

Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISCo)

Terms of Reference

Background

The Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISCo), formed in the 2022-23 academic year, is led by senior University leaders who are reviewing matters of accessibility and developing strategic plans to address barriers that limit access to the world-class quality of education that Waterloo offers. DISCo is advisory to the Provost, who holds executive sponsorship and accountabilities for meeting the 185 recommendations included in the [AODA's Post-Secondary Education Standard \(the "Education Standard"\) Final Recommendations Report 2022](#).

Purpose

DISCo is addressing accessibility concerns within nine thematic areas identified by disabled people as posing barriers to post-secondary education, including but not limited to perceptions and assumptions; assessment, curriculum, and instruction; digital learning and technology; as well as physical and financial barriers. The committee aims to identify synergies, partnerships, resource-sharing opportunities, and collegial practices across all relevant institutional activities.

Mandate

1. Champion accessibility and disability inclusion at the executive leadership level
2. Maintain visibility of departmental and institutional efforts in accessibility and how it may be formalized to meet legislative requirements
3. Coordinate the implementation of recommendations with verticals that have a common/shared scope, such as: Admissions Process Review, [President's Anti-Racism Taskforce](#) recommendations, [Canada Research Chair EDI Action Plan](#) recommendations, [EDIR Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#), [Educational Technology Hub projects and initiatives](#), [WatSEE Framework](#), [Digital Learning Strategy](#) and others
4. Identify targeted recommendations that can be actioned through the [Teaching Innovation Incubator \(TII\)](#)
5. Identify outstanding recommendations requiring separate proposals or additional resources, and develop a timeline for implementation
6. Identify and recommend executive council alignment for accessibility areas/themes that may not have been contemplated previously or have a natural, apparent alignment

Membership

DISCo consists of University executive leadership members who have the accountability and influence to steer institutional activities and advocate for the inclusion of an accessibility lens. Members have an inherent understanding of the impacts of disability inclusion and accessible education within a university context. Membership comprises of co-chairs, with at least one Faculty representative (i.e., dean) and at

least one Academic Support Unit. Other members are selected to provide relative administrative support to steering committee members in exercising their mandate. The following representatives have been selected for membership on DISCo based on their involvement with and influence over campus accessibility issues for persons with disabilities:

- Dean – Faculty of Health (co-chair)
- AVP, Academic (co-chair)
- Registrar
- Project Manager, Provost Office (administration)
- Associate Director, Disability Inclusion (subject matter expertise)
- Lived experience representatives

In addition to the above members, other individuals within the University may be called upon from time to time to serve as members of the Core Planning Team, Sub-Committees, and/or Working Groups, or to complete actions decided by DISCo and approved by executive leadership.

Meeting frequency

Meetings will be at least once per term, or as necessary. Sub-committees and Working groups will meet as often as necessary to carry out its mandate.

Decision making

DISCo members will champion and advocate for disability inclusion with their relative peers in carrying institutional responsibilities and initiatives, including prioritizing resources and efforts relative to the objectives. As individual departments/units look to expand efforts and resourcing, DISCo will support the institution by finding efficiencies in collaboration, coordination and sharing of resources through tracking of projects and work associated with its mandate. The committee will make reports, which may include recommendations, to bring forward to the Provost regularly. Recommendations of the committee remain subject to normal University of Waterloo policies and approvals processes.

Executive Council Lead

Executive Council leads are Executive Council members accountable for the consideration and operationalization of the Education Standard recommendations that are aligned within their portfolio and areas of accountability. They will support their delegated operations leads in sponsorship of activities, initiatives, and projects to support the University in becoming accessible and disability-inclusive. This includes making relative adjustments, changes, and advocacy to relative peers in the adoption of transformational change relative to their areas.

DISCo recognizes that these changes may require additional resources, support, and considerations during the transition period. DISCo is prepared to support the Executive Council Leads in advocating for short-term considerations and re-prioritization of resources in order to facilitate this transformational change. This includes addressing areas that may not have a clear vertical alignment to existing executive leadership portfolios. The Executive Council Leads should clearly articulate these needs, beyond considerations of regular operational requirements, so that it can be considered.

Core Planning Team

The Core Planning Team consists of the delegated operational leads by accountable executive council members to carry out the review, planning, and implementation of the Education Standard recommendations.

Core planning team members report to DISCo on a biannual basis regarding progress made in advancing Education standard recommendations. DISCo will support the core planning team in identifying interdependencies and connections to ensure a coordinated strategic direction in addressing possible institutional risk for Waterloo to assume, alignment of other strategic priorities, and removing barriers to advancing initiatives that support the University in realizing its commitments with the education standard recommendations.

Review

These Terms of Reference, including committee membership, will be reviewed every 2 years.