



The University of Western Ontario's
Accessibility Plan

September 2011 to August 2012

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

30 September 2011

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ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Western Ontario

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. The Act mandates that every university prepare an annual accessibility plan.

Despite the passage of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the requirements under the Act, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force. As of March 2010, the University of Western Ontario has reported on its compliance with the customer service standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“AODA”). To view Western’s compliance report under the under the AODA’s Customer Service Standard, please see:
<http://accessibility.uwo.ca/docs/AODAReporMar2010.pdf>

The following accessibility plan is prepared in accordance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

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 2010 (available at <http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/reports.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 2010-2011

Physical and Architectural Barriers

A number of departments and/or groups are committed to the removal of physical and architectural barriers at Western. Initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus include:

- The Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee ("CARE"), chaired by the University Students' Council, continues to allot funding, made available annually through Facilities Management (formerly known as "Physical Plant"), to address barriers on campus.
- Western's Facilities Management Division plays a large role in addressing physical barriers and is committed to addressing physical barriers on campus. The department provides funds to 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 Facilities Management.

- 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 initiatives to remove physical and architectural barriers across campus include the following:

- As part of a \$2 million dollar project to eliminate physical barriers that began in 2010, Facilities Management installed new detectable warning surfaces during 2010-2011 at road crossings and other campus locations to assist those who have visual impairments.
- The installation of a barrier-free washroom in Elborn College by Facilities Management. This project was supported, in part, through funds contributed by the 2010 Class of the Occupational Therapy Program at Western.
- Additional barrier-free ramps, sidewalks and curbs across campus.
- Contrast strips were added to exterior stair nosings at various locations across campus.
- At the John & Dotsa Bitove Family Law Library, an electric powered, variable height table was installed as a public workspace equipped with a computer. The table can be raised or lowered in seconds at the press of a button to facilitate better access for library patrons who use wheelchairs. Western Law generously purchased the table for the Law Library.
- The Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for approximately 315 students who had chronic illnesses or mobility impairments. These accommodations and services removed or significantly diminished physical barriers that these students would have encountered at the University. Most of these students used exam accommodations that allowed them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., additional time, word processors, and/or voice recognition software to prepare answers to exam questions).
- The University Students' Council's CARE Committee provided funding for accessible transportation during orientation week.
- During the 2010-2011 academic year sixty-one students used accessible campus transportation provided by SSD.

- Housing and Ancillary Services continued to support and provide the necessary facilities for students with disabilities living within Western's Residence System. Additionally, power operated door openers were installed at the Housing Office, at the Floor Lounge of the Essex Hall Residence, as well as at the interior front entrance of the Saugeen-Maitland Hall Residence.
- Western's Senior Ergonomic Specialist and Health & Safety's Facility Safety Coordinator jointly delivered the ongoing Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program. The MSD Prevention Program was delivered to Hospitality Services and Facilities Management (Trades Services). The aim of this program is to provide the training and tools to all workers so that MSDs (injuries to muscles, tendon, ligament, nerves, discs, etc.) can be prevented.
- Western's Ergonomic Specialists continued to provide a variety of services including office ergonomic assessments, risk assessments, job coaching, physical demands reports, job matching and education sessions. They worked with university departments to provide recommendations and develop solutions in response to safety hazards and to help focus on prevention opportunities.
- Rehabilitation Services continued to offer its assistance to individuals for attaining parking permits for persons with disabilities and improving the accessibility of buildings on a case by case basis.



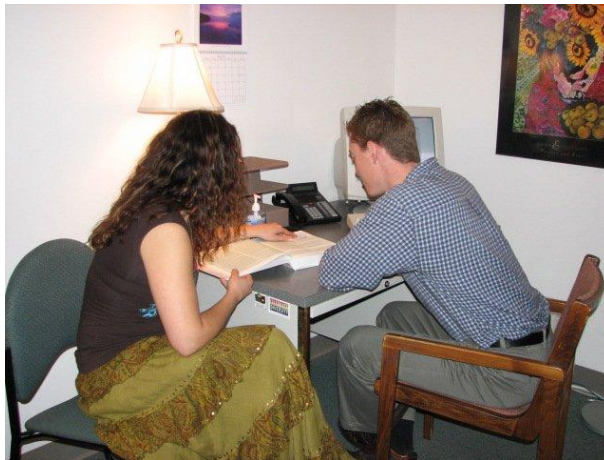
Photo of new detectable warning surface at road crossing. Courtesy of Paul Mayne, Western News

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 at Western website (<http://accessibility.uwo.ca/>).
- 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.
- Through the Accessibility at Western website, Western welcomed feedback on accessibility issues. Between September 2010 and August 2011, seventy accessibility-related inquiries were received. Rehabilitation Services reviewed all feedback (received either by phone or email) and triaged all questions or concerns to the appropriate individual or service provider at Western for follow up.
- Services for Students with Disabilities partnered with a psychologist in private practice to provide a social skills training group for students with Asperger's Syndrome.
- The Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for 1,473 students with disabilities in 2010-2011. Although some accommodations and services removed physical and other barriers, most, if not all, directly or indirectly facilitated access to information and assisted students with communication. For example, exam accommodations such as extra time, text or screen reading software, enlarged print, or Braille allowed students to access information during exams. Similarly, extra time and computers for word processing allowed students to communicate their responses to exam questions.
- SSD helped provide other accommodations and services that facilitated students' access to information for the purpose of learning, writing papers, and completing other assignments. Access to information shared in classes was provided through real-time captioning and/or computerized note-taking for 33 students who were deaf or hard of hearing. Other students used assistive technology on campus to access and work with information. SSD's assistive technologist provided training and other technological support for 185 of these students. SSD arranged for 159 students to use alternative format text (e.g., digital & Braille). SSD's learning strategist provided instruction regarding effective ways with which to work with information for 142 students who have learning disabilities.

- Other services in the Student Development Centre (Writing Support Centre and Learning Skills Services) continued to help students with disabilities develop skills with which to communicate in writing and learn course material.
- Western Libraries continued to provide alternative text formats for library materials on an as needed basis. Between September 2010 and April 2011, the library converted 41 documents for library patrons requiring this service. Western Libraries continued to provide information about accessibility at all library locations on its website: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/accessibility>



*Services include assistance with different learning strategies.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Sandi Spaulding*

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:

- The Mental Health First Aid Canada and Mental Health at Western for Leaders & Supervisors programs were available again this year. The aim of MHFA Canada is to improve the mental health knowledge of individuals who take the course. The objective of Mental Health at Western is to improve knowledge of mental health issues at Western including how to support employees and how to access resources. To date, 266 participants have been trained in Mental Health First Aid Canada and 143 Leaders & Supervisors have been trained through the Mental Health at Western

Program. In addition, training specifically designed for Social Science, UWOSA members and Engineering has been delivered.

- Through the assistance of Services for Students with Disabilities, appropriate accommodation and support for students who have disabilities has allowed them to demonstrate their ability to engage, accomplish, and succeed at university. This demonstration has changed attitudes about people's limitations that were held by some faculty and staff.
- In keeping with the requirements of the AODA Customer Service Standard, Western continued to offer online accessibility-related training particularly for new members and those who had not attended in-person training offered in 2009-2010. There are two versions of Western's online AODA Customer Service Training and each is targeted to the role of the individual in the organization. *Accessibility in Service* is intended for Academic and Administrative Leaders, staff members, student volunteers, and associated persons. *Accessibility in Teaching* is intended for Faculty, Graduate Teaching Assistants, Archivists and Librarians.
- Housing mandated suicide first response and suicide intervention courses for all residence staff and managers in the form of two courses called Safe Talk and ASIST. The goal is to enable housing staff to identify those who may be having thoughts of suicide and to encourage open, direct and honest talk about suicide to increase the number of those seeking assistance.
- Housing and Ancillary Services continued to educate Orientation Week Coordinators about the need to accommodate students with disabilities to ensure that orientation-related activities are inclusive.
- The University Students' Council implemented the Accessibility Ambassador Program to improve accessibility during Orientation Week. *Accessibility Ambassador's* were on-call for any student with a disability or any soph teams that had questions about how they could make their programming more accessible.

Technological Barriers

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

- Information Technology Services ("ITS") continued its efforts to ensure all of Western's official websites meet are accessible according to standards approved by ITS.

- Information Technology Services (“ITS”) continued to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for adaptive technology to assist members of the community.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) continued to provide assistive technology facilities in the Western Student Services Building and the D. B. Weldon Library. The University also provided assistive technology in various locations in Western’s libraries. This technology removed barriers that students would have encountered if they had tried to use other computers on campus.
- SSD’s assistive technologist provided training and other technological support for 185 students.
- Many students registered with SSD benefitted from technology-related exam accommodations that allowed them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., word processors and/or voice recognition software to prepare answers to exam questions).

4. 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. Pursuant to obligations set out in the AODA, it is anticipated that many policies and practices 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:

- Many university departments and units have added a link to Western’s Accessibility website (www.accessibility.uwo.ca) from their departmental homepages. In addition, many have included departmental-specific information about accessibility to their websites.
- Access to computer equipped study rooms (sponsored by Services for Students with Disabilities) in Weldon Library has been greatly expanded with key checkout available from the Service Desk seven days a week, day and evening hours. Previously these rooms were only available five days a week during regular business hours (i.e. 9 am to 5 pm).

- Services for Students with Disabilities advised many departments at Western regarding practices that would enhance accessibility.
- Representatives from Services for Students with Disabilities participated on university committees in order to help ensure that the committees' activities did not create barriers to accessibility and to facilitate the removal of such barriers whenever possible.
- A representative from Services for Students with Disabilities participated in decisions regarding admission to most undergraduate programs for applicants who had requested special consideration for health or disability related reasons.

Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2011-2012

Under the AODA, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* came into effect on July 1, 2011. The regulation sets out the requirements for three areas: transportation, employment and information & technology. Over the coming year, Western will continue to focus on meeting the requirements of the AODA. Additionally, Western is monitoring the development of the *Built Environment Standard* under the AODA and will implement changes and/or project teams as necessary.

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

Physical and Architectural Barriers

- Human Resources (Rehabilitation Services and Health & Safety) will continue the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program.
- Facilities Management will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers as part of renovations and/or upgrading:
 - Physics & Astronomy Renovations (ongoing)
 - Stevenson Lawson Renovations (ongoing)
 - widening existing barrier-free ramps and retrofitting existing entrances at various campus locations
 - ensuring further sidewalk and curb accessibility
 - including markings and tactile strips at various pedestrian crossings locations
 - adding Contrast strips to exterior stair nosings at various locations
 - providing barrier-free access reports for various buildings on campus
 - installing tactile and Braille room signage throughout Elborn College, with financial support provided by the 2011 Class of the Occupational Therapy Program at Western.

- 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 (examples of planned changes include installation of additional grab bars, 'Superpole' mobility device, and low step shower stall).
- Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to improve the accessibility of Residence Buildings on campus. Planned changes include installing four power operated door openers in the Perth Hall Residence. Additionally, contrast strips will be added to exterior stair nosings of the North and South entrance of the Elgin Hall Residence.
- The Office of the Ombudsperson has recommended that floor maps located beside elevators be lowered to ensure that they are more easily visible to campus members who use wheelchairs and to those with visual impairments.
- Western Libraries will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers within the libraries on campus:
 - Various library locations continue to monitor their physical environments and recommend changes to their configurations to improve accessibility.
 - The Archives and Research Collections Centre is seeking cost estimates for installing a power operated door opener to the entrance of the facility.
 - The Education Library is under-going a review of its Service Desk in an effort to determine what work would be required to make the space accessible.
 - The Music Library will be under-going extensive renovations as part of the plan to renovate Talbot College and accessibility of the facility will be taken into account as part of the renovation.



*Accessible ramp at the University Community Centre
Photo courtesy of Terri Tomchick-Condon*

Information and Communications Barriers

- The Western Wellness Series, offered through Rehabilitation Services, will continue.
- Based on its success in 2010-11, Services for Students with Disabilities will continue to partner with a psychologist in private practice, to provide a social skills training group for students with Asperger's Syndrome during the 2011-12 academic year.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) will continue to work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and representatives from other disability services offices in Ontario to develop a pilot project for alternative format text. The project consists of a repository for digital text books which will facilitate the sharing of these texts among universities and colleges. Western used the new system during 2010-2011 and will continue to use it in 2011-2012 as it is developed further. This system has the potential to significantly improve the efficiency with which alternative format text is provided for students with disabilities. Such improvements are especially important in light of the 121% increase in number of Western students who have requested alternative format text over the last four years.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) continues to partner with a psychologist in private practice in London to provide Cogmed training to Western students whose disabilities include weaknesses in attention and working memory.
- Learning Skills and Writing Support Centre have added new staff, writing tutors, workshops and on-line information. The Learning Help Centre will be opening soon to offer students drop-in assistance with all of their learning needs.

Attitudinal Barriers

- Mental Health First Aid Canada and Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors training will be offered in October and November of 2011.
- Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to work with campus partners to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are accommodated within the Residence System, in order to provide a positive campus experience for these students.
- Services for Students with Disabilities will maintain its work with Career Services and a community employer to facilitate the transition to employment for Western students who have disabilities
- With funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Services for Students with Disabilities will continue to deliver a summer program which is designed to facilitate the transition from high school to university for students who have learning disabilities.



*Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all who study, work at or visit our campus.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Sandi Spaulding*

- Due to the success of the Accessibility Ambassadors Program, the University Students' Council will retain and expand this program for the 2011-2012 academic year.
- Western has improved its efforts to support mental health and to increase services available on campus. Here are some of the initiatives put in place to help de-stigmatize mental illness:
 - Housing is distributing buttons and cards to all incoming first-year students, staff and sophs (a total of 6,500 people) as part of a campaign entitled "How are you?... No, really, how are you?". The key message of this campaign is to look out for each other and check in when you notice that someone may be struggling.
 - Residence staff and sophs (a total of 950 people) have been trained on active listening, initiating meaningful conversations and connecting to campus resources. Additionally, a button campaign, "Ask, Listen, Connect" has been launched for residence staff and sophs to provide easy reminders to follow in discussions with students who may be struggling with mental health related issues.
 - Student Health Services includes a dedicated mental health section on the Student Health Services website and their publication 'Student Health 101' contains monthly articles on mental health.

Technological Barriers

- Information and Technology Services (ITS) continues to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for adaptive technology to assist members of the community.

- Information Technology Services (ITS), specifically through the Senate Subcommittee on Information Technology (SUIT), continues its efforts to ensure all Western's official departmental websites meet barrier-free web accessibility according to standards approved by ITS.
- A project is underway to replace Western's current on-line Learning Management System (LMS) – WebCT. The new product, Sakai, will be implemented in 2012. The AODA accessibility standards were included in the selection criteria for the new product and ITS ensured that Sakai met the standards.
- Western Libraries is investigating the purchase and installation of Kurzweil software for public library computers; currently Kurzweil is only available on restricted access computers in the Weldon Library.

Barriers Created by Policies or Practices

- Starting in the 2011-2012 academic year, Student Health Services will be implementing changes to counselling and intake procedures to substantially decrease its waiting list for those experiencing urgent mental health concerns. To further improve the services offered, SHS has hired a full-time psychiatrist, as well as a new intake/crisis social worker who was hired to shorten wait times and provide greater availability on a daily basis for students needing assistance.
- The University Students' Council will be working to improve event planning procedures and clubs training with respect to accessibility issues. The USC Accessibility Commissioner will now be available for all student organizations and clubs with questions about making their events more accessible. Also, as part of the USC club's training, club executives will be encouraged to think about mobility issues and to confirm accessibility of venues before confirming events.
- Development of any new policies, procedures and processes required under the accessibility standards related to the AODA, 2005.
- Western has committed to a new Diversity and Inclusion Plan, and as part of the plan, is committed to:
 - reviewing Western's guidelines and services related to accommodation.
 - working to develop and foster positive dialogue about attitudes and stereotypes regarding accessibility and accommodation of persons with disabilities. Efforts will be focused on enhancing the understanding of needs, the process for accommodation and how accommodations are beneficial to the organization.

Review and Monitoring Process

WODAC's role is to assist 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. The committee will work towards establishing strong partnerships with its campus partners to continue to address accessibility issues.

Appendix

Members of WODAC September 2010 to August 2011

WODAC members may be reached via email to accessibility@uwo.ca.

Department	Committee Member
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett (Chair) Terri Tomchick- Condon
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien Mark Shannon
Information Technology Services	Merran Neville
Office of the Ombudsperson	Jennifer Meister
Physical Plant Department	Mike McLean
Rehabilitation Services	Barbara Froats
Services for Students with Disabilities	Deborah Stuart
Western Libraries	Jennifer Robinson
Western Faculty	Lisa Klinger
King's University College	Joan Aldis
Brescia University College	<i>Vacant</i>
Huron University College	Nina Reid-Maroney
Society for Graduate Students (SOGS)	Chelsea Mohler
University Students' Council *	Megan Khokher
Student Member-at-large	
Student Member-at-large	Emma Arenson
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	<i>Vacant</i>