



THE ACCESSIBLE PATH TO LEADERSHIP: ACCESSIBILITY AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Status Report 2017

Why Accessibility Matters

As a college and public sector organization, George Brown College is committed to creating an accessible organization by preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities and demonstrating leadership for accessibility throughout the college sector and Ontario.

To make accessibility a reality throughout the organization, we recognize that all employees have a role in creating an accessible and inclusive college. Our goal is to ensure accessibility for all of our employees, our students and our community members who access services, products, resources or any of the facilities operated by the College.

Where Are We Now: Implementing our Obligations under the AODA

Legislative Updates

There were no new legislative updates introduced in 2017.

The next major step towards accessibility in our sector will be the creation of the Education Accessibility Standard which reflects Ontario's ongoing commitment to making education more accessible for students with disabilities.

In December 2017, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario confirmed that selections have been made for two Chairs of the Standards Development Committees (SDC) who will lead the creation of a new Education Accessibility Standard to remove accessibility barriers for students.

Membership for both the K-12 SDC and the PSE SDC are currently being finalized, with first meetings expected early 2018.

Multi-Year Plan

George Brown College continues to work in accordance with the multi-year plan developed to meet our organizational obligations under the AODA, *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4 (1) (2))*.

As the AODA obligations are far-reaching with varying levels of responsibility across the college, our multi-year plan reflects a strategic approach to implementation that assigns leadership and responsibility to various groups to ensure our accessibility goals are met.

The multi-year plan is a fluid document and framework that provides high level deliverables and activities, and is updated as progress continues at the college.

College Committees

The college continues its accessibility-related work within the parameters of the George Brown College AODA Committee, comprised of senior leaders representing a cross section of key areas and employees of the college who champion and are accountable for the successful implementation of the accessibility initiatives as they relate to the AODA.

The AODA Coordinator serves as a resource throughout the college who provides leadership and expertise, and is accountable for the development, progression and execution of the college's accessibility strategy.

Provincial Committees

George Brown College continues its representation on the following provincial committees:

- Human Resources Colleges Committee (HRCC) AODA Committee
- Heads of Library and Learning Resources (HLLR) AODA Committee for Ontario College Libraries

Annual Report

The college continues to support all previous and ongoing milestones and initiatives outlined in the college's multi-year plan. Each year a status report is prepared that outlines our achievements including:

- Meeting the current legislative requirement,
- Reporting on recent activities identified within our multi-year plan and
- Identifying related accessibility initiatives that continue to prevent and remove barriers, college wide.

AODA, Status Report 2017 Achievements, Activities and Related Initiatives

Accessible Document Training

- The PMT Administrator & Sr. Digital Specialist, continued monthly training sessions for faculty & staff on creating accessible documents (MS Word, PDFs), available for registering on the college's PD portal, My Learning.
- One-on-one support for faculty & staff (email, phone, Skype, in person) when repeated attempts to make documents accessible have failed.

- Presenting best practices on how to make documents accessible at staff/department meetings.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

- The college continues its commitment to arrange for accessible formats and communication supports (upon request) in a timely manner at a cost that is no more than the regular charge to others.
- The college continues to meet its obligations with the following initiatives: College staff ASL-interpreter role (established 2009); TextNet, a computer-based TTY service (established 2009); UbiDuo technology to support communication for GBC Service Centers (established 2010); and the Captioned Media and eText Policy (established 2006).

Accessible Learning Services

- Accessible Learning Services and Elti collaborated and launched Ally and ReadWrite Gold on Blackboard:
 - ALLY facilitates faculty assessment of whether their teaching materials are accessible.
 - ReadWrite Gold facilitates student access to a screen reader from home, free of charge, which can be used to access Blackboard and general learning materials.
- ALS purchased 10 CCTV's for low vision students to be dispersed through the Library, Assessment Centre and AT labs.
- Accessible Learning Services launched an online [Faculty Guide on Accommodations](#) which is intended to assist faculty in understanding accommodation practices and accessibility best practices for the classroom.
- Completed [two ASL and Captioned videos](#), one regarding the process to withdraw after the strike and the other regarding the strike relief fund. This video was in the top 5 most viewed videos for December on the GBC site.
- Worked closely with marketing to ensure the videos meet approval.
- Completed "What professors should know about Interpreters" as part of the "Myth Busters" video series for faculty.
- Future projects include: top 20 ASL signs for faculty to communicate with their students (script approved) and other potential videos on Computerized Notetaking, Peer Notetaking, Notetaking Express.

Ally: Blackboard Assistive Technology

- Ally is a Blackboard Assistive Technology that supports the College efforts to achieve online accessibility and inclusion for all students. The product assesses and provides recommendations for making course content more accessible to suit diverse needs.
- Using the AODA Standards, Ally analyzes file accessibility and provides targeted solutions to remove barriers through the use of alternative formats.

- Following a pilot run in Summer and Fall 2017, Ally is currently deployed in Blackboard, and it gives faculty and staff reports with guidance and tips on how to make documents more accessible; and it gives students the option to generate instant alternative formats, such as: HTML, ePub, Tagged PDF, Electronic Braille (BRF), and audio (MP3).
- As a practical hands-on tool, Ally is a catalyst to raising awareness among staff and faculty about meeting and exceeding requirements for course content accessibility.
- eLTI offers an online Ally training option and support for everyone at the College.

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Services (DEHRS)

- The college's [AODA Accessibility Policy](#) was refreshed in 2017 in alignment with legislative updates; this included the addition of a detailed section on Service Animal Guidelines (Appendix A) – outlining the process and procedure for supporting and welcoming service animals, in accordance with the AODA.
- The college's [Workplace Accommodation Policy](#) underwent its mandatory review in 2017 and was updated and modernized to align with current GBC standards.
- Launched “Accessibility Tips,” sent to all staff fortnightly via GBC Update, to help the community get better acquainted with the college's obligations under the AODA, and to support accessibility best practices college-wide.
- Submitted an updated Return to Work policy for review and implementation by HR team.
- AODA Coordinator guest lectured in several GBC classrooms on the topic of accessibility best practices and AODA compliance; also presented in faculty meetings, and met one on one with faculty to build accessibility competencies to help facilitate AODA compliance.
- Worked with VP Corporate and VP Academic who sent out a joint statement to all faculty via Chairs/Deans/Directors reaffirming the college's commitment to accessible materials, specifically accessibility requirements for course packs and textbooks.
- Refreshed the AODA compliant template for service disruptions and redistributed it to Facilities and other departments throughout the college.
- Ongoing work by DEHRS to develop a diversity committee and to establish a diversity strategy, college-wide.

eTextbook Initiative

- As part of the college's Digital Learning Initiative (DLI), the eLearning and Teaching Innovation (eLTI) team has been working with programs across the college to implement an eTextbook initiative in which the cost of the textbook is included in the course material fees.
- These eTexts support increased access for students who can interact with the text in their preferred manner: digital, print or audio and offer accessibility features such as: text to speech functionality, adjustable font sizes, and user navigation controls.

- Launched in 2015 with one text; as of Fall 2017, there are 33 courses using 20 unique resources in 39 programs, with deployed 5,600 eTexts to students.
- The eText initiative is consistent with the College's focus on the 3 pillars of sustainable practices: Environmental Sustainability, Social Sustainability and Economic Sustainability.

Human Resources

- Applicants continue to be notified about the availability of accommodation during the recruitment process, including in relation to material or processes to be used. Consultation occurs with the applicant to arrange and provide the accommodation.
- To increase accessibility, the option of Skype interviews for pre-screening or first round interviews is in place, both for people with disabilities for whom travel or mobility may be difficult, and for those who may live at a distance and may not be able to travel for an in person interview.
- In response to feedback from employees and candidates about the application process, [two AODA compliant, instructional documents were created](#) to improve the online job application experience.
- [2016 Employee Engagement Survey](#) results were released to employees in 2017 in an updated, AODA compliant, format to increase ease in reading and interpreting data.

Library

- George Brown College Library continues to respond to alternate format requests of library materials to registered students, faculty and staff with a perceptual disability as defined in the Canadian Copyright Act, using ACE, the [Accessible Content e-Portal](#).
- GBC maintains its representation as Chair of the HLLR-AODA Committee for the Ontario College Libraries.

OER: Open Education Resources

- Ontario College Libraries, under the direction of the Heads of Library and Learning Resources (HLLR), with the support of Ontario College Library Services (OCLS), continue their work towards a strategy that supports Open Education Resources (OER).
- Commissioned research and published the report entitled, "[Online Learning, OERs, and the Changing Role of College Libraries - June, 2016.](#)"
- Currently building an OER toolkit designed to provide support and training to library staff in open education initiatives, including removing barriers to education by prioritizing the use of open, accessible, and free resources written and adapted by subject experts.
- The goals of the OER toolkit are to:

- Establish competencies among librarians and library staff to support college faculty in understanding OERs, including how they may adopt and adapt open resources for use in their courses.
- Establish libraries in leadership role in the emerging areas of OER, ensuring library support of open materials.
- Additional goals include providing a centralized location for Ontario colleges to share information and best practices on OER, including access to significant content that has already been developed locally at individual colleges; and to help facilitate online teaching and learning to ensure all students have equitable access to affordable resources.

The Learning Portal

- The OER project intersects with another Ontario college library initiative, [The Learning Portal](#), which aims to provide easy and equitable access to open learning resources and services for Ontario's online college students, and a consistent, province-wide academic support platform for faculty to use for curriculum development and assignment design. The OER toolkit (planned for release Spring/Summer 2018) will be embedded into the Faculty Resources section of the Learning Portal.
- A GBC representative advises on accessibility standards in the development of the [Learning Portal](#).

Kanopy Streaming Video Collection

- GBC Library now supports [Kanopy](#), an online video streaming platform with a collection of approximately 8,000 videos on a wide variety of subjects, including: social sciences, arts and design, business, computer sciences, health sciences, architecture, food technology and travel and tourism.
- Over 80% of the collection is captioned, and requests can be made by anyone using the platform, including staff and students, to caption any video that is currently not captioned with a 72-hour turn-around service.
- The Kanopy platform also hosts other streamed video collections, including the Elsevier Dental Hygiene Procedures Collection and the Mosby's Nursing Skills Collection, providing a more streamlined and intuitive experience for staff and students using online videos.

Universal Design for Learning

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach to designing curriculum and student services in a way that lessens barriers to participation, reducing the need for individualized arrangements, and increasing inclusion, engagement, and success for all students.

- UDL 101 training was organized for approximately 40 GBC faculty and administrators in winter 2017, including one day for UDL leaders.
- 5 Academic Schools with 17 professors across a range of fields volunteered to participate in an academic pilot in spring 2017 to explore the training, guidance, coaching, and support needed to implement UDL strategies in the classroom, and which strategies were most impactful in student engagement, access, and sense of inclusion. Also explored was the role of 5 support areas in facilitating faculty success with UDL: eLearning, Academic Excellence, Staff Development, Accessible Learning Services, and Academic Services/Learning Resources. Research report on results: March 2018. Focus was also on building a community of practice across the 17 professors, along with other professors across the college who are interested in UDL.
- Service areas in Academic and Student Affairs engaged in a UDL initiative that involved training 20 managers on how to think about student services through the lens of UDL, how to apply a UDL audit to assess services, and guidance in making services changes to widen access and inclusion. Small changes to widen access and inclusion include the use of video appointments for career advising, tailoring counselling for specific groups (Black Student Success Network, International students, etc.), and offering videos with Deaf individual signing student information on website during the faculty strike).

Website Publishing Team

- Use of web service (Siteimprove) to regularly monitor the georgebrown.ca website for accessibility issues.
- Regular meetings with Digital Experience Manager to identify priority accessibility issues flagged by Siteimprove, to be assigned to ITS for fixing.
- Liaising with external vendors to ensure brochures, booklets, and other materials for the college are accessible.
- Running accessibility checks on all documents sent to the Website Publishing Team before posting to georgebrown.ca
- Testing of new HTML templates and/or dynamic web tools for accessibility issues, prior launching live pages.
- Testing web service tools (e.g. Algonquin's Course Outline Retrieval page) for accessibility.
- Testing email templates (e.g. Pardot CRM) for accessibility issues and recommending fixes.
- Engaging the services of an external accessibility consultant for college departments and divisions, to help convert their digital documents to accessible versions.
- The Website Publishing Team's shared email account's signature block now contains the following section on Accessible Documents: *In order to ensure the*

college meets its obligations under the [requirements of the AODA](#), all documents (PDF, Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc.) sent to the Web Publishing Team for posting on the main college website must be accessible. For more information on document accessibility, visit the [Accessibility section of the GBC website](#) or the [Accessible Digital Office Document Project website](#), or [register on My Learning](#) for an upcoming “Creating Accessible Documents” training session.

Moving Forward

George Brown College is committed to continuing to meet the forthcoming AODA obligations of 2020 and 2021, including:

s.18 Educational libraries (2020) to provide, procure or acquire accessible or conversion-ready format of digital based resources (upon request). (Special collections and archival material are exempted).

- The Library eResources Accessibility Project (LEAP) is an HLLR-directed initiative currently in development to assist Ontario college libraries in upholding accessibility best practices and becoming compliant with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) January 1, 2020 deadline for ensuring the accessibility of electronic resources (IASR, 2011, s. 18(3)).

s. 14 All Internet websites and web content (2021) must comply with WCAG 2.0 Level AA (excludes live captioning, audio description).