

# Status Report

## Accessibility

September 2013 to August 2018

Bureau des droits de la personne  
Human Rights Office



uOttawa

# Introduction

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## Accessibility at the University of Ottawa

Our university is unique due to our location in the heart of Canada's capital, our bilingualism and our commitment to promoting francophone culture in Ontario.

Over the past two decades, our university has also seen continual growth. Today, it is home to more than 42,000 students and 8,000 employees. Among them, 22% of students and 13% of staff have said they have a disability that substantially affects much of their daily activity (source: University of Ottawa Diversity and Inclusion Survey topline results, April 2017). This large community and its partners include many sections, departments, faculties, colleges and professional schools.

Given the above, ensuring that members of our University community with disabilities can easily navigate in and around our historic buildings and fully enjoy the experience of living, working and learning on our campus is a real challenge. Maintaining and enhancing service excellence requires an ongoing active commitment at all levels of our university to develop accessible programs and services.

During the period covered by this report, the Human Rights Office focused on the development of Policy 119 — Accessibility. Among other things, the policy formalizes the sharing of roles and responsibilities regarding accessibility among the sections responsible for meeting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements. Services, units and faculties are thus in a better position to generate solutions adapted to their realities and the HRO is better equipped to assess accessibility on campus and take advantage of opportunities for collaboration.

We thank senior management for its support, as well as all those who worked on this report, for the interest they have shown in this important undertaking.

*Human Rights Office Team*

# Table of contents

Introduction .....	2
Accessibility at the University of Ottawa.....	2
Table of contents .....	3
Background.....	4
Legislation.....	4
About this report.....	4
Objectives .....	4
Scope .....	4
Roles and responsibilities .....	5
Methodology .....	5
Report on 2013–2016 commitments.....	6
Human Rights Office.....	6
Sections responsible for customer service .....	7
Accessible events .....	8
Procurement Services.....	8
Library.....	8
Human Resources .....	9
Communications Directorate.....	12
Facilities.....	14
Collaborators.....	15

# Background

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## Legislation

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA) sets out a process to assist public sector organizations like the University of Ottawa to become fully accessible by 2025. As provided for in the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) (IASR), which came into force in 2011, the University must take action to become accessible within five years in five areas: customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment and the built environment. These areas are governed by general requirements concerning creating accessibility policies; procurement or acquisition of goods, services or facilities; and submission of accessibility reports.

## Status reports

According to section 4(1) of [O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the University of Ottawa must post status reports on measures taken to implement the strategy set out in its Multi-year Accessibility Plan.

## About this report

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## Objectives

This document reports on the commitments made in the [2013–2016 Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#), as well as action taken between September 2017 and December 2018.

The objectives of this legally-mandated document are as follows:

- To monitor the University of Ottawa's progress
- To identify barriers that must be eliminated to fulfill commitments set out in the report
- As required, to review strategies with an eye to the drafting of the [2019–2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#)

## Scope

In order to focus on accessibility, we have limited the scope of this new report to the AODA requirements. For more on commitments related to other laws, see the [Human Rights Office's plans and reports](#).

## Roles and responsibilities

The Human Rights Office, working with the faculties and services, is responsible for compiling and assessing the accessibility plans submitted by various units under [Policy 119 — Accessibility](#), in order to develop, draft and publish a University-wide accessibility plan.

Services designated under Policy 119 must submit accessibility plans to the Human Rights Office according to the process and timelines we have established as per the [accessibility requirements for public universities under Ontario law](#).

### Designated services

- Procurement Services
- Human Resources
- Communications Directorate
- Facilities
- Protection Services
- Library

## Methodology

On May 1, 2019, the Human Rights Office received multi-year accessibility plans from the services designated under [Policy 119 — Accessibility](#). These plans had to include, among other things, a report on their commitments under the [2013–2016 Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#).

We relied on this information to draft this report, which was submitted to the Administration Committee for information purposes prior to publication.

### Other services consulted

The Student Academic Success Service — Academic Accommodations and the Teaching and Learning Support Service also provided information regarding the commitments they made under the 2013–2016 Multi-year Accessibility Plan.

# Report on 2013–2016 commitments

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## Human Rights Office

### Adoption of a policy on accessibility

#### COMMITMENT

By 2013, adopt and publicize a policy on accessibility. [O. Reg. 191/11, section 3](#)

#### STATUS

A policy on accessibility was approved by the Administration Committee May 6, 2014. Before being approved by the Board of Governors in May 2018 as [Policy 119 — Accessibility](#), this policy underwent a major re-working, to include the following:

- Responsibilities related to services provided to members of the University community
- Responsibilities associated with compliance with the policy

During the re-working of the policy, formal and informal consultations took place with the services designated under the policy, the Centre for Students with Disabilities, University leadership and senior management.

Communication tools provided by the uOttawa Communications Directorate, the Human Rights Office and senior management were used to consult with members of the University community prior to adoption of the policy and to inform the University community once it had been adopted.

# Sections responsible for customer service

## Accessible educational services

### BACKGROUND

While the duty to provide academic accommodation measures for students with disabilities to the point of undue hardship is based on the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), certain aspects of educational services can also be seen as subject to accessibility standards:

- Customer service
- Information and communications
- Employment

To facilitate reading of this report, commitments and actions affecting educational services under the AODA appear in subsequent sections dealing with each relevant standard.

## Update on accessible feedback process

### COMMITMENT

By 2014, develop an accessible checklist as a guide in creating accessible feedback and course evaluation processes. [O. Reg. 191/11, section 80.50](#)

### RESPONSIBILITY

The Human Resources Office, along with the Communications Directorate and the Office of the Provost and Vice President, Academic.

### STATUS

Since 2015:

- Sample bilingual texts to add to messages to the University community to facilitate feedback are available on the [Accessibility Hub event planning page](#), under “Tools and resources” > “Sample messages.”
- A link to the [Accessibility Hub](#) appears in the footers of University intranet and extranet pages. The hub home page offers the University community many accessible options to provide feedback, comments or suggestions, to learn about service interruptions and to submit service requests or complaints.

Since 2016:

- An accessible [Evaluation of Teaching and Courses](#) form is available on the Blue platform.

Since 2018:

- University community members can submit feedback and comments anonymously by completing the [uOSatisfaction form](#). Reports on requests and corrective measures taken by the University are published periodically.

## Accessible events

### COMMITMENT

By 2014, create guidelines furthering accessibility of events organized by the University. [O. Reg. 191/11, section 80.46](#).

### RESPONSIBILITY

The Human Rights Office, along with members of the ad hoc [University of Ottawa Access Network](#).

### STATUS

The Access Network was established in 2013 and was active until 2016. Event planning guidelines were published November 11, 2015 on the Accessibility Hub.

## Procurement Services

### Training on accessible procurement

#### COMMITMENT

Starting in 2014, train those involved in procurement of goods, services or facilities on accessible procurement practices. [O. Reg. 191/11, section 5\(1\), 6 and 7](#)

#### STATUS

Information sessions took place in 2015 and 2016. An [Accessibility Rules for Procurement](#) presentation (in English only at this point) was developed.

## Library

### Procurement of accessible library resources

#### ENGAGEMENT

Starting in 2015, integrate accessibility requirements in library resource procurement procedures. [O. Reg. 191/11, section 18](#)

#### STATUS

Since 2018, Policy 119 — Accessibility requires that the University library provide, procure or acquire, upon request, an accessible or conversion-ready format of any print, digital or multimedia resource or material for a person with a disability. Special collections, archival materials and rare or donated books are exempt from this requirement.

The library is closely monitoring the development of LEAP (Library eResources Accessibility Project), an initiative of college libraries in Ontario that aims to “establish accessibility best practices” ([LEAP Interim Report Spring/Summer 2017](#), p. 4).



In the meantime, the University of Ottawa and the other members of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) are studying issues related to the acquisition of accessible collections.

## Human Resources

(The Centre for Organizational and Career Development is now the Human Resources Leadership, Learning and Organizational Development section)

### Accessibility training

#### COMMITMENTS

Starting in 2013:

- Provide general training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the provisions of the Human Rights Code.
- Provide and update training for staff on writing accessible documents in Word, PowerPoint, Excel and PDF formats.
- Train webmasters, communication officers and managers responsible for creating web content and developing and updating University web pages about WCAG 2.0 requirements. These people will then act as resource people and trainers.
- Develop and post online a toolbox of material dealing with web accessibility and creation of accessible resources.
- Provide training for professors and trainers to make them aware of accessibility issues in teaching and course and program offerings.
- Find external training on the Integrated Accessibility Standards and the general requirements included therein or develop training and assess the associated costs.

[O. Reg 191/11, section 7](#) and [80.49](#)

#### STATUS

Since 2013, the Teaching and Learning Support Service (TLSS) has offered resources and pedagogical workshops on accessibility for professors, teaching assistants and, sometimes, support staff. The TLSS reports to the vice-provost, academic affairs, in the Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic.

Since 2013:

- Mandatory [Working Together: The Code and the AODA](#) training is provided to staff, volunteers and others who provide goods, services and facilities on behalf of the University.
- Training was offered by an external provider to all designers on accessible PDFs (for more information, see the [Communications Directorate commitments](#)).
- The TLSS provides workshops on accessible learning and resources to assist professors and teaching

assistants.

Between 2013 and 2015:

- The Human Rights Office hired a web accessibility compliance coordinator, who worked with the TLSS, Human Resources and the Communications Directorate to provide workshops to help the University community create accessible web content (documents, multimedia production, social media and web content, and more).

Since 2017:

- The [“Understanding how to make your website content accessible” page](#) on the “Web at uOttawa” site provides resources to help members of the University community understand their legal obligations regarding web accessibility, create accessible web content and download accessibility checking tools.

## **Accessible recruitment, hiring and retention processes**

### COMMITMENTS

Starting in 2014:

- Review recruitment, hiring, retention, performance evaluation and career development policies and practices for each employee category.
- Develop an action plan to better inform employees and applicants of adaptive measures available during the recruitment process.
- Develop and distribute a toolbox for managers on best employment accessibility practices.
- Review guidelines on accommodation measures for University staff. [O. Reg. 191/11, sections 20 to 32](#)

Since 2015:

- [Job postings](#) include a statement that accommodation measures are available. The statement is also on the [Human Resources Accessibility and accommodation page](#).
- Acknowledgements of receipt of job applications include a sentence on the availability of accommodation measures.
- Offers of employment include a mention of policies in place and collective agreements. Information on the duty to accommodate in the workplace is also included in collective agreements.
- The [Human Rights Office “Employment” page](#) provides guidelines for employers and supervisors.
- The [Accessibility Hub “Working” page](#) and the [Human Resources “Accessibility and accommodation” page](#) include information on policies and services dealing with support for employees living with disabilities.

Since 2018:

- The “Responsibilities related to services provided to members of the University community” section of Policy 119 — Accessibility deals with managing applicants and employees with disabilities.
- Information on the possibility of accommodation is provided on the [HR Health and Wellness site](#), in the mandatory [Working Together: The Code and the AODA](#) training, in the [Mental Health First Aid](#) training and during onboarding of new employees.
- There is a written process governing the development of individualized and documented accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.
- Return to work processes are documented and individualized accommodation plans are developed for employees who require accommodation after disability leave.
- The hiring process was amended to include a notice on accommodation.
- Unions are informed of accommodation procedures.
- A guide is available for managers to assist in implementing accommodations for employees with a disability.
- An accommodation best practices checklist used by Human Resources is sent to hiring managers for the interview process.

# Communications Directorate

## Accessible websites

### COMMITMENTS

- Starting in 2013, ensure that communications staff who have received training on the WCAG 2.0 web accessibility requirements (see Human Resources commitments as well) act as accessibility resource people and trainers in their faculties and services.
- Between 2013 and 2016, develop a plan to migrate faculty and service web pages to a new University web platform.
- Continue efforts to ensure quality control and compliance with web accessibility requirements.  
[O. Reg. 191/11, section 14](#)

### STATUS

In 2013:

- Training on accessible PDFs was offered by an external provider to all designers.
- The University has 281 sites on its Drupal content management system (CMS). Drupal complies with the principles of responsive web design, and web templates were developed using an accessible distribution (a CMS version custom designed for uOttawa). However, beyond these sites, others developed by professors or groups do not use the official CMS.
- Training session on Siteimprove (a web accessibility checker used by central communications) to help owners and creators of web content, as well as webmasters, better manage and ensure accessibility of their websites.
- In 2013, the Human Rights Office hired a web accessibility compliance coordinator, who worked with the Communications Directorate and the IT service until 2015 to facilitate the transition towards web accessibility by providing the following:
  - Training and online resources on the Accessibility Hub and the [“Web at uOttawa” page](#) to help the University community create accessible web content (documents, multimedia production, social media and other web content)
  - Drop-in help to make documents, videos, forms and web content accessible
  - A service to facilitate hiring, training and supervision of Work-Study Program students hired to improve website accessibility and content for services and faculties
  - Accessibility parameters for IT purchases and accessibility checking for web content displayed on smartphones
  - Hiring and supervision of three work-study students at Information Technology and the Communications Directorate to help develop best practices in discovering errors in content and

frames and to produce accessible web content.

Since 2015:

- External Relations content creators, designers and website managers receive training and resources on accessibility.
- Consultation sessions take place the first Thursday of the month to answer questions from External Relations staff. Others may attend as well.
- Certain groups have on-demand access as needed to an internal ticket system for questions and requests.
- The [“Understanding how to make your website content accessible” page](#) on the “Web at uOttawa” site provides resources to help members of the University community understand their legal obligations regarding web accessibility, create accessible web content and download accessibility checking tools.

# Facilities

## Information on accessible services and service interruptions

### COMMITMENTS

- Starting in 2013, provide a frontline service to meet the needs of persons with reduced mobility and handle accessibility-related matters such as snow removal and building access.
- Starting in 2014, post accessible interruption of service notices on campus and publish online information about replacement facilities or services, if required (e.g., pathways, entrances, washrooms, Para Transpo stops and accessible parking).

[O. Reg. 191/11, section 80.48, 80.49\(2\)](#) and [80.50](#)

### STATUS

Since 2015:

- Facilities' [Projects & construction](#) and [Interruption notices](#) pages inform the University community of interruptions of accessible services caused by on-campus construction and renovation. The [University of Ottawa Virtual Maps](#) pages for each building include notices of temporary or long-term service interruptions of accessible services on or near campus.
- Notices of temporary and long-term service interruptions are also posted on the [@uOaccessible](#) Twitter account and the [SecurUO](#) mobile app.
- The University community is informed of accessible long-term detours through maps located in campus buildings and on exterior paths of travel.
- University of Ottawa Virtual Maps provide information on paratransit stop locations, shuttle and taxi service, accessible parking spaces and accessible entrances. The interactive "Directions" tab displays accessible indoor walkways and outdoor routes for travel between buildings.
- The [2222 Call Centre](#) handles accessibility requests during office hours and Protection Services takes over on evenings and weekends. Information on this is available via the Accessibility Hub, University of Ottawa Virtual Maps and the SecurUO app. Additional snow removal information is available on the ["Grounds & transportation" page](#). Reminders of these services are posted every winter on campus screens and the [@uOaccessible](#) Twitter account. Protection Services informs the Human Rights Office of accessibility-related requests it handles, in order for us to determine campus accessibility needs.

## Design of accessible public spaces

### COMMITMENT

Starting in 2014, develop initiatives to meet the Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment). [O. Reg. 191/11, sections 80.16 and 80.17, 80.21 to 80.38 and 80.40 to 80.44](#)

### STATUS

Between 2015 and 2018:

While the accessibility of existing facilities will generally be improved as part of the normal upgrade cycle, as stipulated in the AODA, Facilities commissioned Quadrangle Architects to examine campus facilities for accessibility and determine the most persistent and urgent needs.

Facilities works with the Human Rights Office to ensure that online consultations are anonymous, accessible and inclusive.

The 2015–2018 Qaudrangle Architects study, as well as public consultations and incident reports submitted by Protection Services, helped to develop Facilities' accessibility plan for the next five years.

## Collaborators

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A big thanks to all our collaborators who helped produce this document:

- Procurement Services: Marie-Claude Fillion, Isabelle Larivée and Monica Mendoza
- Human Resources : Elvio Buono and Lise Griffith
- External Relations: Marie-Cine Renaud and Mélanie De La Chevrotière (Communications Directorate)
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