



The University of Western Ontario's  
**Accessibility Plan**

September 2009 to August 2010

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

30 September 2009

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## 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 former Act, specifically in reference to the preparation of this report, remain in force. As of March 2010, the University of Western Ontario will report on customer service standard 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”).

## 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 2008 (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 2008-2009

### **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 Physical Plant and Capital Planning Services (“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.
- 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 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 Physical Plant in reviewing the accessibility of new and renovated buildings and recommended that Western adopt the City of London’s Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) for use as a guideline at Western.

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

- Accessibility Maps were revised: <http://accessibility.uwo.ca/maps/htm>

- CARE approved funds to support the following projects relating to physical barriers:
  - Installation of barrier-free door operators at Althouse College (TA102) and the North Campus Building (TA210)
  - Review of primary pathways on campus to ensure they are barrier-free (on-going)
- Housing and Ancillary Services continued to support and provide the necessary facilities to students requiring changes to their accommodations within residence rooms/suites. Specifically:
  - Installation of a strobe light in a single room
  - Portable ramp purchased
  - Talbot College's accessible washrooms were made available for all students during O-week activities
- The Office of the Ombudsperson underwent a number of physical changes due to the construction of the new Student Services building; these changes necessitated a reconfiguration of office space to ensure that it is wheelchair accessible. In addition to moving office furniture, the office replaced its old carpeting which was torn and uneven, presenting a potential safety hazard to office visitors.
- Human Resources (Health & Safety) introduced the Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Program to Hospitality 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.
- Human Resources (Health & Safety) provided 353 individual ergonomic assessments in 2008. The majority of the referrals are for office assessments and job coaching. Twenty-four group training sessions were also conducted.
- The third and final part of the Accessibility Awareness Report summarizing findings from the assessment of physical accessibility of buildings on campus, was delivered to WODAC, Physical Plant and Services for Students with Disabilities in August 2008. Recommendations arising from the three reports are being implemented by Physical Plant.

#### Huron University College

- Designated accessible parking spots in the North parking lot were repainted for improved visibility.
- In January, a review of residence facilities was completed by Ms. Sheila Dinnen for the CNIB. As a result:
  - An overhead hazard at the rear stairwell of the building (Southwest Residence) has been corrected
  - Stair edges were painted in order to make them more visible

- The elevator and floors were labeled in contrasting colours, Braille and large print
- A beep and tone systems was installed in the elevators

#### King's University College

- A new accommodated exam centre was built in Broughdale Hall. Ten new exam stations were built and equipped with computers, assistive technology and ergonomic chairs.
- Four new automatic door openers were installed in high traffic areas.

### **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.
- 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.
- Seven Healthy Life Series presentations were offered to staff and faculty. These presentations, sponsored by Western Wellness and Western's EAP Committee, are intended to assist participants in focusing on what truly matters in life to enhance the quality and depth of experience. Sessions offered: Healthy Self, Healthy Families, Healthy Eating, How to Start a Book Club, Gardening 101, Healthy Work (EAP) and Healthy Play (EAP). Each session was full.
- Services for Students with Disabilities ("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.
- The Associate Vice-President of Housing & Ancillary Services and the Director of Residences are participants of the USC Accessibility

Committee and the following changes were implemented for O-Week 2009:

- More hours of rest for participants with compromised immune systems
  - Information provided about how to hire a diverse group of people. For example, a soph need not carry lots of luggage on move-in day in order to be a “soph”
  - Fire Prevention at Rez Rally – accessibility issues as they related to exit safety were discussed
- 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.

### **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:

- Rehabilitation Services offered the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Canada and Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors program. 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.

The training was launched in October 2008. MHFA Canada was provided in a format of four ½ day sessions and ½ day session of Mental Health at Western. A member of Western’s Rehabilitation Services (Barbara Froats) has the Full Instructor MHFA Canada Certification. Training was offered three times over the past year – October, February and June. To date, fifty-six Leaders and Supervisors have received training. Feedback has been positive. Groups on campus have identified the need for training i.e. Housing, Workplace Health, Campus Police and Academic Counsellors.

- The Academic Leaders’ Summer Conference (June 2009) offered a panel discussion on accessibility. An overview of the recent changes to the

human rights complaints process, including possible further implications for the academic setting, was presented.

- 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 accommodations with treatment and skill development.
- During the course of the academic year, the Ombudsperson made a number of confidential recommendations to individual programs/facilities regarding academic accommodations for students with disabilities. These recommendations included advising decision-makers about ways to discuss a student's accommodation needs that protected both their privacy and dignity.
- Huron University College initiated a Diversity Week, which included information and discussion of accessibility issues and a screening of the "Voices of Diversity" video to all interested students, staff and faculty.

### **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:

- 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).
- ITS is represented on the AODA Customer Service sub-committee tasked with developing a method for Western to provide notice of temporary disruptions to service.
- Western Libraries continues to ensure its website meets barrier-free web accessibility standards as set out by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Access initiative (WAI).

### **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:

- A project team was created to assist with the implementation of the Customer Service Standard required under the AODA.
- Western Libraries drafted its *Customer Service Policy Statement: Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities*, Summer 2009.
- Housing ensured that its student leaders advised residents that special needs forms are available for students to complete.
- An Employment Systems Review was undertaken. As part of this review, barriers for persons with disabilities were addressed. The report will be released in fall 2009.

### Plan for Removal of Barriers in 2009-2010

Over the coming year, Western will be focussed on meeting the requirements of the AODA's Customer Service Standard which comes into effect on January 1, 2010. A project team has been working throughout the summer developing the required policies, practices and training methods. A wide-scale roll-out of this project is expected in the fall of 2009.

Western is also continuing to monitor the development of the other standards under the AODA and will implement changes and/or project teams as necessary.

Western's Affiliated University Colleges – Brescia, Huron and King's – are also working toward compliance with the AODA Customer Service Standard.

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**

- The Department of Physical Plant is involved in major capital renovation projects in Physics and Astronomy (currently on hold), Stevenson Lawson, the University Community Centre and the Richard Ivey School of Business. Physical/Architectural barriers will be addressed as part of the renovations.

- 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.
- Human Resources (Health and Safety) will expand the MSD Prevention Program to targeted areas across campus.
- The Assistant Ombudsperson has identified several physical/architectural barriers in the University Community Centre that need to be addressed. These have been brought to the attention of the administration.
- Western Libraries will ensure that the new Business Library (C.B. "Bud" Johnston Library), part of the new Ivey building, is an accessible space.
- Huron University College will be phasing in further improvements to its residence as contained in the CNIB report during the next capital budget year:
  - Painting the suite doors on the ground floor in a contrasting colour to make them more distinguishable
  - Labeling the mailboxes in Braille

### **Information and Communications Barriers**

- In 2008/09 Housing and Ancillary Services will continue to provide education to students on barriers on campus.
- The Western Wellness Series will continue. Programs planned include: Managing Stress, Transition: Staying Resilient during Organizational Change, Effective Parenting Strategies for School-Age Children and Parenting Teens.

### **Attitudinal Barriers**

- Housing will make educational and promotional materials related to accessibility available through the Programming Office.
- Mental Health First Aid Canada and Mental Health at Western for Leaders and Supervisors training is planned for November 2009 and in March and May 2010.

## **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.
- The School of Occupational Therapy will be providing accommodation for a student with low vision. Accommodations include the purchase of a JAWS program for use on campus.

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

- Development of a customer service policy, procedures and processes as per the requirements of the accessibility standard for customer service as required under the AODA is in process. All documentation will be ready by January 2010.
- The Ombudsperson is undertaking a review of the University's policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities to ensure that the policy accurately reflects the University's process for arranging academic accommodations, and to ensure that it is in accordance with current human rights and privacy legislation.
- The Employment Systems Review report will be released to the community in the fall of 2009. A consultation/feedback process will be undertaken during the fall and then, beginning in winter 2010, development of Western's Employment Equity Plan will commence.

## **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

### Members of WODAC September 2008 to August 2009

WODAC members may be reached via email to [accessibility@uwo.ca](mailto:accessibility@uwo.ca).

Department	Committee Member
Equity & Human Rights Services	Larissa Bartlett (Chair) Terri Tomchick- Condon Andrea Magahey (Acting Chair)
Housing & Ancillary Services	Ruta Lawrence
Human Resources	Jane O'Brien Mark Shannon
Information Technology Services	Merran Neville
Office of the Ombudsperson	Adrienne Clarke
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)	Kirstin Hayes
University Students' Council *	<i>Vacant</i>
Student Member-at-large	<i>Vacant</i>
Student Member-at-large	Jeff Preston
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	Cheryl Jamieson
Staff/Faculty Member-at-large	<i>Vacant</i>

*Please note: the 2008/09 report incorrectly identified the USC representative. The USC did not provide a representative to sit on WODAC last year.*

