

Course Lists 

Approved Courses List

- Complete all of the following
 - Choose any of the following:
 - LS273 - Children's Rights in Canada (0.50)
 - SOC204R - Sociology of Adolescence (0.50)
 - SOC207 - Sociology of Education (0.50)
 - SOC207R - Sociology of Education (0.50)
 - SOC223 - Deviance: Perspectives and Processes (0.50)
 - SOC223R - Deviance: Perspectives and Processes (0.50)
 - SOC224R - Poverty in Canada and its Social Consequences (0.50)
 - SOC375R - Studies in Sociology (0.50)
 - SOC398R - Independent Study (0.50)
 - SOC399R - Independent Study (0.50)
 - SOC450R - Senior Seminar in Special Topics (0.50)
 - SOC490R - Special Studies (0.50)
 - Choose any of the following:
 - PSYCH212 - Educational Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH212R - Educational Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH213R - Exceptional Children (0.50)
 - PSYCH226R - Positive Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH312 - Learning Disabilities (0.50)
 - PSYCH312R - Learning Disabilities (0.50)
 - PSYCH257 - Psychopathology (0.50)
 - PSYCH257R - Psychopathology (0.50)
 - PSYCH334R - Theories of Individual Counselling Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH352 - Culture and Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH352R - Culture and Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH354 - Interpersonal Relations (0.50)
 - PSYCH354R - Interpersonal Relations (0.50)
 - PSYCH356 - Personality (0.50)
 - PSYCH356R - Personality (0.50)
 - PSYCH375R - Studies in Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH398R - Independent Study (0.50)
 - PSYCH399R - Independent Study (0.50)
 - PSYCH444R - Psychological Interventions (0.50)
 - PSYCH448R - Close Relationships (0.50)
 - PSYCH450R - Senior Seminar in Special Topics (0.50)
 - PSYCH490R - Special Studies (0.50)
 - Choose any additional SDS or SOCWK courses at the 200-level or above

Are there cross-listed courses listed in requirements?

Yes

Cross-Listings Options 

All cross-listings to be displayed

Additional Constraints 

1. Students may only complete one course from any cross-listed set.
2. Transfer credits with direct equivalencies to any specific course listed above and unspecific transfer credits (e.g., SDS2XX) with the SDS subject code at the 200-level and above may be counted towards this plan; common degree requirements (e.g., residency, 50% rule) must still be met.
3. Transfer credits for SWREN courses at the 100 and 200 level will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Transfer credits will not be allowed for SWREN courses at the 300 and 400 level.
4. For the additional 3.0 units of approved courses:
 1. 1.5 units must be SDS courses.
 2. 1.5 units must be at the 400-level or above.

Notes 

- Students who choose not to complete the Bachelor of Social Work courses in the last year may elect to withdraw from the double degree program and graduate with a single Social Development Studies plan (Bachelor of Arts) degree via a Plan Modification Form.

Specializations

Specializations for this Major 

Yes - Optional

Specialization Details 

Students may choose to focus their elective choices by completing one or more of four available specializations.

Specializations List 

- Diversity & Equity Specialization, Education Specialization, Individual Well-Being & Development Specialization, or Social Policy & Social Action Specialization

Workflow Information

Workflow Path 

Committee approvals

Faculty/AIW Path(s) for Workflow 

Renison University CollegeFaculty of Arts

Senate Workflow

Senate Regular

Dependencies

Dependent Courses and Programs/Plans

There are no dependencies

3G-BA (SDS) & H-BSW Double Degree Social Development Studies and Social Work Double Degree (Bachelor of Arts - Three-Year General and Bachelor of Social Work - Honours)

Under Review | Fall 2026

Proposal Information

Workflow Status

In Progress

SUC Subcommittee, SUC Curricular Subcommittee

[expand ▾](#)

Waiting for Approval | Approval Delegate(s)

Tim Weber-Kraljevski

Mike Grivacic

Diana Goncalves

Kuali - Arts

Kuali - Env

Melanie Figueiredo

Kuali - Math

Kuali - Eng

Kuali - Hlth

Ashley Day

Kuali - Science

Effective Date and Career

Career

Important! [?](#)

Undergraduate

Effective Term and Year

[?](#)
Fall 2026

Proposal Details

Proposal Type

[?](#)
New

Academic Unit Approval

02/21/2025

Quality Assurance Designation

[?](#)
Major Modification

Major Modification Categories

Change course/program requirements

Merge two or more programs

Undergraduate only: Add new pathway for college students

Recruitment Materials

No

Co-operative System of Study and Requirements

[?](#)
Not Applicable

Creating or Changing Invalid Combinations

[?](#)
Yes

Invalid Combinations Consultations

Social Work Specialization in SDS

- Both units in agreement

Change to Learning Outcomes

No

Rationale and Background for New Program/Plan ?

The 10-month post-degree Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) has operated at Renison University College since the Fall of 1998 with accreditation from the Canadian Association for Social Work Education-Association Canadienne pour la Formation en Travail Social (CASWE-ACFTS). On February 3, 2023, the Commission on Accreditation (COA) of the CASWE-ACFTS granted the Renison Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program a two-year re-accreditation with the following conditions:

1. Demonstrate oversight of content related to accreditation of the BSW program.
2. Eliminate redundancies within the overlapping curricula with the Social Development Studies program.
3. Demonstrate that core social work courses related to the accredited program are developed and taught by those within the School of Social Work's influence and according to the accreditation standards.
4. Provide professional social work content equivalent to that of a four (4)-year BSW program.

To meet the re-accreditation conditions, the School of Social Work determined that the 10-month, post-degree BSW program had to be discontinued and replaced with a concurrent double degree program, combining a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social Development Studies (SDS) and BSW. Knowing that CASWE-ACFTS would likely recommend a revised BSW Model, work to develop a new model began in June 2021 with a joint working group comprising SSW and SDS faculty. Considering CASWE-ACFTS conditions and feedback from alumni, students, and stakeholders, the Joint Working Group tabled a proposal to create a concurrent double degree that would allow students to earn a BA degree with a major in SDS alongside a BSW degree. This major modification proposal outlines the changes required for the double degree program to begin in Fall 2026.

The proposed plan recognizes the need to concurrently continue the 10-month, post-degree BSW program for the 2026-27, 2027-28, and 2028-29 academic years for two reasons. (After this time, the 10-month post-degree plan will be de-activated.)

1. To ensure that all current students who are completing BSW eligibility requirements in the SDS program can achieve their degrees. We will use the 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029 academic years as "transition" years to a) offer the post-degree BSW to students who started in SDS intending to enter the post-degree BSW based on the program information they received at the time, and that informed their decision to enter SDS; and b) ensure financial flow through.
2. To allow for the social work courses (SWREN) of the double degree to be offered at full capacity in years four (4) and five (5) of the five-year double degree program plan

There will be three admissions pathways:

1. Direct entry to the double degree.
2. Admission to the double degree at the end of 1B pending completion of SOCWK 120R with a minimum grade of 75%.
3. Transfer from college or university.

Progression in the double degree requires that SWREN 111R be completed by the end of 2A with a minimum 75%.

Consultations (Departmental) ?

Consultations occurred with the Faculty of Arts, the Social Development Studies department, and the School of Social Work.

Supporting Documentation

General Program/Plan Information

Faculty ?

Vice-President Academic Office

Academic Unit ?

Interdisciplinary Studies

Field of Study ?

Social Development Studies

Faculty ?

Faculty of Arts with Renison University College

Undergraduate Credential Type ?

Major

Program Type

Three-Year General

Degree ?

Bachelor of Arts (Arts) + Bachelor of Social Work

Program/Plan Name ?

Social Development Studies and Social Work Double Degree (Bachelor of Arts - Three-Year General and Bachelor of Social Work - Honours)

Systems of Study

Regular

Online Degree/Diploma ?

Admissions

Admissions Entry Point ?

Both

Admission Requirements: Minimum Requirements ?**Declaration Requirements ?**

Requirements Information

Invalid Combinations 

Yes

List of Invalid Combinations 

Social Work Specialization

Average Requirement 

Yes

Minimum Average(s) Required 

- A minimum cumulative overall average of 60.0%.
- A minimum cumulative major average of 65.0% in all PSYCH, SDS, SOC, and SOCWK required and approved courses listed below.
- A minimum cumulative special major average of 75.0% in all SWREN courses in addition to the following courses: SDS251R, SOCWK120R, SOCWK220R, SOCWK321R.

Graduation Requirements 

- Concurrent completion of both degrees: A Bachelor of Arts (BA), Three-Year General degree and a Bachelor of of Social Work (BSW), Honours degree.

Unit Requirements

- Complete a total of 20.0 units:
 - 6.0 units of Social Development Studies required and approved courses (see below).
 - 9.5 units of Social Work courses (see below).
 - 4.5 units of electives.

Bachelor of Arts Breadth Requirements

- Complete the BA Breath Requirements outlined on the Bachelor of Arts degree-level requirements.

Undergraduate Communication Requirement

- Complete the Undergraduate Communication Requirement outlined on the Bachelor of Arts degree-level requirements.

Field Practicum Requirement

- The Field Practicum Requirement - completion of 720 hours - is achieved by successfully completing the required SWREN 444R and SWREN 445R.
- It is required by most practicum agencies that students have a valid driver's license and access to their own vehicle. Police checks are required by many agencies and in some settings immunization shots may be required.

Co-operative Education Program Requirements **Course Requirements (units) **

Required Courses

0

Units to Complete

No Rules

Course Requirements (no units) 

Required Courses

- Complete all of the following

Social Development Studies Courses

- Complete all of the following

- Complete all the following:

- SDS131R - Political Ideologies and Social Development (0.50)
 - SDS150R - Lifespan Processes (0.50)
 - SDS250R - Social Statistics (0.50)
 - SDS251R - Social Research (0.50)
 - SOCWK120R - Introduction to Social Work (0.50)
 - SOCWK220R - Social Work with Individuals - Theory and Practice 1 (0.50)
 - SOCWK321R - Social Work with Families (0.50)

- Complete 1 of the following:

- PSYCH101 - Introductory Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH101R - Introductory Psychology (0.50)

- Complete 1 of the following:

- PSYCH253 - Social Psychology (0.50)
 - PSYCH253R - Social Psychology (0.50)

- Complete 1 of the following:

- SOC101 - Introduction to Sociology (0.50)
 - SOC101R - Introduction to Sociology (0.50)

- Complete 1.0 additional unit of SDS courses at the 200-level or above

Social Work Courses

- Complete all of the following

- Complete all the following:

- SWREN111R - Foundations of Critical Social Work: Social Justice and Helping (0.50)
 - SWREN212R - Social Work Storytelling and Critical Trauma Informed Practice (0.50)
 - SWREN261R - Indigenous Knowledges and Decolonizing Social Work Practice with Indigenous Peoples (0.50)
 - SWREN314R - Interviewing and Assessment in Social Work Practice (0.50)
 - SWREN322R - Macro Practice: Critical Considerations of Community Organization (0.50)
 - SWREN323R - Social Work Knowledge and Skills for Diverse Group Work Practice (0.50)
 - SWREN324R - Social Work Activism and Social Policy (0.50)
 - SWREN334R - Selected Theories for Social Work Practice: Analysis and Application (0.50)
 - SWREN412R - Environmental Justice and Community Action (0.50)
 - SWREN416R - Transnational Social Work and Transmigration (0.50)
 - SWREN424R - Social Work and Organizations (0.50)
 - SWREN444R - Practicum 1 (1.50)
 - SWREN445R - Practicum 2 (1.50)
 - SWREN470R - Mental Health Landscapes, Concepts, and Practice Approaches (0.50)

- Complete 1 of the following:

- SWREN431R - Practitioner Research in Social Work: Intersectional Considerations (0.50)
 - SWREN471R - Social Work with Older Adults: Critical Issues and Future Trends (0.50)
 - SWREN490R - Special Topics in Social Work (0.50)

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Are there cross-listed courses listed in requirements?

Yes

Cross-Listings Options 

All cross-listings to be displayed

Additional Constraints 

1. Students may only complete one course from any cross-listed set.
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Notes 

- Students who choose not to complete the Bachelor of Social Work courses in the last year may elect to withdraw from the double degree program and graduate with a single Social Development Studies plan (Bachelor of Arts) degree via a Plan Modification Form.

Specializations

Specializations for this Major 

Yes - Optional

Specialization Details 

Students may choose to focus their elective choices by completing one or more of four available specializations.

Specializations List 

- Diversity & Equity Specialization, Education Specialization, Individual Well-Being & Development Specialization, or Social Policy & Social Action Specialization

Workflow Information

Workflow Path ⓘ
Committee approvals

Faculty/AIW Path(s) for Workflow ⓘ
Renison University CollegeFaculty of Arts

Senate Workflow
Senate Regular

Dependencies

Dependent Courses and Programs/Plans
There are no dependencies

SUC - 2025-09 - Regular Agenda - Faculty of Science

Meeting Information

Agenda Page Title

SUC - 2025-09 - Regular Agenda - Faculty of Science

Career Level	Faculty/Unit
Undergraduate	Science

Date	Time	Location
09/30/2025		

Summary

Motion: To approve a major modifications to the Doctor of Optometry program.

Other Business

Attachment(s)

Course Proposals

Course Proposal Details

Courses: Retire

No proposals have been added.

Courses: New

No proposals have been added.

Courses: Changes

No proposals have been added.

Programs & Plans Proposals

Programs & Plans Proposal Details

Doctor of Optometry Program.

Programs & Plans: Retire

No proposals have been added.

Programs & Plans: Major Modifications

Code	Title	Type	Workflow Step	↻
Optometry	Optometry (Doctor of Optometry)	Program	SUC Subcommittee, SUC Curricular Subcommittee Under Review	

Programs & Plans: Minor Modifications

No proposals have been added.

Regulations Proposals

Regulations Proposal Details

Regulations: Retire

No proposals have been added.

Regulations: New

No proposals have been added.

Regulations: Changes

No proposals have been added.

Optometry

Optometry (Doctor of Optometry)

Under Review | Fall 2026

Proposal Information

Status

Active

Workflow Status

In Progress

SUC Subcommittee, SUC Curricular Subcommittee

expand ▾

Waiting for Approval | Approval Delegate(s)

Tim Weber-Kraljevski
 Mike Grivicic
 Diana Goncalves
 Kuali - Arts
 Kuali - Env
 Melanie Figueiredo
 Kuali - Math
 Kuali - Eng
 Kuali - Hlth
 Ashley Day
 Kuali - Science

Changes

- Effective Term and Year
- participants
- Course Requirements (units)
- Graduation Requirements
- Additional Constraints

Effective Date and Career

Career

Undergraduate

Important! ⓘ

Proposed

Effective Term and Year ⓘ

Fall 2026

Existing

Effective Term and Year ⓘ

Fall 2025

Proposal Details

Proposal Type ⓘ

Change

Academic Unit Approval

04/02/2025

Quality Assurance Designation ⓘ

Major Modification

Major Modification Categories

Add work-integrated learning option (i.e., co-op, practicum, internship)

Change course/program requirements

Is there an impact to existing students? ⓘ

No

Is the credential name changing?

No

Co-operative System of Study and Requirements 

No

Creating or Changing Invalid Combinations 

No

Change to Learning Outcomes

No

Rationale and Background for Change(s) **A. Plan Changes****1. Introduction of an Extra Academic Term - Spring Term Year 3****Rationale**

One additional term is proposed for completion of the program requirements; the program completion duration (i.e. length of time to graduation - 4 years) is unchanged.

The School has worked with the University's IAP and Government Relations who submitted the proposal, with rationale, for the additional term to the Ministry of Colleges & Universities (MCU) as a major modification to an existing program. MCU has raised no objections, and IAP has advised that we can proceed for internal approval.

The current program structure consists of 9 terms of study with 117 instructional weeks. With the additional term, this increases to 10 terms of study (129 instructional weeks), with the addition to the program of the spring term in the 3rd year. This brings us to closer alignment with comparable programs in North America (~146-168 instructional weeks).

The additional term provides:

- Consolidation of clinical skills to ensure persistence, continued efficiency and confidence in clinical skills prior to delivering patient care.
 - This addresses our experience of a drop in the students comfort/confidence in their clinical skills between winter term Year 2 and the commencement of patient care in fall term Year 3.
- Earlier and increased experiential learning in provision of eyecare. Clinical experience courses comprising patient care will begin in spring term Year 3, brought forward from fall term Year 3 (current curriculum).
- Increased contact time and opportunity for practical, clinical experience
 - This addresses historical feedback from external supervisors, particularly those that supervise Year 4 interns from both the University of Waterloo and US optometric Schools, that our students are academically well-prepared but – at least initially – lag their US contemporaries in clinical care experience.
- Curricular space to more effectively prepare students for the evolving landscape of contemporary optometric practice, keeping pace with the increasing scope of optometry practice, advanced optometry technology, and clinical techniques.
- Curricular space to offer a clinical skills remediation lab if needed (Clinical Labs 3R)
- Enhancing the overall learning experience

2. Development of a Clinical Lab Stream**Rationale**

Optometric technical skills are currently incorporated in the program via standalone lab courses (e.g. OPTOM 152L) or lab courses that are a component of a classroom/lab course (e.g. OPTOM 246). In the current curriculum, the technical skills lab begin in the winter term Year 1.

The proposed clinical lab stream brings all optometric technical skills labs into standalone courses that begin in the fall term Year 1. Although there is additional content coverage, much of the material is being redistributed. The impact on the number of clinical instructors required has been considered and the majority is covered by reassigning the instructors of the existing clinical labs.

This change allows:

- Earlier exposure to clinical technical skills in the program
- Better sequencing to allow:
 - Earlier scheduling of clinical experience in some standard areas of clinical care (e.g. OPTOM 347 – Contact Lenses I is brought forward to spring term Year 3, allowing scheduling for patient care experiential learning in fall term Year 3)
 - Specialized technical skills to be learned nearer to the point in which specialized clinical experiential learning will occur (e.g. Binocular Vision 4: Management and Vision Therapy scheduled for winter term Year 3 prior to OPTOM 458/468 external clerkships and OPTOM 478 internal clerkship where exposure to vision therapy and advanced binocular vision clinics are scheduled; in the current curriculum, the clinical content associated with this area is covered in winter term Year 2).
- The restructuring of optometry clinical labs aims to expand content coverage, improve efficiency and standardize assessments. The introduction of 'standardised patient' practice provides the students with contextual readiness for clinical care.
- Introduction of a clinical skills remediation lab, if needed, in spring Year 3 (Clinical Labs 3R).

3. Communication Stream**Rationale**

The curriculum plan places an increased emphasis on communication skills within the context of modern clinical practice. Key activities in communication are identified that provide a progressive sequence associated with the clinical labs and classroom teaching in each term.

This change allows:

- The students to be equipped with the essential skills to effectively convey complex information, foster patient trust, and collaborate within interdisciplinary healthcare teams.
 - The **Undergraduate Communication Requirement**, previously fulfilled by OPTOM 360, will now be fulfilled by **OPTOM 412**. A corresponding course change has been submitted to note this.
 - OPTOM 148, 158, 248, 258, Clinical Labs, 342A, and 342B also teach communication and contribute to a larger program plan to build communication competencies throughout the four years of the Optometry program. OPTOM 412 brings together all of this programming into a final course before students graduate and begin professional practice in optometry.
- It addresses an adjustment to the accreditation requirements that states "By the time of graduation, students must be able to demonstrate effective and culturally sensitive communications, both oral and written, with other professionals and patients.", enabling these aspects of practice to be identified and assessed.

B. COURSE ALIGNMENT ASSOCIATED WITH PLAN CHANGES

New Courses, Revised sequencing of courses, and Course Retirements

Rationale

The major curriculum review and the addition of an extra academic term in optometry education are driven by a combination of factors aimed at enhancing the overall learning experience and preparing students more effectively for the evolving landscape of optometry practice.

1. Increasing Scope of Optometry Practice: With the field of optometry expanding and incorporating new technologies and approaches, there is a need to ensure that the curriculum keeps pace with these changes. Adding an extra academic term provides the space to introduce and delve deeper into emerging trends, advanced techniques, and a broader scope of optometric practice.
2. Increasing Contact Time: Optometry is a hands-on profession, and increased contact time means more opportunities for practical, clinical experience. This can be crucial for students to develop their skills, gain confidence in clinical settings, and become well-rounded practitioners. It aligns with the idea that mastery in optometry comes through practical application and real-world scenarios.
3. Advancing Students' Clinical Skills Quickly and Maintenance of Learned Clinical Training: Optometry is an educational domain where hands-on experience is highly valued, and the addition of the extra term increases experiential learning opportunities. It is designed to fast-track the development of competency in clinical skills and support the student in transitioning from the practicing in the clinical labs to providing patient care. By advancing clinical skills more quickly, students will be better prepared for the demands of real-world optometric practice upon graduation.
4. Support for Remediation of Struggling Students: Recognizing the diverse learning needs of students, the additional term would provide a structured platform for remediation. Students who may be facing challenges in certain areas can receive targeted support, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed and meet the necessary standards for practice.

Overall, these changes reflect a commitment to continuous improvement in optometric education, ensuring that graduates are not only well-equipped with the fundamental knowledge but also possess the advanced clinical skills necessary for success in the dynamic field of optometry.

As a result of the additions of new courses and clinical labs, and the spring term following Year 2, courses must be redistributed throughout the terms, particularly in year 3. This will ensure the content is properly sequenced, and student workload is balanced across terms.

New Courses

Rationale:

Several new courses have been introduced. This will expand the breadth and depth of the curriculum to align and adapt to increases in the scope of practice in the optometry profession, as well as preparing students for potential areas of future scope expansion.

- Glaucoma and Neurodegenerative Disease Course:
 - Provides depth in understanding the interrelation of pathophysiology, diagnostics, and patient context in the management of glaucoma and neurodegenerative disease. This course contains some re-located content and expands it to reflect a shift in patterns of contemporary practice that has emerged following the introduction of therapeutic management to the optometry scope of practice.
- Neuro-Ophthalmic Disease and Management:
 - This course provides an in-depth look into neuro-optometric principles, focusing on the visual and functional impacts of neurological injuries and diseases. Students will explore the visual pathways and gain insight into how focal and ambient visual processing interact. The course covers symptoms associated with neurological trauma, such as diplopia, tracking issues, focusing problems, glare sensitivity, eyestrain, balance challenges, and posture impairments, alongside neuro-optometric rehabilitation techniques for addressing these symptoms.
- Medical Imaging and Artificial Intelligence in Optometry:
 - This course offers a comprehensive overview of medical imaging modalities and their integration with artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. Students will explore key imaging techniques, including computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), focusing on their roles in diagnosing and managing a variety of medical conditions. The curriculum will cover fundamental principles, imaging protocols, and common applications in clinical practice. A critical aspect of the course will address the implications of AI in healthcare, discussing its potential to enhance imaging analysis, streamline workflows, and improve diagnostic accuracy.
- Binocular Vision 3: Eye Movements and Disorders and Binocular Vision 4: Management and Vision Therapy:
 - these courses relocate some content from OPTOM 272 and allow for focused expansion of content in eye movements and disorders, and management and vision therapy.
- Optometry Clinics - 348C: an additional term of optometry clinics.
- Clinical labs
 - Year 1 - 2 labs (1 fall, 1 winter)
 - Year 2 - 4 labs (2 fall, 2 winter)
 - Year 3 - 5 labs (1 spring, 2 fall, 2 winter)
 - +1 Remedial lab added in spring term Year 3, as alternative pathway to support students who do not successfully complete clinical exam during year 2 winter term labs.
 -

Course Changes

Rationale: Due to introduction of new material and streamlining/redistribution of existing content, some course changes must be made in stages. Several course titles are changing for increased clarity, which will apply both to current and future cohorts. Effective in future years, a few course descriptions will also change to account for content redistribution, which applies to the cohort beginning their studies in 2026.

- Titles changes for increased clarity:
 - OPTOM 152 - Fundamental Clinical Techniques
 - OPTOM 252 - Binocular Vision 1: Non-strabismic Conditions
 - OPTOM 262 - Preparation for Primary Clinical Care
- Title and description change for increased clarity:
 - OPTOM 412 - Case Analysis and Communication 3
- Effective fall 2027: Content and titles of two courses will change to incorporate content restructuring and courses being retired, for the cohort beginning fall 2026. The delay in this change ensures current cohorts can complete the degree requirements for the year they began their studies:
 - OPTOM 243 - Neuro-physiology of Vision and Binocular Processes
 - OPTOM 272 - Binocular Vision 2: Strabismus and Amblyopia
 - description changes to incorporate content from retired courses (OPTOM 219)
- Effective fall 2028: Renumbering OPTOM 380 Practice Management to OPTOM 480, and moving to spring term of year 4.

Retired courses

Rationale: Select courses are being removed to reduce redundancy or make room for new content and to streamline existing content. Key material will be reintegrated and reorganized into related courses to ensure no critical knowledge gaps.

- Retiring courses will be done in a phased approach, to ensure current cohorts can complete the degree requirements for the year they began their studies.
 - Fall 2026
 - OPTOM 139 - Colour Vision
 - OPTOM 152L - Clinical Techniques 1 Lab
 - Fall 2027 - select 200-level courses to be retired:
 - OPTOM 219 - Visual Perception 2: Monocular and Binocular Visual Processes
 - OPTOM 245L - Diseases of the Eye 1 Laboratory
 - OPTOM 252L - Clinical Techniques 2 Laboratory
 - OPTOM 255L - Diseases of the Eye 2 Laboratory
 - Fall 2028 - select 300-level courses to be retired.
 - OPTOM 346 - Ophthalmic Optics 3
 - OPTOM 347L - Contact Lenses 1 Laboratory
 - OPTOM 375L - Diseases of the Eye 3 Laboratory
 - OPTOM 360 - Professional Ethics and Optometric Communication (UCR - replaced by OPTOM 412)
 - OPTOM 477 - Clinical Techniques 4
- For example, content from OPTOM 219 will be redistributed between OPTOM 243, OPTOM 272, and Binocular Vision 3: Eye Movements and Disorders.
- Content from OPTOM 139 will be moved into OPTOM 109.
- The binocular vision courses have been renamed and expanded, with content shifting as needed.

***See attachments for current vs. new course sequence charts.**

Notes

Implementation in stages

Optometry students typically progress in a cohort, with a prescribed set of required courses and no electives. This generally makes it more straightforward to plan for implementing changes in stages (e.g. when to start/stop/continue offering courses) as they correspond to a particular cohort and year. There are normally only a few students who may move to a different cohort for a number of academic or non academic reasons (failed term, withdrawn due to medical reasons, etc.). Such students would join the next cohort and be mapped to the new plan requirements, but we would work with their individual situation to ensure that they are able to catch up with no gaps in the outstanding content.

Impact of Major Curricular Modification on Program Intended Learning Outcomes

The program's intended learning outcomes (ILOs) speak, at a high level, to the practice of contemporary optometry. The major curricular modifications improve our ability to meet the program ILOs - adapting to the changing landscape of the scope of practice of optometry - but do not change the high-level outcomes. We have made some updates to the language in the program ILOs without altering their intent. Mapping of our program to the Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs) is unchanged.

Consultations (Departmental)

Faculty Engagement & Approval from Faculty Council

During 2023 & 2024 the School of Optometry Curriculum Committee conducted meetings with individual instructors and proposed streams to seek alignment of learning objectives to program outcomes, and seek feedback from stakeholders on proposed changes. The final version of the curriculum was shared in open house sessions with faculty and students in March 2025. The changes were approved at the faculty council meeting on April 2nd, 2025.

Student Impact & Engagement

- Historical feedback from students indicated earlier clinical training would be beneficial. They are aware that they lose momentum with their clinical skills after Winter Year 2 prior to seeing patients in Fall Year 3. To bridge the gap, the School has been running informal bootcamps in the week before the fall term Year 3 begins.
- An opportunity for remediation would have benefitted students who run into issues in the courses where the activity is provision of clinical care. Integrating all of the clinical skills learned in one exam can be challenging for some and remediation of these issues contemporaneous to clinical experience will provide an opportunity for the student to continue with their cohort.
- The current cohort of students, while largely unaffected by the changes, identified that the additional term will include an additional term of tuition fees. Their main concern was that this be clearly signaled to incoming students to the program.
- There was student support for the additional courses and some interest in being able from the current first years to enrol in the course while in their 4th year.

Supporting Documentation

- CurrentCurriculumPlan.pdf
- ProposedCurriculumPlan.pdf

General Program/Plan Information

Faculty

Faculty of Science

Academic Unit

School of Optometry and Vision Science

Field of Study

Optometry

Faculty

Faculty of Science

Undergraduate Credential Type

Major

Program Type

Honours

Degree

Doctor of Optometry

Program/Plan Name 

Optometry (Doctor of Optometry)

Systems of Study

Regular

Online Degree/Diploma 

Admissions

Admissions Entry Point 

Direct Entry

Admission Requirements: Minimum Requirements 

Applicants to the Doctor of Optometry program will be selected on a competitive basis. Composite qualifications including credentials, academic, and non-academic factors will be considered.

Assessment of academic performance will include review of required courses, consideration of the overall cumulative average obtained at the post-secondary level, and full course load study terms.

Optometry Admission Test (OAT) scores, an Optometry Admission Information Form, confidential reference forms, and a personal characteristic assessment will be used to assess non-academic qualifications in the initial screening of applications.

Applicants reaching the second stage of the admissions process will participate in an interview. The admissions committee will seek applicants who demonstrate both strong academic potential and qualities and skills judged to be the most valuable for an effective career in optometry.

Admissions criteria are subject to change. See the School of Optometry website for the most up-to-date application requirements and application timeline published on an annual basis.

Offers of Admission - Conditions

All offers of admission are conditional upon successful completion of the current academic year and requirements. Admitted students must maintain their level of academic performance. The admissions committee reserves the right to revoke admission to an already admitted student if their academic performance falls below acceptable standards.

Admitted students must also be prepared to meet certain post-admission requirements including a criminal record - vulnerable sector check, and obtaining and maintaining up-to-date immunizations, as noted on the application requirements page. All information received by the University is treated confidentially, in accordance with applicable privacy legislation.

Advanced Standing Offers of Admission

Advanced standing entrance to the Doctor of Optometry program is available on a limited basis to qualified internationally graduated optometrists and ophthalmologists. Advanced standing students who successfully complete third- and fourth-year optometry courses will obtain a Doctor of Optometry degree. Visit the Advanced Standing Optometry Preparation Program (ASOPP) website for details.

Exemptions

Students granted admission to the first professional year who have taken courses equivalent to those required in the professional program may apply for exemptions from these courses after acceptance into Optometry.

Requirements Information

Invalid Combinations 

No

Average Requirement 

Yes

Minimum Average(s) Required 

- A minimum cumulative overall average of 60.0%.
- A minimum term average of 60.0%. See academic standing rules.

Proposed

Graduation Requirements 

- Complete a total of 34.5 units.
- Complete and/or maintain the following throughout the duration of studies:
 - Yearly self-declaration regarding any criminal convictions, cautions, or disciplinary proceedings. This includes minor summary of offences, but not road traffic offences dealt with by the way of a fixed penalty notice. External clinics may require separate Criminal Record Check (CRC) reports. Failure to disclose any relevant information that is revealed subsequently may result in an investigation by the Associate Dean of Science, Teaching and Learning, and the revocation of the student's registration in the Doctor of Optometry program.
 - Up-to-date immunizations, in accordance with clinic requirements, subject to change.
 - Standard first aid and CPR level C or level HCP certification.

Existing

Graduation Requirements 

- Complete a total of 33.5 units.
- Complete and/or maintain the following throughout the duration of studies:
 - Yearly self-declaration regarding any criminal convictions, cautions, or disciplinary proceedings. This includes minor summary of offences, but not road traffic offences dealt with by the way of a fixed penalty notice. External clinics may require separate Criminal Record Check (CRC) reports. Failure to disclose any relevant information that is revealed subsequently may result in an investigation by the Associate Dean of Science, Teaching and Learning, and the revocation of the student's registration in the Doctor of Optometry program.
 - Up-to-date immunizations, in accordance with clinic requirements, subject to change.
 - Standard first aid and CPR level C or level HCP certification.

Co-operative Education Program Requirements Course Requirements (units) 

Year One

7.75

7

Units to Complete

- The following are the requirements to complete in Year One.

Fall

3.25

3

Units to Complete

- Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM104 - Neuroanatomy (0.50)
 - OPTOM105 - Medical Microbiology (0.50)
 - OPTOM106 - Geometrical, Physical and Visual Optics (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM108 - Histology of Tissues and Organs (0.50)~~
 - OPTOM109 - Visual Perception 1: Perception of Light (0.50)
 - OPTOM124 - Human Gross Anatomy (0.50)
 - OPTOM148 - Clinical Experience 1 (0.25)
 - OPTOM122L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 1A (0.25)

Winter

4.5

4

Units to Complete

- Complete all of the following
 - Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM103 - Pathophysiology (0.50)
 - OPTOM114 - Ocular Anatomy and Physiology (0.50)
 - OPTOM126 - Fundamentals of Visual Optics (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM130 - Colour Vision (0.50)~~
 - ~~OPTOM150 - Optometric Jurisprudence (0.50)~~
 - OPTOM152 - Clinical Techniques 1 (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM152L - Clinical Techniques 1 Laboratory (0.25)~~
 - OPTOM158 - Clinical Experience 2 (0.25)
 - OPTOM170 - Public Health Optometry (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM108 - Histology of Tissues and Organs (0.50)~~
 - ~~OPTOM132L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 1B (0.25)~~
 - Complete 1 of the following:
 - OPTOM134 - Immunology (0.50)
 - BIOL441 - Advances in Immunology (0.50)

Year Two

7

10.25

Units to Complete

- The following are the requirements to complete in Year Two.
- The following are the requirements to complete in Year Two. Year Three begins in the spring term immediately after Year Two.

Fall

3.75

Units to Complete

- Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM215 - Systemic Disease (0.50)

- OPTOM216 - Ophthalmic Optics 1 (0.50)
- OPTOM231 - Introductory Clinical Pharmacology (0.50)
- OPTOM243 - Neurophysiology of Vision (0.50)
- OPTOM245 - Diseases of the Eye 1 (0.50)
- ~~OPTOM245L - Diseases of the Eye 1 Laboratory (0.25)~~
- OPTOM248 - Clinical Experience 3 (0.25)
- OPTOM252 - Clinical Techniques 2 (0.50)
- ~~OPTOM252L - Clinical Techniques 2 Laboratory (0.25)~~
- OPTOM202L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 2A (0.25)
- OPTOM212L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 2B (0.25)

Winter

~~3.25~~

3.5

Units to Complete

- Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM219 - Visual Perception 2: Monocular and Binocular Visual Processes (0.50)
 - OPTOM246 - Ophthalmic Optics 2 (0.50)
 - OPTOM255 - Diseases of the Eye 2 (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM255L - Diseases of the Eye 2 Laboratory (0.25)~~
 - OPTOM258 - Clinical Experience 4 (0.25)
 - OPTOM261 - Clinical Ocular Pharmacology (0.50)
 - OPTOM262 - Clinical Techniques 3 (0.25)
 - OPTOM272 - Strabismus and Aniseikonia (0.50)
 - OPTOM150 - Optometric Jurisprudence (0.50)
 - OPTOM222L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 2C (0.25)
 - OPTOM232L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 2D (0.25)

Spring

3

Units to Complete

- Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM365 - Ophthalmic Lasers and Refractive Surgery (0.50)
 - OPTOM347 - Contact Lenses 1 (0.50)
 - OPTOM377 - Pediatric Optometry and Learning Disabilities (0.50)
 - OPTOM348A - Optometry Clinics (1.00)
 - OPTOM352 - Binocular Vision 3: Eye Movements and Disorders (0.25)
 - OPTOM300L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 3A (0.25)

Year Three

~~8.25~~

7

Units to Complete

- The following are the requirements to complete in Year Three. **Year Three begins in the spring term immediately after Year Two.**

Fall

~~3.75~~

3.5

Units to Complete

- Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM342A - Case Analysis and Optometric Therapies 1 (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM346 - Ophthalmic Optics 3 (0.25)~~
 - OPTOM347 - Contact Lenses 1 (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM347L - Contact Lenses 1 Laboratory (0.25)~~
 - OPTOM348A - Optometry Clinics (1.00)
 - OPTOM375 - Diseases of the Eye 3 (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM375L - Diseases of the Eye 3 Laboratory (0.25)~~
 - OPTOM387 - Low Vision and Geriatrics (0.50)
 - **OPTOM367 - Contact Lenses 2 (0.50)**
 - OPTOM348B - Optometry Clinics (1.00)
 - OPTOM312L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 3C (0.25)
 - OPTOM302L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 3B (0.25)

Winter

~~4.5~~

3.5

Units to Complete

- Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM342B - Case Analysis and Optometric Therapies 2 (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM348B - Optometry Clinics (1.00)~~
 - ~~OPTOM360 - Professional Ethics and Optometric Communication (0.50)~~
 - ~~OPTOM365 - Ophthalmic Lasers and Refractive Surgery (0.50)~~
 - ~~OPTOM367 - Contact Lenses 2 (0.50)~~
 - OPTOM377 - Pediatric Optometry and Learning Disabilities (0.50)
 - ~~OPTOM380 - Practice Management (0.50)~~
 - OPTOM385 - Clinical Medicine for Optometric Practice (0.50)
 - **OPTOM373 - Neuro-Ophthalmic Disease and Management (0.25)**
 - **OPTOM372 - Binocular Vision 4: Management and Vision Therapy (0.25)**
 - **OPTOM370 - Advances in Medical Imaging and Artificial Intelligence (0.25)**
 - **OPTOM383 - Glaucoma and Neurodegenerative Disease (0.25)**
 - **OPTOM322L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 3D (0.25)**

- OPTOM332L - Optometry Clinical Laboratory 3E (0.25)
- OPTOM348C - Optometry Clinics (1.0)

Year Four

10.5
10.25
Units to Complete

- Complete all of the following
 - The following are the requirements to complete in Year Four over the course of three consecutive terms (spring, fall, winter). Year Four terms are a minimum of 15 weeks.
 - Complete all the following:
 - OPTOM412 - Case Analysis 3 (0.75)
 - OPTOM458 - Clinical Clerkship 1 (3.00)
 - OPTOM468 - Clinical Clerkship 2 (3.00)
 - OPTOM477 - Clinical Techniques 4 (0.75)
 - OPTOM478 - Clinical Clerkship 3 (3.00)
 - OPTOM380 - Practice Management (0.50)

Grand Total Units: 33.5 34.5

Course Requirements (no units) [?](#)

Required Courses

No Rules

Course Lists [?](#)

Required Courses

No Rules

Are there cross-listed courses listed in requirements?

No

Proposed

Additional Constraints [?](#)

1. The Undergraduate Communication Requirement is fulfilled by the successful completion of OPTOM412.

Existing

Additional Constraints [?](#)

1. The Undergraduate Communication Requirement is fulfilled by the successful completion of OPTOM360.

Notes [?](#)

- Granting of Bachelor of Science (Honours Science): Students who have completed a minimum of three years (15.0 lecture units) of any Science program at the University of Waterloo before successfully completing the Optometry degree may be eligible to transfer up to 6.0 optometry units to a Bachelor of Science (BSc), Honours Science degree. Students who already have a Three-Year General Science degree from the University of Waterloo are eligible to upgrade their degree to Honours Science. Students cannot add a minor to the Honours Science (BSc) degree. For details regarding eligibility, contact Science academic advisors.

Specializations

Specializations for this Major [?](#)

No

Workflow Information

Change to Undergraduate Communication Requirement

Yes

Workflow Path 	Faculty/AIW Path(s) for Workflow 	Senate Workflow
Committee approvals	Faculty of Science	Senate Regular

Dependencies

Dependent Courses and Programs/Plans

PREREQUISITES

▼ OPTOM 104 - Neuroanatomy	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 255 - Diseases of the Eye 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 105 - Medical Microbiology	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 103 - Pathophysiology	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 346 - Ophthalmic Optics 3	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 246 - Ophthalmic Optics 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 261 - Clinical Ocular Pharmacology	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 477 - Clinical Techniques 4	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 215 - Systemic Disease	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 216 - Ophthalmic Optics 1	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 109 - Visual Perception 1: Perception of Light	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 106 - Geometrical, Physical and Visual Optics	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 367 - Contact Lenses 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 461S - Optometry Seminar	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 114 - Ocular Anatomy and Physiology	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 245 - Diseases of the Eye 1	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 243 - Neurophysiology of Vision	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 231 - Introductory Clinical Pharmacology	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 365 - Ophthalmic Lasers and Refractive Surgery	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 152 - Clinical Techniques 1	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 219 - Visual Perception 2: Monocular and Binocular Visual Processes	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 272 - Strabismus and Aniseikonia	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 126 - Fundamentals of Visual Optics	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 360 - Professional Ethics and Optometric Communication	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 385 - Clinical Medicine for Optometric Practice	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 380 - Practice Management	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 387 - Low Vision and Geriatrics	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 377 - Pediatric Optometry and Learning Disabilities	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 342A - Case Analysis and Optometric Therapies 1	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 375 - Diseases of the Eye 3	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 108 - Histology of Tissues and Organs	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 124 - Human Gross Anatomy	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 134 - Immunology	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 258 - Clinical Experience 4	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 148 - Clinical Experience 1	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 488 - Exit Exam Remediation	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 158 - Clinical Experience 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 348A - Optometry Clinics	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 348B - Optometry Clinics	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 248 - Clinical Experience 3	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 460 - Advanced Study Topics	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 139 - Colour Vision	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 412 - Case Analysis 3	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 441 - Optometry Research Proposal	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 451 - Optometry Research Project	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 458 - Clinical Clerkship 1	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 468 - Clinical Clerkship 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 245L - Diseases of the Eye 1 Laboratory	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 342B - Case Analysis and Optometric Therapies 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 478 - Clinical Clerkship 3	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 150 - Optometric Jurisprudence	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 170 - Public Health Optometry	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 252 - Clinical Techniques 2	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 262 - Clinical Techniques 3	View Courses >
▼ OPTOM 347 - Contact Lenses 1	View Courses >

Proposed Curriculum

Stream	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
	Fall	Winter	Spring - Off Term	Fall	Winter		Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter
Medical Sciences	104 Neuroanatomy: anatomy of head and neck	103 Pathophysiology		215 Systemic Disease	261 Clinical ocular pharmacology		365 Ophthalmic lasers and refractive surgery	375 Diseases of the eye 3	Glaucoma and neurodegenerative disease	412 Case Analysis	412 Case Analysis	412 Case Analysis
	105 Medical Microbiology	114 Ocular Anatomy and Physiology		245 Diseases of the eye	255 Diseases of the eye 2				385 Clinical medicine for optometric practice			
	124 Human Gross Anatomy	134 Immunology		231 Introduction to clinical pharmacology					Neuro-optometry			
		108 Histology of Tissues and Organs		243 Neurophysiology of vision and binocular perception								
Medical sciences Labs	104 Neuroanatomy: anatomy of head and neck	114 Ocular Anatomy and Physiology										
	124 Human Gross Anatomy	134 Immunology										
Clinical Vision Sciences	106 Geometrical, Physical and Visual Optics	126 Fundamentals of Visual Optics		216 Ophthalmic Optics	246 Ophthalmic optics 2		347 Contact Lenses 1	387 Low vision and geriatrics	Binocular Vision 4: Management and Vision Therapy			
	109 Visual Perception 1: Perception of Light			252 Binocular Vision 1: Non-strabismic Conditions	272 Binocular Vision 2: Strabismus and Amblyopia		377 Pediatric optometry and learning disabilities	367 Contact lenses 2				
							Binocular Vision 3: Eye Movements and Disorders					
Clinical Vision Sciences Labs	106 Geometrical, Physical and Visual Optics	126 Fundamentals of Visual Optics										
	109 Visual Perception 1: Perception of Light											
Experiential Sciences		152 Fundamental Clinical Techniques			262 Preparation for Primary Clinical Care			342A Case analysis and optometric therapies	342B Case analysis and optometric therapies 2	380 Practice management		
		170 Public Health Optometry			150 Optometric Jurisprudence					458/468/478 Clinical Rotations	458/468/478 Clinical Rotations	458/468/478 Clinical Rotations
	148 Clinical Experience 1	158 Clinical Experience 2		248 Clinical experience 3	258 Clinical experience 4		348A Optometry Clinics	348B Optometry Clinics	348C Optometry Clinics			
Experiential Sciences Lab/Clinic	Clinical Lab 1A	Clinical Lab 1B		Clinical Lab 2A	Clinical Lab 2C		Clinical Lab 3A	Clinical Lab 3B	Clinical Lab 3D			
				Clinical Lab 2B	Clinical Lab 2D		Clinical Lab 3R	Clinical Lab 3C	Clinical Lab 3E			
Communication Stream	Consent, Privacy, and Confidentiality Essentials (Record-keeping & Social Media)	Ensuring Cultural Safety in Care		Explaining Exam Results to Patients	Targeted Case Histories (Refraction/BV/Basic Ocular Health)		Case History Practice with Standardized Patients	Patient-Friendly Language (CLs, Myopia Management, etc.)	Communicating with Patients with Special Needs (Aphasia, Dementia, Hearing Loss)	Presenting & Discussing Grand Rounds (Verbal & Written Case Reporting)		
	Navigating Professional Boundaries	Addressing Healthcare Barriers		Simplifying Terms for Patients (Lens/Frame Recommendations)	Exploring Ethical Scenarios in Practice		Patient Counseling Lab	Written & Verbal Patient Documentation (Referrals, Case Presentations)	Integrating AI & Automated Communication	Communication in Practice Management: Patient & Staff Interaction Skills		
	Power Dynamics in Patient Interactions	Intro to Targeted Case Histories			Responding to Disclosures: Trauma-Informed Care Workshop		Targeted Case Histories (Low Vision, Pediatrics, CL, Advanced Ocular Health)	TBL Focus: Counseling & Record Keeping				

Current Curriculum

Stream	Year 1			Year 2		Year 3			Year 4		
	Fall	Winter	Spring - Off Term	Fall	Winter	Spring - Off Term	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter
Medical Sciences	104 Neuroanatomy: anatomy of head and neck	103 Pathophysiology		215 Systemic Disease	261 Clinical ocular pharmacology		375 Diseases of the eye 3	365 Ophthalmic lasers and refractive surgery	412 Case Analysis	412 Case Analysis	412 Case Analysis
	105 Medical Microbiology	114 Ocular Anatomy and Physiology		243 Neurophysiology of vision	255 Diseases of the eye 2		375L Diseases of the eye 3 clinical techniques	385 Clinical medicine for optometric practice	477 Clinical Techniques	477 Clinical Techniques	477 Clinical Techniques
	108 Histology of Tissues and Organs	134 Immunology		245 Diseases of the eye	255 Diseases of the eye 2 Clinical techniques						
	124 Human Gross Anatomy			231 Introduction to clinical pharmacology							
				245 Diseases of the eye clinical techniques							
	104 Neuroanatomy: anatomy of head and neck	114 Ocular Anatomy and Physiology									
Medical sciences Labs	124 Human Gross Anatomy	134 Immunology									
	109 Visual Perception 1: Perception of Light	139 Colour Vision		216 Ophthalmic Optics	219 Visual Perception 2: monocular and binocular visual process		387 Low vision and geriatrics	367 Contact lenses 2			
	106 Geometrical, Physical and Visual Optics	126 Fundamentals of Visual Optics			246 Ophthalmic optics 2		347 Contact Lenses 1	377 Pediatric optometry and learning disabilities			
					272 Strabismus and aniseikonia						
	106 Geometrical, Physical and Visual Optics	139 Colour Vision			219 Visual Perception 2: monocular and binocular visual process		346 Ophthalmic optics 3	367 Contact lenses 2			
	109 Visual Perception 1: Perception of Light	126 Fundamentals of Visual Optics					347 Contact Lenses 1	377 Pediatric optometry and learning disabilities			
Clinical Vision Sciences							387 Low vision and geriatrics				
				216 Ophthalmic Optics	246 Ophthalmic optics 2						
				252 Clinical techniques	262 Clinical techniques 3						
					272 Strabismus and aniseikonia						
				248 Clinical experience 3	258 Clinical experience 4						
				252L Clinical techniques	262 Clinical techniques 3						
Clinical Vision Sciences Labs	152 Clinical Techniques 1						342A Case analysis and optometric therapies	342B Case analysis and optometric therapies 2			
		150 Optometric Jurisprudence					348A Optometry Clinics	348B Optometry Clinics			
		170 Public Health Optometry						360 Professional ethics and optometric communication			
		158 Clinical Experience 2						380 Practice management			
	148 Clinical Experience 1	152L Clinical Techniques 1					348A Optometry Clinics	348B Optometry Clinics	348C Optometry Clinics		
	Clinical Lab 1A	158 Clinical Experience 2									
Experiential Sciences							458/468/478 Clinical Rotations	458/468/478 Clinical Rotations	458/468/478 Clinical Rotations		
				216 Ophthalmic Optics	246 Ophthalmic optics 2						
				252 Clinical techniques	262 Clinical techniques 3						
					272 Strabismus and aniseikonia						
				248 Clinical experience 3	258 Clinical experience 4						
				252L Clinical techniques	262 Clinical techniques 3						
Experiential Sciences Lab/Clinic											

2023 NATIONAL/FACULTY SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (NSSE/FSSE) | WATERLOO KEY RESULTS

This report summarizes key Waterloo's 2023 NSSE/FSSE results broken down by class (first-year and graduating year) and Faculty. It also provides recommendations and outlines suggested actions retrieved from the Waterloo Student Experience & Engagement (WatSEE) Framework Toolboxes, the Framework for Teaching Effectiveness, Work-Learn Institute (WxL), and Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) resources.

INTRODUCTION

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) surveys first-year and graduating-year undergraduate students triennially to measure the degree of student engagement in academics and other educationally purposeful activities that contribute to academic and personal growth. High levels of engagement have been linked to positive educational practices and outcomes in undergraduate education. The 2023 survey was administered from March 1 to April 10, 2023, and achieved an overall response rate of 41%.

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) is designed as a companion survey to NSSE. It is sent to instructional staff (faculty, instructors, and graduate students) who teach at least one undergraduate course. The survey aims to gather quantitative data on instructional staff's perceptions and expectations regarding student learning, development, and engagement in educational practices. 2023 is the first iteration of the survey at Waterloo. It was administered from March 21 to April 10, 2023, and achieved an overall response rate of 30%.

The NSSE and FSSE surveys are designed to be complementary, with alignment in question framing, language, style, and response options. This alignment enables direct comparisons between students and instructors, providing a comprehensive view of student engagement and instructional staff perceptions. The report presents Waterloo's 2023 NSSE/FSSE summary results broken down by class (first-year [FY]/lower division [LD] and graduating year [GY]/upper division [UD]) and Faculty in the following four key areas: teaching practices, academic workload, reflective learning, supports and campus environment, and diversity engagement. The percentage differences between student and instructor percentages are in the center column, where questions align between students and instructors. This 'Stud-Inst difference' provides a comparison of student and instructor perceptions for comparable questions, helping to identify areas for potential improvement for both groups.

SUMMARY RESULTS

Perceptions of teaching practices: The academic feedback process on drafts or work in progress, tests, and assignments, is an area with significant potential for improvement for students and instructors.

- Less than half of students agree quite a bit/very much that instructors provide feedback on drafts or work in progress. Yet, slightly more than half of instructors report providing feedback (quite a bit/very much).
- About half of students also report that instructors have provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments (quite a bit/very much), compared to over 80% of instructors.
- The second most highlighted area for improvement is ensuring a better fit between course content, assignments, and tests/exams.

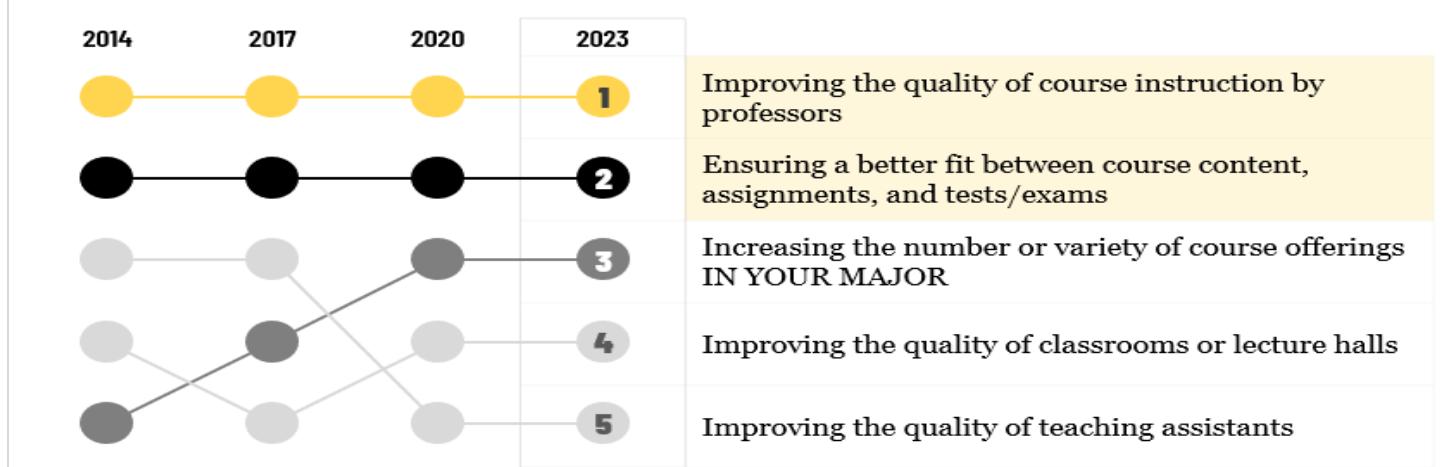
Recommendation: Adopt effective academic feedback strategies between instructors and students and provide better alignment between courses, assessments, and overall program goals.

- Key WatSEE toolbox items

- *Incorporate Inclusive Pedagogies*: Provide details of assessments at the beginning of the course and identify how they connect to essential course requirements.
- *Facilitate Course Alignment*
 - Align and articulate course learning objectives with course activities and assessments.
 - When relevant, align and articulate course-level with program-level learning objectives and specify what learning objectives come before and after the course.
- *Support student wellbeing*: Provide clear written course and assessment expectations.
- *Provide Effective Feedback*
 - Provide clear, focused feedback in an accessible format on how students can improve their work, including what was good, what could be improved, and how to improve.
 - Be timely to maximize learning impact and allow student agency regarding course enrolment.
- Additional campus-wide resources are listed on the [WatSEE website](#).
- **Framework for Teaching Effectiveness** items
 - *Framework/alignment design elements* – Develop appropriate and sufficient assessment methods that align with course objectives and outcomes.
 - *Assessments and feedback Implementation actions* – Provide performance feedback in a timely manner, and directions for student improvement individually or collectively.
- Key CTE resources: The [Waterloo Assessment Institute \(WAI\)](#) and the [Teaching Excellence Academy \(TEA\)](#) help instructors re-design their courses and key assignments to align with learning outcomes and student assessments through small-group and individual activities and peer feedback.

Students (NSSE 2023) % of responses quite a bit/very much			<i>Stud-Inst difference</i>	Instructors (FSSE 2023) % of responses quite a bit/very much		
FY	75%	Clearly explained course goals and requirements	18%	Clearly explained course goals and requirements	LD	93%
GY	72%		25%		UD	97%
FY	70%	Taught course sessions in an organized way	28%	Taught course sessions in an organized way	LD	98%
GY	69%		29%		UD	98%
FY	73%	Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	26%	Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	LD	99%
GY	72%		26%		UD	98%
FY	44%	Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress	8%	Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress	LD	52%
GY	45%		11%		UD	56%
FY	51%	Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	36%	Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	LD	87%
GY	50%		36%		UD	86%

Note: See [teaching practices Faculty results](#) in the Appendix. First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD); Graduating year (GY)/Upper division (UD).

CONSORTIUM | TOP 5 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM AS IDENTIFIED BY WATERLOO RESPONDENTS

Perceptions of academic workload: divergence in instructor and student perceptions of student workload and how much time students spend on academics.

- About 1 in 5 instructors indicate that their coursework emphasizes memorizing course material quite a bit/very much. This contradicts student perception, with about three in five or more indicating the same, suggesting a higher student perception of the memorisation workload.
- About nine out of 10 student respondents report that Waterloo emphasizes spending significant amounts of time on studying and academic work quite a bit or very much. Yet, 46% of instructors found it important or very important that Waterloo increase its emphasis on study time and academic work.
- The amount of time students report spending on assigned reading and preparing for class is about three times the amount instructors expect of students and six times the amount they perceive students actually spend.

Recommendation: Consider encouraging a more balanced approach between academic workload and student development.

- Key WatSEE toolbox items
 - *Support student wellbeing:* Consider how your course processes impact student well-being (e.g., course policies, expectations, workload).
 - *Foster Belonging through Connections:* Encourage students to participate in activities that help broaden their UW experience and support their well-being (e.g., UW Athletics and Recreation, clubs, societies).
 - Additional campus-wide resources are listed on the [WatSEE website](#).

Students (NSSE 2023) % of responses			Stud-Inst difference	Instructors (FSSE 2023) % of responses		
FY	70%	Coursework emphasizes memorizing course material (Quite a bit/very much)	52%	Coursework emphasizes memorizing course material (Quite a bit/very much)	LD	19%
GY	59%		45%		UD	14%
FY	87%	UW emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (quite a bit/very much)	n/a	Increase UW emphasis on students spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (Important/very)	LD	46%
GY	87%				UD	46%
FY	6.9	Average student-reported hours per week: time spent on assigned reading	n/a	Average expected student hours per week: time spent on assigned Reading	LD	1.9
GY	6.1				UD	1.9

Students (NSSE 2023) % of responses			Stud-Inst difference	Instructors (FSSE 2023) % of responses		
FY	20.3	Average student-reported hours per week: Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc.)	16.7	Average perceived student hours per week: Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc.)	LD	3.5
GY	18.7		15.5		UD	3.2
				Average expected student hours per week: Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc.)	LD	5.5
					UD	5.2

Note: See [academic workload Faculty results](#) in the Appendix. First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD); Graduating year (GY)/Upper division (UD).

Reflective learning: Few students report connecting concepts to other courses or real-world experiences, although instructors find this important or very important.

- About three-quarters of instructors or fewer find it important/very important that students combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments. Yet only half of students report doing so often/very often.
- About two-thirds of instructors or fewer find it important/very important that students connect their learning to societal problems or issues in their coursework. Yet only two in five students report doing so in their coursework often or very often.
- More graduating year/upper-division students and instructors report that Waterloo/courses have contributed to real-world problem-solving skills than first-years. Instructor results are fairly similar to those of students.

Recommendation: Encourage the use of available teaching resources to advance reflective learning and critical reflection.

- Key WatSEE toolbox items
 - *Decolonize Teaching and Learning*
 - Identify opportunities for inquiry-based instruction where students engage knowledge with communities to address social and environmental issues.
 - Employ collaborative activities within course time to support critical reflective learning.
 - *Employ Critical Reflection Activities*: incorporate one or more learning activities that require critical reflection. Model the reflective process used in your discipline, encourage multiple perspectives, and assess it using provided clear criteria.
 - *Foster Belonging Through Connections*: Invite students to share their experiences in the course (work, extracurricular, or life experiences) to promote community connections (class, global).
 - *Incorporate a student-directed reflective and experiential learning framework (SLICC) into a course*
 - Additional campus-wide resources are listed on the [WatSEE website](#).
- [Framework for Teaching Effectiveness](#) items
 - *Promotion of student engagement Implementation actions*: Uses teaching/learning strategies that encourage student engagement and deep learning.
- Key CTE resources: CTE has a centrally supported platform containing resources to enhance teaching, such as the [Teaching Tip Sheets](#), a searchable collection of brief and practical documents with resources such as [Teaching problem-solving skills](#), [Reflection Framework and Prompts](#), [Critical Reflection](#), [Student Led Individually Created Courses \(SLICCs\)](#), and [ePortfolios Explained: Theory and Practice](#)).
- CEE consulting services and [Work-Learn Institute \(WxL\) resources](#) for educators.

Students (NSSE 2023) % of responses			Instructors (FSSE 2023) % of responses		
FY	51%	Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments (often/very)	Importance: students combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments (important/very)	LD	60%
GY	55%			UD	74%
FY	39%	Connected your learning to societal problems or issues (often/very)	Importance: students connect their learning to societal problems or issues (important/very)	LD	60%
GY	42%			UD	68%
FY	56%	UW contributed to skills growth in solving complex real-world problems (quite a bit/very much)	Courses structured to contribute to growth in solving complex real-world problems (quite a bit/very much)	LD	52%
GY	65%			UD	71%

Note: See [Reflective learning Faculty results](#) in the Appendix. First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD); Graduating year (GY)/Upper division (UD).

Supports and campus environment: Students report low institutional emphasis on social opportunities and overall well-being support, while instructors highlight the importance of increased institutional emphasis.

- About 1 in 2 students indicate that the institution emphasizes social opportunities quite a bit/very much, while four out of five instructors call for increased emphasis.
- Less than a third of students report institutional emphasis on helping to manage non-academic responsibilities (e.g., work, family) (quite a bit/very much), while half or more instructors likewise call for increased emphasis.
- Instructors seem to overestimate the proportion of students spending one or more hours/week on co-curricular activity (nine out of 10 instructors versus 7 out of 10 students).

Recommendation: Develop support strategies to encourage co-curricular activity, social opportunities, and overall well-being by promoting available student support and resource links. Consider more effective communication of resources to students (see the [Student Communications Survey](#) to understand student communication preferences).

- Key WatSEE toolbox items
 - *Promote Student Supports:* Include applicable student supports, resources, and tools in your course outline, e.g., connection & well-being, Current students (UWaterloo life), etc.
 - *Support student wellbeing:* Adopt course processes that positively impact student well-being and the teaching team (e.g., course policies, expectations, workload).
 - *Foster Belonging through Connections:* Encourage students to determine how they should mediate their UWaterloo experience and support their well-being via organized activities (e.g., sports), unstructured activities (e.g., crafts), and/or university services and supports.
 - Additional campus-wide resources are listed on the [WatSEE website](#).

Students (NSSE 2023) % of responses			Stud-Inst difference	Instructors (FSSE 2023) % of responses		
FY	56%	UW emphasizes providing opportunities to be involved socially (quite a bit/very much)	n/a	Increase UW emphasis on providing opportunities for students to be involved socially (important/very)	LD	78%
GY	44%				UD	79%
FY	29%	UW emphasizes helping to manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	n/a	Increase UW emphasis on helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (important/very)	LD	55%
GY	23%				UD	57%
FY	68%	Student reported: participating in co-curricular activities (campus publications, student government, intramural sports, etc.) (1 or more hours/week)	19%	Instructor perceived: students participating in co-curricular activities (campus publications, student government, intramural sports, etc.) (1 or more hours/week)	LD	87%
GY	71%		19%		UD	90%

Note: See Supportive Campus Environment Faculty results in the Appendix. First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD); Graduating year (GY)/Upper division (UD).

Diversity engagement: students and instructors report high student interaction with diverse individuals, but a low understanding of diverse backgrounds or the inclusion of diverse perspectives in course discussions and assignments.

- Three out of four students report discussions with diverse races/ethnicities and backgrounds, yet only three in five instructors provide such opportunities in their courses.
- Half or fewer students report that UW encourages contact among students from diverse backgrounds, while seven out of 10 Instructors recommend increasing emphasis on such interactions.
- About a third of students report including diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments, often/very often. Yet, about half of instructors report providing opportunities during courses for students to engage in such activities (quite a bit/very much).
- About half of students report that UW has contributed to growth in their understanding of people of diverse backgrounds. Fewer instructors (less than 40%) report structuring their courses to contribute to this understanding.

Recommendation: Encourage opportunities for students to engage in discussions and interact with peers from diverse backgrounds.

- Key WatSEE toolbox item
 - Decolonize Teaching and Learning
 - *Identify opportunities to engage Indigenous communities in the development and/or delivery of course content.*
 - *Consider your responsibility to creating a just and equitable learning environment.*
 - Additional campus-wide resources are listed on the [WatSEE website](#).

Students (NSSE 2023) % of responses			Instructors (FSSE 2023) % of responses		
FY	78%	Had discussions with people of races/ethnicities other than their own (often/very)	Courses provide an opportunity to have discussions with people of races/ethnicities other than their own (quite a bit/very much)	LD	62%
GY	74%			UD	63%
FY	74%	Had discussions with people from countries other than your own (often/very)*	Courses provide an opportunity to have discussions with people from countries other than their own (quite a bit/very much)	LD	56%
GY	72%			UD	56%
FY	50%	UW emphasizes encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Increase UW's emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (important/very)	LD	79%
GY	38%			UD	73%
FY	36%	Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments (often/very)	Importance: students include diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments (important/very)	LD	49%
GY	35%			UD	49%
FY	49%	UW contributed to growth in understanding people of other backgrounds (racial/ethnic, religious, nationality, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Courses structured to contribute to understanding people of other backgrounds (racial/ethnic, nationality, religious, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	LD	37%
GY	52%			UD	39%

*New question in 2023. See [Diversity Engagement Faculty results](#) in the Appendix. First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD); Graduating year (GY)/Upper division (UD).

APPENDIX 1: NSSE/FSSE RESULTS BY FACULTY**Table 1:** Perceptions of teaching practices | NSSE/FSSE 2023 Waterloo results by Faculty

<i>How often instructors have ...</i>		Group	HEA	ART	ENG	ENV	MAT	SCI
First-year (FY)/ Lower division (LD)	Clearly explained course goals and requirements (quite a bit/very much)	Students	74%	77%	73%	74%	76%	78%
		Instructors	100%	96%	97%	89%	88%	79%
	Taught course sessions in an organized way (quite a bit/very much)	Students	63%	72%	66%	70%	73%	72%
		Instructors	92%	96%	100%	100%	98%	100%
	Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points (quite a bit/very much)	Students	74%	70%	72%	78%	74%	77%
		Instructors	100%	98%	100%	100%	98%	100%
	Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress (quite a bit/very much)	Students	45%	55%	41%	55%	40%	38%
		Instructors	33%	70%	53%	61%	28%	33%
	Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments (quite a bit/very much)	Students	46%	52%	52%	49%	55%	47%
		Instructors	100%	87%	88%	83%	86%	75%
Graduating year (GY)/ Upper division (UD)	Clearly explained course goals and requirements (quite a bit/very much)	Students	76%	75%	68%	75%	73%	72%
		Instructors	100%	98%	97%	100%	100%	88%
	Taught course sessions in an organized way (quite a bit/very much)	Students	68%	70%	66%	73%	71%	68%
		Instructors	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%	94%
	Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points (quite a bit/very much)	Students	71%	73%	75%	76%	68%	74%
		Instructors	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%	94%
	Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress (quite a bit/very much)	Students	53%	56%	39%	52%	41%	43%
		Instructors	79%	63%	50%	59%	52%	41%
	Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments (quite a bit/very much)	Students	53%	55%	45%	48%	56%	46%
		Instructors	86%	88%	80%	88%	87%	82%

Table 2: Perceptions of academic workload | NSSE/FSSE 2023 Waterloo results by Faculty

		Group	HEA	ART	ENG	ENV	MAT	SCI
First-year (FY)/ Lower division (LD)	Coursework emphasizes memorizing course material (Quite a bit/very much)	Students	83%	74%	64%	73%	62%	79%
		Instructors	33%	17%	0%	17%	33%	29%
	UW emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (quite a bit/very much)	Students	85%	78%	92%	77%	88%	91%
	Increase UW emphasis on students spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (Important/very)	Instructors	67%	50%	50%	39%	33%	46%
	Time spent on assigned reading	Average student-reported hours per week	Students	7.5	8.1	6.1	7.1	6.7
		Average expected student hours per week	Instructors	1.4	2.5	1.4	2.2	1.4
	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc.)	Average student-reported hours per week	Students	19.1	16.1	23.1	17.0	21.8
		Average perceived student hours per week	Instructors	1.5	2.5	4.9	2.6	5.4
		Average expected student hours per week	Instructors	4.2	4.9	6.1	4.8	6.6
Graduating year (GY)/ Upper division (UD)	Coursework emphasizes memorizing course material (Quite a bit/very much)	Students	65%	57%	55%	50%	56%	73%
		Instructors	21%	15%	3%	18%	13%	21%
	UW emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (quite a bit/very much)	Students	87%	79%	88%	84%	88%	93%
	Increase UW emphasis on students spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (Important/very)	Instructors	36%	56%	42%	47%	48%	45%
	Time spent on assigned reading	Average student-reported hours per week	Students	6.9	8.5	5.1	5.6	6.0
		Average expected student hours per week	Instructors	1.6	2.7	1.4	2.2	1.4
	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc.)	Average student-reported hours per week	Students	16.5	16.9	20.0	16.2	20.1
		Average perceived student hours per week	Instructors	2.0	2.6	4.3	3.5	4.6
		Average expected student hours per week	Instructors	3.9	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.9

Table 3: Reflective learning | NSSE/FSSE 2023 Waterloo results by Faculty

		Group	HEA	ART	ENG	ENV	MAT	SCI
First-year (FY) / Lower division (LD)	Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments (often/very)	Students	53%	62%	47%	67%	39%	51%
	Importance: Students combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments (important/very)	Instructors	67%	58%	82%	50%	44%	58%
	Connected your learning to societal problems or issues (often/very)	Students	45%	63%	29%	68%	21%	34%
	Importance: students connect their learning to societal problems or issues (important/very)	Instructors	83%	77%	61%	83%	21%	38%
	UW contributed to skills growth in solving complex real-world problems (quite a bit/very much)	Students	53%	56%	64%	65%	45%	47%
	Courses structured to contribute to growth in solving complex real-world problems (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	42%	55%	73%	78%	35%	33%
Graduating Year (GY) / Upper division (UD)	Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments (often/very)	Students	69%	69%	45%	70%	43%	58%
	Importance: Students combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments (important/very)	Instructors	100%	69%	65%	88%	64%	85%
	Connected your learning to societal problems or issues (often/very)	Students	63%	65%	32%	69%	23%	37%
	Importance: students connect their learning to societal problems or issues (important/very)	Instructors	86%	81%	45%	100%	45%	59%
	UW contributed to skills growth in solving complex real-world problems (quite a bit/very much)	Students	64%	64%	70%	77%	63%	51%
	Courses structured to contribute to growth in solving complex real-world problems (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	86%	68%	74%	94%	52%	65%

Table 4: Supports and campus environment | NSSE/FSSE 2023 Waterloo results by Faculty

		Group	HEA	ART	ENG	ENV	MAT	SCI
First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD)	UW emphasizes providing opportunities to be involved socially (quite a bit/very much)	Students	60%	59%	53%	71%	50%	58%
	Increase UW emphasis on providing opportunities for students to be involved socially (important/very)	Instructors	83%	87%	71%	78%	77%	71%
	UW emphasizes helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Students	29%	31%	28%	31%	34%	22%
	Increasing institutional emphasis: Helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (important/very)	Instructors	67%	56%	32%	44%	58%	54%
	Students/perceived students participating in co-curricular activities (campus publications, student government, intramural sports, etc.) (1 or more hours/week)	Students	72%	58%	74%	73%	74%	58%
		Instructors	100%	90%	88%	88%	88%	79%
Graduating Year (GY)/Upper division (UD)	UW emphasizes providing opportunities to be involved socially (quite a bit/very much)	Students	55%	47%	41%	49%	41%	44%
	Increase UW emphasis on providing opportunities for students to be involved socially (important/very)	Instructors	86%	77%	81%	82%	74%	71%
	UW emphasizes helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Students	25%	25%	22%	27%	22%	21%
	Increasing institutional emphasis: Helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (important/very)	Instructors	71%	58%	45%	53%	57%	47%
	Students/perceived students participating in co-curricular activities (campus publications, student government, intramural sports, etc.) (1 or more hours/week)	Students	71%	66%	72%	71%	76%	67%
		Instructors	100%	85%	87%	94%	95%	82%

Table 5: Diversity engagement | NSSE/FSSE 2023 Waterloo results by Faculty

		Group	HEA	ART	ENG	ENV	MAT	SCI
First-year (FY)/Lower division (LD)	Had discussions with people of races or ethnicities other than your own (often/very)	Students	76%	79%	82%	82%	68%	78%
	Courses provide an opportunity to have discussions with people of races or ethnicities other than their own (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	67%	77%	64%	67%	42%	38%
	Had discussions with people from countries other than your own (often/very) *	Students	66%	76%	77%	77%	71%	72%
	Courses provide an opportunity for discussions with people from countries other than their own (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	42%	75%	64%	50%	47%	33%
	Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments (often/very)	Students	47%	61%	21%	63%	21%	32%
	Importance: students include diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments (important/very)	Instructors	75%	77%	24%	78%	12%	17%
	UW contributed to growth in understanding people of other backgrounds (racial/ethnic, religious, nationality, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Students	60%	61%	43%	59%	42%	47%
	Courses structured to contribute to growth in understanding people of other backgrounds (racial/ethnic, religious, nationality, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	33%	57%	15%	65%	7%	21%
	UW emphasizes encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	53%	52%	49%	56%	46%	50%
	Increase UW's emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (important/very)	Instructors	75%	83%	62%	78%	72%	83%
Graduating Year (GY)/Upper division (UD)	Had discussions with people of races or ethnicities other than your own (often/very)	Students	82%	76%	78%	74%	62%	77%
	Courses provide an opportunity to have discussions with people of races or ethnicities other than their own (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	64%	75%	45%	71%	55%	65%
	Had discussions with people from countries other than your own (often/very) *	Students	75%	74%	72%	74%	66%	73%
	Courses provide an opportunity for discussions with people from countries other than their own (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	64%	65%	53%	59%	57%	50%
	Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments (often/very)	Students	63%	61%	21%	62%	20%	26%
	Importance: students include diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments (important/very)	Instructors	86%	65%	26%	76%	18%	29%
	UW contributed to growth in understanding people of other backgrounds (racial/ethnic, religious, nationality, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Students	64%	68%	45%	64%	44%	47%
	Courses structured to contribute to growth in understanding people of other backgrounds (racial/ethnic, religious, nationality, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Instructors	79%	61%	26%	24%	14%	18%
	UW emphasizes encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, etc.) (quite a bit/very much)	Students	44%	44%	33%	39%	37%	37%
	Increase UW's emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (important/very)	Instructors	79%	71%	71%	82%	61%	71%

*New question in 2023

Memo to Committee | Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost | University of Waterloo

To: Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Co-Chairs:

David DeVidi, Associate Vice-President, Academic

Jennifer Gillies, Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility

Cathy Newell Kelly, Registrar

Lili Liu, Dean of Health

From: James W.E. Rush, Vice-President, Academic and Provost

Cc: Joyce Barlow, Associate Director, Campus Accessibility

Jenny Flagler-George, Executive Director

Tony Ly, Governance Officer

Megan McGarry, Manager, Internal and Leadership Communications

Kathy Smidt, Director, Internal and Leadership Communications

Date: June 13, 2025

Re: Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Final Report

Through our core mission commitments in academics and research, together with our strong differentiating commitments in co-operative education and other forms of work-integrated learning, innovation, application, and entrepreneurship, we have continuously demonstrated the value of the University of Waterloo. Waterloo's students and employees are among the best in the world. Each brings unique experiences and expertise to the table. Waterloo is committed to leveraging these talents by creating an environment designed for everyone.

I commissioned the Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISCo) in 2022/23 as an advisory committee to work towards considering the 185 recommendations included in the [AODA's Post-Secondary Education Standard \(the "Education Standard"\) Final Recommendations Report 2022](#) with the understanding that while the Education Standard is not codified, the barrier areas identified in the report illuminate the everyday barriers experienced by persons with disabilities in post-secondary education. DISCo was initiated under the framework of the Provost's Advisory Committee on Building a Resilient University of Waterloo to thoughtfully evolve a sustainable, coordinated, and empowered approach to optimize how the campus community works and studies, while embracing a culture of "One University".

DISCo aimed to identify synergies, partnerships, resource-sharing opportunities, and collegial practices across all relevant institutional activities 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.

Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Findings

DISCo made five core recommendations aimed at enabling the University to appropriately and effectively adhere to the existing AODA standards while building momentum towards DISCo initiatives. Below is a summary of these recommendations and preliminary actions and commitments taken to support them.

1. Establish Collaborative Leadership with Oversight on Accessibility

DISCo noted that a factor contributing to the success of the committee in meeting its mandate was the provision of executive level oversight, leading to the recommendation that an ongoing accessibility steering committee be established that includes standing membership that includes Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility; the Associate Vice-President, Academic; and a rotating member of Dean's Council, with other members selectively included based on the collaboration needs at that time. The University has accepted the recommendation, with the first rotating member of Deans' Council to be the Associate Vice-President, Academic Operations. The participation of the AVP Academic Operations will be essential in supporting the focus of the committee on planning, budgeting, and interdisciplinary collaboration in relation to the provision of support for operational activities related to accessibility across executive-level portfolios.

2. Embed Accessibility into the Budget and Planning Process

DISCo recommended accessibility be imbedded as part of Waterloo's planning and budgeting practices to ensure appropriate compliance with AODA. The University has accepted this recommendation, and I will send a directive to Paul Fieguth, AVP Academic Operations to ensure that accessibility is a required consideration in the upcoming planning and budgeting cycle, and ongoingly, through incorporation in templates and guidance materials developed by the Integrated Planning and Budgeting Office. Paul Fieguth's role on the accessibility steering committee outlined above with help to facilitate this activity.

3. Assign Executive Council Members with Ongoing Responsibility for Accessibility

Given that disability inclusion requires ongoing efforts, DISCo recommended a sustained approach of executive level responsibility for accessibility, including making AODA compliance an annual agenda item at Executive Council. The University has accepted this recommendation. An annual update on institutional initiatives, projects, plans, and policies under the umbrella of community and culture will be provided annually to Executive Council. This will include topics related to AODA compliance, as well as EDI-R, Indigenization and decolonization, employee engagement, student mental health, and student and employee experience.

4. Visible Commitment to Accessibility

DISCo recommended a regular and clear articulation of the institutional commitment to accessibility. The University has accepted this recommendation, and will continue to highlight the need for accessibility to the campus community, including bringing forward updates on campus wellness, support and accessibility, and student accessibility to the Community and Culture Committee of the Board, which is tasked with monitoring and providing oversight of programs and related policies regarding the promotion and protection of the University community in key areas within the Board's purview.

5. Maintain Accessible Education Project

The Accessible Education Project was identified by DISCo as having made many strides towards the goal of ensuring accessible education practices become engrained in everyday planning and processes of Waterloo instructors and ASUs. To maintain this momentum, DISCo recommended a continued commitment to the Accessible Education Project. The University accepts this recommendation, and I have committed to ongoing support for a minimum of two additional years.

Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Final Report

Committee Members

Co-Chairs

David DeVidi, Associate Vice-President, Academic

Jennifer Gillies, Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility

Cathy Newell Kelly, Registrar

Lili Liu, Dean of Health

Members

Joyce Barlow, Associate Director, Campus Accessibility

Jenny Flagler-George, Director, Strategic Initiatives

Tony Ly, Associate Director, Strategic Initiatives

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Kathy Smidt, Director, Internal and Leadership Communications

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Background

The Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISCo) was formed in the 2022-23 academic year in accordance with the [Terms of Reference](#). DISCo comprised University senior leaders and members who were responsible for strategizing how the University can address barriers that limit access to the world-class quality of education that Waterloo offers. DISCo is an advisory committee to the Vice-President, Academic and Provost (“Provost”) that assumed executive sponsorship and accountabilities for proactively addressing the 185 recommendations included in the [AODA’s Post-Secondary Education Standard \(the “Education Standard”\) Final Recommendations Report 2022](#).

This report articulates the work that has been completed by DISCo since its formation, measured against the established mandate and Terms of Reference. Key findings and insights are shared through the committee’s work, including recommendations for the Provost’s consideration to ensure the gains made through DISCo maintain momentum and are sustainable as the University works towards creating an accessible campus for all students.

Rationale

In 2018, the Ontario government committed to the development of an Education Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). An AODA standard development committee drafted recommendations to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities of what should be included in the AODA Education Standard, including 185 recommendations within the post-secondary education system. These 185 recommendations were grouped into 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. While the recommendations have not yet been codified, the University is required to comply with existing AODA standards and adhere to the Ontario Human Rights Code. It is anticipated that the intent of the Education Standard recommendations will also be legislated in some capacity over the next few years. Moreover, disability inclusion is at the heart of our institution, with an understanding that accessible education is part of educational excellence.

In 2022, the Provost established this committee to take a proactive approach to creating an accessible Waterloo for everyone, inspired by the culture of “One University” in which all in our community can thrive. The goal of the committee was not to simply meet existing or imminent AODA compliance standards, but rather to develop a sustainable infrastructure that would enable accessibility to become a part of the standard operating procedure in academic and campus life—to build a campus culture of accessibility and disability inclusion. Publication of the PSE Standard recommendations provided DISCo with an understanding of the thematic areas that Waterloo would need to consider when beginning this foundational work.

DISCo was chaired by four Executive Council members who reinforced the University’s commitment to accessibility, and ensured prioritization of AODA-related initiatives and requests with the relevant units and departments of the University:

- David DeVidi, Associate Vice-President, Academic
- Jennifer Gillies, Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility

- Cathy Newell Kelly, Registrar
- Lili Liu, Dean, Faculty of Health

Mandate

DISCo was convened to champion and advocate for disability inclusion, and to work with colleagues to share institutional responsibilities and initiatives that include prioritizing resources and efforts relative to this objective. DISCo was responsible for supporting the institution in finding efficiencies in collaboration, coordination, and sharing of resources through the tracking of projects and work associated with its mandate. Through the committee's efforts, many synergies, partnerships, and resource-sharing opportunities were identified, and collaborative practices across all relevant institutional activities were explored.

DISCo's mandate was as follows:

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 PSE Standards recommendations with verticals that have a common or shared scope, such as [Admissions Process Review](#) and [Holistic Admissions Exploration](#), [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 and themes that may not have been contemplated previously or have a natural, apparent alignment.

The following criteria were established as measurements of the committee's success:

- Institutional ownership of accessibility to meet AODA requirements is acknowledged.
- Interdisciplinary approaches to disability inclusion are applied.
- Projects and initiatives are created and identified to operationally meet AODA requirements and recommendations.
- The campus community is receptive to DISCo's actions and initiatives.

Actions

DISCo took the position that while the Education Standard was not codified, the barrier areas identified in the report illuminate the everyday barriers experienced by persons with disabilities in post-secondary education. While the University has strived to create an inclusive and accessible campus through the provision of supports, services, policies, and procedures, it was likely that members of the University of Waterloo experienced similar barriers. As such, DISCo used the recommendations in the Education Standard as a framework for action. This section provides a summary of the actions taken to accomplish DISCo's mandate.

Establishing Executive Leadership Oversight

The Education Standard articulates the need for transformational leadership to help shift attitudes, behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions. The engagement of senior leaders in building a sustainable infrastructure for disability inclusion was seen as critical for DISCo to achieve its mandate and success.

Using the Education Standard as a framework, DISCo reviewed the 185 recommendations and determined the best alignment of each recommendation to an Executive Council member's portfolio. The intent was for Executive Council members (after consultation and engagement) to assume responsibility for these recommendations, then develop and implement the most appropriate response to the recommendations. The assignment of recommendations took into consideration alignment with other institutional initiatives such as [Admissions Process Review](#) and [Holistic Admissions Exploration](#), [President's Anti-Racism Taskforce](#) recommendations, [Canada Research Chair EDI Action Plan](#), [EDIR Strategic Plan \(2022-2025\)](#), [Educational Technology Hub projects and initiatives](#), [WatSEE Framework](#), [Digital Learning Strategy](#) and others.

Executive Council members were invited to review and identify the recommendations believed to fall under their purview. In some cases, the process identified recommendations that could be achieved in collaboration between Executive Council members. Upon completion of this engagement process, each Executive Council member adopted an action plan to address the Education Standard recommendations that related to their unit.

Operationalizing the Action Plan

The Education Standard articulates numerous operational recommendations that could only be implemented by using both a top-down and bottom-up approach. The Executive Council members, after adopting the action plan within their units, assigned operational leads based on their role and expertise that could best support the work. The operational leads were typically department heads within their units who held direct responsibility for aspects relating to the action items.

DISCo held a kick-off meeting for the identified operational leads responsible for the action plan, which was recorded for future reference. The meeting facilitated collaboration between portfolios, informed operational leads of Waterloo's current state compared to the AODA requirements, and outlined the resources required to support the development of the action plan. Details around monitoring outcomes, bi-annual updates on progress, and support that was made available to working groups were also shared.

To identify the scope of work required to action the recommendations, and the supports that would be required, DISCo distributed a Post-Secondary Education Accessibility (PSEA) baseline assessment survey to the operational leads in January 2024. The survey collected information about the extent to which the operational leads were aware of how the University was proactively addressing the recommendations in the Education Standard document, in addition to uncovering gaps and identifying the resources required to carry out this important work. Through this assessment, several themes emerged:

- The University is already executing many of the recommendations, and many could be integrated into standard operations with a few adjustments.
- The recommendations are achievable through inter-departmental collaboration.

- Some responses to recommendations are dependent on government actions and stakeholders external to the University. In these instances, the University would continue to work with government and sector stakeholders to address those recommendations.

The survey also enabled DISCo to determine the scope of future work, helped to guide and inform next steps, and served as a benchmark for measuring implementation progress.

Engaging the Campus

The Education Standard directs senior leadership to implement a communication strategy that is readily accessible, understandable, and includes key messages across many platforms. DISCo worked to ensure the campus community was informed and engaged in DISCo's work, and that they understood the intentions of the PSE Standard recommendations, through a variety of mechanisms.

The University's senior leaders were engaged on DISCo's formation, mandate, actions, and progress at various leadership tables, including Deans Council, Executive Council, and Council of Academic Leaders. DISCo also regularly reported to the Vice-President, Academic and Provost.

The campus community remained informed of DISCo's purpose, timeline of actions, and resources through DISCo's webpage, which was housed on the website of the [Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost](#) (Appendix A):

Instructors and faculty were specifically engaged through collaboration and consultation efforts, given the vital role they play in creating an accessible and inclusive educational experience for students. DISCo created a messaging document for Teaching Fellows and departmental "accessibility champions" to support communications with their peers. The messaging document aims to

- develop consistent messaging that can be amplified across communication channels,
- increase awareness about disability and its prevalence in the Waterloo community,
- increase awareness of teams that are promoting accessibility across campus,
- promote collaboration and involvement in accessibility projects, and
- instill a sense of pride and accountability in creating inclusive experiences.

DISCo also supported broader departmental efforts by offering a senior leadership presence in departmental activities related to the PSE Standard recommendations. For example, Cathy Newell Kelly, Registrar, delivered opening remarks and participated in a communications workshop hosted by University Relations. The workshop provided guidance for those in Communications on how to use disability inclusive language and create accessible communications on behalf of the University. Similarly, David DeVidi, Assistant Vice-President, Academic delivered opening and closing remarks at [Accessible Education Day](#) in October 2024, a day of learning, sharing, and collaborating on bringing accessible educational practices to the University's academic functions.

Monitoring Progress

The baseline PSEA assessment conducted by the operational leads indicated that 60 recommendations were completed, in progress, or could be actioned by the University. There are 58 recommendations that were identified as either requiring the University to undertake new work, or they are difficult for the

University to implement on its own due to gaps within the sector or interdependencies with the government.

A follow-up survey was circulated in July 2024 to the operational leads who indicated in the PSEA baseline assessment that they were ready to move forward with specific actions. The goal of the survey was to gain sightline into the progress of these initiatives, and it revealed that 15 of the assigned PSE Standard recommendations were identified as already implemented at the University, 36 were in progress, and 6 have an action plan in place but work had not yet started at the time of the survey. The data collected in this follow-up survey informed the development of the [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan \(MYAP\) Bridge Plan Annual Status Report 2024](#) (Appendix B).

Departments engaged DISCo members as stakeholders in their work to implement AODA requirements. In this capacity, DISCo members offered support and facilitated connections to other initiatives at the University, as well as helped each department establish success criteria and a system to monitor progress on accessibility projects.

Impacts and Outcomes

The intention of DISCo was to develop a sustainable infrastructure that would enable accessibility to become a part of the campus' culture, using the Education Standard as a framework for action. Therefore, the mandate and success criteria of DISCo reflect that intention.

Achieving Success

DISCo successfully achieved the six project mandates within the projected two-year timeline.

1. Champion accessibility and disability inclusion at the executive leadership level.

DISCo collaborated with executive leadership to develop action plans for which they could appropriately assume responsibility. Executive Council members assumed responsibility for the consideration, development, and implementation of the most appropriate responses to the recommendations within their assigned purview.

2. Maintain visibility of departmental and institutional efforts in accessibility and how it may be formalized to meet legislative requirements.

DISCo maintained visibility of departmental and institutional efforts in accessibility as related to the action plans in several ways:

- Establishing executive leadership responsibility for the ongoing action plans
- Conducting the initial PSEA baseline assessment survey
- Conducting a follow-up survey to support the development of the Multi-year Accessibility Plan Progress Report
- Continuing to engage the campus community in this work by assigning executive leadership responsibility of the PSE Standard recommendations

This created the infrastructure required for ongoing visibility of the institutional efforts to develop a campus culture of accessibility and disability inclusion, which will be particularly beneficial should the PSE Standard becomes codified and the institution will need to demonstrate compliance with

legislative requirements.

3. Coordinate the implementation of recommendations with verticals that have a common or shared scope.

DISCo's approach of engaging executive leaders to identify the recommendations that align with their unit's accountabilities resulted in the identification of actions and outcomes that would best be achieved in collaboration with other executive leaders. The bringing together of operational leads to engage with their action plans further enabled the identification of opportunities for collaboration. The PSEA baseline assessment and follow-up survey enabled DISCo to have additional sightline to the departmental activities that intersected with other departments, or that could have a greater impact if achieved collaboratively. DISCo's visibility of accessibility initiatives across campus facilitated the collaboration of various teams and departments on specific initiatives.

One outcome of this coordination was the creation of the Physical Accessibility Specialist role. This role focuses on facilitating the AODA's Design of Public Spaces Standard and upcoming Education Standard recommendations related to physical barriers. While the physical accessibility requirements are driven by accessibility legislation, meaningful and sustainable impact in managing legacy building design and integration requires a collaborative role, one that has a close working relationship with the Campus Accessibility team but is situated within Plant Operations to ensure insight into all building design considerations. This role will advocate for accessible and inclusive physical space design as part of the standard facilities management processes at the University, rather than approaching it as a post-completion add on. DISCo brought these units together to identify the opportunity for a shared resource, supporting efficient resource management while promoting knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing for both areas.

4. Identify targeted recommendations that can be actioned through the Teaching Innovation Incubator.

DISCo effectively utilized the [Teaching Innovation Incubator](#) (TII) to carry out various recommendations via the action plan, and facilitated bottom-up idea generation. The TII was designed to enable faculty, staff, and students to bring innovative teaching ideas forward, while facilitating cross-departmental collaboration within a supportive structure that provided guidance and oversight. TII was well positioned to help organize and support three working groups designed to address the most impactful areas of the action plan related to accessible education: policies and guidelines, instructional practices and processes, and learning tools and materials. This was particularly critical since the most challenging recommendations to implement required involvement and investment from faculty members.

As part of this work, TII established an [Accessible Teaching](#) project, designed to support the development of innovative ideas aimed at promoting accessibility within post-secondary education, helping to establish an educational culture where excellent education is accessible education.

DISCo effectively changed the approach and the narrative about what is involved in offering exceptional education, enabling the University to become more accessible overall. Recognizing the need for effective collaboration between faculty members and academic instructional support units to make changes in accessible education, the Accessible Education Project established working groups co-led by faculty and Academic Support Unit (ASU) leadership, with equal representation from both areas. Applying a

collaborative and synergistic approach to this work had an additional benefit of consolidating resource requirements to achieve shared outcomes. For example, recognizing that the Library and the Accessible Education Project both had a need for project support work, and that the work was interrelated between academic teaching materials and teaching practices, DISCo facilitated conversations between both areas in which it was identified that a shared resource could be mutually beneficial—not only in completing the work, but also acting as a conduit of collaborative activities as the individual gained insights into each area.

5. Identify outstanding recommendations requiring separate proposals or additional resources, and develop a timeline for implementation.

While action plans were created for each Executive Council member that aligned with the 185 PSE Standard recommendations, the intention was not to simply create a “check list” of actions. The goal was to develop a sustainable infrastructure to embed disability inclusion into all aspects of education. As such, DISCo supported several new initiatives and actions that would advance disability inclusion on campus. This enabled the committee to identify overlapping resource needs or the duplication of work in departments across campus.

For example, understanding that there was sector-wide interest in creating resources for some of the related Education Standard recommendations, operational leads were encouraged to participate and contribute at sector-level tables to share learnings, knowledge, and resources beyond the campus.

6. Identify and recommend Executive Council alignment for accessibility areas and themes that may not have been contemplated previously or have a natural, apparent alignment.

DISCo worked with Executive Council members to identify the most appropriate scoping of the action items, with a shared recognition that most items do not fall squarely into one unit. In some instances, responsibility for the action item was diverted to another unit to be more appropriately aligned. Even when an Executive Council member held responsibility for an item, a sincere approach to addressing the spirit of the recommendations often required cross-unit collaboration. Through this process, Executive Council members were able to identify the actions that were dependent on the involvement of other departments or units, and plans were created to facilitate effective collaboration.

In meeting its mandate, DISCo achieved its noted success criteria:

- Institutional ownership of accessibility to meet AODA requirements was acknowledged
- Interdisciplinary approaches to disability inclusion were applied
- Projects and initiatives were created and identified to operationally meet AODA requirements and the PSE Standard recommendations
- The campus community was receptive to DISCo’s actions and initiatives

Gaining Insights

While DISCo was assigned a clear mandate, the committee remained open to the iterative nature of a significant cultural change effort. As the committee evolved, and through collaboration with the campus, the following key insights were gained.

Culture change requires more than a compliance checklist

As departments worked through their assigned recommendations, it became clear that there was an appetite for participating in a cultural change towards integrated accessibility, versus looking at it as a box to check off. To make sustainable and meaningful change, and to ensure compliance with legislated requirements, it was recognized that accessibility needs to be embedded into the work of each department and unit. This requires disability inclusion and accessibility to become a part of the University's standard operating procedures, and not an overlay on existing processes or a separate, parallel process. Early on, DISCo arrived at an effective framing of the goals of accessibility and reinforced it through the slogan "excellent education is accessible education." All University members, from faculty to staff to students, can recognize a commitment to quality as part of the University's core mission, and framing accessibility in this way can support and sustain a genuine culture change beyond DISCo.

A holistic approach to disability inclusion is required

The campus' early responses to the PSE Standard recommendations were almost completely focused on actions that should be completed within Academic Support Units. DISCo recognized that the most challenging and impactful recommendations required the buy-in and involvement of faculty members. It was recognized that an approach where instructors and faculty were "handed down" directions, without genuine engagement in achieving a shared vision, would not yield meaningful and effective change. As such, DISCo ensured all ongoing efforts to support disability inclusion and accessible education meaningfully engaged faculty and instructors, alongside all other involved parties. DISCo engaged faculty members and staff through the TII and the Accessible Education Project, bringing them into conversations about how to create an accessible University of Waterloo. The composition of DISCo provided further insights into the benefit of engaging senior leadership and members with specialized, yet shared responsibilities related to accessibility. Outcomes were far more impactful when a matter was examined and carried out using an intersectional and collaborative approach.

Collaboration fosters effectiveness and efficiencies

Through the information gathered in the PSEA baseline assessment, and the progress reports and action plans received from project teams, DISCo developed a process to consolidate and rationalize resource requests that came forward from different Executive Council units as requirements to achieving accessibility action items. In this way, DISCo helped avoid the duplication of roles, strengthened collaboration and resource sharing across units, and helped ensure efforts are aligned to goals. Through this collaborative approach to assessing resource needs related to accessibility, DISCo created a model by which effective and efficient assessment and resource allocation can be used in the future.

Strategic oversight and direction help maintain momentum

An insight that emerged was the effectiveness of having leadership (by way of DISCo) provide strategic oversight of the University's accessibility efforts to ensure operational alignment and provide appropriate direction. Executive leaders and operational leads benefited from engaging DISCo to solicit their expertise in finalizing their unit-wide action plans. Momentum was maintained by using DISCo to monitor and celebrate progress, and to provide strategic guidance along the way.

During the course of DISCo, the role of Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility was created, which holds accountabilities for advancing accessibility on campus and overseeing compliance with AODA. The position, once filled, was included as a DISCo co-chair alongside the Associate Vice-President, Academic; the Registrar; and the Dean of Health. The collaborative leadership approach provided strategic oversight to the campus' accessibility efforts, and helped advance disability inclusion in both the service and academic setting.

Recommendations

While DISCo achieved its mandate by fulfilling the requirements of the Terms of Reference, it became apparent that additional, ongoing actions are required to maintain the infrastructure for disability inclusion that was established through DISCo to propel genuine cultural change related to accessibility.

The following recommendations aim to enable the University to appropriately and effectively adhere to existing AODA standards while maintaining the momentum of existing DISCo initiatives. These recommendations will further enable the University to achieve its Waterloo at 100 goals, particularly the “culture” goals, which call us to a) be nimble and co-ordinate across disciplinary and organizational boundaries for the betterment of our University and our students, b) embrace decolonization, Indigenization, inclusivity, equity, and anti-racism into our organizational culture, and c) ensure the physical and mental health and well-being of our students and employees, and support them to achieve success in their personal and professional lives.

Recommendation 1: Establish Collaborative Leadership with Oversight on Accessibility

A factor contributing to DISCo's success was the provision of executive level oversight on accessibility across campus. The establishment of the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility enables strategic oversight of monitoring AODA compliance, as well as the provision of guidance to the campus on effectively addressing barriers that impede accessibility. This unit will be responsible for monitoring the progress of outstanding DISCo action items (i.e., unit-wide PSE Standard recommendation action plans) and will be available to offer support to Executive Council members and their teams on embedding these plans and actions within their standard operating procedures (and ideally, in their budgeting and planning process). However, to build and maintain momentum for an ongoing culture change towards full accessibility, a holistic and collaborative leadership approach is required.

DISCo provided a model of success by bringing together senior leaders to collectively identify an effective structure for cross-collaborative operational work, impactful strategic initiatives, and to identify overlapping resource needs and duplication of efforts across campus. Each role brought a unique perspective to the planning process for advancing campus accessibility. It is therefore recommended that an ongoing accessibility steering committee be established that includes standing membership of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility; the Associate Vice-President, Academic; and a rotating member of Dean's Council, with other members selectively included based on the collaboration needs at that time. The accessibility steering committee would hold a mandate related to the following:

- Planning: Establishing institution-wide, strategic initiatives with executive leaders that sustain an accessibility culture that applies to both the academic units and within academic support units.
- Budgeting: Reviewing time-limited resource requests (e.g., contract staff, external consultants, technology, etc.) related to accessibility to a) identify overlapping resource needs and requests to enable effective and efficient hiring and resource allocation, b) identify opportunities for sharing existing resources in cross-departmental accessibility initiatives, and c) assessing and consolidating resource requests across units to present to the Provost (all permanent and ongoing resource requests would continue to be part of the unit's budget and planning process).
- Interdisciplinary collaboration: Facilitating discussions that support operational activities related to accessibility that cross executive-level portfolios. The committee will offer steering support and advice on transitional and operational activities that require interdisciplinary collaboration where no clear executive sponsorship exists in the current structures.

The steering committee will neither interfere with, nor supersede, the mandate, authority, and responsibility of any Executive Council member.

Recommendation 2: Embed Accessibility Planning into the Budget and Planning Process

For accessibility to become a part of standard practice, and to ensure appropriate compliance with AODA, it is recommended that accessibility planning become an embedded part of the institution's budget and planning process. This will enable units to plan for, and consider, how accessibility can be incorporated within their annual plans (either as a "special project" or by embedding accessibility requirements into standard operating procedure) and to consider how their existing budgets and staffing complements can support this ongoing work. This will enable AODA compliance tracking to be more efficient and effective.

Recommendation 3: Assign Executive Council Members with Ongoing Responsibility for Accessibility

DISCo was successful at establishing executive member oversight of the actions stemming from the 185 recommendations. However, disability inclusion requires ongoing efforts, thus a sustained approach of executive level responsibility for accessibility is required. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- Each Executive Council member be assigned ongoing responsibility for ensuring their unit meets (or exceeds, where possible) statutory obligations related to accessibility.
- AODA compliance becomes a standing agenda item (e.g., annually) at Executive Council, where the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility will provide an update on AODA compliance status, areas of risk/non-compliance, and notices of amendments.
- That "equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism" (EDIA-R) become a standing agenda item for discussion at Executive Council (e.g., annually) to ensure awareness and alignment of related initiatives across units. This will be an opportunity for EC members to share best practices and monitor impact of actions/initiatives in achieving our Waterloo at 100 "culture" goals.

Intentionally embedding “accessibility” into each Executive Council member’s set of accountabilities will enable accessibility to be a part of the Unit’s standard operating procedures, and will support units in meeting Waterloo at 100 goals. Embedding AODA and EDIA-R into the Executive Council agenda will provide a sustainable structure for executive leaders to provide updates on their accessibility planning and initiatives, identify opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing across units, and to identify any potential or existing risks related to meeting AODA compliance. This will be particularly important because most accessibility initiatives, projects, and accountabilities cross executive leadership portfolios. It will also provide a mechanism for Executive Council members to work collaboratively, while embedding their specific accessibility initiatives within their own budget and planning process.

Recommendation 4: Visible Commitment to Accessibility

The University regularly and clearly communicates its values and commitments to the broader community, which serve as a compass to guide everyday actions and decisions. During times of financial challenges and organizational change, it is even more important for the University to reaffirm these commitments and values. While we balance our budget by reducing expenses and finding efficiencies, we are obligated to continue to create an accessible campus. It is therefore recommended that the University’s commitment to accessibility be routinely reinforced in all relevant communications, such as strategic reports, town halls, and presentations (e.g., at Senate and Board of Governors).

Recommendation 5: Maintain Accessible Education Project

A key component of creating an accessible campus is having accessible education. Removing systemic barriers to post-secondary education requires dedicated focus, expert knowledge, and collaboration between faculty and academic support units. The Accessible Education Project has made many strides towards this goal over the past two years, and should continue for a minimum of another two to three years to ensure accessible education practices become engrained in the everyday planning and processes of Waterloo instructors and ASUs.

Conclusion

DISCo successfully completed its mandate by achieving all requirements of the Terms of Reference and in addition, gained insights into how the University can maintain the momentum in implementing AODA requirements. DISCo developed a sustainable infrastructure for achieving AODA compliance and for promoting disability inclusion across the institution, through a collaborative and institution-wide approach to creating a culture of accessibility. The recommendations within this report are intended to enable the University to sustain this approach upon dissolving DISCo.

Appendices

Appendix A: Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Website

[Disability Inclusion Steering Committee | Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost | University of Waterloo](https://disco.uwaterloo.ca/)

Appendix B: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)

[MYAP Bridge Plan Annual Status Report 2024](https://disco.uwaterloo.ca/assets/documents/2024-03-01-MYAP-Bridge-Plan-Annual-Status-Report-2024.pdf)