Accessible Education – Beta Teaching Innovation Incubator Project – Terms of Reference (DRAFT)

Background

Based on the principle that accessible education is better education, UW envisions a post-secondary education experience for learners where accessibility is at the forefront of what we do. Leveraging the AODA's post-secondary education standard recommendations that were written by experts with disability lived experience in post-secondary education sector, the Teaching Innovation Incubator is supporting the Accessible Education project to ensure that the University of Waterloo is a leader in promoting accessibility in our teaching and learning.

Statement on Incorporating Disabled Voices

The work proposed as part of this project will directly impact the experiences of our disabled learners and UW community. We acknowledge that our work cannot be done without robust consultation and relationship building with our disabled community. In an effort to ensure no one needs to disclose their disability should they choose not to, disabled members of our UW community will not be directly solicited to join this project; rather, disabled voices will be prominent and given priority to provide input and feedback throughout the project's lifecycle. Mechanisms to do so include establishing an open-membership *Disability Trust that* comprises individuals who have willingly self-declared their disability and want to be part of conversations about making teaching and learning at UW fully accessible. A province-wide group of disabled voices is always being considered to ensure post-secondary institutions have a group of willing voices to receive feedback from on accessibility that are not contextualized around a given institution's culture.

Objectives

The following are core objectives of this work:

- Support the creation of a teaching and learning environment in which innovative, accessible education practices are valued and supported, and so are tried, assessed, and improved over time.
- Position accessible education as a road to better teaching and learning for everyone, not merely a regulatory approval matter.
- Rethink how we do things so that accessibility is part of the development process, rather than an "add on" to practice.
- Promote long-lasting change in program, instructor, and student mindset with respect to accessible education.
- Recognize that the disability community contributes to our diversity and re-imagining our teaching and learning approaches is required to fully include all identities.

Within these overarching objectives are three project teams tasked with overseeing and enacting a subset of the recommendations that have been identified as directly addressing teaching and learning. These project teams are: Policy & Guidelines; Instructional Programs & Practices; Learning Tools & Materials.

Policy & Guidelines project team's target goals:

- Clarify Waterloo's values, principles, and processes for managing diverse needs and unique situations related to equity with respect to teaching and educational practices.
- Envision, develop, and clearly articulate policies, guidelines, and processes related to equity and accessibility that are clearly valuable and beneficial to all stakeholders.

Instructional Programs & Practices project team's target goals:

- Reimagine accessible education by identifying and/or establishing teaching practices and curricular approaches that prioritize accessibility and inclusion in the context of teaching and learning at Waterloo.
- Identify innovative ways to share and normalize accessible practices as a cornerstone of broader inclusion strategies employed by instructors, programs, and academic support units.

Learning Tools & Materials project team's target goals:

- Establish processes enabling Waterloo to become a leader in capitalizing on new technology in ways that address and improve accessibility.
- Champion the academic success of all students by identifying and implementing essential supports that guarantee accessible and equitable learning materials.

Scope of Work

There are 185 recommendations put forward by the Ontario Government's Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee. 28 of these recommendations have been identified as either directly impacting teaching and learning, or having components that will intersect with teaching and learning to some degree. The planning team has already categorized these recommendations into the three aforementioned buckets: policy & guidelines; instructional programs & practices; and learning tools & materials. Each project team is led by two co-leads: one faculty member, and one ASU leader. The co-leads are:

- Policy & Guidelines – David DeVidi (Associate Vice-President, Academic) & Jennifer Coghlin (Associate Registrar, Enrolment Services & Academic Policy)
- Instructional Programs & Practices - Diana Skrzydlo (Teaching Fellow, Faculty of Math) & Donna Ellis (Director, Centre for Teaching Excellence)
- Learning Tools & Materials - Rob Hill (Teaching Fellow, Faculty of Science) & Aldo Caputo (Director, Centre for Extended Learning)

Joyce Barlow, Associate Director, Disability Inclusion (Human Resources) is a subject matter expert and consults with all three project teams.

The co-leads of each project team have the following tasks:

a) Identify and invite individuals from across campus to form a team to support the work in their respective project.
b) Identify and invite collaborators who will provide support and expertise when called upon throughout the project lifecycle.
c) Process the recommendations that have been assigned to their project team and determine an outcome or deliverable that will address the recommendation.

d) Design a timeline in order to address these recommendations, taking into account the proposed timelines provided by the Ontario Government.

These tasks are necessarily broad so that the project teams can best decide how to address each recommendation in a way that meets the core objectives of this project.

All other recommendations that have been put forward by the Ontario Government's Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee that do not address teaching and learning are out-of-scope for this project.

Project Team Members

The following table identifies the project team, co-leads, and the preliminarily identified members/units that will be invited to join as either team members or collaborators. Faculties or ASUs may have individuals they would recommend to fill these roles.

Project Team	Co-Leads	Possible Members/Units
Policy & Guidelines	David DeVidi Jennifer Coghlin	**Team**: 1 ADU, 1 ADG, Secretariat, Library, AAS Director
		Collaborator: CEE, SSO, HR, FAUW, student reps, CEL, CTE, UOps, Grad Ops, GSPA
Instructional Programs & Practices	Diana Skrzydlo Donna Ellis	**Team**: QACI, Registrar's Office, AAS, CEL, CTE, faculty reps, 1 ADU, EDI-R
		Collaborator: Academic Advisors, student reps, SSO, CEE (WIL Programs), MUR, Library
Learning Tools & Materials	Rob Hill Aldo Caputo	**Team**: CEL, CTE, Library, IST/ITMS, 1 ADU or ADG
		Collaborator: FAUW, student reps, UOps, Grad Ops, Edtech Ecosystem group, AAS

Roles & Time Investment

Each member of the project team will have varying degrees of work that is expected of them.

- **Co-leads** will meet as a leadership team on a monthly basis to make strategic decisions about the overarching project, share status updates, and decide how to drive the project forward. Co-leads will also lead meeting with their respective project teams, and work with the project team on addressing their assigned recommendations by developing outcomes or deliverables.
- **Project team members** will meet with their co-leads and fellow project team members on a monthly basis. They will be tasked with deciding how to address their assigned recommendations and carrying out the work to do so. In some cases, project team members will be directly responsible for completing the work, whereas in others they will be deciding how to accomplish the work and identifying which other units need to be involved. Such arrangements will be made as clear as possible at the outset of the project, but as the work proceeds, project team members' roles may evolve. Project team members will ideally serve as members throughout the entirety of the project's lifecycle.

- **Collaborators** will be called upon when a segment of the project, or a specific recommendation, benefits from their expertise. Their commitment will vary depending on the task, but they can be expected to attend meetings and complete tasks when necessary. Collaborators may only be needed for a short period of time (e.g., one month) or a potentially longer commitment (e.g., six months to a year).

Timeline

The project began in early 2023 and is expected to be completed within three to four years. A detailed timeline will need to be developed by each project team once the teams have been constructed. Timelines are flexible. Due to the length of this project, if team members or collaborators need to step away from the project, their respective faculties or ASUs may identify a replacement to provide support.

Success Indicators

The following success indicators will ensure the work being done by this project team will ultimately address and meet our learners' and instructors' needs:

- AODA compliance has been sufficiently met.
- Project team members have embraced ownership of this work and meeting project goals, and campus community is seeing the value of this work being enacted.
- Development and implementation of a change management plan that contributes to buy-in and changes in practices.
    a. Examines and proposes solutions to real and perceived challenges (e.g., impact on staff and faculty workload).
    b. Includes the development of an understandable and agreed upon statement of commitment to accessibility.
- UW is seen as a leader in accessibility, as evidenced by increased admission applications and external use of UW developed resources.