transport service on campus. In 2008, Services for Students with Disabilities ("SSD") reviewed the services provided with the students using the service to ensure quality service and responsiveness to any concerns raised regarding the service.

2. Information and Communications Barriers

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

- WODAC and Equity & Human Rights Services maintained and updated the Accessibility website (http://accessibility.uwo.ca/), which had been launched in September 2007.

- As part of its ongoing mandate Equity & Human Rights Services provided consultations and resources to staff, faculty and students on issues regarding the University's duty to accommodate.

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[1] Annual Report of the Accessibility Fund for Students with Disabilities, Access to Opportunities Fund, Interpreter Fund, and enhanced services Fund for Students with LD.

- Rehabilitation Services continued to offer its assistance to individuals for attaining parking permits for persons with disabilities, creating ergonomically correct workstations and accessible buildings on case by case basis.

- Nine Wednesday Wellness lunch sessions were presented to Western staff and Faculty from October 2007 to June 2008.

- Services for Students with Disabilities ("SSD") initiatives included:
    - An SSD staff member gave a presentation that addressed effective methods for teaching diverse learners at Western's Fall Perspectives on Teaching Conference

    - SSD staff raised awareness concerning the rationale for various accommodations, the University's and Students' responsibilities concerning accommodation, requirements for the documentation of disabilities, assessment practices, services available, and the need for explication for essential course and program requirements through discussions with faculty members, department chairs, Deans, health care professionals, special education personnel in the secondary school system, prospective students and parents.

    - Staff members participated on Western's Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, the University's Barrier Free Access Committee, the Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee, the President's Standing Committee on Employment Equity, and the President's Committee for the Safety of Women on Campus.

    - During 2007/08 year SSD provided numerous services as follows:

Table 1 Number of Students using Services [2]

Service Provided	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Examination administration & invigilation	548	654	668	747
Access Van	7	11	31	54
Alternative format text books	52	48	73	72
Equipment Lending	30	12	n/a	n/a
Interpreter services	4	2	0	0
Real Time Captioning		1	1	1

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[2] Annual Report of the Accessibility Fund for Students with Disabilities, Access to Opportunities Fund, Interpreter Fund, and Enhanced Services Fund for Students with L.D., pg. 8.

Computer Note-taking	11	11	10	14
Learning Skills Services	117	110	114	110
Enhanced Services for students with LD	120	167	215	262
OSAP BSWD Students applying Applications processed	179 253	173 244	155 200	148 191

- Housing and Ancillary Services worked in collaboration with the USC Housing to provide awareness education on barriers on campus. Along with USC housing provided awareness education on barriers on campus.

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:

- Two members of Rehabilitation Services have received provisional Mental Health First Aid Canada instructor certification.
- Rehabilitation Services and Staff Relations were involved in receiving certification for Mental Health First Aid.
- Two pilot sessions entitled 'Mental Health Education for Leaders and Supervisors in the Workplace' were launched. This course will improve knowledge of mental health issues at Western including how to support employees and how to access resources.
- Rehabilitation Services partnered with Family Services of Thames Valley to present "Supporting a Mentally Healthy Workplace" at the summer Academic Leaders' Conference.
- Housing and Equity & Human Rights Services supported the Professional and Managerial Association's (PMA) lunch and learn series on Mental Health.
- SSD staff coordinated with staff from Student Health Services to provide psychological assessment, medical and counseling support for students with attention deficit disorders. SSD worked with counselors in Student

Health Services as well as Student Development Service's Psychological Services and Learning Skills in an effort to coordinate students' academic accommodation with treatment and skill development.

4. Technological Barriers

Efforts to remove technological barriers on campus are on-going and the removals of such barriers are priorities for various departments.   Initiatives from the past year include:

- Services for Students with Disabilities purchased 9 large flat screen computer monitors and two ergonomic keyboards.

- Western Libraries: The D.B. Weldon Library, Art & Music Library received Smart view CCTV systems and Learning Opportunities Lab workstations. These were funded by the CARE.

- CARE approved the purchase of 10 Note taker and accommodated exam laptops.

- Information Technology Services ("ITS"), specifically through the Senate Subcommittee on Information Technology ("SUIT"), continues its efforts to ensure all of Western's official departmental websites meet barrier-free web accessibility standards, as set out by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Access Initiative (WAI).

- King's University College introduced a new accommodated room in which the computer stations were equipped with speech recognition software, text to voice software, print magnification software, and learning strategy software.

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 include:

- A revised Employment Equity guide was completed for use by those responsible for faculty hiring and promotion, which would include considerations for hiring and promoting persons with disabilities.
- Finalization of WODAC's terms of reference.
- Development of a task force reporting to WODAC to review the development of the Customer Service Standards required under the Ontarians with AODA

- Outreach
  - o With funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, SSD further developed and delivered a summer program designed to facilitate the transition from high school to university for students who have learning disabilities

Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2008-2009

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**
- In collaboration with Physical Plant, SSD designed a new accessible exam facility, which is expected to be completed in the fall of 2010.

- Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to support and provide the necessary facilities to students requiring changes to their living accommodations within residence rooms and suites.

- WODAC, Physical Plant and SSD will review the Physical Accessibility Report which evaluates the physical accessibility of 12 buildings on campus and includes recommendations.

- CPTED Training will continue in 2008/09 for more members of the community to promote a safe environment.

- To work with grounds persons , to raise the issue of snow removal on campus to help community members understand the great barrier and hazard that snow is for persons with mobility issues.

- Update the accessibility website floor maps indicating the accessible routes through the interior of new building on campus as they become available.

- The Department of Physical Plant is currently involved with major capital renovation projects and will be addressing physical/architectural barriers as part of the planned renovations for the following buildings: Talbot Theatre, Physics & Astronomy, Stevenson Lawson Building and the UCC.

King's University College:

- King's University College will undertake an accessibility audit of the college, which will be completed and reviewed to establish priorities and solutions.

- The college expects to build a new accommodated exam room with ten stations in the new academic building located on Epworth Street.

2. Information and Communications Barriers

- In 2008/09 Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to provide education to students on barriers on campus.

- To improve the visibility of the position of Commissioner for Graduate Students with Disabilities, thereby improving the frequency of communication between the Commissioner and graduate students to encourage input from the graduate student population.

- To improve the visibility of the Accessibility at Western web page by linking it to the Services for Students with Disabilities web page.

- To include information on accessibility on the website for Western's Residences (including London Hall, Western's graduate student residence).

- A review of the BFAC role is planned for 2009.

- Western Libraries' will coordinate 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.

3. Attitudinal Barriers

- Continue to improve understanding and awareness of mental health issues across campus, especially among managers and supervisors, through further education and training initiatives. A workshop on Mental Health Issues is planned for Leaders and Managers.

- Continue to develop and present various educational programs across campus (for example, a duty to accommodate workshop for staff, faculty and students).

- Rollout of Mental Health First Aid Canada certification. Sessions planned for October 08, Feb/May 09.

- Continuation and further development of the Musculoskeletal Program is planned.

- Similar programs as offered in 2007/08 in collaboration with USC are planned for 08/09 and will include mental health workshops.

- Further education on mental health workshops are planned by Housing and Ancillary Services for students in residences.

- SSD will further develop its work in the secondary school system in London and Toronto to assist students with the transition to University.

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.

- Services for Students with Disabilities will be investigating the use of remote real-time captioning and its ability to pick-up classroom discussions.

5. Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

- Consider a review of the existing policy on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.

- Develop a customer service policy, procedures and processes as per the requirements of the accessibility standard for customer service as required under the AODA.

- Human Resources will continue its e-recruitment and outreach efforts to recruit persons with disabilities to Western's workforce.

6. Accessibility Standards

- The University will be developing policies, practices, and processes to ensure compliance with customer service accessibility standards under the AODA. This work will include the development and implementation of training for members of the University community who provide customer service.

- The University will consider whether there are best practice guidelines that should be adopted by Western for the building and renovation of existing buildings on campus.

Review and Monitoring Process

WODAC continues to take an active role in identifying and addressing barriers on Western's campus. The committee will continue to focus on finding a reasonable and timely resolution to accessibility concerns. In the coming year, WODAC will be playing an important role in the development of University programs and policies needed to meet the new accessibility standards. The committee will work towards establishing strong partnerships with its campus partners to continue to address accessibility issues.

Appendix A

Members of WODAC

The following members of the University community served as members of WODAC between September 2007 and August 2008:

Functional/Administrative Group Members (one representative each):

Department	Committee Member	Contact Information
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett (Chair)	(519) 661-2111 x83334
	Terri Tomchick- Condon	(519) 661-2111 x81428
	Andrea Magahey	(519) 661-2111 x83334
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence	(519) 661-2111 x85978
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien	(519) 661-2111 x8426
Information Technology Services	Merran Neville	(519) 661-3976 x83976
Office of the Ombudsperson	Adrienne Clarke	(519) 661-3573 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) 661-2147 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)	Kirstin Hayes	
University Students' Council	Kelly Wilson	
Student Member-at-large	Vacant	
Student Member-at-large	Jeff Preston	
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson	(519) 661-2111 x84841
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Vacant	