

The OUAC Communications and Events Department Accessibility Plan

An implementation plan for compliance with the Information and Communications Standard (Part of Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act)

Report last revised: December 12, 2024

Introduction

I. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005

In 2005, the Government of Ontario passed the AODA to make Ontario accessible by 2025 and to provide persons with disabilities, the Government and industry representatives with the opportunity to be involved in the development of accessibility standards.

The Government created accessibility standards as part of the AODA. Businesses and organizations in Ontario need to follow them to identify, remove and prevent barriers so people with disabilities have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

The IASR establishes accessibility standards and introduces requirements. There are currently 5 accessibility standards enacted in law, which are combined in the IASR:

1. Information and Communications
2. Employment
3. Transportation
4. Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)
5. Customer Service

Compliance guides are available on the [Government of Ontario's website](#).

[Copy of the full regulation](#).

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1

WCAG 2.1, published in June 2018, extends WCAG 2.0 (December 2008). The additive approach of WCAG 2.1 means that content that conforms to WCAG 2.1 also conforms to WCAG 2.0. The World Wide Web Consortium (an international organization that develops web standards) advises the use of the most current version of WCAG when developing or updating web content and/or accessibility policies.

WCAG has 3 levels of testable success criteria: A, AA and AAA. These refer to checkpoints that make websites and their content accessible. Each level builds on the previous one; AAA is the highest level of accessibility.

Purpose of This Plan

This accessibility plan reports on the current standards, policies and procedures in place in the OUAC's Communications and Events Department ("the Department") that comply with the IASR. It outlines the items that the Department will address in the future and it establishes priorities and timelines for implementing the Accessible Information and Communications Standard within the Department.

II. Meeting the Requirements of the Information and Communications Standard

The Department has been proactive in addressing issues of accessibility in the OUAC's publications and on its websites.

In 2024, the Department continued to work toward fulfilling the requirements of the Information and Communications Standard outlined within the IASR. The Status Report section outlines IASR requirements and steps taken to date to ensure that the OUAC fulfills these requirements.

Note: This report applies only to the OUAC's Communications and Events Department. There are components of the Information and Communications Standard that must be addressed separately by other OUAC departments. For example, the Application Systems Department manages content and computer systems that also fall under the Information and Communications Standard.

Information and Communications Standard Requirements – Status Report

Note: Sections 15 through 19, inclusive, do not apply to the OUAC.

Requirement 11(1)

Every obligated organization that has processes for receiving and responding to feedback shall ensure that the processes are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communications supports, upon request.

Status: Compliant

Compliance Date: January 1, 2016

Completed:

- We have processes in place to receive feedback by telephone, mail and email and to ensure that any response provided is in an accessible format.
- **Note:** The OUAC does not currently accept feedback in person.

Next Steps:

- None

Requirement 11(2)

Nothing in this section detracts from obligations imposed under section 7 of Regulation 429/07 (Customer Service).

Status: N/A

Compliance Date: January 1, 2016

Completed:

- Not actionable

Next Steps:

- N/A

Requirement 12(1)

Provide accessible formats and communication supports for people with disabilities:

- a) in a timely manner and
- b) at a cost no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

Status: Compliant

Compliance Date: January 1, 2016

Completed:

- We have [procedures for accessible format requests](#) and [procedures for accessibility requests for events](#).
- Our core publications are available online as web pages, rather than PDFs, to ensure that they are easily accessible by screenreader.

- **Exception:** The Ontario Universities' Guidance Dialogues Resource Guide document is currently a PDF. We plan to have a more accessible online format of this information by 2026.
- We have an [Accessible Publications Design Guide](#) and a [Graphics Style Guide](#) to ensure that the files are ready to be converted to accessible formats "in a timely manner".
- We have [documentation about how to design publications](#) so they can be used to create a screenreader-accessible PDF.
- The OUAC commits to providing accessible formats in a timely manner and at no cost. This commitment is posted on the accessibility web page (details in item 12[3]).
- We have scheduled a time each year to research new formats that may improve our process.
- We have created an accessible Word template to use for document creation and accessible format requests.
- We regularly test our Accessible Format Request Form and OUEvents Accessibility Request Form to ensure they are functioning properly.

Next Steps:

- None

Requirement 12(2)

Consult with the individual to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

Status: Compliant

Compliance Date: January 1, 2016

Completed:

- We include the [consulting requirement in our Accessible Format Requests Procedure](#) and the [consulting requirement in our Accessible Events Procedure](#).

We created an [Accessible Format Request Form \(in 2019\)](#) and [OUEvents Accessibility Request Form](#) (in 2024) to improve the process of receiving and fulfilling requests. We expanded the consultation information and templates in our Accessible Format Requests Procedure in 2019. **Next Steps:**

- Expand the consultation information and templates in our Accessible Events Procedure.

Requirement 12(3)

Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Status: Compliant

Compliance Date: January 1, 2016

Completed:

- We maintain an [accessibility web page](#) that notifies the public about the availability of accessible formats and our commitment to accessibility. We reviewed this page for plain language in 2018 and reviewed the Accessible Formats section in 2019. We review the page annually.

- We maintain an [events-specific accessibility web page](#) that notifies the public about the availability of accommodations and accessibility resources for events, and about our commitment to accessibility. We review the page annually.
- We have made our [Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#) available online as a web page, rather than a PDF.
- We link to the OUAC accessibility page from the OUAC, Guidance, OUEvents, OUInfo and GO2 websites and all applications.
- We include standard wording in every publication (including a link to the OUAC accessibility web page) that indicates that accessible formats are available upon request.

Next Steps:

- Add information about the availability of accommodations for events (including accessible formats and communications) to the accessibility web page.

Requirement 13(1)

If emergency procedures, plans or public safety information is made available to the public, it must be available in accessible format, upon request.

Status: Compliant

Compliance Date: January 1, 2012

Completed:

- There are currently no emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available to the public.

Next Steps:

- None

Requirement 14(3)

The Government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly, for both their internet and intranet sites, shall meet the requirements in section 14 in accordance with the schedule outlined therein.

Status: N/A

Compliance Date: N/A

Completed:

- Does not apply to the OUAC.

Next Steps:

- N/A

Requirement 14(4)1

New websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A.

Status: Compliant

Compliance Date: January 1, 2014

Requirement 14(4)2

All websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0/2.1 Level AA, except:

- a) success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (live) and
- b) success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (pre-recorded).

Status: In progress

Compliance Date: January 1, 2021

Completed (14[4]1. and 2.):

- The OUAC, Guidance, GO2, OUEvents and OUInfo websites adhere to WCAG 2.0 A Standards, and nearly all WCAG AA Standards. (See Appendix A for OUAC website URLs.)
- We [documented the requirement](#) for all websites to adhere to WCAG 2.0 AA standards.
- We added an AODA testing phase in all website and application development procedures and proofreading processes. We have [documentation](#) to ensure that all Communications and Events team members are aware of web accessibility requirements.
- We improved the accessibility of language on the OUAC, Guidance, GO2, OUEvents and OUInfo websites and applications. We made as much content as possible match the language of the locale. We added wording and language attributes, where needed.
- We addressed accessibility issues related to language of pages and parts (WCAG 2.1, 3.1.1 and 3.1.2).
- We reviewed how screenreaders read our applications and implemented several improvements.
- We reviewed the accessibility of tables on our websites and removed or reformatted irregular tables.
- We removed the Ontario Universities' Info (OUInfo) PDFs from that website.
- We replaced the inaccessible Quick Reference charts in the Ontario Universities' Guidance Dialogues Resource Guide PDF with the accessible Quick Compare Tool on the OUInfo website.
- We redesigned the OUAC website for a more accessible and user-friendly experience, with improved navigation and language.
- We contributed design input and wording changes to the Undergraduate application project for a more accessible user experience.
- We resolved an accessibility issue (keyboard navigation) with the Accessible Format Request Form in 2024.
- We replaced many of the OUAC's PDF forms on our websites with accessible online forms.
- We redesigned the OUAC's Guidance website for cycle 2025 for a more accessible and user-friendly experience.

Next Steps:

- We will continue to perform accessibility testing on OUAC websites and applications.
- We will continue to review OUAC-generated PDFs, including fillable PDF forms, and potential solutions for improved accessibility.
- We will continue to ensure documents posted on our websites for external audiences are accessible.
- We will continue to advise other OUAC departments on accessibility improvements they can make to the Undergraduate application for future cycles.
- We will continue work on redesigning the OUAC's other websites and applications for a better user experience. We will refresh the GO2 website for cycle 2026 and redesign the OUInfo website for cycle 2027. Targets for redesigning other OUAC applications in the future are yet to be determined.

III. Summary

The OUAC has a history of providing top-quality services based on communication between the OUAC and applicants, high schools and universities. Communication is the foundation of our service. For that reason, it is important that we can adequately communicate with everyone.

In 2024, the OUAC's Communications and Events Department continued to work toward fulfilling the requirements outlined in the Information and Communications Standard (within the IASR).

- We performed reviews of our websites to identify and resolve accessibility issues and discover opportunities for improvement.
- We redesigned the Guidance website to make it more accessible and user friendly.
- We advised on further improvements for the Undergraduate application for a better user experience, including more accessible navigation and language.

Making our communications more accessible is a beneficial, long-term business plan and risk management strategy. We will continue to monitor our progress and ensure that we keep up with accessibility developments, requirements and opportunities.

IV. References and Further Information

[Access Forward – Accessibility Training](#)

[Accessibility Laws in Ontario](#)

[Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Resource Centre](#)

[CNIB Info and Resources](#)

[Guide to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#)

[Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(e-law\)](#)

[World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\) – Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#)

Appendix A

Notice of Accessible Formats

Each publication should, if possible, contain a statement that indicates that accessible formats are available, and how to obtain them. The last column in this chart records this status.

- Publications that are meant exclusively for marketing (e.g., posters), and are not essential information, do not contain an accessible format statement. These publications are marked “N/A”.
- Some publications are available upon request only (e.g., paper applications). For these documents, it is assumed that the person making the request will outline, at the time of the request, any special formats they need. For that reason, these publications do not contain an accessible format statement and are marked “N/A”.
- Publications that are available online (HTML) include a link to the [OUAC's Statement of Commitment to Accessibility](#), which outlines how to obtain accessible formats.

We will keep this list up to date by cross-referencing it with the [OUAC Publications](#) page.

Print, PDF and Online (HTML) Publications

Publication Name	Category	Language	Outsourced, In-House, PDF or HTML/Online?	Contains Access Blurb/Link?
Undergraduate Application Guide	Undergrad	English	HTML/Online	Yes
Undergraduate Application Guide	Undergrad	French	HTML/Online	Yes
Collaborative University and College Programs	Undergrad	English	HTML/Online	Yes
Collaborative University and College Programs	Undergrad	French	HTML/Online	Yes
Winter, Spring and Summer Admission	Undergrad	English	HTML/Online	Yes
Winter, Spring and Summer Admission	Undergrad	French	HTML/Online	Yes
Undergraduate Paper Application Form (on request)	Undergrad	English	In-house	N/A
Undergraduate Paper Application Form (on request)	Undergrad	French	In-house	N/A
Undergraduate Poster (for Group A applicants)	Undergrad	English	PDF	No
Undergraduate Poster (for Group A applicants)	Undergrad	French	PDF	No
Undergraduate Poster (for Group B applicants)	Undergrad	English	PDF	No
Undergraduate Poster (for Group B applicants)	Undergrad	French	PDF	No
Undergraduate Tutorials (Video, PDF & PPT)	Undergrad	English	HTML/Online	Yes

Publication Name	Category	Language	Outsourced, In-House, PDF or HTML/Online?	Contains Access Blurb/Link?
Undergraduate Tutorials (Video, PDF & PPT)	Undergrad	French	HTML/Online	Yes
Admission Information Service Flyer	Undergrad	Bilingual	PDF	N/A
Counsellor Hyperdoc	Undergrad	English	PDF	No
Counsellor Hyperdoc	Undergrad	French	PDF	No
Student Hyperdoc	Undergrad	English	PDF	No
Student Hyperdoc	Undergrad	French	PDF	No
Undergraduate Information Manual	Undergrad	English	HTML/Online	Yes
OLSAS Application Guide	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
OLSAS Application Guide	Professional	French	HTML/Online	Yes
OLSAS Information Manual	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
OLSAS Paper Application Package (on request)	Professional	English	In-house	N/A
OLSAS Paper Application Package (on request)	Professional	French	In-house	N/A
OMSAS Application Guide	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
OMSAS Application Guide	Professional	French	HTML/Online	Yes
OMSAS Information Manual	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
ORPAS Application Guide	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
ORPAS Application Guide	Professional	French	HTML/Online	Yes
ORPAS Information Manual	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
TEAS Application Guide	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
TEAS Application Guide	Professional	French	HTML/Online	Yes
TEAS Information Manual	Professional	English	HTML/Online	Yes
TEAS Paper Application Package (on request)	Professional	English	In-house	N/A
TEAS Paper Application Package (on request)	Professional	French	In-house	N/A
OUEvents Hyperdoc	Recruitment	English	PDF	No
OUEvents Hyperdoc	Recruitment	French	PDF	No
OUIInfo Map Poster	Recruitment	Bilingual	PDF	No
Ontario Universities' Guidance Dialogues Resource Guide	Recruitment	Bilingual	PDF	Yes

OUAC Websites

Website Name	URL
OUAC website (English)	www.ouac.on.ca
OUAC website (French)	www.ouac.on.ca/fr
Guidance counsellors' website (English)	https://guidance.ouac.on.ca
Guidance counsellors' website (French)	https://guidance.ouac.on.ca/fr
Ontario Universities' Events website (English)	www.ouevents.ca
Ontario Universities' Events website (French)	www.ouevents.ca/fr
OUInfo (English)	www.ouinfo.ca
OUInfo (French)	www.ouinfo.ca/fr
GO2 website for universities (English only)	https://go2.ouac.on.ca

Note: The OUAC websites include all OUAC applications, which are linked from their respective department pages on the www.ouac.on.ca and www.ouac.on.ca/fr websites.

Appendix B

Communications and Events Department Accessibility Documentation

- [Accessibility Statement](#)
- [Accessible Design Style Guide](#)
- [Accessible Events Procedure](#)
- [Accessible Format Request Procedures](#)
- [Instructions for Creating Accessible InDesign Documents](#)
- [Instructions for Creating Accessible PDFs](#)
- [Instructions for Creating Accessible Word Documents](#)
- [Instructions for Receiving and Tracking Accessibility Feedback](#)

Appendix C

Accessible Publication Formats and Assistive Technologies

What are accessible formats?

Accessible formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone, while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

Why do we need to provide information in other formats?

Some people cannot read because of their disability. This includes people who:

- are blind or have low vision
- have an intellectual or other cognitive disability
- cannot hold publications or turn pages because of a physical disability
- have difficulties accessing information on the internet
- have difficulties watching or hearing video presentations

Providing accessible formats allows everyone to access the information.

Examples of Accessible Formats

Large Print

Large print helps people who have low vision. Large print materials should be prepared with a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Screenreaders

Screenreaders convert text that is displayed on a computer monitor to voice (using a speech synthesizer) or to Braille.

Braille

Braille is an accessible format for people who are blind or deafblind. It is a tactile system of raised dots representing letters or a combination of letters of the alphabet. Braille is produced using Braille transcription software.

Audio Format

Audio is an accessible format for people with a vision, intellectual or developmental, or learning disability who are unable to read print.

Captioning

Captioning translates the audio portion of a video presentation by way of subtitles or captions. Captions usually appear on the bottom of the screen. Captioning makes visual media with sound accessible to people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Captioning may be closed or open. Closed captions can only be seen on a television screen that has a device called a closed caption decoder. Open captions are "burned on" a video and appear whenever the video is shown.

Windowing

Windowing lets people who are Deaf read by means of an interpreter. The interpreter uses sign language to explain what other people are hearing during a video presentation or broadcast.

The interpreter appears in a corner or "window" of the screen and translates spoken words into sign language. Windowing may include open or closed captioning.

Descriptive Video Service (DVS)

DVS provides descriptive audio narration of key visual elements – the action, characters, locations, costumes and sets – without interfering with dialogue or sound effects. This makes television programs, films, home videos and other visual media accessible for people with vision disabilities.

Assistive Technologies

People with disabilities may use one or more of the following assistive technologies:

- speech input and synthesized speech output
- screenreaders
- screen magnifiers
- screen projectors
- audio recorded information
- text telephones
- adjustable signal level and tone on audio devices
- volume control
- hands-free data entry and response selection
- intelligent word prediction software
- accessible pointing devices, such as mouth sticks
- keyboard controllers
- book holders and page turners
- touchscreens
- standardized icons

Although many people who are Deaf or hard of hearing use wireless or hand-held communications devices to send and receive text messages, TTY (teletypewriter) is still widely used.

Bell Canada Relay Service lets TTY users and hearing people talk to one another by phone with the help of specially trained operators.

Accessible Websites

Providing easy access to information through accessible websites benefits everyone, including people with disabilities, seniors, consumers living in areas that do not have access to high-speed internet, people who have difficulty reading and writing, and people whose first language is not English.

Visit [Accessibility](#) to request this document in an accessible format.

OUAC Accessibility: Accessibility Requests

December 12, 2024

Executive Summary

Through the Accessible Format Request Form on the OUAC website, we received fewer accessible format requests this year compared to last (20 in 2024; 37 in 2023).

In May 2024, we added an Ontario Universities' Events (OUEvents) Accessibility Request Form to the OUEvents website to allow individuals to submit requests for accommodations for in-person and virtual events. Prior to implementing this form, we asked event attendees to submit requests for accommodations to us by email.

We received 50 requests through the OUEvents Accessibility Request Form this year and 2 requests by email (both before the form was available), compared to only 3 requests received by email in 2023.

Number of Accessible Format Requests Received to Date

Total Accessible Format Requests Received

Year	Number of Requests Received
2012	2
2013	9
2014	3
2015	2
2017	1
2018	8
2019	73
2020	32
2021	42
2022	39
2023	37
2024	20 (to date)

2024 Accessible Format Requests by Application (To Date)

Application	Number of Requests
OLSAS	2
OMSAS	6
ORPAS	1
Other (contract, grad, other)	1
TEAS	3
Undergraduate	7

2024 Accessible Format Requests by Document Type (To Date)

Document Type	Number of Requests
Application Guide	18
Application	1
Other	1

2024 Accessible Format Requests by Language (To Date)

Language	Number of Requests
English	16
French	4

The total number of requests we received for accessible formats this year is significantly lower than last year. Historically, most accessible format requests have been related to the Undergraduate application (previously separate 101 and 105 applications). The small number of requests we received related to Professional applications is similar to the number received last year.

The smaller number of requests related to the Undergraduate application received this year, relative to past years, may indicate that the new, modernized and user-friendly Undergraduate application and redesigned application guide on the OUAC website provide a more seamless and accessible user experience than the former 101 and 105 applications and guides.

Turnaround

We continue to adhere to the turnaround commitment published on our website, providing the requested document in a timely manner (5-10 business days).

Consultation

Consultation continues to be a lengthy and challenging process. Many applicants do not respond to our requests for more information.

Number of OUEvents Accessibility Requests Received to Date

Total OUEvents Accessibility Requests Received

Year	Number of Requests Received
2023	2 (via email)
2024	52 (to date; 2 received by email, 50 through the form)

2024 OUEvents Accessibility Requests by Event (To Date)

OUEvent	Number of Requests
Ontario Universities' Fair (OUF)	40
Regional Fairs	6
Information Sessions (virtual)	5
Guidance Dialogues (not on form)	1

2024 OUEvents Accessibility Requests by Accommodation Type (To Date)

Note: Some individuals requested more than 1 type of accommodation.

Document Type	Number of Requests
American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter – English	6
Langue des signes québécoises (LSQ) interpréter – French	1
Sign language interpreter – Other language	1
Accessible format of a document	6
Closed captioning – English	17
Closed captioning – French	3
Accommodation for sensory needs	6
Accommodation for mobility needs	15
Other	23

2024 OUEvents Accessibility Requests by Language (To Date)

Language	Number of Requests
English	48
French	4

The large number of requests received through the new OUEvents Accessibility Request Form indicates the need for accommodations for accessibility needs at OUEvents. Most requests we received were for the OUF.

The types of requests we received will help guide planning for future events. For example, requests related to mobility needs for the OUF indicate we should add more information about accessible parking and the locations of elevators at the venue on our website. Requests related to the need for a quiet space for sensory needs and/or rest at the OUF suggest that it would be useful for us to have a designated quiet space at the event. The requests received this year will also guide future wording for FAQs for the OUEvents website and for template responses for consulting on requests.

We received many requests for closed captioning at in-person events that we could not fulfill, as there were no presentations at these events. In such cases, we offered alternative resources and suggestions.

Many requests in the “Other” category indicated the individual did not have accessibility needs and/or was seeking general information about an event.

Turnaround

Similar to with the Accessible Format Request Form, we adhere to the turnaround commitment published on our website, responding to the requestor to consult and provide solutions in a timely manner (5-10 business days).

Consultation

Consultation is a lengthy and challenging process, often involving third parties, such as university and venue staff. Many requestors do not respond to our requests for more information.

Accessibility Request Process

We have detailed, step-by-step documentation that explains the process for handling requests for accessible documents and accommodations for accessibility needs at events:

- [Accessible Format Requests Procedure](#)
- [Accessible Events Procedure](#)

We are working with the OUAC's Data and Policy Analysis Department to determine a data retention policy for these requests, which we will add to our procedure documentation, and wording for our websites to inform users how we use their information and how long we store it.