

Western University's  
**Accessibility Plan**

September 2013 to August 2014

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



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## Introduction

In December 2001, Ontario passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (the “ODA”). The purpose of the ODA 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 ODA mandates that every university prepare an annual accessibility plan.

Despite the passage of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, (the “AODA”) the requirements under the ODA, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force. To view Western University’s compliance reporting under the AODA, please see: <http://accessibility.uwo.ca/resources/reports.html>

**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 2012 (available at <http://accessibility.uwo.ca/resources/reports.html>).

## Western's Commitment to Accessibility Planning

As is stated in the University's *Accessibility at Western* policy:

The University of Western Ontario is committed to recognizing the dignity and independence of all staff, students, faculty and visitors and seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities have genuine, open and unhindered access to University goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

Western University has been committed to accessibility planning for many years. In particular, we are committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons with disabilities studying, visiting and working at Western. As part of this commitment, there are a variety of services, groups and committees on campus devoted to promoting accessibility and to ensuring that individuals have equitable access to services and facilities. Western actively works towards meeting its obligations under legislation, as well as towards 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 accessibility plans; and
- The provision of quality services to persons with disabilities.

## Barrier-Removal Initiatives in 2012-2013

### **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:

- All physical and architectural accessibility enhancements on campus are coordinated through Western's Facilities Management Division. 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.

- During 2012-13, physical/architectural barriers were addressed as part of the renovations completed on the Kresge Building (vestibule and corridor doors), Molecular Biology Building (corridor doors), Talbot College (exit, corridor and universal barrier free washroom), Thompson Engineering Building (main floor washrooms) and Althouse College (corridor doors).
- As part of a \$2 million dollar project to eliminate physical barriers that began in 2010, Facilities Management installed new detectable warning surfaces during 2012-2013 at road crossings and other campus locations to assist those who have visual impairments.
- Additional barrier-free ramps, sidewalks and curbs were installed across campus.
- Installations of barrier free door operators and hold-open devices at various locations across campus.
- The Campus Accessibility Review and Enhancement Committee (“CARE”), chaired by the University Students’ Council, continues to allot a portion of funding to address specific barriers on campus.
- The Student Development Centre’s Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) facilitated academic accommodation and provided related services for approximately 368 students who had chronic illnesses and/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 provided funding for accessible transportation during orientation week.
- During the 2012-2013 academic year eighty-eight 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. In addition, the following accessibility initiatives were undertaken:
  - Western’s newest residence, Ontario Hall, was built to be accessible.
  - 12 new barrier free units have been created within Ontario Hall.
  - The Residence Programming office, a resource centre for 350 residence staff, sophs and Council members, was relocated to Ontario Hall to ensure that this resource is accessible for all students.

- Housing's Administrative Office was also relocated to Ontario Hall to allow for accessibility. Additionally, the front desk and all individual staff workspaces incorporate accessibility features.
- A second barrier free apartment, which includes a wheel-in shower, was created at Platt's Lane Estates.
- During 2013, the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Program was delivered to Hospitality Services, Facilities Management (Trades Services and Caretaking), Libraries and Animal Care and Veterinary Services. The aim of this program is to create awareness of MSDs and the hazards associated with them and to address potential MSDs through recognition, assessment and implementation of controls. Additionally, this process creates value for Ergonomic Services, as work areas that require further ergonomic assessment are clearly highlighted and can be acted upon.
- Western's Ergonomic Specialists continued to provide a variety of services including office ergonomic assessments, risk assessments, job coaching, job demands descriptions (JDD), job matching and education sessions. This service is available to all university departments in order to provide recommendations to promote safety and well-being.
- 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.
- Western Libraries made changes to reconfigure the space at the Law Library (a multi-year project) and also upgraded public areas in the library, in keeping with accessibility requirements.



*Photo of 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:

- Western's Accessibility at Western website (<http://accessibility.uwo.ca/>) was re-launched in 2013 using Western's most recent web standards.
- 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 2012 and August 2013, thirty-seven 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.
- The Student Development Centre's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) provided services for 1735 students with disabilities in 2012-2013. Most, if not all, of these services facilitated access to information and assisted students with communication. These services included exam accommodations (e.g. extra time, text & screen reading software, digital & Braille exams, computers for word processing), which allowed students to access information and communicate their answers during exams. Over 1100 students wrote exams with accommodation.
- SSD provided access to information shared in class through real-time captioning, sign language interpretation, and/or computer note-taking for 31 students who were deaf or hard of hearing. They arranged alternative format textbooks (e.g., digital & Braille) for 168 students. SSD provided training in the use of assistive technology with which to access information for 184 students. SSD also provided learning strategy instruction for 164 students with learning disabilities.
- The Western Wellness Series continued with a Wellness Fair held in the Social Sciences Building on February 21, 2013 with 40 individuals attending the event. This was offered in conjunction with the Faculty/Staff Leader Conference. Display tables were set up with representatives from Rehabilitation Services, Human Resources - Benefits, Ergonomic Services, Workplace Health Services, Family Services Employee Assistance Plan (EAP), Hospitality Services, Campus Recreation and Canadian Centre for Aging and Activity.
- Western Libraries continued to provide alternative text formats for library materials on an as needed basis. Between September 2012 and August 2013, the library converted 162 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>

- All six Western Libraries library locations have Kurzweil 3000 and Zoomtext 10 software for use on public library computers.



*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 attitudinal barriers include:

- The Mental Health at Western website continues to be updated and maintained. It has helped to increase awareness about mental health needs. This website directs students, faculty, staff, parents and families to mental health services and resources available at Western. The website is located at: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>
- The Mental Health First Aid Canada (MHFA) program was available again this year. The aim of MHFA Canada is to improve the mental health knowledge of individuals who take the course. Eight courses of MHFA Canada were provided to 125 participants in 2012-2013, bringing the total number of individuals trained since 2008 to 454. In addition, training was specifically designed and delivered for Western's Student Emergency Response Team (SERT) and the Department of Physics and Astronomy.



- The Mental Health at Western for Leaders & Supervisors program continued to be offered on campus. 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. Since the beginning of the program, 184 Leaders and Supervisors have received this training, including the 23 participants who were trained in two follow-up sessions during 2012-2013.
- A new Mental Health Interactive Learning Module was launched in October, 2013. Over 1200 faculty/staff and over 600 students have completed the training. The module was co-developed by Learning and Development and Student Health Services. Completion of the module is recorded on participants' Western training records and participants can also print a certificate of completion for their own records.
- Rehabilitation Services and Student Health Services delivered "Staff, Faculty and Student Mental Health: The Leader's Role" as part of Western's BASICS (Building Administrative Skills Through Innovation, Collegiality and Strategy) program.
- In November 2013, Western's Leaders' Forum featured mental health advocate Stéphane Grenier, a retired member of the Canadian Military. Grenier spoke about the mental health in the workplace and what leaders and colleagues can do to create a supportive environment. Following his talk, Grenier was joined for a panel discussion by Western members, Rebecca Crichton, Rehabilitation Team Leader from Human Resources and Kevin Wamsley, Associate Dean, Health Sciences.
- A session entitled 'Mental Health Promotion and Intervention' was offered at the 2013 Academic Leaders Summer Conference by Rehabilitation Services, Student Health Services and the Student Case Manager.
- Rehabilitation Services provided a session to Administrative Officers and Directors of the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry on their services, including supports, resources and Western's transitional accommodation process.
- Together with the Student Case Manager, Rehabilitation Services provided a session entitled 'Mental Health at Western' to the Student Leaders of the Student Success Centre as part of their orientation program.
- Through assistance from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), appropriate accommodation and support for students who have disabilities has allowed them to demonstrate their ability to engage, accomplish, and succeed at university. In doing so, this has helped to eliminate attitudinal barriers on campus.
- In keeping with the requirements of the AODA Customer Service Standard, Western continued to offer online accessibility-related training, particularly for new members. 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 offers some key initiatives to help de-stigmatize mental illness. Suicide first response and suicide intervention courses continued to be mandated 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. A campaign entitled “How are you?...No, really, how are you?” was offered in 2012-2013 with the key message to look out for each other and check in when you notice that someone may be struggling. Additionally, residence staff and sophs (a total of 950 people) have been trained on active listening, initiating meaningful conversations and connecting to campus resources.
- 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.
- SSD worked with Western’s Faculty of Health Sciences to organize a conference entitled *Embracing Diversity: Supporting Students with Mental Health Challenges in Professional Practice*. Representatives from SSD also delivered a keynote presentation, as well as an afternoon presentation and discussion session. This conference was provided for clinical instructors in South Western Ontario who supervise practicum students from Western’s Schools of Nursing, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Communication Sciences and Disorders. The conference addressed practices for supporting students who encounter challenges during their practicum training because of mental health disabilities. One purpose of this conference was to address attitudinal barriers and provide information that would help clinical instructors interpret problematic behaviour and respond to students in a sensitive and constructive manner.

### **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 are accessible according to standards approved by ITS and implemented by the Department of Communications and Public Affairs through the Western template.

- Information Technology Services (“ITS”) continued to respond on an as-needed basis to requests for accessible content on websites where adaptive technology is being used by members of the Western community. Such websites include official University websites and course websites on OWL.
- Western’s Learning Management System (LMS), referred to as OWL, meets accessibility standards. In those cases where improved accessibility is needed support has been provided by the ITS Instructional Support Team.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) continued to provide assistive technology in its facilities at 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.
- 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).
- Western Libraries offers Kurzweil 3000 and Zoomtext 10 software for use on the public library computers at all six library locations. Kurzweil 3000 is suitable for users with perceptual disabilities, while Zoomtext 10 is for use by patrons with visual disabilities.

#### **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:

- Housing ensured that accessibility was a key consideration in offering their Residence Staff Training during 2012-2013.

- SSD staff members participated in outreach to London community organizations by delivering presentations to: students with hearing loss in the London District Catholic School Board, individuals with acquired brain injury and their families at Parkwood Hospital and remote sites through the Ontario Telemedicine Network, as well as to individuals with learning disabilities at the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's London Region Office. The purpose of this outreach was to facilitate the transition to university by encouraging efficient and early use of services.
- An SSD staff member participated in the Council of Ontario University's development of a Resource Kit for Faculty by arranging for herself and a student with whom she works to be interviewed, while video recorded, about services that were helpful to the student. One purpose of this project is to provide faculty members with information concerning effective methods for teaching and supporting students with disabilities, especially mental health disabilities. This resource may help to remove attitudinal and other kinds of barriers that students encounter.
- SSD formed new partnerships with two psychologists and a psychological associate in London for the purpose of referring students who require assessments. This new arrangement and improved processes resulted in more timely assessments for students.
- Services for Students with Disabilities advised many departments at Western regarding practices that would enhance accessibility.
- Equity & Human Rights Services continued to provide advice to Academic and Administrative leaders on best practices with regards to Western's Duty to Accommodate, as it pertains to disability and the Human Rights Code.
- Representatives 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.
- SSD worked with representatives from TD Bank and Western's Career Services to organize a novel networking session for students with disabilities and TD employers. This event facilitated subsequent interviewing and hiring of individuals with disabilities. Initiatives such as this event are responses to systemic barriers that perpetuate the underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

## **Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2013-2014**

Over the coming year, Western will continue to focus on meeting the requirements of the AODA. 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. During 2014, it is anticipated that the program will be delivered to Information Technology Services, Facilities Management (Caretaking Services and Trades), Western Libraries and Hospitality Services.
- Facilities Management Major Capital Renovation Projects will include renovations and an addition to the Music Building, which will address accessibility.
- Facilities Management will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers as part of renovations and/or upgrading at various campus locations:
  - Installing barrier-free ramps
  - ensuring further sidewalk and curb accessibility
  - pedestrian crossing including markings and tactile strips
  - installation of barrier free door operators and hold-open devices
  - barrier free washroom upgrades
  - removal of doors in public corridors (where appropriate)
- 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.
- Western Libraries will be undertaking the following projects that will address physical/architectural barriers within the libraries on campus:
  - Renovation plans for the Ground and Lower Ground floors, including collaborative learning zone in the Taylor Library as well as those in the Law Library have been developed to meet accessibility needs for users within these spaces.
  - Accessibility has been taken into account in the planning and design of Western's newest library located in the newly constructed business school building. The library will open in its new location in the fall of 2013.
  - Weldon Library has been under-going renovations as part of the plan to create the new Map and Data Centre and accessibility of the facility has been taken into account as part of the renovation. The new Map and Data Centre will be open to community members in the fall of 2013.



*Accessible ramp at the University Community Centre*

### **Information and Communications Barriers**

- The Western Wellness Series, offered through Rehabilitation Services, will continue.
- Western Libraries will continue to provide alternative text formats for library materials on an as needed basis.

### **Attitudinal Barriers**

- Starting early in 2014, Mental Health First Aid Canada Basic Training is being offered to both the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) and the Student Emergency Response Team (SERT). Additional training sessions will be offered in February and April of 2014.
- Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors training is ongoing and will be offered again in June 2014.
- Western will be offering its annual Wellness Fair. This will be offered in conjunction with the Western's Staff and Leader's Conference in February of 2014.
- Rehabilitation Services, in partnership with Student Health Services, will be delivering "Staff, Faculty and Student Mental Health: Leader's Role" training through the BASICS (Building Administrative Skills through Innovation, Collegiality and Strategy) Program in early 2014.

- Rehabilitation Services will be offering a Mental Health First Aid Canada Youth training session for the first time in May, 2014. This is a new 14-hour certification course focuses on the unique aspects of mental health in youth ages 12-24.
- 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.
- With funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Services for Students with Disabilities will 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*

### **Technological Barriers**

- Information and Technology Services (ITS) continues to respond on an as-needed basis to assist with making accessible content for users of adaptive technology.
- ITS continues to work with the community to ensure that the learning management system (OWL) and content placed there by instructors is accessible.
- Information Technology Services, 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.

- The Office of the Ombudsperson will be creating a new website in 2014 and will ensure that its design complies with accessibility guidelines.

### **Barriers Created by Policies or Practices**

- Services for Students with Disabilities is working with the Web and IT Team to develop functionality that will allow SSD to schedule note-takers for students with hearing impairments and to respond efficiently to changes in students' course registration at the beginning of each term. This scheduling function will help to minimize disruptions in access to classroom information that follows students' course changes during Add/Drop.
- Housing will ensure the accessibility of their Residence Staff Training during 2013-2014 by offering this training at London Hall and the UCC.
- Western will continue with the development of any new policies, procedures and processes required under the accessibility standards related to the AODA, 2005.

### **Review and Monitoring Process**

The University will continue to comply with all applicable Federal, Provincial and Municipal legislation with respect to accessibility and will implement the standards specified under the AODA. Western is committed to actively identifying and addressing barriers on our campus. As part of this commitment, there are a variety of services, groups and committees on campus devoted to accessibility and to ensuring that individuals have equitable access to services and facilities. Through the establishment of strong partnerships among campus partners, we will review and monitor accessibility on Western's campus. As a community devoted to accessibility, we will continue to work together to find reasonable and timely resolution to accessibility concerns.



## Appendix

### Report Contributors *September 2012 to August 2013*

Department	Contributors
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett Terri Tomchick- Condon
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