



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Nipissing University Accessibility Advisory Committee (NUAAC)

March 2024 to February 2029

This document is available in alternate format upon request.

A Message from the President

Nipissing University is committed to taking action towards making our campus accessible, with respect to facilities, support services, and resources. We must ensure that all our students have the full opportunity to thrive both academically and socially. All students must have a sense of belonging to our community to enrich the overall educational experience for everyone. We must ensure a culture of support and understanding, and we must be innovative in our solutions to ensure that we create holistic learning environments that both recognize and celebrate the strengths and contributions of every individual - that is academic excellence.

Background

Legislation

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) sets out a process to assist public sector organizations like Nipissing University to become fully accessible by 2025. As provided for in the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#), which came into force in 2011, the University must act to become accessible within five years in five areas. These five areas include customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment, and the design of public spaces. These areas are governed by general requirements concerning creating accessibility policies, the procurement or acquisition of goods, services or facilities and submission of accessibility reports.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Under section 4. (1) of [O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), Nipissing University must establish, implement, maintain, document, post, review and update a multi-year accessibility plan at least once every five years, in consultation with persons with disabilities. The plan must provide an overall description of the University's strategies to, on one hand, prevent and eliminate barriers, and on the other, meet the [accessibility requirements for public universities under Ontario law](#).

Introduction

Nipissing University is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). This accessibility plan identifies how we will play a role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians. This plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. We commit to training every employee as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to accessibility policies. We maintain records of the training provided including dates on which the training was provided and who completed the training. This plan has been amended from the 2014 version and further updates will be provided after the development of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

and Accessibility (EDIA) action plan, and the awaited release of the final AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard to set new goals and priorities.

The institution has made significant strides in recent years, ushering a more inclusive and equitable campus environment. These accomplishments can be seen in the work of the Nipissing University Accessibility Advisory Committee (NUAAC), the Equity Action Planning Task Force (EAPT), and various other committees and student groups. Achieving WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) Level 2.0 A and AA standards for our Nipissing University website is a notable example. Also, embarking on a million-dollar project in 2023-2024 and updating all the fire alarm systems within the institution.

Statement of Commitment

Nipissing University is committed to ensuring equitable access and participation for people living with disabilities. We are committed to treating all people in a way that empowers them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in fostering an inclusive culture that supports the consistent and passionate pursuit of excellence for all members of the Nipissing community. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, creating barrier-free learning and working conditions for persons with both physical and psychological health conditions or impairments. We respect diversity and continue to build on past lessons and achievements as well as on-going challenges by creating a living, learning, and working community that is accessible and supportive of all members of the community. We are committed to taking concrete action; not only by being responsive and removing barriers to accessibility, but also proactively fostering an inclusive culture, supporting health and well-being initiatives, and preventing barriers to accessibility.

This statement supports the AODA's five standards and gives concrete direction for making the province's services and resources accessible. Nipissing University will strive to ensure our accessibility initiatives support the AODA principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

**List of achievements to remove and prevent barriers based
on the AODA compliance and timelines.**

Customer Service (2010)

- Train all staff and volunteers, including Board Members
- Policy
- File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st)

Information and Communications (2012)

- Emergency and public safety information

Employment (2012)

- Workplace emergency plan for employees with disabilities

General Requirements (2013)

- Policies
- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- Kiosks
- Procurement or acquiring good, services or facilities
- File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st)

Information and Communications (2013)

- Educational and training resources and materials
- Training to educators
- Public libraries

General Requirements (2014)

- Training of all staff and volunteers

Information and Communications (2014)

- All new internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 level A
- Accessible feedback processes

Employment (2014)

- Recruitment
- Employee accommodation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees returning to work • Performance management, career development and redeployment
<p>General Requirements (2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st) <p>Information and Communications (2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible formats and communication support • Educational libraries – print-based resources • Producers of educational or training material – Textbooks
<p>Design of Public Spaces (2016) Make new or redeveloped:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational trails and beach access routes accessible • Outdoor public use eating areas accessible • Outdoor play spaces accessible • Exterior paths of travel • On and off-street parking lots accessible • Service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas with fixed seating accessible • Maintain accessible elements of public spaces
<p>General Requirements (2017 & 2019)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st)
<p>Information and Communications (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational libraries - multi-media/digital resources • Producers of educational or training material – Supplementary print materials
<p>General Requirements (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st) <p>Information and Communications (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 level AA (excluding live captioning and audio description)
<p>General Requirements (2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st)
<p>General Requirements (2025)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File accessibility report (by Dec. 31st)

Strategies & Actions

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) outlines requirements for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications that are accessible for people with disabilities. There are five specific standards and there is general information and requirements that apply to all the standards. Nipissing University is committed to providing workers with different options in how they receive, and process information should an accommodation be required. This can include all information essential in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities on an employee's work but also all information available to other employees in the workplace.

1) Employment Standard

The standard requires that employers must make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities.

Nipissing University is committed to ensuring we comply with the employment standards. The human resources department ensures that all applicants are provided with information on accommodations available during the recruitment and selection process, including the interview and assessment. When candidates are invited for an interview, they are individually contacted and advised that accommodations are available upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used. The human resources department will consult with an applicant on the accommodation that best suits their need. The institution also encourages people with disabilities to self-identify on a cover letter.

When a new employee is onboarded, the human resources representative will review all of Nipissing University's policies and procedures which includes the employment accommodation policy and accessibility policy. Nipissing University also has an accessibility webpage that is highlighted during the Human Resources orientation process. New employees also review a list of the staff on the Nipissing University Accessibility Advisory Committee (NUAAC).

The Human Resources department is committed to providing internal and external community partners with publicly available and accessible emergency information. We will continue to provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary. The human resources department will work with each person with a disability to assist with their accommodation needs and any gradual or return to work engagements.

2) Transportation Standard

The transportation standard sets out the requirements for transportation service providers.

Particularly, features and equipment on vehicles, routes, and services offered must be accessible to people with disabilities.

3) Design of Public Spaces Standard

The design of public spaces standard outlines the need for newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for people with disabilities. At Nipissing University, we do not have an in-house accessibility building specialist or expertise. When the institution determines there is a need for a new or redesigned space, a third party is employed, and an architect comes in to implement and design the space. All the architectural companies take on the responsibility of ensuring the applicable building codes and accessibility requirements are followed based on municipal and provincial legislation. From there, the City of North Bay reviews these plans and determines whether a building permit will be approved.

The institution follows this process for all new or renovated places both indoors and outside. The outside facility which includes parking lots, accessible parking spaces, sidewalks and walkways, outdoor lighting, emergency telephones and more. We are required to report and provide annual updates to the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) which is consistent with all postsecondary institution in Ontario. We also employ and outside an asset management group as a third party to complete audits of newly renovated spaces. There is a member from facilities on both the Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) as well as the Nipissing University Accessibility Advisory Committee (NUAAC). Moving forward, we hope to utilize the *Inclusive Physical Spaces Framework* created by the University of Waterloo.

4) Customer Service Standard

The standard outlines requirements for removing barriers for people with disabilities so they can access goods, services, and/or facilities.

Nipissing University is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means we provide goods, services, and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high-quality timeliness as others.

Nipissing University has been offering training on how to provide customer service to persons with disabilities since the requirement came into effect in 2010. Nipissing staff, faculty, student staff and volunteers have participated in this training. The institution utilizes AccessForward for the Accessible Customer Service Training and the five-part series on the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA from the Ontario Human Rights Commission are also used.

Should there be any changes to Nipissing University accessibility policies, the University will provide training to staff, faculty, student staff and volunteers.

5) Communications & Information

Nipissing University is committed to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. We will consult with persons with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

Other Applicable Nipissing University Policy

- [Employment Accommodation Policy](#)
- [Nipissing University – Accessibility Webpage](#)
- [Respectful Workplace and Learning Environments Policy](#)
- Service Animal on Campus

These policies emphasize the commitment to accessibility and the duty to accommodate. Accessibility policies at Nipissing University are guided by dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

Conclusion

In summary, our multi-year accessibility plan outlines our commitment to addressing barriers and improving accessibility within our organization. The aim is to create a more inclusive environment in accordance with regulations and standards, reflecting our dedication to accessibility as an essential aspect of our operations.

The University recognizes that further steps need to be taken to help Nipissing become completely barrier free, physically, academically, attitudinally, and socially. It is imperative that we educate our community to recognize barriers to access and provide them with the tools to address them. By doing so, we will be more proactive in removing those barriers, and ensuring a workplace and learning environment that provides all with the opportunity to succeed.

The Multi-Year Accessibility 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.

Feedback:

Nipissing University recognizes that feedback is critical to the process of identifying and removing barriers to participation as well as improving how we deliver our services to people with disabilities. Feedback may be given by email, by telephone or by regular mail.

Communication of the Plan

A copy of this plan is posted and available on the University website. Inquiries regarding Nipissing University's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan or requests for an alternate format copy of this plan may be directed to the contact person below.

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