ACCESSIBILITY AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

ANNUAL STATUS REPORT 2021–2022
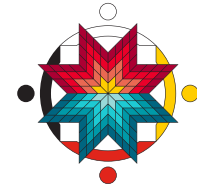
WHAT'S INSIDE

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

George Brown College is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous peoples who have lived here over time. We are grateful to share this land as treaty people who learn, work, and live in the community with each other.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We welcome your feedback. Let us know if you have any questions or feedback about the activities and programs highlighted in this 2021–2022 Accessibility Status Report, the George Brown College Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and accessibility matters in general.

To view previous Status Reports, visit georgebrown.ca/about/aoda/reports

To request a copy in another format or to send us your comments or questions, please contact us at:

Office of Anti-Racism, Equity and Human Rights Services

Mail: Office of Anti-Racism, Equity and Human Rights Services
George Brown College
160 Kendal Ave., Room C221B
Toronto, ON, M5R 1M3

Telephone: 416-415-5000 ext., 4

Email: AODA@geogebrown.ca

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE *ACCESSIBILITY STATUS REPORT 2021–2022*

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), George Brown College is considered a large designated public sector organization. As such, George Brown is required to ensure its compliance to the standards outlined in the AODA legislation. Compliance standards include developing and implementing a multi-year plan identifying actions to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities who engage with our institution.

AODA legislation also requires designated public sector organizations to prepare an Annual Report relative to the multi-year accessibility plan. This Report documents the planning and implementation activities undertaken by George Brown as part of the multi-year plan.

The college supports all previous, ongoing, and upcoming milestones and initiatives outlined in the college's multi-year plan. This status report outlines our achievements including activities related to:

- Meeting the current legislative requirements
- The development and implementation of a new -multi-year accessibility plan following the previous plan that expired in 2021.
- Accessibility initiatives that continue to prevent and remove barriers and promote inclusion college-wide

This report highlights our efforts over the past year to not only meet compliance standards, but also to live up to our commitment to demonstrate leadership for accessibility throughout the college sector.

GEORGE BROWN'S STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

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.

OFFICE OF ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS SERVICES (OAREHRS)

The OAREHRS is responsible for ensuring that the college meets its obligations under the AODA. This includes leading, planning, supporting, filing, and reporting to the government and the public on progress. OAREHRS is also responsible for providing training, consultation, support, and advice on how to meet broad accessibility requirements. Most significantly, the office ensures through collaboration and consultation that the college continues to uphold our values as outline in our Vision 2030, Strategy 2026 as well as the the four core principles of the AODA. These principles include independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity.

Finally, the office works within a shared commitment to continue to uphold our commitment to cultivating a more accessible and inclusive college community for persons with disabilities

SETTING THE CONTEXT

In 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic changed our college, our communities, and our world. The province ordered the closure of non-essential services, including colleges. During this report's timeframe the lifting of sanitary and health measures by the Government of Ontario and Canada seeking to go back to the previous "normal" implied new adjustments for students and employees who had been studying and working remotely.

Although most of the challenges posed by the remote learning and working have been improved, our most vulnerable employees and students remain at an increased risk of experiencing exclusion, isolation, and increased barriers as a result of the pandemic's aftermath. In that regard, to support the students, the employees, and the community we serve, the College implemented the protocols for the return to the campuses. This is the College's response to the highly remote environment in which the services for the students have been provided during the last 2 years. During this transition the college has been committed to continue to address these and other systemic barriers.

The college recognizes that challenges experienced by persons with disabilities extend beyond the issues identified during the pandemic, and are greater than the campus environment . It is important for the college to continue to have a holistic approach to addressing barriers faced by those with disabilities. We must ground our solutions to these barriers in a historical and contemporary context, while ensuring that we also acknowledge the intersecting identities that may exacerbate these barriers.

This report provides a snapshot of how George Brown College pursues adapting services, programs, and policies to meet the new challenges of the aftermath of COVID-19 while continuing to meet compliance and advance our efforts to prevent and eliminate barriers to accessibility to create a more inclusive institution.

COMPLIANCE REPORTING

George Brown College is required to submit an Accessibility Compliance Report in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). This reporting is an attestation that the college meets the required applicable standards. The compliance report can be found on George Brown website. (georgebrown.ca/about/aoda/reports). We are required to submit our reporting every two years. George Brown submitted a report in December 2021, the next compliance report will be submitted to the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility in December 2023

MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

George Brown College is the final stages of developing the 2023-2028 Multi-year Accessibility Plan to meet our organizational obligations under the AODA, Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4 (1) (2)).

Development Process

Excellence Canada (a third party accessibility consultant firm) was contracted to assist the College in the development of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The process to develop the plan includes four stages. Stage (1) Conducting a document review and environmental scan, Stage (2) Public Consultation (students and employees) and Reporting, Stage (3) Development of Multi-year Plan Framework; Stage (4) AODA committee training, Stage (5) Action Planning and Implementation.

The documentation review and environmental scan was completed in April 2022, this included a review of policy, guideline, reports program initiatives, training plans and communication tools.

Following the document review and environmental scan, and between April and August 2022, OAREHRS invited community members, including persons with lived experience with (dis)abilities who also intersected with identified stakeholder groups (ex. students, support staff, faculty and administration) to participate in focus groups and interviews. Focus groups explored with participants their views on current accessibility accomplishments, opportunities for improvements and suggested ideas for priorities or areas of focus to advance college accessibility goals and commitments in the coming years.

The information gathered from the focus groups were reviewed and themed by Excellence Canada and recommendation were generated in a report[*]. The internal report identified four main themes including: Risk Considerations and Impact, Physical Barrier Concerns, Lack of Organizational/ Process Cohesion and Integration; Accountability. These themes were followed by recommendations which will be used to inform the priorities of the 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility plan

AODA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

George Brown has an established committee to support the institution in identifying and addressing accessibility issues. Our AODA Committee is comprised of senior leaders and employee representation throughout the college.

Committee members include champions of accessibility best practices, employees who are accountable for the successful implementation of accessibility initiatives and AODA regulations and the AODA Lead. AODA committee provides leadership and expertise across the college in support of the college's accessibility plan.

George Brown is committed to increasing representation of persons with disabilities on the AODA committee; this includes hearing from students within our community. It is essential that the voices of those most impacted by our efforts are centred and amplified as we continue our planning. In 2023, a recruitment effort will be undertaken to ensure that the committee has greater engagement with, improved communication to, and greater representation from persons with disabilities throughout the college. In addition, over the next year the committee will receive additional development focused on the Post-Secondary Education Standards Recommendation, Implementing Accessibility Plans (Roles and Responsibilities) and Disability Inclusion and Justice.

MEMBERS OF THE AODA COMMITTEE

Name	Title
Radamiro Gaviria	(Lead) Sr. Mgr., Human Rights & Equity
Samantha Alnemri	(Administrative Lead) Operations Coordinator (OAREHRS)
Alexis Lau	Research Resource Coordinator, Research & Innovation
Asim Ayub	Interim Campus Manager, WF, Facilities
Candice O'Donnell	Sr. Manager Student Support Strategic Integration (Counselling/ALS)
Cathy Weyman	Office of the Registrar, Manager, Registration
Colin Fitzsimons	Director, Academic Services & Learning Resources
Ellen Flanagan	Accessibility Consultant, Student Support & Wellbeing
Hooman Farhangnia	Campus Manager, Casa Loma, Facilities
Jackie Tan	Director Planning, Operations & Administration
Jennifer Grant	Director, Office of Anti-Racism, Equity & Human Rights Services
Jessica Grant	Marketing Manager, Strategy & Innovation
Joanna Friend	Professor, Centre for Community Services & Health Sciences
Kathleen Abbott	Associate Dean, Centre for Continuous Learning
Marisol Escobar	Visual Designer/Asset Maintenance Coord., Strategy & Innovation
Monica Curtis	PMT Administrator & Senior Digital Specialist
Mubein Tarahi	Sr. Manager Capital projects
Nerys Rau, Director	Project Dir. for Limberlost Place
Roanna Moses	Manager, Disability & Accommodation

Name	Title
Robert Wilson	Project Manager, Capital Projects, Facilities
Shay Rosen	Manager, Accessible Learning Services
Susan Bowrah	Vice President People and Culture
Susan Toews	Dean, Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies
Vakul Arora	Supply Chain Business Process and Compliance Manager, Office of the VP

To learn more about the committee, or how to become a member please contact:
AODA@georgebrown.ca

WORKING TOWARDS GREATER ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR 191/11) requires designated public sector organizations to meet standards of accessibility in the areas of information and communications, employment, transportation, design of public spaces and customer service.

The items below are a summary of the AODA requirements that are completed and continue to be part of George Brown's day-to-day operations. Meeting the requirements of the AODA legislation is an ongoing process; exceeding these requirements is an ongoing commitment. George Brown will continue to seek opportunities to build on successes in the areas below in an effort to create a more accessible and inclusive working and learning environment.

✔ Accessible customer service

✔ Accessibility policies

✔ Accessible purchases

✔ Emergency response plans for employees

✔ Ongoing staff and faculty training

✔ Accessible feedback

✔ Educational resources (see below)

✔ New websites that conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA (see below)

✔ Employment standards

✔ Accessible formats and communication supports

✔ Design of public spaces standards

✔ Compliance monitoring and reporting

PROPOSED POST SECONDARY EDUCATION STANDARDS

In 2019 the Ontario Government began a process to propose recommendations for accessibility standards for postsecondary education. The initial recommendations were circulated for comment in 2021 and George Brown College provided their feedback at that time. The present and upcoming work around accessibility and compliance will be done with these emerging standards in mind. Although the specifics of the standard are unknown at this time, at least nine barrier areas have been considered:

✔ Attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, assumptions

✔ Awareness and training

✔ Assessment, curriculum, and instruction

✔ Digital learning and technology

✔ Organizational barriers

✔ Social realms, campus life

✔ Physical and architectural barriers

✔ Financial barriers

✔ General overarching barriers

Where possible, these barriers areas are to be incorporated into the next plan aiming to an early achievement of these emerging standards. At this stage, it is not possible to know what the new standards will ultimately include but it is certain that there will be new requirements that colleges will be responsible for adopting. Where the College can prepare for those additional requirements, it is more likely to find success and ease in implementation.

WORKING TOWARDS 2025: ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2021–2022

The following is a summary of efforts and accomplishments that apply to the 2021–2022 requirements under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR O. Reg. 191/11). Accomplishments are organized under applicable standards. Only standards pertinent to this report are included. These include general, customer service, information and communication, employment, design of public spaces standards.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The General Requirements are those regulatory requirements that apply across all standards. The section governs several areas of compliance including establishment of accessibility policies, multi-year accessibility plan, procuring or acquiring goods services or facilities, self-service kiosks and training.

2020–2021 Accomplishments include:

- The objectives outlined within the multi-year plan that ended in 2021 were met. The development of the new five-year plan is in progress and to be announced in Winter 2023.

- The new employees offer letters are harmonized to ensure AODA training requirements are consistently communicated to all employees. For the period of 2022 the completion rate of AODA training was as follows:
    – Working Together: The Code and the AODA – 211 employees
    – General Accessibility Requirements Module – 196 employees
    – Accessible Information and Communication Standards Module – 183 employees
    – Accessibility Awareness Training for Educators Module – 185 employees
    – Accessible Customer Service Standards Module – 15 employees

- Accommodation requests were collected upon Employee Training and Development registration. Examples of accommodations provided:
    – American Sign Language (ASL)
    – Note takers
    – Modifications for visual disabilities
    – Production of AODA compliant PDF versions of E-course content

- All Employee Training and Development videos (self-directed, live virtual and live in person) are now by default closed captioned and have transcripts available.

- The College is at its initial stages of implementing 'Stepped Care', a first step self-directed service model for students to seek accommodation supports.

- The procurement process of technology is done with a Universal Design Lens (UDL).

- The College is supporting the transition from COVID-19 Protocols by:
    – Extending and updating accommodations in response to COVID-19.
    – Implementing the Return to Campus Guide.
    – Delivering training and developing resources to ensure health and well-being practices. The resources are communicated and posted on the College's internal and public website.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD

The Customer Service Standard mandates that service providers must find ways to break down barriers that customers with disabilities from accessing the services they need. Barriers may be due to physical obstacles, technology, information and communication, an organization's practices or procedures and attitudes of employees. This standard requires institutions to ensure that policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the four core principles: Independence, Dignity, Integration, and Equality of Opportunity. Areas covered within this standard include: accessibility policies, use of service animals and support persons, notice of temporary disruptions, AODA training for employees, feedback process and format of documents.

2020–2021 Accomplishments include:

- The role of Coordinator Complex Case Management was developed to support, build relationships and facilitate the implementation of complex accommodations to further reduce barriers and increase access for students with disabilities.

- The Employee Accessible Document training was offered quarterly.

- Updated Adaptive Technology Labs at Cosa Loma and Waterfront to ensure currency of the physical spaces and software are provided to students with accessibility needs.

- A lending program for students registered with Accessible Learning Services was stablished to ensure they have technology while their Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) is being processed.

- Page1+, a new library services platform that provides accessible access to library resources was implemented.

- George Brown College partnered with the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and Accessible Content E-Portal (ACE) to provide students media in alternate forms. Students can access materials via Daisy text, Daisy Audio CDs, braille, downloadable audio and e-braille and described movies.

- The Learning Library Commons reconfigured the circulation desk at Casa Loma to enable better access to space and services for students requiring mobility assistance

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS STANDARD

The Information and Communications Standard is a part of the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation. This standard outlines requirements for organizations to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for persons with disabilities. The standard focuses on accessible formats and communication supports, emergency procedures, plans and public safety, accessible website and web content, educational and training resources, and materials (including training for educators and producers of educational or training materials), libraries of educational and training institutions, and public libraries.

2020–2021 Accomplishments include:

- ZOOM has been implemented college wide as a response to the need of an accessible communications platform.

- GBC Research has updated all website images to contain metadata to support readers and accessibility devices.

- All designed and uploaded documents for George Brown College's website are AODA compliant.

- Multiple training and resource webinars were delivered through a Universal Design Learning (UDL) lens;
  - GBC TLX conference hosted many webinars on accessibility to the George Brown College community,
  - Supporting the Mental Health and Accommodations Needs of Students in Online Platforms,
  - UDL panel discussions,
  - Intro to Kurzweil 3000,
  - UDL, Actively learn and H5P,
  - UDL Practice Zone – A Peer Support Space,
  - Learner variability and removing barriers,
  - Tech tools and programs that promote accessibility for all learners;
  - Managing & Collecting In-Class Worksheets in the Class Notebook (UDL & OneNote).

- George Brown College course development process was updated to include accessibility standards and elements of UDL.

- Student feedback on accessibility is collected with the course Evaluation forms.

- Training provided every semester to faculty around UDL and accessibility standards.

- Accessibility consultants have been consulted prior to purchasing new software platforms and products for Tutoring and Leaning Centre and the Contact Centre.

- Moved to a new learning management system.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARD

The Employment Standard, under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, requires employers to provide for accessibility across all stages of the employment life cycle. These standards provide guidelines around accessible employee recruitment and communication, interviewing, hiring and employment practices. Areas of focus include (but are not limited to): recruitment, assessment or selection processes, notices to successful applicants, workplace emergency response information, individual accommodation plans, return to work processes, performance management, career development and advancement.

2021–2022 Accomplishments include:

- Employee Disability and Accommodations reported a rating of 20% less WSIB claims compared to other post-secondary institutions.

- Implemented a case management tool to track Short-Term Disability (STD), Long -Term Disability (LTD) and WSIB accommodations.

- Hybrid model implemented for virtual interviews.

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES STANDARD (BUILT ENVIRONMENT)

The Design of Public Spaces Standard, under the Integrated Accessibility Standards, is intended to remove barriers in buildings and outdoor spaces for people with disabilities. The standard applies only to new construction and extensive renovation and covers outdoor recreation. Focus areas include (but are not limited to) parking, playground equipment for children and youth, and space maintenance.

2021–2022 Accomplishments include:

- An audit of all George Brown College spaces for accessibility and inclusion has been initiated.

- Multiple spaces for accessibility were updated, including;
  - Wheelchair access ramp added to 215 King Street West Building (St. James Campus);
  - Removing the current platform and stairs leading to two of the existing elevators at 200 King, lowering these elevators' opening and install new elevators that will be accessible to all floors. (This project is a multiyear project);
  - All lighting at 300 Adelaide Street East (St. James Campus) was updated to LED.

- New universal washroom was added to 1 Dartnell Avenue (Building D) (Casa Loma Campus).

- All new spaces are designed through the lens of UDL, inclusions and active learning;
  - Flexible seating and mobility around the space,
  - Acoustics,
  - Student views of instructor and displays,
  - Cameras for capture,
  - Assistive devices;
  - Height adjustable podiums.

WORKING TOWARDS 2025: ACCESSIBILITY AT GEORGE BROWN, WHAT'S NEXT?

George Brown College committed to meeting and exceeding the requirements set out in the AODA, including upcoming obligations. The college is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming working, living, and learning environment that supports persons with disabilities. To do this we need to ensure ongoing and meaningful consultation, comprehensive and collaborative action planning and sustained shared effort in implementation.

We will turn our focus to multi-year action planning ensuring that there is a framework in place to support the College in progressing towards our emerging accessibility goals. The new Accessibility Multi-Year Plan will align with our values and goals as outlined in George Brown College's Vision 2030, Strategy 2026. The upcoming plan will also seek to respond to the themes identified by our community and recommendations articulated in the consultant's report. The multi-year plan and its successful implementation will be another catalyst in our efforts to drive George Brown College toward becoming an equitable and inclusive college renowned for student success, teaching and learning excellence, innovation and employee pride and engagement.

In addition to a focus on multi-year accessibility planning and implementation to advance our commitment to meaningful inclusion, George Brown will also focus on maintaining our responsibility for compliance under the Act. The following identifies compliance and additional inclusion initiatives planned for implementation in 2023-2024:

- Ensuring current AODA compliance activities are fully implemented and clear records and evidence are available. (Including compliance reporting, training documentation, annual reporting)

- Strengthening our AODA committee through training plan and by engaging with, listening to, and increasing representation of persons with disabilities within the college community.

- Provide training focused on Duty to Accommodate and Human Rights Code to Administrators and Accommodation decision makers.

- Review and refresh Cornerstone required AODA Training Modules as well as compliance indicators throughout the college.

- Review various accommodation software platforms to enhance service delivery, build efficiencies, and improve data collection to further support the needs for students with disabilities.

- Teaching and Learning Exchange (TLX)/ Universal Design Learning (UDL):
  - Launch George Brown College UDL Community of Practice (COP).
  - Offer UDL Certificate Managers Cohort for college Leadership.
  - Set up a GBC UDL website to include workshops and video assets around UDL & D2L.
  - Implement new training to support faculty in incorporating learning technologies that support UDL practices.
  - eLearning & Teaching Innovation (eLTI): Promote Ally and M365 for accessibility content.
  - Establishing the Designing for Inclusion Taskforce to support accessibility and accommodations for students with disabilities through a focus on three key areas: Teaching and Learning, Services and Engagement and Infrastructure

- Update door numbers or implement new signage to include Braille.

- Designated reflection rooms/prayer rooms/quite rooms in each building.

- Facilities project managers to develop plan to ensure accessibility and inclusion lens is applied to all design and construction projects.

- Implementation of live chat bot solutions which will enable greater access to information for students.

- Update George Brown College's website to WCAG 2.1 (AA) to meet compliance.

- Update employee disability and accommodations policies.

- Expand accessible document training across the organization.

CONCLUSION

Creating an accessible institution requires collaborative work to remove barriers and create greater opportunities. George Brown continues to maintain our legal responsibilities under the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code and strives to build representative coalitions to promote and advance this work.

The process to develop and implement the next multi-year framework and plan for George Brown College is currently underway and has, thus far, included a process to review current state/best practices, hear from employees and students, including persons with lived experiences with disabilities. The intention is that this level of consultation will result in a plan that is responsive to the specific needs of George Brown College community, the requirements of the AODA, and can anticipate the emerging Post Secondary Education Standards. The multi-year accessibility framework and plan, combined with George Brown College's commitment to ongoing compliance, meaningful equity and inclusive practices and collective responsibility, will shape this next year and years to come. Most importantly our planning will provide a pathway towards a barrier free and accessible learning and working environment for those with disabilities and our entire George Brown community.

CONTACT

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