

# York University Accessibility Report 2013

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## **Executive Summary**

York University is working toward making the University an accessible environment for all persons. The University is committed to meeting the requirements outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

In 2005, the Ontario legislature passed the AODA. This legislation was designed to make Ontario accessible to persons with disabilities by 2025. The Act contemplated achieving its goal through the development of five separate standards – Customer Service, Information & Communication, Employment, Transportation, and Built Environment. Four of the standards in the AODA have been passed into law. The final standard for Built Environments is still under review by the Ontario government. This report highlights these standards and measures taken by York to date to achieve compliance and describes initiatives undertaken over the past year to prevent and remove barriers at York University.

## **Accessibility Planning Process**

In developing this report, input was received from AODA Coordinating Committee members regarding measures that were adopted by various departments over the last year to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. This pan-university committee was established and is chaired by the University Secretary and General Counsel. The role of this Committee is to assist York University in developing and overseeing implementation of the compliance framework for the AODA requirements.

## **Accessibility Services**

York University's commitment to accessibility is supported throughout the University in various offices. They are:

- Physical, Sensory and Medical Disability Services (PSMDS) assists in facilitating the provision of 'reasonable' academic accommodations to students with physical, sensory and medical disabilities to help maximize their educational experience. PSMDS also helps to increase awareness in the campus community about students with physical, sensory and medical disabilities.
- Counseling and Disability Services (CDS) provides comprehensive psychological and academic support services to students.
- Employee Well Being Office (EWO) assists in disability management and return to work accommodation for employees.
- Library Accessibility Services (LAS) provides equitable access to the full range of library services, resources and facilities for all York University students, faculty and staff.

- Campus Services and Business Operations (CSBO) is responsible for overall planning, development, expansion, alteration, maintenance, and operation of all physical facilities (buildings, grounds and plant equipment) for the University. CSBO provides the University with services that help achieve the goals of the University while enhancing University life for all.
- Centre for Human Rights (CHR) advocates and educates individuals regarding the provisions of the *Ontario Human Rights Code (Code)* as well as all human rights policies at York University. The CHR assists individuals and groups to address and resolve allegations of discrimination and harassment as defined by the *Code* through an accessible, impartial, non-adversarial and confidential process.

## **AODA Standards**

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service was the first standard to be enacted. Since January 1, 2010 York University has implemented the Customer Service Standard ensuring that its policies, practices and procedures comply with the requirements of the standard.

The Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) was released in June 2011. It combined the following standards:

- Information and Communication
- Employment and
- Transportation

under one integrated regulation. The requirements under this regulation will be phased in accordance with the timelines established by the regulation, i.e., between 2011 and 2025.

The final standard for Built Environments is still under review, as stated in the Executive Summary section, above

## **Report on Accessibility Standards**

### **Customer Service**

Training is provided to all persons who are in a position to influence policy decisions and who interact with the public on York's behalf. Learning and Organizational Development designed and implemented a plan to provide all employees with training related to communicating with and serving persons with disabilities.

York University has demonstrated compliance with the Customer Service Standard under the AODA by the following actions:

- Incorporating the AODA Customer Service training modules into new employee

onboarding orientation.

- Reviewing training completion rates quarterly and follow up email reminders are sent about the requirement to complete customer service training.
- Posting training information, including training modules, on the accessibility page of the intranet.
- Creating a website identifying the various accessibility tools and resources. See [Accessibility website](#).
- Implementing an online mechanism for providing notice of service disruptions has been implemented. Service disruptions are posted on the Accessibility Hub website.
- Implementing Guidelines regarding the use of support persons or service animals that are in effect.

## **Information and Communications**

The Information and Communications Standard focuses on the requirement to create, provide and receive information and communication in accessible formats and with communication supports for persons with disabilities. The timelines for compliance vary. The following steps have been or will be taken:

- Established a process for receiving and responding to feedback to persons with disabilities.
- Created feedback forms which are available on the [accessibility website](#).
- Developed a [Statement of Commitment](#) to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.
- Provide for emergency procedures and information in accessible formats upon request.
- Provide for the provision of accessible formats of educational and training resources through York University Library's Papyrus System, upon request.
- Developed in partnership with the Council of University the Educator's Accessibility Resource Tool Kit which addresses accessible program or course delivery and instruction.
- Provided academic employees with the Accessible tool kit.

## **Employment**

The Employment Standard regulations address employment practices and policies designed to create a workplace that is more accessible to existing and potential

employees. The majority of the requirements under this standard will come into effect 2014.

The following steps have been taken:

- Developed policies that highlight York University's commitment to working towards a barrier-free workplace and expanding the accessibility of the workplace to persons with disabilities.
- Established policies of accommodation for employees and potential applicants to compete for positions perform their work and fully participate in employment at York.

## **Transportation**

The Transportation Standard mandates that when York University provides transportation, accessible transportation services will be arranged upon request. York has procedures in place.

## **Built Environment**

The Built Environment Standard currently outlines recommendations on removing barriers in buildings and public spaces for people with disabilities and the timeline for compliance is January 1, 2016. The building standards will be addressed at a later date through amendments to the Ontario Building Code.

## **Other Initiatives**

Various divisions throughout the University are working to create a more inclusive and barrier free environment. In addition, the following are some of the initiatives that have been taken in 2013.

## **Academic**

- The Faculty of Health created a new AODA complaint recruitment brochure. The picture windows on the Faculty of Health website have been reformatted to meet AODA image visibility requirements.
- The Faculty of Science provided new Teaching Assistants an overview of the AODA at "TA Day" which is held in September. This is an orientation and training session that is organized and run by the Health, Safety and Compliance Manager to ensure they are properly oriented.
- Glendon hired a student to identify and on the areas of the campus that may present a physical challenge for people with disabilities.
- The ITS department at Glendon purchased a subscription to a tool called

Siteimprove. This is a web governance tool that will help Glendon fall into AODA compliance by identifying and pin-pointing areas of non-compliance across the entire website.

- Graduate Studies created a task force in late 2012 which continues to identify accessibility issues impacting Graduate Students and work with constituent groups to support essential accommodation requirements.
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies working with Faculty Relations updated the Graduate Studies Academic Petition Form. The intent is to clarify and improve processes related to the application for extension of program time limits and/or priority pool entitlement for CUPE members with disabilities. The new form is scheduled for implementation by December 2013.
- Graduate Studies made accessibility improvements to the Automatic Door Opener and modified the accessible light switch in the office/study room for Graduate Students in Critical Disabilities Studies.

### **York University Library (YUL)**

- A Research Grant was awarded for a study of the readiness of its e-collections for AODA: "Accessibility and e-books at York: A 2013 report card".
- The SPARK website (Student Papers and Academic Research Kit Online tool) was launched. This website is designed for accessibility and tested with users of access technologies.
- The YUL's launched an AIF Project Video, blog and resource page "[Connecting with Disability Services at York](#)".
- Library Accessibility Services launched an online student feedback form to over 500 registered service users.
- The University Librarian's Office suite includes a fully accessible washroom.
- The Bronfman Business and Steacie Science & Engineering Libraries installed new accessible printing/scanning workstations have been installed.
- Library Computing Services implemented customized online access for students using adaptive technologies for room booking calendar and door entry code access.
- Library Accessibility Services (LAS) collaborated with York University's Copyright and Privacy Officers to ensure compliance of the LAS referral process, and LAS hosted subsequent workshop to launch the new form and processes with counsellors and managers from the 3 Counselling and Disability Services offices (MHDS, LDS, PSMDS).
- Library Services provided training to all library staff on Universal Design and A Blind Student's Experience.

- Instructional Librarians attended training for addressing accessibility for students experiencing physical, sensory and mental health disabilities.
- Assistant University Librarians (AUL) and Librarians participated in development of an Ontario-Wide AODA Toolkit for academic library compliance, and the Manager of LAS' participated in the development of an Ontario-wide repository of alternate format texts, both initiatives under the aegis of Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) and Scholar's Portal.
- The Library Accessibility Services team received training on customer service provision to students with Mental Health disabilities, provided by a Counsellor from CDS-MHDS.
- Osgoode Law School ensured that the Research Bytes were subtitled. Ensured that visiting speakers with physical limitations are accommodated. Provided accessible space for wheelchairs. Podcasts of lectures are done in compliance with AODA requirements. Audio recorded lectures for visually impaired audience members. Prepared materials for visually impaired faculty member who resides on the Research & Seminars Committee.

## **Student Services**

### **Access York**

- The York University Accessibility Fund is a pan-university fund established in January 2013, to fund accessibility expenditures that make the University more accessible to persons with disabilities. Its goal is to create and improve infrastructure and broaden accessibility for persons with disabilities within the York University community.
- Access York organized an Annual Round Table for Students with Disabilities and Administrators in October 2013. This roundtable allowed for discussion that promotes awareness of disabled students' issues of concern amongst upper level administrators at York University.
- The Disability Bandits and Tabling Event occurred in Feb 2013. This event, sponsored by the Disability Education and Awareness Subcommittee, encouraged students to identify barriers in York University's built environment with post-it-notes. These were live-steamed to video and posted on an Access York Facebook page.

### **Career Centre**

- The Career Centre, York Internship and Co-op websites have been upgraded to most recent templates created by Communications & Public Affairs and UIT (which have been designed in accordance with W3C Content Accessibility standards 2.0). Also made ongoing accessibility improvements to websites have been made to ensure that users with screen reading software are more easily able to navigate and use the site.



- The Career Centre's website includes a webpage that directs students with disabilities to on-campus and community career resources and events.

### **Counselling & Disability Services (CDS)**

- CDS adapted the new student orientation for students with disabilities to include a "virtual orientation" whereby students could access much of the information online 24/7 to increase ease of access to the information.
- CDS developed new online instructional videos for students with disabilities, e.g. how to apply for the Bursary for Students with Disabilities, how to access disability services on campus, etc.
- Counselling and Disability Services worked with over 2600 students with physical, sensory, medical, learning, and mental health disabilities to ensure appropriate academic accommodations in their undergraduate and graduate course work.

### **Registrar's Office**

- The Registrar's Office new Current Students, RO and SFS websites launched in the summer of 2012 were audited and are AODA compliant.
- The new OSAP site, launched summer 2013 was also created with accessibility in mind and as AODA compliant.
- The Registrar's communications management and staff attended AODA in-depth training to ensure they know how to make websites compliant and an accessibility checker tool recommended by York University is used to check compliance on any re-designed web page before launching.
- The Registrar's forms have been updated since Fall 2012 and are AODA compliant.

### **Student Client Services (SCS)**

- SCS provided an information session related to services for the incoming class of students in Counselling and Disability Services.
- The Director of CDS attended a staff session to provide an overview of Counselling and Disability Services.
- The Manager of Learning Disability Services (LDS) attended a staff session to provide an overview of Learning and Disability Services.
- LDS, OSAP and Scholarships & Bursaries pursued discussions to ensure clear communication about financial support to students with disabilities.

## **Student Community & Leadership Development**

### Residence Life:

- Residence Life partners with the Centre for Human Rights to offer training to Residence Dons in August to cover diversity and inclusion. Staff are educated on ability and the Ontario Human Rights Code, respect and principles of inclusivity.
- AODA training is provided for Residence Dons and Residence Porters.

### Student Community:

- A workshop on how to ensure orientation events are inclusive and accessible During Orient the Leader, 1000 orientation leaders are trained in inclusivity by the CHR.

## **YU Start (New Student Program)**

- All 20 student leaders completed the AODA training modules as part of their training.
- All videos for online enrolment were captioned.

## **Finance and Administration**

### **Campus Services and Business Operations (CSBO)**

- York University Transportation Services actively works with local public transit agencies to provide the best possible services to meet the transportation needs of the community.
- Transportation Services also offers complimentary shuttles to the GO Train Station, a shuttle between the Glendon-Keele campus and also VANGO, an on-campus mobility service for persons with disabilities.
- York University employees have been trained to post notice of service disruptions to services used in particular by persons with disabilities using the temporary service disruption tool.
- CSBO created, posted and provides in accessible formats or with communication supports, upon request, *An Emergency Preparedness Guide for Persons with Disabilities*.
- CSBO worked closely with Innovation in Research in Sustainability in the development of a community survey around priorities for accessibility improvements.
- CSBO has continued to work closely with Centre for Counselling and Disabilities Services (CDS) through Student Community Development (Physical, Sensory and Medical Disability Services) to ensure that every student registered for the VanGO services has a plan to ensure “door to door” service.

- CSBO reviews all renovation projects with a focus to creating a barrier free environment.
- All projects earmarked to improve accessibility will be addressed promptly. All Service Requests have a tick-off box in the application called “Accessibility”.

### **Learning and Organizational Development – Human Resources**

- Learning and Organizational Development converted Questions for all standard multiple-choice tests to text-only format for conversion to accessible formats as required.
- Basic accessibility features have been incorporated into existing computer skills courses for MS Office.
- Learning and Organizational Development have developed in-class courses with a focus specifically on the accessibility principles and techniques available in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint to ensure that electronic documents are as accessible as possible.

### **Centre for Human Rights (CHR)**

- The Centre for Human Rights provides 'Inclusivity' workshops which include a component relating to accessibility and accommodations for persons with disabilities. This workshop was delivered to the following York community members over the last year:
  - Osgoode Law Students;
  - Youth Connection camp;
  - Community Safety Council members;
  - Security Officers;
  - GoSafe staff (comprised of students);
  - York managers through L&OD; and
  - Career Development staff (Schulich).
- The CHR provides 'Diversity' and 'Respect in the Workplace' workshops which include a component on accessibility and accommodation for persons with disabilities. These workshops are delivered to student groups, staff groups such as managers, as well as faculty groups such as Teaching Assistants.
- The CHR supports disability awareness events on campus, such as the annual conference by the Critical Disability Studies Student Association, as well as the annual event held by Access York.
- The Centre for Human Rights in collaboration with Access York and other community members has developed and published [guidelines on hosting an accessible event](#).
- CHR in partnership with the Vice-Provost Academic and the Executive Director of Counselling and Disabilities Services send out a letter annually to all faculty about the responsibilities and obligations to accommodate students with disabilities.

## **Summary**

York University has worked together as a community over the past year on a number of initiatives which focus on York's commitment to increase accessibility at our institution.

We continue to focus on the best way possible to provide support for persons with disabilities at York as we strive towards compliance. Achieving accessibility and inclusivity is a commitment of all members of our community and can only be achieved through the commitment of faculty, staff and students.