

Renison University College Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Territorial Acknowledgement

Renison University College is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land that was promised to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River, and is within the territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

We make every effort to honour and respect the implications of this land acknowledgement in the work that we do, and the programs and courses that we offer.

Renison is committed to the inclusion of all at every level, and this includes the work of decolonization.

Renison's Truth and Reconciliation Working Group is committed to fulfilling the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; namely, to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, addressing the backlog of Indigenous students seeking a post-secondary education and incorporating Indigenous education into existing programming.

To date, the committee has helped to organize the screening and world premiere of a film, documenting the lives of Residential school survivors, and the group has been very active in the development of a new scholarship designed exclusively for Indigenous students. Discussions around the hiring of an Indigenous senior leader, to assist in the development of curriculum and College planning are underway.

De-colonizing higher education is a long-term project, but work is underway and the Truth and Reconciliation Working Group is committed to the ongoing success of these plans.

Commitment to Accessibility

Renison University College is committed to making its campus community inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities studying, visiting, or working at Renison. This document outlines how Renison promotes accessibility and ensures equitable access to its services and facilities, and how these measures will adapt and expand over the next few years. Renison has intentionally and purposefully aligned many of the goals of its Five-year Strategic Plan (2019 – 2024) with the goals of the Multi-year Accessibility Plan, in order to ensure that the goals of this plan remain at the forefront of ongoing planning process and that measurable outcomes are in place.

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Renison has taken measures to advance accessibility within its organization. In particular, Renison has implemented practices and established accessibility policies to ensure the Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communication, Transportation and the Built Environment Standards meet the requirements set out by the AODA.

Renison's Plan, along with its policies, practices and procedures all complement the University of Waterloo's commitment to accessibility and their published protocols. Accessibility efforts within the University of Waterloo are centralized through the Waterloo Accessibility Committee which aims to provide a unified approach in creating a fully inclusive environment for people with disabilities within the campus community. As an Affiliated College of the University of Waterloo, Renison students graduate with Waterloo degrees. As such, Renison's efforts to make its campus more inclusive and accessible are necessarily tied to those of Waterloo while, at the same time, Renison must adopt its own individual focus and attention. To this end, Renison has created its own working and advisory group, known as Accessibility Matters; this group was formed to raise awareness and make recommendations with regard to accessibility needs on the Renison campus.

Administration and Governance

Reporting to Renison's Executive Council, Accessibility Matters at Renison was formed as an advisory and working group established to address accessibility on the Renison campus. Its responsibilities include:

- Serve as a resource to the university college community on issues related to accessibility
- Educate the Renison community on real and potential barriers to accessibility including sharing best practices for addressing issues and eliminating barriers
- Serve as the Renison campus contact point for all accessibility concerns
- Provide, when needed, a liaison with services on campus at the University of Waterloo to ensure that everyone's needs are met

Life at Renison

A Student-Centered Approach

Renison's Accessibility Matters group is made up of a cross-section of students, faculty, and staff, and includes members who identify as having accessibility needs. The committee has been leveraged to provide feedback and guidance with the Renison community on matters related to accessibility. Together, the group shares best practices for the shared Renison community.

Accessibility Matters has already had considerable impact on the lives of its students residing and studying at Renison:

- A thorough Accessibility Audit was conducted in spring 2016, to identify issues, as well as immediate vs. long-term solutions
- Implemented accessibility changes to the Renison facility that could be made right away
- Launched the Accessibility Matters webpage
- Sought Accessibility champions within the Renison community – faculty and staff who are implementing accessible solutions and universal design practices in their classes, work, and life at Renison
- Hosted a Low Vision Clinic for Renison faculty, staff and resident Dons
- Accessible water stations were installed during the summer of 2016
- Hosted a Global Accessibility Awareness Day event
- Student Residence corridors have been equipped with automatic door operators at key points
- Strobe lighting has been added to classrooms for additional fire safety precautions for the hearing impaired
- Accessibility has been identified as a key factor in all ongoing renovations and additions including the 3rd floor addition to the Academic Centre, completed in December 2019

Accessible Parking Spaces

Renison understands the need to provide adequate, accessible, well-lit parking on campus for students, staff, faculty, and community visitors. Renison has allocated accessible parking spots beside the main entrance and, during its recent parking lot refresh, added several new accessible parking spots closest to the building entrance within the controlled parking area. Current trends and parking data indicate that Renison is exceeding current needs in this area, but data is reviewed on a term by term basis. Additionally, as Renison owns and controls its own parking allotment, it is well positioned to address additional accessible parking needs as they arise.

Assistive Software for Students

Credit students at Renison have access to Kurzweil software through the University of Waterloo, which will provide this assistive technology on any computer at Waterloo. This allows students to access digital material in a format that is most conducive to their needs anywhere on campus – not limited by one particular computer lab or area of campus.

Additionally, Waterloo has created an adaptive technology loan cabinet through AccessAbility Services, enabling students to try or borrow technology without the financial burden of purchasing it, allowing for greater access accommodation technology.

Academic Accommodations

All Renison students, including those enrolled in non-credit programs, have access to the Renison Student Advocacy Advisory Committee, who can assist in referrals for academic accommodation.

Renison credit students, as students of the University of Waterloo, have access to academic accommodations in accordance with Waterloo's policy, available from AccessAbility services. Currently included are:

- The Graduate Student Medical Leave Award, created for eligible research-based graduate students who must go inactive for medical reasons (e.g., physical or mental health) and, as a result, may have their current university funding discontinued. Effective January 1, 2018, eligible students may receive a one-time award valued at a maximum of \$5,000. This new medical leave award will provide support to eligible inactive students as they return to health, allowing them a timely return to their studies and Waterloo's community
- A 10 per cent tuition discount for undergraduate students who require a reduced course load as part of their accommodation plan
- A protocol to ensure students with disabilities receive interim accommodations pending formal documentation
- An online system which promotes greater independence, autonomy, and streamlined processes for facilitating academic accommodation to allow students to obtain the required accommodations sooner, and minimize disruption to their studies

Student Access Van

The Student Access Van is a shuttle service offered through Waterloo's AccessAbility Services that is supported through University funding and student auxiliary fees. The service is for students with a temporary or permanent disability requiring transportation support between main campus buildings, including Renison.

A Healthy Working Environment

Renison desires to remove barriers during the application and selection process for positions, and employment of, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, women, and visible minorities. To do this, Renison has put several policies in place in accordance with the AODA as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Renison considers the dignity of each person, and creates workplace accommodations based upon individualized needs, with the goal to ensure the employee is fully able to be integrated and able to participate in the workplace. Renison gladly undertakes its duty to accommodate employees with disabilities so that they may perform the duties associated with their positions free from any barriers that are explicitly related to their disability.

Examples of accommodations include but are not limited to:

- Access to adaptive technologies and ergonomic products
- Adjustments to work schedules or break time
- Accommodations involving Return-to-Work processes
- Alternative formats for teaching

Additionally, all new and current employees of Renison are informed about accessibility policies and measures. This information will be given to employees as soon as possible when they begin their employment.

Accessibility Matters will be working closely with Human Resources, the Deans Academic Council, CAPE Council and Executive Council to explore ways to improve the onboarding experience for new faculty and staff, to ensure that accessibility and inclusion are embedded into the hiring process.

Professional Development for Employees

Renison employees have access to training and professional development opportunities to increase their knowledge on accessibility and inclusion, including AODA-specific training. Waterloo's internal Information Systems and Technology department regularly offers software accessibility workshops to all Renison employees through their Skills for the Electronic Workplace courses. Standard workshop offerings include: Introduction to Web Accessibility, Accessible Word and PDF Files, Accessible Digital Design, and Creating Accessible Tables.

Scheduling of Classes

Renison's Registrar's Office is engaged with the Accessibility Matters working group and, as such, matters of accessibility, on the part of both students and faculty, are carefully considered when scheduling classroom space and teaching windows. Through this close collaboration, and the intimate relationship and knowledge that Renison has with its students, faculty and staff, due in part to its size, Renison is able to schedule class locations and class times that best meet the accessibility needs of its community. Improving this process remains an ongoing objective of the Accessibility Matters group.

Additionally, in consultation with their departments, instructors may request limitations on teaching time availability. There is a priority level #1 given to instructors with verified disabilities, which will be accommodated by Renison's Registrar's Office when scheduling teaching activity.

Actions for 2020-2025



Policy and Procedures

The goals and objectives as articulated by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, aligns with the mission and vision of Renison University College and our motto: *sed coelom solum* (one sky over all). Renison believes that it is the role of the university to remove any obstacles that impede its students from achieving their full potential.

As such, Renison welcomes the changes that are being introduced by provincial and federal legislation with respect to accessibility. Renison University College, in connection with its Strategic Planning Process, is in the process of reviewing any updating all internal policies; this process has been informed by Renison’s commitment to AODA compliance.

Renison is committed to continually updating and reviewing its accessibility policy for Renison employees, including onboarding and training programs. Additionally, the RFP process is under review to ensure that vendor compliance with AODA mandates, is built into the selection process.



Customer Service

In accordance with the Customer Service Standard of the AODA, Renison provides accessible customer service in every way possible. This means that Renison will treat every person with a disability, whether they are a student, faculty member, staff, or guest of Renison (our “customers”) with dignity. Renison acknowledges its desire for independence, and does its best to integrate services provided to persons with disabilities with services provided to others, ensuring that the opportunities afforded to persons with disabilities are equal to those afforded to others. Renison will also make an effort to communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. Renison is currently formalizing protocols for service animals on campus; both in-class and in-residence, to ensure that the needs of the entire community are being met fairly and equitably. Renison recognizes the need for processes and protocols around service disruptions, and better communication in this regard, and this work is also underway.



Information and Communication

The Information and Communication Standard within the AODA is focused on ensuring persons with disabilities are able to access information. Renison will identify commonly required communication formats and develop a strategy to visibly support a culture of inclusivity and reduce the number of individual requests for accommodation. All course materials are available in an accessible format; all materials posted on the website are AODA compliant.

Renison’s websites use Waterloo’s Web Content Management System (WCMS), which meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard. All employees who create or manage content using WCMS are trained in the use of its accessibility features.



Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standard within the AODA is focused on making it easier for persons with disabilities to move through and use the environment. Renison will make every effort possible to incorporate accessibility design, criteria, and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities, except where it is not possible to do so. If it is not possible, Renison will provide an explanation as to why this is so if requested.



Employment

The purpose of the Employment Standard within the AODA is to integrate accessibility into regular workplace processes and to ensure that employers provide accessibility across all stages of the employment life cycle – including recruitment, onboarding, performance assessment, promotion, and departure. Renison will establish and communicate a standard process for managing accommodation requests for persons with disabilities (active or prospective employees, students, and cross-over populations). Renison’s priorities are to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of individuals in need of accommodation (to prevent real or perceived bias against an individual based on their disability); as well as to ensure that funding is provided for accommodation solutions, regardless of an individual’s faculty/department affiliation.



Education

An AODA Education Standard is currently under development at the University of Waterloo and it is near completion. Since Renison and Waterloo have a shared student experience, Renison will work closely with UW to incorporate the elements of this Standard that apply to its environment, and create individual Standards where necessary. In an effort to be proactive, several initiatives to provide students with equitable access to programs and the ability to complete their degrees have already been identified by main campus and will be further developed. From a teaching perspective, both University of Waterloo and Renison University College strive to incorporate universal design principles within teaching spaces and look for training and awareness opportunities for all faculty/instructors regarding student accommodation.



Training and Tools for Employees (including instructors)

Renison is in the process of providing training on all aspects of the AODA and Customer Service Standard as well as the Human Rights Code to all employees, volunteers, all persons who develop policies for Renison, and all people who provide goods, services, and facilities on behalf of Renison. This will be done as soon as possible when new employees or other service providers commence their tenure, or when changes are made.