Accessibility Report

A Summary

May 2021

Goals

- Understand accessibility on campus and issues students might face related to accessibility.
- Determine a way for WUSA to address issues moving forward.

474 Survey respondents
13 Interviewees
58% Of respondents self-identified as having a disability

UWaterloo Services

AccessAbility Services
Provides students with individualized plans which include a variety of academic accommodations.

- 69% knew how to register.
- 89% who identify as having a disability were registered.

Health Services
Provides medical support and treatment to students, often needed to support accommodation requests and to register for AccessAbility.

- 22% of those who encountered issues accessing services experienced this with Health Services.

Counselling Services
Main office on campus that provides mental health and wellness care; provides documentation to AccessAbility Services for accommodation registration.

- 29% of those who encountered issues accessing services experienced this with Counselling Services

Concerns

- Long wait times*
- Lack of communication
- Interpersonal issues (discrimination, ignorance, dismissal of needs, etc.)
- Lack of 2SLGBTQA+ support from doctors*
- Quality of care
- Lack of long-term care available
- 6 session limit is not enough

* been/ being addressed by WUSA
Academic Experiences

27% of respondents faced accessibility barriers related to teaching/learning structure.

21% of respondents faced barriers relating to stigma against disabilities.

43% of respondents felt that their instructors were not understanding and accommodating enough when it concerns disabilities.

Concerns

- Instructors refuse to provide accommodations due to not believing students’ conditions or providing accommodations at all.
- Frustration at the university systems which allow instructors to ignore accommodation requests.
- Students want better communication between AccessAbility and instructors, including better follow-up to ensure accommodations are being provided.

Online Learning

Concerns

- Less accommodations through AccessAbility; created new concerns like lack of transcripts of lectures.
- Remote courses may have more assignments than in-person which negatively impacts persons with accessibility issues.

Benefits

- Asynchronous schedule is helpful to some students as this allows them to work when they feel the best.

Employment

Concerns

- Some students might choose to NOT participate in a co-op program because they believe their functional limitations make co-op inaccessible to them.
- Strict co-op interview policies push students to attend interviews even when they do not feel capable of interviewing that day.
- Must communicate better; let students know CEE and AccessAbility can provide accommodations during interviews.
Built Environment

35% of respondents felt that university buildings in general were not accessible to them/ that they were unsure if buildings had been made accessible to them.

Concerns

- Older buildings had the highest number of complaints.
- Internal signage, inaccessible entrances and unreliable elevators.
- Improper clearing of snow and ice/winter maintenance is a common accessibility barrier on campus.
- Issues in receiving accommodations for on-campus housing.

Finances

High medication and support device costs can be a barrier to students with accessibility needs.

Other Concerns

52% of students felt that there is not enough disability awareness on campus.

64% of respondents said there is not enough awareness for different types of disabilities on campus

Recommendations

Promotion of the Centre for Academic Policy Support (CAPS)

Student-run resource for people who need to file a petition, grievance, or appeal to address an academic policy with the university (i.e., if accommodations were not provided or an assignment should be weighted differently but the instructor did not agree).

- Many students with accessibility needs indicated they had gone through this process but that help would have been beneficial.
Continue work on the Student Safety Committee

- Include relevant data and information regarding the built environment collected in this project in the student safety committee portfolio.

This information will supplement the existing evidence the committee has already and will serve to ensure physical accessibility issues are highlighted in their work.

Creation of an Accessibility committee under WUSA

To continue the work of this report and collaborate with the stakeholders mentioned in this report, a committee should be formed. The committee will look into:

- **AccessAbility Services**: Registration, communication, advisor training/inclusivity.
- **Health Services**: Reporting and Oversight systems, advocacy for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity, expansion of long-term, consistent care.
- **Counselling Services**: Clarification of services offered and limits on said service, consistency of care, increased number of sessions available per student.
- **University wide inclusion training**: improving existing training, expanding requirements of completion, emphasize the need for and expectation of providing accommodations.