THE ACCESSIBLE PATH TO LEADERSHIP: ACCESSIBILITY AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Status Report 2018

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.
Please contact: aoda@georgebrown.ca

Contents

Why Accessibility Matters

As a college and public sector organization, George Brown College is committed to creating an accessible environment 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 2018.

In March 2018, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released its new [Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities](#), along with recommendations on how to best meet legal obligations under Ontario's Human Rights Code. This Policy replaces the previous document, Guidelines on Accessible Education (2004).

In January 2019, the College received the following updates from the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility:

- In early 2018, two Standards Development Committees began exploring options for the removal of accessibility barriers in the Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 and Postsecondary sectors. The work of these committees has been on hold since last June, as the [Ontario Progressive Conservative Party majority] government considers options on the best way to address accessibility in the province's publicly-funded education system.
- The Hon. David Onley's Third Legislative Review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act is due January 31, 2019. The Ontario government will be waiting to review Mr. Onley's report before considering the best path forward to further improving accessibility in Ontario.

Multi-Year Plan

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

As GBC's 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 a cross-section of employees who represent key areas accountable for the successful implementation of accessibility initiatives as they relate to the AODA, as well as employees who are accessibility champions.

The AODA Coordinator serves as a resource throughout the college who provides leadership and expertise, and is accountable for coordinating 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
- College Libraries Ontario (CLO) AODA Committee for Ontario College Libraries

Annual Status 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 2018:
Achievements, Activities and Related Initiatives

Accessible Document and Web Accessibility Training

- The Assistant Webmaster – Marketing, continues to offer monthly training sessions for faculty & staff on creating accessible documents (MS Word, PDF), available for registration on Cornerstone, 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.
- Additional training provided (upon request) on web and email accessibility best practices, specifically as it relates to email campaigns and the creation of landing pages to support such campaigns. Departments receiving this training to date include: Alumni Services; Communications; Strategy and Innovation.

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:
  - ASL English Interpreter for College Employees and Events role;
  - TTY service via 1-877-515-5559, as posted throughout the GBC website and directed to the GBC Contact Centre, with a line in Deaf Services;
  - UbiDuo technology and Boogie Boards to support communication for GBC Service Centers;
  - Captioned Media and eText Policy (established 2006).
  - Career Services is in the process of implementing a Visual Relay Service (VRS) pilot project to assess compatibility for providing on demand, accessible services that enables people who use sign language to communicate with voice telephone users.
  - The Contact Centre is working on a plan to roll out SMS text messaging services, Spring 2019.

Accessible Learning Services (ALS)

- ALS introduced the role of Access and Inclusion Coach, to provide hands-on, tailored and supportive guidance to teaching faculty across the college in how to implement academic accommodations effectively and how to apply Universal

Design for Learning strategies to maximize access and inclusion while maintaining academic standards.

- The Work Integrated Learning / Accessible Learning Pilot was initiated to widen access and increase inclusion in field placement experiences for students with disabilities. The project covers a wide spectrum of development, including mapping a process to guide students in determining needs in field placement, from students who do not need accommodations but do need education and skills for self-advocacy and pro-active planning, to students who have complex needs requiring accommodations. Key components of the project include education and training for Accessibility Consultants, Career Advisors, and Field Placement Advisors with workshop and resource development.

- In August 2018, Accessible Learning Services and Counselling co-hosted a three-day summer transition experience for 45 new students with disabilities. These first year students were given the opportunity to meet staff from the service areas, have a guided tour of their campus, engage in social activities with peers, and learn about strategies and supports which will promote their success at College.

- Last spring, staff from Accessible Learning Services met with colleagues from Operations and the Financial Aid office to streamline bursary application processes. Wait times for students and miscommunication around OSAP's Bursaries for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) have since been greatly reduced.

- The ALS team identified and authored a Systemic Barriers Identification document which outlined the primary systemic barriers that students experience at the college. Recommendations for next steps include promoting accessible classroom materials and UDL design of courses, etc. and meeting with the Registrar's office to review processes. This document will be used to guide departmental initiatives as we continue to remove barriers for students.

- The Accessible Learning Services Policy was revised in August 2016 in response to the OHRC Mental Health Directives. It includes updated language around the name of the department, mental health accommodation, roles and responsibilities as well as a criteria and procedures for retroactive accommodations. The updated policy has been approved as of December 2018 and uploaded to the GBC website.

- Accessible Learning Services is providing greater departmental support and response to serious accommodation complaints from students with the goal of facilitating a faster resolution so that students can resume their studies and have increased opportunities to be successful in their programs.

- A project is now underway to review and redevelop intake processes with the goal of providing a more streamlined process for students which is aligned with new OSAP requirements including updates to OSAP Disability Verification.

- ALS is developing a Hub or community on Blackboard for faculty and students to use and source accommodation related information.
- Accessible Learning Services launched "CALM Zone" a drop-in session at two campuses during the fall semester to provide a quiet place for students with disabilities to connect. Two Peer Coaches were hired and trained to work with students with a variety of disabilities.

Captioning: Blackboard Collaborate

- The college has contracted with Blackboard to offer live captioning for Collaborate sessions. This service offers 200 words per minute live captioning in English with an accuracy of 98%. To request live captioning, a 48-hour lead time is required, along with details regarding the session date, time, duration and Collaborate link, emailed to the Captioned Media Coordinator.
- ALS, ELTI and the Captioned Media Coordinator partnered to develop a process to ensure that students with relevant accommodation plans can receive captioning when participating in Blackboard Collaborate sessions.

Career Services

- Career Services created an accommodation statement for staff email signatures, directing students on how to request accommodations, such as an interpreter, with a link to the Career Services staff directory webpage.
- Five members of the Career Services team completed Accessible Documents Training (PDF) in 2018.
- All Career Services staff are up to date on AODA and OHRC online training modules for 2018.
- In collaboration with Accessible Learning Services for the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Task Force, Career Services created a multi-delivery workshop (with a full length lecture-style option and a two-part web-based series) for Student with Disabilities on disclosure and accommodation for Work Integrated Learning. Additional workshop for transitioning into WIL placement currently in development for Winter 2019.
- Developing workshop content in collaboration with the School of Deaf and Deafblind Studies, for a three-day employability training session for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students focused on resume, interview and career readiness skills to be delivered in Winter 2019 semester.
- Addition of a large print reader in Career Services and Accessible Learning Services student space at Casa Loma Campus.
- Hosted an inclusive hiring event with Scotiabank at St James campus in October 2018, which was attended by 23 students with disabilities. Deaf Services were

onsite to provide ASL-English interpreting services for student/employer discussions.

- Career Services is currently implementing a Visual Relay Service (VRS) pilot project to assess compatibility for providing on demand, accessible service to Deaf students of the college on an as needed basis. This would be a supplemental service to the formal ASL interpreting support provided by Deaf Services.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) has formed a partnership with the Honours Bachelor of Interpretation (American Sign Language – English) program to provide a more formalized opportunity for interpreting students to obtain their practicum hours.
  - o Practicum students are required to complete a minimum number of hours observation, including a set minimum number of hours of consecutive/simultaneous interpreting.
  - o Scheduling will be done by the BAI with input from DHHS with regards to interpreter availability and interest.
- The DHHS team hosted several activities throughout the month September, for National Deaf Awareness Month:
  - o Staff hosted "International Day of Sign Language and International Week of the Deaf" on September 24-28.
  - o Partnered with ASL Club Toronto and Student Association, showcasing movies featuring Deaf characters, including: The Hammer, Shape of Water, Children of a Lesser God, A Quiet Place, Wonderstruck.
- Hosted "A Quiet Place," an ongoing event running every Friday from October to December 2018. The workshop focuses on learning and practicing ASL. It is a very casual and fun environment to communicate in ASL; split in 3 groups, (beginning, intermediate and advanced levels) with games and activities for each session.
- Hosted "Meet and Greet," an event focused on getting to know the new Deaf Counselor and the Deaf Peer Coach who presented on the services they provide. This event provided Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students the opportunity to meet and learn more about who to contact if they need help and support.
- Coordinated an open event for students from Deaf Upgrading Program, American Sign Language and Deaf Studies program, Intervenor for Deafblind Persons program, Deaf and hard of hearing students from other programs and staff to attend and socialize during lunch hour, with an emphasis on meeting new people in an ASL environment.

- Partnered with the GBC Food Bank and Community Action Centre for the event "Play, Nibble and Chill" at the end of November. It focused on getting to know the services of the Food Bank and Community Action Centre in a relaxed environment that included eating food and playing games. Many Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students increased their understanding of the services available, and they will now stop by and hang at Community Action Centre any time.
- Offered the "De-Stress Holiday Relief Workshop" focused on learning more on the tools of time management and how to cope with stress, followed by destress games / activities.
- Completed 10 videos, ranging from faculty focused information videos, to testimonials from our Deaf graduates.
- The department plans to continue existing projects through 2019 and offer new initiatives including:
  - Resuming "A Quiet Place" at St James Campus and introducing this event at Casa Loma and finding Deaf Space for Casa Loma.
  - Setting up Nutrition and Wellbeing workshops for St James and Casa Loma Campuses.
  - Offering Meet and Greet with the Food Bank and Community Action Centre event at Casa Loma.
  - Working with DEHRS on an event featuring a Deaf Indigenous presenter; hoping to partner with Indigenous Education & Services as well.
  - Partnering with DEHRS to set up workshops on Human Rights and Sexual Violence Prevention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students.

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Services

- The College filed the 2017 Accessibility Compliance Report with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.
- Continuing to strengthen relationships and accessibility support throughout the college through one on one support, outreach activities, and partnerships.
- Throughout the winter and spring semesters, "Accessibility Tips" were sent to all staff fortnightly via GBC Update, to help the community become better acquainted with the college's obligations under the AODA, and to support accessibility best practices college-wide.
- 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 and staff to build accessibility competencies to help facilitate AODA compliance.
- Drafted "Accessibility Requirements and Workflow: Classroom Resources & Supports" a document that synthesizes the process and supports available in support of accessible classrooms.
- Further to the joint statement by Vice President, Academic and Vice President, Student Success renewing the college's ongoing commitment accessible

resources, key stakeholders drafted the "Accessible Document Remediation Strategy Proposal" that identified gaps at the college and made recommendations for a streamlined workflow and support system for the remediation of documents.

- Refreshed all content throughout the [AODA website pages](#) to improve user experience and access to information.
- Posted the [AODA compliant template for service disruptions](#) publicly and redistributed it to Facilities and other departments throughout the college.
- Introduced aoda@georgebrown.ca for streamlined communication.
- The organizational reporting for the role of ASL-English Interpreter for College Employees & Events was realigned from DEHRS to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. The role itself has not changed but this organizational move was made to ensure that the position has sufficient support and infrastructure in place going forward.
- The AODA Coordinator responded to feedback from our community by liaising with TTC WheelTrans to improve services for the GBC Community, including the implementation of increased signage and stop improvements, at our 200 King St E. location.

Facilities

- Facilities continues to address the physical assets of GBC's aging infrastructure to better meet the requirements of the AODA, the OHRC, and the Ontario Building Code.
- Many service counters throughout the college have been changed from high, transaction tops to lower counter heights to accommodate accessibility.
- The new college standard for furniture includes powered sit-to-stand desks with variable height capabilities that allow proper adjustments to suit all users.
- These desks have been ordered for classrooms and will continue to be implemented as funds become available. Facilities staff is currently working with academic departments to prioritize which classrooms require these tables.
- Painting of walls now includes the painting of door frames in a contrasting colour to enhance visible difference per AODA/Building Code requirements.
- "All-Gender" washroom signage has been established through consultation and implemented into the college signage standard.

Human Resources

- Applicants continue to be notified about the availability of accommodation during the recruitment process, and consultation occurs with applicants and employees to arrange and provide accommodations.
- To increase accessibility, documents and email templates in Word and Cornerstone that are used throughout the talent acquisition process have been updated to reflect accessibility best practices and to strengthen AODA compliance, including: Interview Guidelines; Mini-Lesson Guidelines; Offer Letter Emails; Interview Schedule template; Education Verification Form.

- Individualized Emergency Accommodation Plans for employees with disabilities continue to be created with the input of the employee with reference to their specific needs. The creation of individualized plans is led by the Manager - Safety and Wellness, in consultation with Security, Human Resources, and the AODA Coordinator (as needed).

Library, Academic Services & Learning Resources

- In addition to the range of accessible library services offered, 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.
- The Library continues to reconfigure existing space to enhance accessibility by improving service areas. Casa Loma Library installed a new service desk with service points that meet accessibility standards. The St. James Library service desk is scheduled to be updated by the end of winter term.
- GBC library has installed six new height adjustable tables at St. James, three at Waterfront, and three at Casa Loma which increases the total from one at each library.
- Prodigi devices for low vision users have been installed at St. James, Casa Loma, and Waterfront LLCs, Assessment Centres and Adaptive Technology Labs.
- GBC library is currently working with ALS to develop a Service Level Agreement that outlines service development and responsibility to ensure a better service experience for all students.

College Libraries Ontario

- Work continues on LEAP - Library eResources Accessibility Project, a CLO-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)).
- College Libraries Ontario (CLO) continue to support equitable access to open learning resources and services via The Learning Portal and the OER Toolkit.
- GBC maintains its representation as Chair on the AODA Committee for College Libraries Ontario (CLO), and advises on accessibility standards in the development of CLO projects, such as the Learning Portal.

Research and Innovation

- GBC's Research & Innovation department continues to improve awareness and communication around accessibility beyond the initial hiring stage, with a focus on accommodation throughout students and graduates onboarding:
  - Onboarding communication emails include accessibility / accommodation statements.
  - Onboarding can be done in-person but also through phone and computer screen sharing to accommodate students, including those who live far from campus.
  - Mandatory online AODA & OHSA training has become more interactive, resulting in students able to apply their knowledge to their workplace.
  - An increased rate of students who are satisfied with the training procedures, methods and flexibility of an accessible online training.
  - The benefits and importance of completing the AODA modules are emphasized during the onboarding process.
    - Deadlines and importance of mandatory training have been communicated more clearly and strictly;
    - As a result, an increased rate of students are completing the online trainings in a timely manner with positive outcomes.
- With a large volume of student and graduate hires, the department has become more flexible in accommodating busy schedules (i.e. students hired on timesheets versus on regular schedule). This strategy prevents issues related to scheduling and improved overall satisfaction of our students, meanwhile increasing flexibility.
- The department continues to plan for new strategies that incorporate AODA, Diversity and Inclusion into the projects students and graduates are hired for, including:
  - Observing our selection process more closely, including how diversity is incorporated into the selection process, in addition to grades, performance, and referrals.
  - Creating and maintaining inclusive, accurate and detailed job descriptions for the positions we are hiring for when necessary.
  - Communicating and providing more resources, information and supporting continuous departmental meetings for staff and Project Managers to bring awareness to equitable recruitment practices and procedures.
  - Increasing creativity and collaboration between GBC's departments to attract a more diverse population for research projects, including both students and faculty.

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 CLO-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)). For further details, please contact cabba@georgebrown.ca.

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

Contact

If you have any questions about AODA compliance or accessibility best practices at George Brown College, please contact: aoda@georgebrown.ca – thank you.