

Status Report on Accessibility

December 2019 to May 2020

*Bureau des droits de la personne
Human Rights Office*



uOttawa

Forward

Accessibility at the University of Ottawa during the COVID-19 pandemic

Three months after the adoption of the 2019–2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan, the COVID-19 pandemic threw our world into disarray.

We are aware that this pandemic has had significant repercussions and potentially disproportionate effects on members of our University community who are living with disabilities.

We assure you that the Human Rights Office (HRO) is working with University authorities to ensure that the measures taken during the pandemic comply with Public Health Ontario directives and with the accessibility standards set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. We continue to work towards the Plan's critical deadlines, albeit remotely.

During the time covered in this report, the HRO focussed on completing [Accessibility Compliance Reporting Form – 2019](#) required by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility and on implementing the 2019-2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan.

Note that we found it necessary to adapt some of our strategies to the current situation; some non-critical deadlines were pushed back to allow us to mobilize the resources needed to manage the COVID-19 crisis. These changes are described throughout this report.

We would like to thank senior management for its support, along with all those who worked on this report. We appreciate their interest in this important undertaking.

Human Rights Office Team

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Background

Legislation

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA) sets out a process to assist public sector organizations, such as the University of Ottawa, to become fully accessible by 2025. According to [Ontario regulations on integrated accessibility standards](#) (OIAS), which took effect in 2011, the University must take measures to become accessible in five areas: customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment, and design of public spaces. These areas are governed by general provisions that relate to creating accessibility policies; accessibility plans; procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities; training, and; the submission of reports on accessibility.

Status reports

According to section 4(1) of [Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, the University of Ottawa must publish reports on the measures taken to implement the strategy set out in its multi-year accessibility plan.

About this report

Objectives

This document reports on the action plans that services committed to undertaking between 2019 and 2020 as part of the [2019-2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#).

The objectives of this legally mandated document are:

- ✓ To monitor the University of Ottawa's progress
- ✓ To identify barriers that must be eliminated to fulfill commitments set out in the Plan
- ✓ As required, to review the strategies outlined in the 2019-2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan

Scope

This document is limited to the annual and ongoing commitments stated in the [2019-2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#) for the period between 2019 and 2020. To learn more about HRO commitments with respect to other legislation, see the [Human Rights Office plans and reports webpage](#).

- ✓ Note that this initial 2019-2024 Plan report covers only the past six months so that future annual reports on accessibility can be published at the same time as the HRO's annual reports.

Roles and responsibilities

The Human Rights Office, working with the faculties and services, is responsible for compiling and evaluating the status reports on accessibility plans submitted by various units under [Policy 119 - Accessibility](#), in order to design, draft and publish University-wide reports.

Services designated under Policy 119 must annually submit accessibility reports to the Human Rights Office according to HRO processes and timelines, in accordance with [accessibility rules for educational institutions in Ontario](#).

Designated services

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

Methodology

On May 15, 2020, the Human Rights Office received status reports on progress multi-year accessibility plans from the services designated under [Policy 119 - Accessibility](#). These plans were required to include, among other items, a status report on the commitments undertaken in accordance with the [2019-2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#).

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

Other services consulted

The Student Academic Success Service (SASS) – Accommodations and the Teaching and Learning Support Services also provided information on the commitments they have made as part of the 2019-2024 Multi-year Accessibility Plan.

Consultations with members of the University community living with disabilities

After being reviewed by the AC, the multi-year accessibility plan was posted on the [Human Rights Office Plans and Reports webpage](#) for public consultation.

Members of the University community with disabilities were invited to submit comments in person during a meeting hosted by the HRO on December 3, 2019, and to complete a brief, confidential online survey between December 17, 2019 and February 15, 2020.

The invitation to participate in this consultation was published in the *Gazette*, posted on the University's social media pages, sent to addresses on the SASS – Academic Accommodations distribution list, and broadcast on TV screens across campus.

Summary of quantitative results

- Based on the survey's 68 respondents, the rate of satisfaction with the commitments listed in the [2019-2024 Multiyear Accessibility Plan](#) was between 65% and 75%.
- The role on campus, abilities and functional limitations, and type of disability of those completing the survey did not significantly influence the level of satisfaction with each of the standards.
- Of the respondents, 64% were undergraduates.

Summary of qualitative results

Some of the respondents identified the following needs:

- Having teachers who are well-trained in providing accessible services.
- Holding mandatory courses that are difficult to transfer (e.g. courses that require the use of heavy machinery or specialized materials) in accessible locations so as not to limit mobility-impaired students in their choice of programs.
- Providing more information on accommodation in the workplace to employees with disabilities and better support throughout the accommodation process.
- Providing an online course selection and enrolment process is accessible.
- Increasing the number of accessible bus shelters and the number of ParaTranspo stops on campus.

Comments relating to issues outside the scope of this survey were transmitted to the appropriate sectors.

For further details on the survey results, see the document entitled *Survey on the 2019-2024 Accessibility Plan: Results and Interpretation* .

Status report on 2019-2020 commitments

Human Rights Office

Plans and reports on accessibility

- ✓ On December 21, 2019, a report on the accessibility activities undertaken from 2017 to 2019 was submitted to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (English-language report available upon request).
- ✓ The current annual status report describes the progress between 2019 and 2020 on measures undertaken to implement the strategies described in the 2019-2024 Multiyear Accessibility Plan.

Accessibility feedback process

During consultations on the [2019-2024 Multiyear Accessibility Plan](#), members of the University community living with a disability were invited to apply for a seat on the University's new [uOaccessible Advisory Board](#) and to be added to the HRO distribution list to stay informed of future online consultations on accessibility.

The invitation to participate in this consultation meeting was published in the *Gazette*, posted on the University's social media pages, sent to addresses on the SASS – Academic Accommodations distribution list, and broadcast on TV screens across campus for one month.

We compiled applications from individuals interested in sitting on the advisory board; a selection process for the advisory board will begin at the start of the 2020-2021 academic year. We also gathered the names of those interested in staying informed of future online consultations on accessibility.

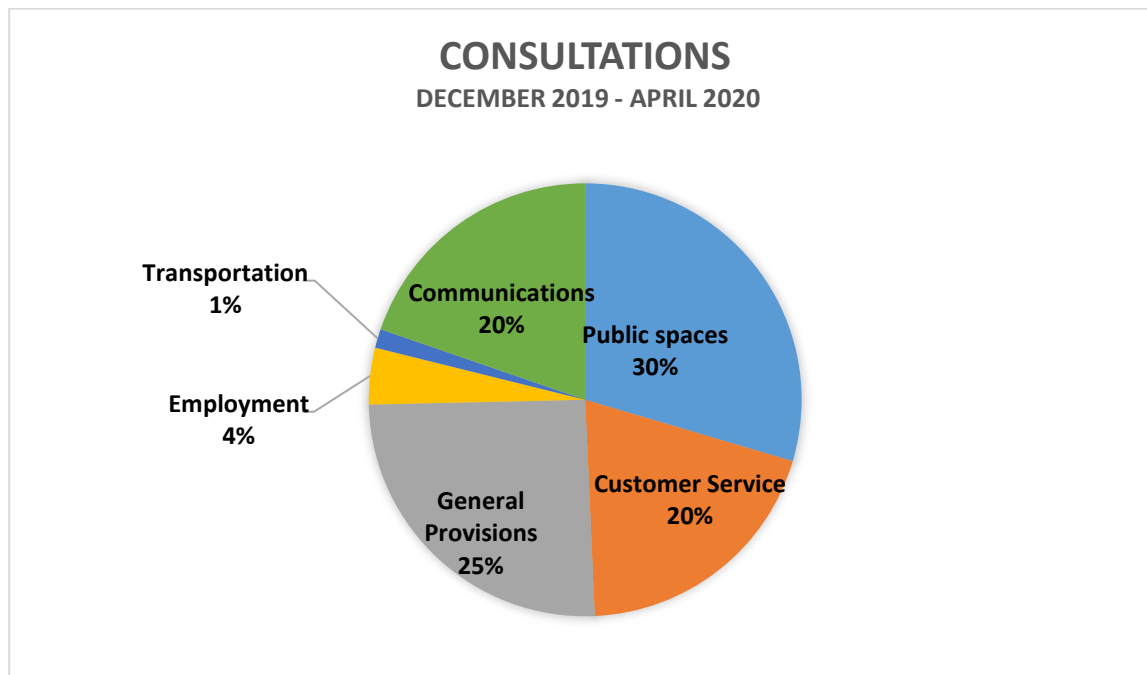
For more information, refer to the document entitled Survey on the 2019-2024 Accessibility Plan: Results and Interpretation.

Advisory services

Requests by service and by faculty

- ✓ Between December 2019 and April 2020 (five months), the HRO fulfilled 71 requests for advice from services and faculties on the following accessibility standards:
 - 21 regarding the design of public spaces (30%)
 - 18 regarding general provisions on accessibility (25%)
 - 14 regarding information and communication standards (20%)
 - 14 regarding customer service standards (20%)
 - 3 regarding employment standards (4%)

- ✓ 1 regarding transportation standards (1%)



Internal committees

The HRO sits on the following internal committees:

- ✓ The mandatory training committee (Human Resources)
- ✓ The advisory committee on the design of public spaces (Facilities)
- ✓ The occupational health and safety committee (Office of Risk Management)

The HRO advises the following committees:

- ✓ The architecture review board (Information Technology)
- ✓ The committee on essential program requirements (Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs)
- ✓ In early December 2019, the HRO invited designated services to participate in consultations with persons living with disabilities on campus
- ✓ In mid-December, 2019, the HRO consulted the designated services to write a status report on the 2017-2019 accessibility activities. This report was submitted to the Administrative Council for approval before being sent to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.
- ✓ In February 2020, the HRO presented a copy of the Survey on the 2019-2024 Accessibility Plan: Results and Interpretation to the services.

Procurement

Purchasing accessible goods and services

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Procurement worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Providing new staff members with training that integrates accessibility criteria and recording the number of trained staff members so these details can be included in status reports created in accordance with the Plan
- ✓ Promoting the procurement policy, along with its associated policies, procedures, and practices as they are amended
- ✓ Integrating accessibility elements when updating procurement practices

STATUS OF 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Procurement completed the following commitments:

- ✓ Worked with the Human Rights Office to find ways to assess the accessibility of goods and services during the procurement process.

Details:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Procurement postponed training sessions designed to bring its staff members up to speed on accessibility. It also postponed the incorporation of accessibility requirements into its new bidding and evaluation models

- ✓ Support the integration of accessibility standards in new IT and construction terms of reference
- ✓ Ensure that new documents uploaded to the procurement website comply with accessibility standards

Communications Directorate

Accessible websites

STATUS REPORT ON ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, the Communications Directorate worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Providing expert advice on web accessibility for large-scale University projects.
- ✓ Ensuring the accessibility of officially recognized websites under the control of the University through an automated audit, notification, and follow-up solution
- ✓ Regularly auditing website accessibility and faculty and service compliance efforts
- ✓ Regularly producing reports on web accessibility as well as notices of non-compliance for the University community
- ✓ Working with those responsible for non-compliant websites to help them meet WCAG 2.0 requirements
- ✓ Training and raising awareness of web accessibility issues among campus stakeholders
- ✓ Ensuring access to up-to-date online references and work tools
- ✓ Extending commitments under the Plan to the actions of other campus bodies (e.g., architecture review board, information and communications committee, Procurement, Human Rights Office, Human Resources, Language Services, and the Teaching and Learning Support Service).
- ✓ Submitting detailed multi-year accessibility plans and annual status reports on the accessibility of the uOttawa.ca website

STATUS REPORT ON 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, the Communications Directorate completed the following commitments:

- ✓ Renewed staff training on the accessibility of websites and web content
- ✓ Reported on the state of web accessibility at the University of Ottawa
- ✓ Enumerated and consolidated campus tools, online resources, best practices, reference websites and expertise related to accessibility
- ✓ Designed a 2020–2024 web accessibility operational plan (WAOP) to promote compliance with CD commitments
- ✓ Reviewed and presented a more precise, detailed governance model for campus stakeholders and saw to its adoption
- ✓ Built an on-campus community of experts in website and web content accessibility
- ✓ Conducted a review of University website accessibility and made minor improvements

Details

The Communications Directorate is determined to defend the principles of accessibility throughout the University community and online through clear instructions, various tools, and educational initiatives. Accessibility is one of the main pillars of the web transformation project, which will take place from 2020 to 2022. This project will introduce a new experience for University users that features accessibility.

Human Resources

Accessibility training

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Human Resources worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Ensuring that a member of the Human Rights Office sits on the mandatory training committee. Part of this committee's mandate is to ensure that the University complies with government requirements in terms of mandatory training. The committee is also mandated to oversee other types of training, and to implement measures to ensure training quality.
- ✓ In the current Plan's annual status reports, describing Human Resources initiatives to promote mandatory training to University employees

STATUS OF 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Human Resources completed the following commitments:

- ✓ Developed guidelines on roles and responsibilities with respect to mandatory training
- ✓ Informed managers about the dashboards that provide reports on the training completed, or to be completed, by their staff

Details

- ✓ The committee on mandatory training gathers representatives from the various services responsible for mandatory training sessions. This committee adopted a charter that defines the roles and responsibilities of its members with respect to the management and distribution of mandatory training sessions.
- ✓ All managers received a memo reminding them of the importance of completing mandatory training and of checking their personal dashboards for the training they have taken or need to complete. A message to this effect was also published in the *Gazette* to reach all members of the University community.
- ✓ Mandatory training sessions offered online from May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020 included:
 - [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) (online workshop)

- o [Working Together: the Code and the AODA](#) (online workshop)

Accessible recruitment and hiring processes

STATUS OF 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

Details

The new guide for managers is currently being revised. This guide is among the priorities of the Human Resources Modernization Project, whose team meet regularly. We expect that the guide will be next June.

Workplace accommodation measures for employees with disabilities

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Human Resources worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Providing managers with information on accommodation measures as part of Mental Health First Aid Training and during the Leadership and Management Program workshop on this topic.
- ✓ Offering, as needed, training sessions and support to managers to facilitate workplace accommodation measures and eliminate potential barriers to returning to work

STATUS OF 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Human Resources completed the following commitments:

- ✓ Developed a return-to-work guide for managers with advice and best practices.

Details

- ✓ An initial return-to work guide for managers was created in 2018. The guide will be modified to include advice and best practices to facilitate the workplace reintegration of employees.
- ✓ The annual report detailing the number of managers who have benefitted from advice and training offered by Human Resources on workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities will be available in December 2020.

Teaching and Learning Support Service

Training for educators

STATUS REPORT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICE COMMITMENTS (ONGOING)

From December 2019 to May 2020, the TLSS worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Working with the Human Rights Office to include the number of professors who have taken TLSS training on accessible learning in future annual status reports.
- ✓ Including in annual reports TLSS initiatives that promote training on accessibility issues to professor members of the APUO and the APTPUO.

Details

- ✓ Most TLSS activities, including the 7 webinars in the series on designing online courses, discuss accessibility.
- ✓ The TLSS publishes several resource documents on accessibility on the [Accessibility Hub](#) under Teaching and Training (see the section on Inclusive Teaching)
- ✓ Further related documents are also available for University community members on the TLSS [sub-section on accessibility](#)
- ✓ The following two webinars aimed at professors also discussed accessibility:
 - *Pratiques d'enseignement inclusives : réflexions et stratégies pour favoriser la diversité des façons d'apprendre et les environnements d'apprentissage accessibles* (5 participants on December 11, 2019)
 - Inclusive Teaching Practices: Reflection and Strategies to Foster Variability and Accessible Learning Environments (17 participants on December 12, 2019)
- ✓ The following two workshops aimed at teaching assistants also discussed accessibility:
 - Accessibility and Diversity for Learning: Roles and Strategies for TAs (37 participants, February 5, 2020)
 - *Accessibilité et diversité des façons d'apprendre : rôles et stratégies de l'AE* (7 participants, February 6, 2020)

Protection Services

Information on emergency procedures, plans, and public safety

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Protection Services worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Including accessibility-related elements in emergency exercises on campus to properly prepare Protection Services members and ensure that members of the University community with disabilities are informed.

Details

- ✓ The Protection Services website explains the procedure for members of the University community with disabilities to follow to request a personalized emergency plan.
- ✓ The development of a new, all risk intervention plan takes accessibility requirements into consideration. The launch of this plan and the analysis of the training program by the senior officer for accessibility policy have been postponed until the COVID-19 situation is resolved.

Maintenance of accessible elements

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Protection Services worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ During patrols, ensuring that building entrances and emergency exits are accessible, safe and clear.
- ✓ Working with Facilities when problems concerning accessible elements in public spaces (e.g., elevators, road and sidewalk conditions, snow removal) are reported.

Details

- ✓ Responsibility for ensuring that building entrances and emergency exits are accessible, safe and clear is shared among Protection Services divisions.
- ✓ These divisions inform Facilities of these issues, and Facilities then coordinates the appropriate maintenance and repair.

Accessible parking spaces

PARKING AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION OFFICE

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

Details

- ✓ In general, accessible parking spaces are not used to install temporary construction site bins or equipment
- ✓ In terms of the impact of construction projects on accessible parking spaces, a plan to limit hoarding has been drafted. This plan is the result of a joint effort between the project lead, Protection Services, and the Office of Parking and Sustainable Transportation.

Facilities

Outdoor spaces, parking spaces, service counters, and waiting areas

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Facilities worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Creating and maintaining an accessible interactive campus map.
- ✓ Consulting members of the University community with disabilities to decide on priority initiatives and to measure progress.

STATUS OF 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, Facilities completed the following commitments:

- ✓ Modernized and replaced platform lifts and stairlifts for wheelchairs, with 90% of the project complete.
- ✓ Updated and installed accessible washrooms in all priority locations as determined by the needs of the University community and the results of the Quadrangle Architects accessibility study conducted between 2015 and 2018
- ✓ Implemented a mechanism to receive and respond to comments
- ✓ Established a governance structure that clearly defines roles and responsibilities for the management and implementation of Facilities' multi-year accessibility plan

Details

- ✓ Facilities works in close cooperation with the Human Rights Office to improve accessibility on campus and resolve any related issues
- ✓ These efforts include, but are not limited to, the following actions:
 - updating accessible campus maps
 - maintaining and modernizing platforms and escalators
 - preparing five-year action plans for 40 buildings on campus
 - participating in committee activities with the Human Rights Office

Library

Procurement of accessible library resources

STATUS OF ONGOING COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, the Library worked on the following commitments:

- ✓ Raising awareness of universal design principles among library staff members.

STATUS OF 2019-2020 COMMITMENTS

From December 2019 to May 2020, the Library completed the following commitments:

- ✓ Explored various options to reduce the number of steps required for the library users to request and receive accessible material and to make the process as transparent as possible.

Details

- ✓ Due to the challenges related to the COVID-19 situation, we are focusing our efforts so that students with print disabilities can get the accessible materials they need for their courses.
- ✓ We are also working on changing the procedure to standardize student requests for materials in accessible formats. These changes should come into effect later this year
- ✓ Library staff took part in a presentation to library staff on accessibility and inclusive design practices for Open Educational Resources (OER).
- ✓ Library staff members continue to receive information on accessibility best practices.

Partners

The Human Rights Office would like to sincerely thank all those who helped produce this document:

- Procurement: Isabelle Larivée and Monica Mendoza
- Human Resources: Lise Griffith and Sophie Ménard
- External Relations: Marie-Cine Renaud, Mélanie De La Chevrotière, and Jason Cobill
(Communications Directorate)
- Resources: Marc-Antoine Joly, Geoffrey Frigon and Jodi Courchaine (Facilities)
- Library: Talia Chung, Joan Cavanagh, Cecilia Tellis and Megan McMeekin
- Student Academic Success Service: Michel Guilbeault and Pascal Wickert

The Human Rights Office would also like to warmly thank the members of the University community who took the time to share their experiences and make recommendations to assist the University in its quest for accessibility.