McMaster University Accessibility Plan 2010-2025

McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC), December 2010
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC) is responsible for ensuring the University’s adherence to Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The Council provides a mechanism for planning, reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the AODA Accessibility Standards within the University. MAC has the responsibility of addressing the identified barriers and developing the plan for the removal and prevention of barriers. MAC will also review work from the previous year to determine if all objectives have been met, identify reasons for unaddressed objectives, and specify how these objectives can be re-instituted going forward. MAC shall review its membership on an annual basis to ensure adequate representation from persons with disabilities.

McMaster University introduced its first accessibility plan in compliance with the Ontario Disabilities Act (ODA) in the 2003-2004 academic year. This plan outlined a number of accomplishments McMaster has achieved over the last few years in terms of barrier removal, and active steps taken to prevent barriers. This list is not exhaustive, and McMaster recognizes that individual departments make many efforts to accommodate without necessarily seeking recognition. The university applauds such efforts and encourages continuation of this practice. This document contains a record of known accomplishments as a means of demonstrating its efforts in the removal and prevention of barriers to access for persons with disabilities.

- Customer Service (compliance January 2010)
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

The 2010-2025 document is but one snapshot of a series of successive plans, and continues to be a model for future accessibility plans. It retains a progressive plan of activities that forecast full implementation of the AODA standards by 2025. This Plan will be updated annually to reflect progress made towards full compliance with the AODA. Each year, the plan for the current year will be addressed through the McMaster Accessibility Council (MAC).
SECTION 2: AREAS OF ACCESS TO BE ADDRESSED

In 2005, the provincial government enacted the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (AODA). The goal of this Act is to make Ontario fully accessible to persons with disabilities by 2025.

The following categories arise from the AODA and shall also be reported in the University's annual plan:

1. Customer Service
2. Built Environment
3. Information and Communication Systems
4. Transportation
5. Employment

As each of the above five standards of the AODA are codified as regulations, creating legal obligations for the University, the annual Accessibility Plan will compare its accomplishments in enhancing accessibility with the formal requirements of each standard. As of December 2010, only the Customer Service Standard has been formalized into regulation (O.Reg. 429/07), and McMaster has met its primary obligation under that regulation, namely the provision of mandatory training for those engaged in the provision of services to members of the public.
SECTION 3: MCMASTER UNIVERSITY ACCESSIBILITY PLAN*

3 (a) This portion of the Accessibility Plan reflects those initiatives that are contained in the standard(s) currently finalized and in force.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AODA Standard/ Regulation Section References</th>
<th>Initiative/Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>McMaster Completion Status</th>
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| Training                                   |                  | Customer Service training must be provided for:  
  - Those who interact with members of the public on behalf of the University:  
  - Persons who participate in developing the McMaster’s policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties. | 2010 and ongoing  
  Training is accessible at: [www.mcmaster.ca/accessibility](http://www.mcmaster.ca/accessibility) | January 1, 2010 |
| Feedback Process                           |                  | Establish an accessible process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which McMaster provides goods or services to persons with disabilities. The information about the process will be readily available to the public. | 2010 and ongoing | January 1, 2010 |
Proposed Standards

3 (b) This portion of the Accessibility Plan provides an overview of the proposed standards that are not yet finalized or in force. This section reflects that despite the lack of final detail, McMaster University is aware of what actions and initiatives, broadly speaking, it will be required to implement in order to meet the spirit of the standards once they are finalized.

Proposed Built Environment Standard

As of January 2011, the Built Environment Standard is still in a proposed format, and as such, the details of the requirements as well as the compliance dates have not been finalized. The proposed standard is currently with the Minister of Community and Social Services, who is considering what will become law and when. In the meantime, McMaster continues to address accessibility issues that may fall within the purview of the Built Environment Standard on an as needed basis. It is anticipated that the Standard will set firm timelines for the completion of accessibility initiatives that McMaster may already be in the process of implementing.

The proposed Built Environment Standard will address the following aspects of the built environment. Note that not all of these categories or all components of the categories are relevant to the McMaster community.

- Common Access and Circulation
- Interior Accessible Routes
- Exterior Spaces
- Communication Elements and Facilities
- Plumbing Elements and

Note that although compliance dates may not be specified until the Standard becomes law, the Standard proposes the following with respect to timelines:

**New Construction**
Twenty-four months after regulations come into force, a) building permits issued for new construction will require the building to meet the accessibility requirements of this Standard; and b) new construction of elements not addressed by Ontario’s Building Code shall meet the requirements of this Standard at the time of construction.

**Extensive Renovation and Change of Use**
Twenty-four months after regulations come into force, a) building permits issued for extensive renovations/change of use will require the building to meet the accessibility requirements of this standard; and b) extensive renovation of elements not addressed by Ontario’s Building Code shall meet the requirements of this Standard at the time of construction.
3 (c) Proposed Integrated Standard

The Proposed Integrated Standard includes general accessibility requirements, as well as those in the areas of transportation, employment and information, communications and technology. As was the case with the Built Environment Standard, the requirements have not yet been finalized. In any event, McMaster continues to address accessibility issues in each of these areas, recognizing that such address may fall within the broader purview of providing accessible customer service.

An overview of the intention of this integrated standard is as follows:

Part A: General Requirements

Policies and Practices

- Every obligated organization will be required to establish, maintain and implement policies governing the implementation of the accessibility standards (Information and Communications, Employment and Transportation).
- The policies will be required to include:
  - A description of how the organization will meet the requirements of the accessibility standards; and
  - A statement of commitment for meeting the needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner.

Accessibility Plans

Obligated organizations will be required to develop accessibility plans which will include how accessibility will be achieved with respect to accessibility requirements and timeframes included in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

Emergency and Public Safety Information

Every obligated organization will be required to provide prepared emergency and public safety information in an accessible format, upon request, where this information is available publicly.

If an obligated organization is required to provide a document to a person with a disability, the organization will be required to provide the document or the information contained in the document in a format that takes into account the person’s disability, in accordance with the Information and Communications Standard’s “Accessible Formats and Communication Supports” requirement.
Part B: Accessible Information and Communication Requirements

The Information and Communications Standard focuses on accessible information and communications relating to the provision of goods and services.

Websites

Obligated organizations will be required to make their internet websites and web content conform with W3C WCAG 2.0, initially at Level A, increasing to Level AA

Government of Ontario will be required to also make their intranet websites and content conform with W3C WCAG 2.0, initially at Level A, increasing to Level AA

Organizations will be first required to make new internet websites and the content on those new internet websites conform, followed by existing websites and web content

Website content (including but not limited to documents, videos, audio files, records and archived materials) published on the website prior to 2012 – must be available in an accessible format upon request

Part C: Accessible Employment Requirements

Requirements within the Employment Accessibility Standard will apply to recruiting, hiring and retaining persons in paid employment, including full-time, part-time, or apprenticeships.

The standard will not apply to:

- Unpaid employment
- Volunteer placements, co-op placements, high school work experience placements, etc.

Part D: Transportation Requirements

Requirements for transportation will prevent and remove barriers so that people with disabilities can more easily access transportation services across the province.

Persons or organizations who are not primarily in the business of transportation services, will be required to provide accessible vehicles and equivalent service upon request, and may contract or co-ordinate with other transportation providers to provide equivalent services. [Only applicable to universities, hospitals and colleges.]
SECTION 4: MCMASTER ACCESSIBILITY REPORT CARD

Barriers Previously Addressed
Many improvements have been made over the years at McMaster with regard to physical access, policies, staffing, etc. Some of the more notable items are listed below, but this list is not exhaustive. Where possible dates have been identified. The progress of accessibility achievements at McMaster is categorized in accordance with the five AODA standards, and further sub-divided in terms of those barrier-removal initiatives that were undertake pre- and post- the enactment of the AODA.

Customer Service Standard

Pre-AODA Initiatives:

√ Open Forum meetings and disability-specific presentations provided to faculty and department heads


√ Consultation with the Senior Management Team of the University regarding obligations under the Ontarian’s with Disabilities Act (2001), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and Human Rights. A plan will be presented to bring the ODA annual plans into the University’s annual budget cycle.

√ Volunteer note-taker services developed for students with disabilities (1999)

√ Peer mentor and tutor program developed for students with learning and other disabilities (1998)

√ Senate Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities passed in 2003 highlights commitment to flexibility and creativity in accommodation of students with disabilities, both undergraduate and graduate

√ Residence contract clause developed retaining the option to reallocate residence rooms to meet accessibility needs

√ Housing and Conference Services established priority for students with disabilities in housing allocation process
√ Learning Disability Specialist funded to provide students with learning disabilities support (1993)

√ Coordinator, Library Services for Students with Disabilities converted to full time (2005). Coordinator is responsible to work with students regarding alternate text format, reference services, and material acquisition.

√ Career counselor designated to work with students with disabilities on employment and career issues. Peer support as well.

√ Peer support services coordinating one-to-one volunteer assistance, library resource support and alternate format transcription, learning support resources, and mental health support groups

√ Creation of Manager of Disability Services and University Lead on disability matters (2005)

√ Administrative support provided to the Manager of Disability Services (2005)

√ Review and refinement of Program Coordinator support to students with disabilities services within the Centre for Student Development (2005)

√ McMaster Accessibility Council established in 2009

√ President’s Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC) working group on access and accommodation established in 2009

√ Exams Office (Office of the Registrar) assumed responsibility for administration of all December, April and deferred exam accommodations for students with disabilities

√ Special Consideration Bursary established to assist students with disabilities and administered by Student Financial Aid & Scholarships (2002)

√ Undertake a review of policies regarding part-time versus full time status in undergraduate programs for students with disabilities (2007).
Post-AODA Customer Service Initiatives

√ McMaster University Policy on Accessibility (Accessibility Policy) approved in March 2010. This policy reflects the University’s commitment to fostering, creating and maintaining a barrier-free environment for all individuals. Further the policy provides Guidelines on specific accessibility considerations in accordance with the AODA. The guidelines developed in line with AODA Customer Service standard include principles and protocols with respect to the following:
1. Use of Assistive Devices
2. Service Animals and Support Persons
3. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Service
4. Providing Feedback and Complaints

Built Environment Standard

Pre-AODA Initiatives

√ Residence buildings designed and built with level access, elevators, accessible washrooms and laundry facilities, with adjoining rooms for attendant care when required (2003)

√ Ramp to Chester New Hall (2004)

√ Renovations to Hamilton Hall accessible washrooms, improved accessibility (2005)

√ McMaster University Student Centre – Centre for Student Development and Student Health Services located in this new facility (2001)

√ Renovations to Alumni Memorial Hall to make it accessible (2004)

√ Elevator for access to University Hall (1992)

√ Accessibility audit of Ivor Wynne Centre (2004)

√ Signage improvement campaign (2004-2005)

√ Automatic door operators installed at all necessary building entrances (annually)

√ Attendant-style single use wheelchair accessible washrooms addressed in all academic buildings on campus (annually)

√ Classroom retrofits with accessible work stations (annually)
√ Parking policy to adopt numerous accessible parking spaces (1990)
√ Change rooms in Ivor Wynne Centre modified for access (2003)
√ Information Technology building access provided with ramp to the building’s main entrance, and additional classroom modifications
√ Elevator installed in the mezzanine of the Ivor Wynne Centre
√ Lift installed in the Commons building providing second and basement floor access (1990) / upgraded in 2009
√ Use of urban Braille design on all new pedestrian walkways on campus (2005 Main entrance, and previously)
√ Completed audit for Ivor Wynne Centre and David Braley (2009)
√ Completed outdoor pathway design in Arts Quad to ensure full accessibility (2010)

**Employment Standard**

**Pre-AODA Initiatives**

√ Ergonomic furniture and workstation adaptations made for faculty and staff with disabilities (as needed)
√ Establishment of an access fund, under the administration of Human Resources, for staff to support the costs of accommodation in the workplace (1991)
Information & Communications Standard

Pre-AODA Initiatives

√ Development of assistive technology lab in Commons Basement to include more types of assistive hardware and software (2003)

√ Assistive hardware and software purchased by departments for individual use by faculty and staff with disabilities (as needed)

√ Purchase of new technologies for use by students with disabilities including a Braille laptop computer (Braille Lite), Tiger Brail embosser capable of producing tactile graphics, computer screen enhancers, text to speech software, speech to text software, closed circuit televisions, scanners, and optical character recognition software, among others (ongoing as technology changes)

√ Virtual tour and map of campus buildings and accessible entrances (under development)

√ Creation of a tactile campus map for students with visual impairments (2003)

√ Full-time Learning Strategist and full time assistive technologist provided to assist students with learning disabilities (2002)

√ Systems Administrator in the Centre for Student Development available to provide technical support to students with disabilities (1998)

SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

The University and MAC as well as the President’s Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC), recognize that further steps need to be taken to help McMaster become completely barrier free, physically, academically, attitudinally, and socially. As such, the Annual Plan presented above reflects a commitment to engage in incremental initiatives in accordance with the AODA and the expectation that the University will be free of attitudinal, physical and social barriers by the year 2025. The process will be meaningful and effective as the committee endorses a consistent and resolute approach to barrier removal and prevention.