AODA Annual Report & Plan

2017-2018

Table of Contents

Introduction 2
Diversity of Projects and Commitments 3
Consultation Process for the Report 4
Accessible Built Environment 5
Accessible Communications 6
Accessible Service Delivery 7
Research & Partnerships 9
Pedagogy 10
Mental health 11
Summary 12

Appendix i - AODA Compliance Timeline 13
Appendix iii - AODA Compliance Timeline - Table Format 15

Introduction

We are pleased to release the 2017-18 University of Toronto AODA Annual Report and Plan (the report). Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and specifically Regulation 191/11 'Integrated Accessibility Standards' ("Regulation"), designated public sector organizations, like the University of Toronto, are required to develop multi-year accessibility plans outlining their strategy to prevent and remove barriers, and to meet requirements under the Regulation (O.Reg. 191/11, s.4).

This year we are making a change in our approach to the report, by adding a new element. Our goal is to better align the structure of the report to highlight progress made over the year, as well as areas of opportunities for improvement. Previous reports have looked back over the year to provide a narrative on progress; this year the report also includes new sections on recommendations and next steps. The report will continue to record the advances made in 2017 by the University community in creating working and learning environments that are accessible and inclusive. In addition, it will outline recommendations and next steps for the University's AODA Office to work on in 2018 and beyond.

Every year significant work occurs across all three campuses, multiple divisions, and various departments that assists in working towards an accessible campus. We recognize that accessibility is about more than the positioning of a physical building feature, rather that it also encompasses the attitudes of those who occupy the buildings. All of us must be committed to ensuring that inclusive environments exist at the University and that community value of incorporating accessibility considerations infuse all aspects of our thinking, planning, and programming. This report conveys our broad commitments to accessibility and inclusion and how we endeavour to move beyond the point of compliance.

The projects highlighted in this report illustrate the work across all three campuses, as well as focusing on accomplishments with respect to the various sections of the AODA and its Standards. They show how the University is seeking to stay accessible as it innovates education and provide access to a broader range of members at the University.

The opportunities and next steps outlined throughout the report are intended to enhance and support this work. They will also help keep the University on track to achieve the goals of the legislation.

Diversity of Projects and Commitments

Accessible Built Environment

These projects focus on the built environment at the University. Renovations, new buildings, and new legislative processes that relate to building accessibility are highlighted here.

Accessible Communications

These projects focus on the way information is delivered in a format that accounts for a person's disability needs.

Accessible Service Delivery

These projects include our obligations under the Customer Service Standard. Here we highlight how departments are delivering their services in an accessible manner.

Innovation & Partnerships

The University has completed several projects in partnership with various organizations and continues to produce innovative solutions in the area of accessibility.

Pedagogy

The University is committed to the delivery of classroom learning in accessible ways. This section of the report highlights the work completed by various academic units, professors, and support services to create inclusive classrooms.

Mental Health

In recognition of the importance of mental health & wellbeing, this section of the report highlights initiatives on mental health in the post-secondary environment.

Consultation Process for the Report

The Consultation Process

Under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations, the University is required to consult with persons with disabilities when it establishes, reviews or updates its accessibility plans. The AODA Office placed an open call for submissions through notices in the Bulletin and the student accessibility service offices' newsletters on each campus. The Office also solicited input from Students for Barrier-free Access. Feedback was gathered through in-person meetings and submissions via email. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated in the consultation process by either providing feedback or helping to promote the request for community input.

As noted in the Introduction, we added a new element to the 2017-18 report to outline some Opportunities and Next Steps for the AODA Office to focus on in each area. During the consultation phase we sought input on these proposed Opportunities and Next Steps. Participants provided valuable feedback on these recommendations as well as identifying additional areas of consideration. The overarching themes of the feedback suggest that we should focus more attention on: outreach and information sharing (e.g. wayfinding); system navigation (e.g. how to navigate the University's services and systems, and; training and awareness (e.g. offering regular training not covered by the online AODA module. The AODA Office is committed to responding to this feedback and is actively seeking ways of including it in upcoming projects and communications.

Ongoing Consultation

During the consultation process, the AODA Office heard that there is considerable interest amongst community members to be more involved in AODA matters at the University. Participants expressed the benefit of engaging with those with lived experience in a more formal and routine manner to discuss progress and plans. In response to feedback, the AODA Office commits to conducting consultation on a more regular basis with community members and, starting in 2018-2019, will convene a consultation group to provide advice on AODA goals.

The mandate of this group will include providing feedback on elements such as new buildings or planned renovations (as outlined in the Built Environment section), on information and communication projects across the University (e,g, new or refreshed websites), and any other projects or initiatives or updates to processes as deemed appropriate.

Accessible Built Environment

It is important that our buildings and public spaces are safe and accessible to all members of the University community. While we are pleased to be able to report that the University is meeting its regulatory requirements under the Design of Public Spaces Standards and others, we also strive to increasingly incorporate accessibility into building design and operations. Examples of this work include the continued design work of the Landmark Project, with the goal of revitalizing the major public spaces of the historic St. George campus; the continuing renovations across St. George to improve accessibility on campus; the ongoing work of the Advisory Committee on Physical Accessibility at UTSC (including the retrofitting of washrooms), and; the upgrades taking place at Hart House (see Key Focus below).

Hart House quad

Key focus: Hart House Accessibility Upgrades

In October 2016, Hart House completed its Accessibility/Inclusion review, the purpose of which was to identify physical barriers to accessibility and inclusion. As of December 2017, seventeen per cent of these recommendations were completed. Some of these completed projects included the installation of accessible doors to the library, creating space for wheelchair access at tables in the library, the installation of accessible water fountains, the installation of a new ramp at the east-end of the building (Founder's Prayer), and creating an accessible entrance for the Native Students Association Garden. Hart House will continue to address the barriers identified as part of the Review through various upcoming projects and initiatives. In progress at present are projects to improve the accessibility of Hart House Theatre by creating new barrier-free seating and installing new all-gender accessible washrooms in the lobby. Projects related to the review's recommendations are expected to continue up until 2020 and will also form part of the House's broader Infrastructure Renewal.

Upcoming Project: University College renovations

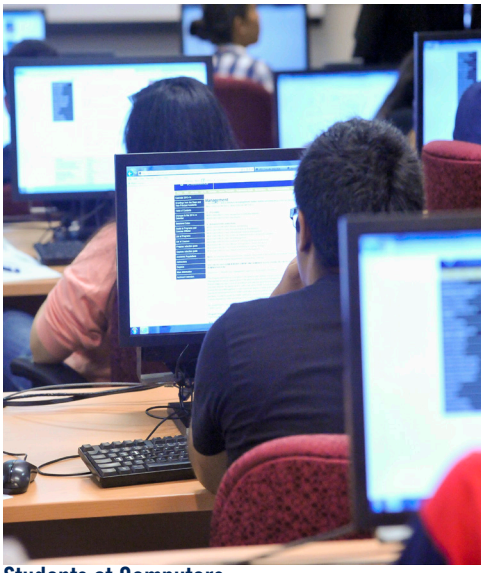
University College is seen as one of the University's oldest and most iconic buildings. Starting in 2018 it will undergo large scale renovations with the aiming of making the building, that's more than 150 years old, more accessible and student-friendly. It has been noted that University College can be challenging to access for anyone trying to access the building who has any form of disability. Therefore, a major component of the revitalization project is improving accessibility across the building. This includes building a new elevator and replacing some stairs with ramps. Renovations are expected to be completed by spring of 2019.

Opportunities & Next Steps: Review Design Standards & Convene Review Group

Previous to the legislative changes related to the built environment (i.e. accessibility amendments to the Ontario Building Code in 2015 and the coming into force of the Design of Public Spaces Standards in 2016), the University developed its own Accessibility Standard. These Standards now need to be reviewed alongside the changes in the regulatory requirements. The AODA Office will convene a group to review the University's Accessibility Standards, taking into consideration the legislative changes, as well as any new best practices.

In addition to this review, the AODA Office will also work with University Planning, Design & Construction to convene a group to review design projects from an accessibility perspective. Specific effort will be made to ensure that membership of this group includes representatives of those with lived experienced.

Accessible Communications



Students at Computers

Making our online spaces accessible is another important aspect of ensuring our information and communications reaches as many members of the University community as possible. This year the AODA Office, as well as communicators across our campuses, have worked to continue to address barriers to web accessibility. This has included the AODA Officer assisting in incorporating a session on accessible communications at TechKnowFile, a free technology conference offered to all faculty and staff, the AODA Office delivering regular accessible communications workshops on all three campuses, the AODA Office's WCAG 2.0 project (see Key Focus below), and Arts & Science developing an AODA Compliance Guidebook, an all-in-one tool to assist with Information & Instructional Technology applications. In addition to these projects, the Inclusive Design Research Centre were brought in to provide in depth training to web developers, designers and writers, through the University's Organizational Development & Learning Centre (ODLC). Finally, New College's D.G. Ivey Library created a new role of Accessibility & Public Services Librarian whose role is to work on improving the level of accessibility and AODA compliance of the services offered at this library.

Key focus: AODA Office WCAG 2.0 Project

In the summer, 2017, the AODA Office hired a work-study student to review a suite a Provostial websites to assess their conformance level to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. Following the completion of the Professional Web Accessibility Auditing Made Easy course, the student worked with various communications teams to create reports on their websites. This provided the opportunity for a work-study student to learn more about web accessibility and apply it in a real communications context, as well as providing a benchmark for us on how we are doing with accessibility using this sample suite as an example. It also provided the communications teams with detailed information and advice on the accessibility of their websites, and with strategies and resources for fixing any issues. The AODA Office plans to repeat this project again in summer 2018. The status of the original suite of sites will be measured based on last summer's report and new sites will be considered for review.

Upcoming Project: increased training opportunities

In collaboration with the Organizational Development Learning Centre (ODLC), the AODA Office will host in depth sessions covering web accessibility on all three campuses throughout early 2018. These sessions will provide a technical introduction to creating accessible web content. Experts working in this field will provide participants with an in-depth overview of the WCAG 2.0 and how conformance can be achieved through the use of practical tools. Information regarding these sessions will be communicated through the ODLC.

Opportunities & Next Steps: Web Accessibility Review

This year the AODA Office re-convened its web accessibility advisory group to review current efforts to address web accessibility and create a pool of resources to assist Divisions in this work. The group is tasked with reviewing the current publicly accessible web environment and appropriate strategies for evaluating its accessibility in relation to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 to Level AA. Results of this work are intended to be used to raise awareness of web accessibility and ways in which websites can be changed in order to meet our obligations under the AODA.

Accessible Service Delivery

Tina Doyle, Director of AccessAbility Services, UTSC & Thusi Thuraisamy with College Life the text-to-speech app for TalkRocket Go (see 2013-14 Annual Report)

Ensuring all those to whom we provide a service, including education or supporting staff and faculty, have accessible options, helps the University fulfill its commitments to equity, diversity and excellence. In delivering on this commitment, excellence may flourish in an environment that embraces viewpoints and experiences of the broadest range of people.
Through its services and process, the University is working to make sure accessible service is prioritized and delivered. Examples include the Health & Well-being Programs & Services team which provides accommodation support to faculty and staff such as setting up assistive technologies, job coaching and technology training; the AccessAbility Resource Centre at the Mississauga campus, Accessibility Services at the St. George campus, AccessAbility Services at the Scarborough campus which provide services to students, combined all three had more than 5600 registered students, representing a seventeen per cent increase on the previous year; the release of a tri-campus publication seeking to demystify the academic accommodations process (see Key Focus below). Another example of this work is the AODA Office releasing new training to all staff and faculty (see Key focus below). Finally, Accessibility Services at the St. George campus underwent a reorganization.

Key focus: Demystifying Academic Accommodations for Faculty & Staff

This year a new tri-campus publication 'Demystifying Academic Accommodation' was developed as a reference for faculty and staff. It was first distributed to the University in September, 2017 and continues to be shared widely in print and electronic formats. The document was created to provide instructors with information about accommodating students with disabilities. It covers: roles and responsibilities of the student, the Accessibility Advisor, instructor and staff; communication style; frequently asked questions; universal design and considerations for providing accessible education, and; contact information .
It was accompanied by a smaller booklet, 'What faculty members need to know about accommodating students'. This provides information on when to refer students to one of the University's student accessibility services and a faculty member's role in the accommodations process. Both of these publications are available via the Academic Accommodations webpage.

Key focus: New University-wide AODA Training

In early 2017, the AODA Office launched a new online training module in order to better meet our obligations under the legislation. As per the legislation, the University is required to provide training under the Customer Service Standard and section 7 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The new training is delivered through a 30-minute online module and is intended for all employees, existing and new. It replaces the Blue Brochure and provides additional information on the IASR, and the Ontario *Human Rights Code* as it relates to disability. So far 6,600 people have taken this training.
The AODA Office has also produced a three page document intended to be used for the training of volunteers and other service providers. This will be included in onboarding packages, contracts, or other information provided to volunteers or other service providers.

Accessible Service Delivery

Opportunities & Next Steps: clarifying processes for “student-employees”

The University has several thousand students who are also employees. Academic accommodations for students are provided through accessibility services on each campus, and accommodations for staff and faculty are provided through Health & Wellbeing Programs & Services. There is an opportunity to clarify the process when students who are also employees wish to request accommodations for their employment. Over the next year, the AODA Office will work with various stakeholders on identifying ways in which the process could be clarified for all parties. Examples of possible outcomes are educational and training materials, centralized information, more frequent connections between the different services, and regular communications on the processes.

Research & Partnerships

Students playing wheelchair basketball

This year the University has participated in a number of meaningful projects with various external partners to develop innovation solutions for accessibility, including: Play the Game; U of T startups winning awards at the Ontario Centres of Excellence Discovery Conference, a UTSC project to make labs more accessible, and the University's Strategic Recruitment Centre's participation in the Dolphin Mentoring Day (Key Focus below).

Key focus: Dolphin Mentoring Day

In October 2017, the University's Strategic Recruitment Centre participated in Disabilities Mentoring Day, which is organized by Dolphin Digital Technologies. The mentoring program facilitates the pairing of job-ready persons with disabilities with organizations that utilize the skills they have or are developing through training. The University hosted mentors for the day, who shadowed members of staff working in various areas of the University.

Since 2011, Disabilities Mentoring Day has matched aspiring and motivated people with disabilities with community partners, such as U of T, to provide unique opportunities to gain insight from practicing professionals around job requirements, job duties and tasks. The next Mentoring Day will take place on 24 October 2018.

Opportunities & Next Steps: research & accessibility

In 2018-19 the AODA Office will work with the Environmental Health & Safety Office and others to review the existing processes for accessibility and accommodation queries in research environments. This process will include reviewing how faculty, staff and students access resources and information about available services, outlining the responsibilities of each office/service, and ensuring each office/service is aware of their role and responsibilities in the process. This work will begin with a review of the research environment within the University, and will then expand in scope to review those outside of the University (e.g. hospital laboratories).

Pedagogy

Recognizing that there are various ways to make education more accessible, the University has worked to provide resources to teaching staff on how to do so. Information and advice on the incorporation of accessible course design have been widely disseminated with support provided. This is in line with AODA requirements to provide training to educators in this area and further helps to create accessible spaces. Examples include: the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation hosts several sessions focussing on accessibility in learning; the Teaching Assistant Training Program hosts regular sessions including 'Creating a Culture of Accessibility' and 'Creating Accessible Visual Aids'; Academic and Collaborative Technologies released 'Online Course Tips for a More Accessible Portal Course' (see Key Focus below), and; the hosting of annual workshops on inclusive teaching and design at the Scarborough campus' Centre for Teaching and Learning.

Students in University College Classroom

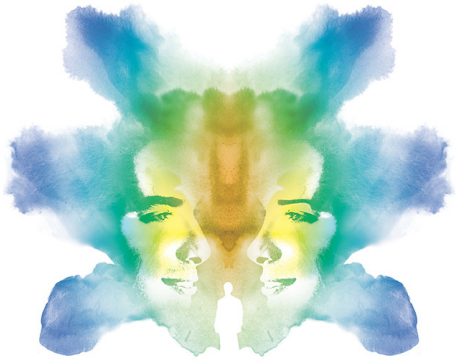
Key focus: Accessible learning object design

The Online Learning Strategies portfolio is committed to the development and implementation of the University's online learning strategy. The mandate of this office is to identify, recommend and support the coherent provision of online learning solutions, services, processes and related infrastructure required to serve the academic and administrative needs of the University. To this end, this year the portfolio developed a resource to assist those involved in the development online interactive learning objects using Articulate Storyline. The Accessible Learning Object Design resource provides materials organized according to the four major principles of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 to Level AA of perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. The material covers those guidelines that require human intervention to ensure accessibility (e.g. adding alternative text).

Opportunities & Next Steps: accessible course design resources

As indicated in the introduction to this section, the University is providing training to educators on accessible course design through various formats, through in-person sessions at its teaching and learning centres, through the provision of online resources, and through practical advice to educators. Over the next year the AODA Office will seek to augment this work in collaboration with various offices across the University. The intention is to create a more centralized resource providing educators at the University with information about accessible course design, upcoming sessions on each campus, and opportunities to collaborate on furthering the implementation of accessible course design principles.

Mental health



The University of Toronto serves a large and diverse student, faculty and staff population and is dedicated to fostering an academic community that allows students, as well as faculty and staff, to thrive in their work.

Providing support to our community members so that they may flourish is key to fostering an environment that embraces the broadest range of people.

Over the past year, examples of this work have included Mindfest, a free mental health and wellness festival held at Hart House (Key Focus below), the HealthyU initiative from St. George Health & Wellness, which now has a website to provide health and well-being support to students; the development of the Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education's Mental Health and Physical Activity Research Centre (MPARC), a unique research facility integrating the study of physical activity and mental health; the continued expansion of the Flourish program at UTSC, and finally; Exam Jam continued following its growth last year with sessions at UTM Exam Jam, Faculty of Arts and Science Exam Jam, Engineering Exam Jam, and UTSC Exam Jam.

Key focus: Mindfest

With the central themes of diversity and resilience, the fifth edition of Mindfest took place last October. This is a free mental health and wellness festival at Hart House. This year the convenors wanted to use the occasion to show how both mental health and wellbeing can be as important as physical health. The schedule was designed to offer something for everyone: students, staff, faculty, and the public. There were yoga, improv, and tai chi workshops, as well as talks on bullying and a panel on the representation of mental health in the media. One event was a workshop for high school students on the transition to university.

Other highlights included a keynote by Jean-Paul Bédard on cultivating resilience, a presentation by Dr. Suzanne Stewart about mental health, Canada and Indigenous reconciliation, and a talk by Kiertson Drier about the Bathroom Stall Project.

Opportunities & Next Steps: Mental Health Framework

The University will continue to implement the recommendations outlined in the Student Mental Health Framework. The document outlines 22 recommendations across five key areas. These areas include: U of T's institutional commitment; awareness, training and anti-stigma strategies; inclusive curriculum and teaching approaches; mental health services and programs, and; policies and procedures. The overall recommendation of the report is to adopt a systems approach as the overarching institutional strategy.

In response to these recommendations, and supported by the Rossy Family Foundation donation, the University is undertaking the development of a mental health literacy curriculum and resilience curriculum. These will focus on implementing an Identify, Assist, Refer model and training, as well as proactively engaging with students to support individual resilience and wellbeing.

Summary

The AODA Office finds that the broad range of projects and initiatives detailed in this report confirm the ongoing support and commitment of the University's community to building an accessible working and learning environment for persons with disabilities.

This large community, encompassing various divisions, departments, faculties and geographic locations, engages the delivery of accessible service and strives towards creating a system-wide, integrated and comprehensive approach to accessibility. Our goal of making the University of Toronto a leader in assisting the Province of meeting the goals of the AODA is strengthened by our internal and external partnerships.

The AODA Office has also committed to engaging with the University community in a more meaningful and formal way to approach meeting the goals of the AODA in a more collaborative and consultative manner.

Over the next year, and with the legislative goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025 in mind, we will continue to target our efforts to best support persons with disabilities at the University. The University as a whole, from institutional commitments to the support and leadership of visionary faculty, staff and students will continue to be well-positioned to fulfill its commitments under the AODA and move beyond compliance.

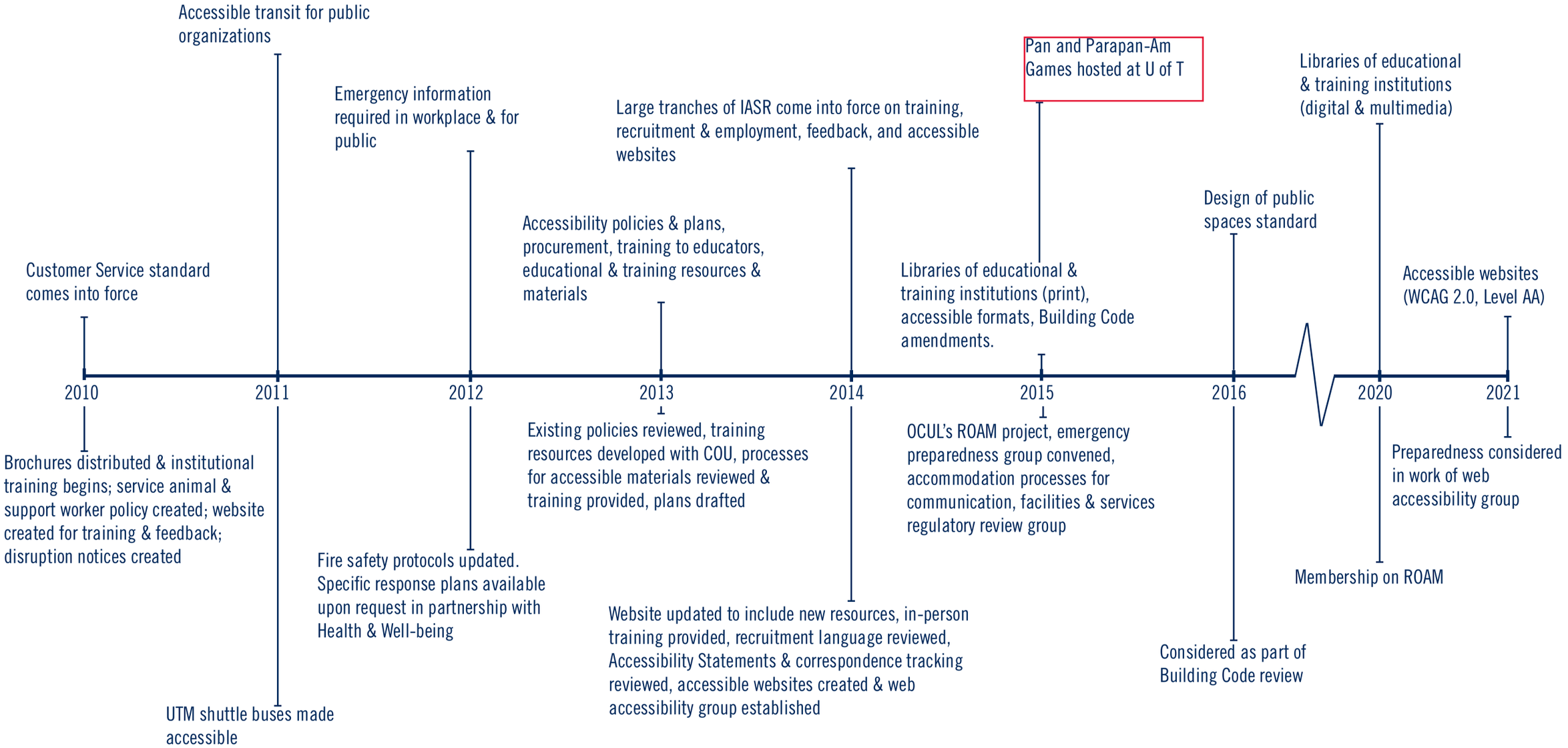
Appendix i - AODA Compliance Timeline

What follows is a graphic representation of the AODA and the University's respective responses. This begins in the past from the point at which the Customer Service Standard came into force, through to present-day, contemporary standards and their concurrent dates, moving towards the future furthest compliance date of 1 January 2021. Those regulation milestones are mirrored by the University's own milestones in how we responded, and will respond, to the legislated expectations.

The purpose here is to provide a snapshot of the work our community has completed, is currently engaged in and what it plans to complete in the future in order to respond to the goals of the AODA and build an accessible working and learning environment for persons with disabilities. A table version of this graphic is provided underneath it.

Appendix ii - AODA Compliance Timeline

Regulation Milestones



UofT Milestones

Appendix iii - AODA Compliance Timeline - Table Format

Date	Regulation Milestones	UofT Milestones
1/1/2010	Section three (policy development), section four (service animals and support workers), section five (notice of temporary disruptions), section six (training for staff), section seven (feedback process), and sections eight and nine (notice of availability of documents) of the Customer Service Standard.	• Customer Service Brochure developed, including description of the Standard, who to contact with concerns, relevant policies, advice around disability disclosure, how disability is defined. • The brochure also lists helpful accommodation tips including some on assistive devices, support persons and animals, food & drink, event location and arrival. • Since 2011 over 12,500 brochures have been distributed across the University and regular in-person training provided.
1/7/2011	Section 76 of IASR (public sector organizations transportation).	• UTM shuttle buses ensured to be accessible.
1/1/2012	Section 13 of IASR (emergency procedures, plans & public safety)	• Fire Safety protocols updated. Specific response plans are available upon request. Performed in partnership with Health & Well-being.
1/1/2012	Section 27 of IASR (workplace emergency response information)	• Specific response plans are available upon request. Performed in partnership with Health & Well-being.
1/1/2013	Section three (accessibility policies)	• Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities: U of T Guidelines • Employment Equity Policy • Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities • Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence • Statement on Human Rights
1/1/2013	Section four (accessibility plans), section five (procurement), , section 15 (educational & training resources), section 16 (training to educators)	• Plans incorporated into process developed for ODA plans. • Relevant policies reviewed • Accessibility services at all three campuses engaged in providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. • Educator Accessibility Resource Kit with COU, training provided across the institution, including via Centre for Teaching Innovation & Support
1/1/2014	All sections of Employment Standard (except s.27) within IASR come into force.	• Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities: U of T Guidelines • Recruitment language reviewed.
1/1/2014	Section six (self-service kiosks), section seven (training), section 11 (feedback), and section 14 (accessible websites, WCAG 2.0, Level A)	• Updated training resources provided to the U of T AODA website. • Accessibility statements updated and communications professional trained on their use. • Homepage updated, new Faculty of Law and Library pages created with accessibility and web accessibility group convened.
2015	Pan and parapan-Am Games hosted at U of T	

Date	Regulation Milestones	UofT Milestones
1/1/2015	Section 12 (accessible formats & communication supports), section 18 (libraries of educational & training institutions (print materials))	• Accommodation for Employees with Disabilities: U of T Guidelines • Accessibility services at three campuses. • Health & Well-being Programs & Services, tri-campus. • Accessibility statements include process for feedback to request accessible formats. • Groups convened to review emergency procedures at all three campuses. • Received OCUL's Report on Accessible Media (ROAM) for non-print materials. • ACE (Accessible Content E-portal) is launched as a Scholars Portal (OCUL) service for alternate formats of print materials.
1/1/2015	Effective date of Ontario Regulation 368/13 filed to amend the new 2012 Building Code, O.Reg. 332/12	• Facilities and services group convened to review updated regulatory requirements with respect to the built environment.
1/1/2016	Section 80 (Design of Public Spaces Standard)	• Facilities and services group convened to review updated regulatory requirements with respect to the built environment.
Feb 2017		• Rollout of new online training module on Customer Service and requirements of Section 7
1/1/2020	Section 18 (libraries of educational & training institutions (digital or multimedia resources))	• ROAM fully implemented
1/1/2021	Section 14 (accessible websites WCAG 2.0, Level AA)	• Considered in scope of activities for web accessibility group.