

# FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE SERIES: SUPPORTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

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Karolina Kural, Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager, Kinaxis

Mitch Bewick, Co-op Student Experience Manager, Accessibility, Co-operative and Experiential Education



# TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is co-ordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.



Map source: Adam Lewis, "Living on Stolen Land," Alternatives Journal December 2015



IN CANADA FOR  
**HANDS-ON EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING**

MACLEANS STUDENT VOICES SURVEY  
2022



A GLOBAL NETWORK OF  
**8,000+**  
EMPLOYERS



**26,000+**

CO-OP STUDENTS ENROLLED IN

**120+** PROGRAMS



HOME TO THE

**WxL** Work-Learn  
INSTITUTE

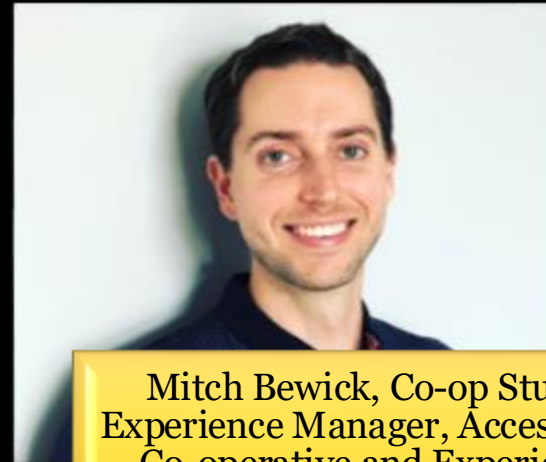
# MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Anne-Marie Fannon, Director,  
Work-Learn Institute



Karolina Kural, Global Equity,  
Diversity and Inclusion  
Manager  
Kinaxis



Mitch Bewick, Co-op Student  
Experience Manager, Accessibility,  
Co-operative and Experiential  
Education



# OVERVIEW

- Research-informed insights on the experiences of students with disabilities in work-integrated learning (WIL)
- How Kinaxis supports accommodations and accessibility
- How academic institutions support employment accessibility and accommodations.
- Q&A

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY **DISABILITY**?

A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses or activities

**27%** of Canadians have at least one disability

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ACCESSIBILITY?

Workplace accessibility refers to creating an environment that accommodates and welcomes employees with diverse needs, including those with physical, sensory, cognitive or other disabilities.

Source: [The Comprehensive Guide to Workplace Accessibility \(accessibilityspark.com\)](https://www.accessibilityspark.com/)

## Barriers to accessibility:

- Attitudinal
- Informational and communication
- Systemic
- Physical and architectural
- Technological

Barriers may be visible or invisible

# DEFINING ACCOMMODATIONS

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“A workplace accommodation is **any change in the work environment or the terms and conditions of employment** that allows a person with limitations in their abilities, or who faces barriers from the standard rules and conditions of work, to perform their job.”

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT



*Students with disabilities:*

# **THEIR PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCE IN WIL**

# STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN WIL:

**~50%**

Nearly half of students who were registered with disability services said their disability affected their decision NOT to do WIL

**9.8 x**

Students with specific learning disabilities were 9.8 times **less likely to participate in co-op programs**

**80-90%**

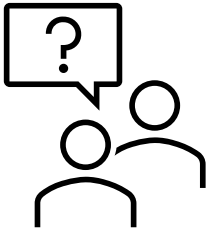
of co-op students with disabilities work **without accommodations.**

Source: Gatto et.al. (2021)

Supporting accommodations for inclusive workplaces

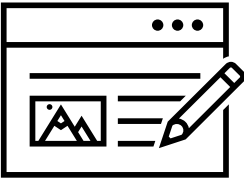
# TYPES OF BARRIERS FACED BY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

## Disclosure



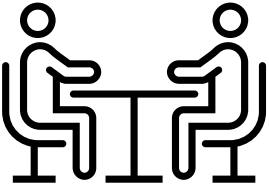
Challenges in deciding when and how to disclose a disability.

## Hiring & Recruitment



Challenges with job descriptions, interview processes and onboarding.

## Support



Challenges with accessibility and inclusivity of support provided.

# Disclosure

## Motivation

Disclosure is a personal choice.  
Disclosure varies for each person  
and situation.

### Motivation for concealment:

To access opportunities:

*“It’s hard to disclose because some places claim they want diversity, but I worry they might not hire me due to my disability.”*

To avoid discrimination/stigmatization:

*“I don’t tell my employer that ‘oh I have ADHD’ because there’s a lot of preconceptions about people with ADHD, how they work, how they behave, so it’s just safer not to because there’s a lot of stereotyping still.”*

# Disclosure

## Impact

Disclosure is a personal choice.  
Disclosure varies for each person  
and situation.

One of the biggest barriers to success within WIL is identity management, negotiating how to share information about a stigmatized identity with others at work.

(Khan et al., 2024)

## Impact of non-disclosure

- **Social Relationships:** *“if you feel like you have to omit information about your life or lie or downplay who you are, I think it can be a lot more challenging to connect with your coworkers and to connect with your managers.” - A female student with a disability*
- **Well-being:** *“definitely felt like I wasn't my authentic self, which like put a lot of stress on me that way...” - A neurodivergent student*

# Hiring & Recruitment

## Inclusive Job Descriptions

*“I'm lucky that I do wanna work for the government. So at least that's where there tends to be more accommodations. But pretty much now I might as well just look at government jobs and not even consider, like, private organizations. So, I feel this limits my learning because I can't even seek out those opportunities.”*

Students repeatedly mentioned job postings as a barrier. They acknowledged that job postings are opportunities to learn about the employer, but felt that information about **inclusivity was incomplete, lacking, or misleading**.

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### TOP TIPS:

- Review your job description to ensure it reflects your commitment to inclusivity
- Add in details about any programs or resources that you have to support students with disabilities

# Hiring & Recruitment

## Inclusive Interviews

*“I think that like if an interview is going to involve any sort of like technical questions like that should be something that is fully outlined beforehand. Like not necessarily the exact questions, just, more guidelines and structure on what they can do to me in their interview.”*

### TOP TIPS:

- Share details about the interview format, length, themes and areas of questions
- Encourage requests for any accommodations that are required for the interview process and provide contact details for requesting accommodation

# Hiring & Recruitment

## Inclusive on-boarding

*“I just don’t know who to go to about [accommodation]. I don’t know if it’s HR and nobody’s really told me who I would talk to get accommodations.”*

### TOP TIPS:

- Share accommodation resources in a welcome email
- Review workplace flexibility during orientation
- Review the process for requesting accommodation during orientation



# THE POTENTIAL OF CREATING ACCESSIBLE WIL EXPERIENCES

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Persons with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as those without disabilities

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Successful post-graduation employment is affected by past education and employment experiences

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Work based WIL experiences (e.g., co-ops and internships) are proven to be particularly effective for improving post graduation employment rates for persons with disabilities

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*Source: Gatto et al., 2021 and ACEN, 2023b*

AS A GLOBAL LEADER

We empower people through technology to harness the **full potential** of global supply chains.

- Founded in 1984 in Ottawa, Canada
- 1800+ employees worldwide, with Interns in Canada, US, India, Europe and Japan
- Recognized as Canada's Top 100 Employers for Young People and as a Top 100 Internship Program by WayUp/Yello
- 106 Internship positions to fill for Winter 2025

# Unlock employee potential through **accessibility**



Increased  
productivity



Improved  
employee  
retention



Larger talent  
pool



Legal  
compliance



Kinaxis  
values

# Accessibility Strategy Foundations





**WORKFORCE  
TRAINING**

**SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES  
SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE  
ACCESSIBLE CONTENT GUIDELINES**



**TALENT  
ACQUISITION  
TRAINING**

**ACCESSIBLE HIRING PROCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**



**PEOPLE  
LEADER  
TRAINING**

**NEUROINCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES  
ACCESSIBLE HIRING PROCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

# Training

“My disability exists not because I use a wheelchair, but because the broader environment isn’t accessible”

STELLA YOUNG



FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE

# Accessible hiring process as a way of mitigating accommodation requests

Job  
posting

Before the  
interview

During the  
interview

After the  
interview

**KINAXIS**<sup>®</sup>

# Inclusive employee experience - onboarding



Employee checklist



New hire roadmap



Contact sheet



Virtual orientation



Manager checklist



Manager guide

Consultation with Divergent Minds Employee Resource Group

# Adjustments students can implement to enhance their work environment

## Focus

- Use noise-cancelling headphones
- Schedule “focus time”
- Remove or minimize visual distractions
- Take 5-minute breaks

## Time management

- Use a timer
- Leverage your Outlook calendar
- Use time management tools

## Preference for written communication

- Ask to see relevant content before the meeting starts
- Submit questions or comments in meetings via the chat



ACCOMMODATIONS

Workplace accommodation recommended for formal changes to work environment



# Key performance indicators



Training completion



Candidate success rate



Employee experience



KEY  
TAKEAWAY

It's not only about the numbers. It's the right context that counts.

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Inclusion Manager

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# SUPPORTING CO-OP ACCESSIBILITY



**How post-secondary institutions are building support for inclusive co-op experiences**

## **Mitchell Bewick**

Co-op Student Experience Manager, Accessibility  
Co-operative and Experiential Education, University  
of Waterloo

# CO-OP STUDENT EXPERIENCE MANAGER, ACCESSIBILITY



Striving to understanding the co-op experience of students with disabilities



Looking at supporting the growth towards a more disability inclusive model of co-op across the lifecycle

# CO-OP STUDENT EXPERIENCE MANAGER, ACCESSIBILITY



The management and optimization of supporting **day to day co-op accessibility** matters and employment accommodation requests

**Reactive**



The longer-term strategic goals and objectives that strive to **infuse accessibility into the core** of what we do

**Proactive**

# UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITY: A STARTING POINT



- ✓ Gain awareness of and appreciate the current resources and supports available to students navigating the co-op employment experience
- ✓ Collect input and feedback from the university community on barriers, knowledge gaps, and accessibility requirements

Helps to identify barriers and information/service gaps

# **REMOVING BARRIERS: EMPLOYMENT ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT EXAMPLE**

Responding to an identified gap in student transitional support between school and work environments

# REMOVING BARRIERS: EMPLOYMENT ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT EXAMPLE

Acknowledged the impact of decoupling:

- The process of **obtaining academic accommodations**
- The ability to receive **support with requesting co-op employment accommodations**

<b>The Co-op Accommodation Support Pathway (CASP)</b>	Optional pathway for students to access without registration or verification
	Results in greater and faster access to employment accommodation supports
	Limits unnecessary disclosure and promotes self-determination



# ACCESSIBILITY IS MORE THAN ACCOMMODATIONS.

*It's a mindset.*

# INFUSING AN ACCESSIBILITY MINDSET:

Embedding accessibility into how we think and do co-op

A result of building disability confidence through engagement in purposeful learning activities and community building

Creates opportunities across the entire co-op experience

- Optimizing the co-op service model (WaterlooWorks as an ally in this)

# INFUSING AN ACCESSIBILITY MINDSET:

**Challenges the conventional models of understanding academic/employment success and models of disability support.**



- Post-Secondary Education Standard - Recommendations (AODA)

- What does future-proofing look like?

# Q+A

# STAY CONNECTED

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**THANK YOU!**



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