



Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

Accessibility Operating Policy

Approved: January 10, 2025

Table of Contents

	1
Purpose	2
Accessibility Operating Policy 1 - Accommodations	2
Accessibility Operating Policy 2 - Grounds	3
Accessibility Operating Policy 3 - Accessibility Coordinator	4
Accessibility Operating Policy 4 - Training	5
Appendix A: Descriptions of OUSA Conferences and Events	6
Appendix B: Accessibility Checklist	8
Appendix C: Requesting an Accommodation	13

Purpose

OUSA is dedicated to ensuring its work and learning environments are accessible and barrier-free for all. OUSA will work to implement and develop accommodations for employees, Steering Committee members and delegates based on the processes described in this policy.

The goal of the policy is to offer a simple, easy to navigate, confidential process for requesting an accommodation.

Accessibility Operating Policy 1 - Accommodations

Definition: An accommodation is when workflows, physical spaces, or events in a working or learning environment are changed to allow everyone to participate without barriers or limitations. An accommodation can be a temporary or permanent alterations.

Example of a physical accommodation:

1. Changes to a bathroom to have grab-bars, ramps or larger entryways
2. An elevator entrance that is the same distance to the meeting area as the stairway entrance
3. An automated button to open doors

The above list of examples for physical accommodations is not exhaustive, but as referenced further in this policy and appendices, individualized needs will be taken into consideration and addressed as best as possible.

Example of accommodations to workflows:

1. Allowing asynchronous submission of work. Asynchronous workflows allow employees to work outside of typical working hours, such as 9am-5pm, and instead complete work at their own pace at the time that suits them best. For example, such an accommodation would be provided to someone who might have a sleeping disorder and need to wake up later.
2. Meetings scheduled only in the afternoon, or specific hours of the day: many companies are moving towards meetings only after 11am and before 3pm to accommodate caregivers whose duties to children include pickup-drop-off, and for employees who perform better later in the day as opposed to earlier in the day.
3. "Reading time": companies are now allowing for 10-20 minutes of "reading time" scheduled into meetings to allow participants to read the documents during the

meeting in which they are supposed to be discussed. For example: the meeting for this draft may include 10-20 minutes of reading time to allow participants to scan the document first before the meeting begins.

4. Event accommodations may include changes to the seating arrangement, meeting-space or technology that is used to ensure all members can enter the event using the same entrance and receive the same information at each event. For example, a conference with transcription or ASL interpretation is an example of an event accommodation.

Accommodations are granted in the following areas of OUSA activities:

- Work completed within the Home Office
- Work completed as part of participating in the Steering Committee
- Participating and attending various OUSA events and conferences such as:
 - Welcome Conference;
 - Strategic Planning Conference;
 - General Assemblies;
 - Student Advocacy Conference;
 - Alumni events;
 - Partners in Higher Education Dinner; and
 - Any additional events that OUSA hosts for internal and external participants

Descriptions of each conference can be found in Appendix A.

Accessibility Operating Policy 2 - Grounds

Definition: Grounds for accommodation simply are the reason(s) *why* an accommodation is being requested. It involves one or more factors that contribute to the necessity for a certain action.

An accommodation under this policy may be requested under medical and accessibility related grounds, OR non-medical grounds such as religion, caregiver status, race and gender.

- Medical grounds may include circumstances such as an illness or injury, as well as reasons related to mental health & well being
- Religious grounds may include circumstances such as holy days or days of worship
- Caregiver status grounds may include circumstances related to providing child

care, elder care or care for another dependent member of your family or household

- Accessibility grounds may include requests for resources that accommodate the needs of disabled OUSA members
- Race based grounds may include circumstances where one has experienced trauma, exposure or harm as a result of racial violence or events in the world (global racial injustice)
- Gender based grounds may include circumstances where one has experienced gender-based violence, domestic violence or other forms of discrimination

If a participant of OUSA feels that their accessibility requests have been denied based on the grounds above, they are able to seek recourse in accordance with OUSA's Human Resources policy.

Accessibility Operating Policy 3 - Accessibility Coordinator

1. The Accessibility Coordinator is a specialized staff within OUSA's Home Office that is trained in AODA standards, has familiarity with principles of universal design and disability justice, and is trained in the handling of confidential material.
2. The role of the Accessibility Coordinator will belong to the Manager of Operations and Communications and shall be stated in their job description.
 - a. Having AODA training and a familiarity with principles of universal design and disability justice will be considered assets in job postings for the Manager of Operations and Communications. If the successful candidate does not have this background, OUSA will mandate that they complete these trainings and fund them, if necessary. Completing these trainings will be considered professional development for the Manager of Operations and Communications, but will not draw from their professional development budget offered in their contracts.
3. The Accessibility Coordinator shall be responsible for:
 - a. Collecting information on the accessibility needs of Home Office, Steering Committee, student delegates, and other guests at OUSA's conferences and events
 - b. Meeting with students and guests to review itinerary of event and discuss any improvements/suggestions for accommodations
 - c. Making arrangements throughout all of OUSA's conferences and events to accommodate accessibility needs
 - d. Following the Accessibility Checklist, as described in Appendix B, for all in-person and virtual conferences and events

- e. Requesting any budgetary adjustments for accessibility aids to the Executive Director and Vice-President Finance
- 4. Following the vertical principle, the Accessibility Coordinator will *not* share, unless necessary to fulfill the accommodation, information about accommodations requests with those outside of their direct supervisor, the Executive Director. With consent, they may share your information with adjacent staff in the Home Office, external organizers, or presenters to support your accommodation request.

Accessibility Operating Policy 4 – Training

- 1. All employees of OUSA must have AODA training or any additional training that is deemed of equal or better quality by experts.
 - a. As a part of the onboarding process for new Home Office staff, AODA training or modules of equal quality shall be required and completed within 3 months of the start date.
 - b. If AODA is used for training, Home Office shall complete the free online training from the official AODA website: <https://www.aoda.ca/free-online-training/>
 - c. Upon completion, Home Office staff shall send the certificate of their completion to the Executive Director. In the event that the new employee is the Executive Director, the certificate shall be sent to OUSA's Vice-President of Administration and HR.
- 2. Steering Committee will be encouraged to complete their AODA training as follows:
 - a. For Steering Committee members who already complete AODA training with their member association, the Executive Director shall request a copy of their certificate of completion, to be submitted by July 1st.
 - b. For Steering Committee members who do not complete AODA training with their member association, it will be highly encouraged to complete within 2 months of the start of their term. A certificate of completion should be sent to the Executive Director.

Appendix A: Descriptions of OUSA Conferences and Events

Welcome Conference

A two-day conference held in Toronto that aims to introduce OUSA's work, operations, and stakeholders to Steering Committee and other student leaders. Attendees include Steering Committee, Home Office, student association executives, and guest speakers. Attendees spend most of the day in a theatre-style or mid-sized room with open space for several tables and chairs. There are a couple of presentations that attendees listen to, onboarding training related to EDIA, and a social activity in the evening. Attendees also move around to different tables to interact with various stakeholders. The first Steering Committee meeting of the year is held on the second day at a different location in Toronto (a meeting room) where executive elections take place.

Strategic Planning Conference

A three-day conference held in Ontario that aims to set OUSA's strategic priorities for the year, including advocacy and organizational goals. Attendees include Steering Committee and Home Office. Attendees spend two days brainstorming and discussing OUSA's work for the year. Group photos and headshots are taken, and an evening social activity is planned. The third day concludes with a Steering Committee meeting, ratifying the annual strategic priorities.

General Assembly

A four-day conference held at an OUSA member institution. Attendees include Steering Committee, Home Office, student delegates, and guest speakers. Attendees spend time rotating between breakout sessions to provide feedback on drafts of policy papers being projected onto a screen. Policy paper authors spend time rewriting at the hotel or on campus while delegates spend time at a social activity in the surrounding community or on campus. Delegates are also expected to attend other sessions that offer remarks from guest speakers or contribute to OUSA's organizational development. The fourth day culminates in the Annual General Meeting (fall only) and Plenary, where the policy papers with final amendments are projected onto a screen and undergo final debate and ratification.

Student Advocacy Conference

A five-day conference held in Toronto where student leaders lobby elected officials and government staff on OUSA's advocacy priorities. Attendees include Steering Committee, Home Office, and an additional student delegate per member association. Attendees spend the first day in training and then preparing for their lobby meetings. Throughout the week, attendees move between Queen's Park, Ministry offices, and OUSA's home base (a large meeting place with several tables and chairs, for attendees

to grab food and debrief meetings with Home Office). Attendees also have an evening social, and depending on scheduling, attend a reception and Question Period at Queen's Park.

Alumni events

An evening social activity in Toronto, which can be held at OUSA's Home Office or alternate venue such as a restaurant or bar. Attendees include Steering Committee, Home Office, and OUSA alumni. Attendees spend a couple of hours socializing with one another. Depending on the venue, the space is mostly empty, with a couple of options for seating.

Partners in Higher Education Dinner

An annual dinner held in Toronto at the end of the governing year, typically in a conference or reception hall. Attendees include Steering Committee, Home Office, institutional leadership, student association members and staff, faculty, Ministers, Members of Provincial Parliament, government staff, and guest speakers. Attendees spend the evening socializing and participating in a seated dinner. OUSA's Awards for Teaching Excellence are presented and distributed throughout the evening.

Appendix B: Accessibility Checklist

VIRTUAL

Before Event

1. Communication
 - a. Provide the contact information for the Accessibility Coordinator
 - b. The Accessibility Coordinator must provide an accommodation form for all Home Office, Steering Committee members, and delegates
 - c. Use accessible communication when initiating contact with those who have identified accommodations requests and provide an overview of the plan for the event
2. Inviting participants
 - a. In your email communications, or on the webpage that advertises the event, ensure that the name of the contact person processing accommodations is clearly provided.
 - b. Include a pdf or link to Appendix C of the Accessibility Operating Policy which outlines how to request an accommodation, and the time by which the requests should be received.
3. Promotion
 - a. Ensure that the font size meets the following criteria:
 - i. 12 point font minimum
 - ii. The text is double-spaced
 - iii. The fonts are from an approved list of accessible fonts (such as):
 1. Helvetica
 2. Times New Roman
 3. Arial
 4. Open Sauce
 5. Calibri
 6. Tahoma
 7. Rockwell
 8. Verdana
 - b. The colours of the text are high-contrast
 - i. Use the WebAIM Contrast Checker tool to make sure text receives a “pass” in all categories.
 - c. Ensure that the images on your digital poster meet the following criteria:
 - i. The colours in the images are high-contrast
 - ii. Ensure an image-description is added to the picture so that a screen reader can pick it up

4. Virtual Platform

- a. Make sure the platform meets the following criteria:
 - i. It is compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers.
 - ii. It has closed-captioning that automatically generates on screen
 - iii. The captions are visible in a single screen and the same screen that everyone is looking at.
 - iv. Has an option for live-translation and ASL interpretation
 - v. Produces a transcript, or allows the manual production of a transcript
 - vi. Does not require a cursor or mouse, but can be used via keyboard shortcuts
 - vii. Allows for screen magnification, and high contrast settings
 - viii. Audio feedback tools built into the platform
- b. The following platforms include most, if not all of these settings:
 - i. Zoom
 - ii. Google Hangouts (is compatible with an ASL interpretation app & has audio feedback tools)
 - iii. Microsoft Teams (also has audio feedback tools).

During Event

1. Presentation

- a. Log on early to make sure the following features are working on your platform:
 - i. Closed-captioning
 - ii. ASL interpretation/live interpretation
- b. Describe accessibility features clearly at the beginning of your presentation
 - i. “The live interpretation is accessible by clicking ____ at the bottom of your screen...”
- c. Give clear instructions on what to do if accessibility features malfunction
 - i. “If you experience any issues with translation, captioning or audio feedback, you can message (identify person) in the chat at any time during the presentation.”
- d. When sharing your screen, give a clear audio description of what you are sharing. Participants with visual impairments cannot fully see your screen.
 - i. “I’m sharing 3 charts on my screen. The first chart is data from 2021. The second chart is data from 2022. The third chart is data from 2023.”

2. Event Conduct

- a. Make it a practice to build in breaks every 2 hours
- b. Let people turn off their cameras if they need
- c. Allow people to step away from the screen and use the generated transcript to catch up
- d. Speak slowly, using simple and concise language
- e. Ask your audience if they understand what you have presented. If not, go back and simplify.

IN-PERSON

Before Event

OUSA events and conferences should be planned in a manner that ensures adherence to the following components:

1. Location:
 - a. In close proximity to public transportation and stops/stations that are verified to be accessible by the local transit authority
 - b. Can be accessed using Wheelchair Accessible Vans and/or taxis and reserving such modes of transport ahead of time
2. Venue:
 - a. Wheelchair and mobility aid accessibility
 - b. Barrier-free pathways
 - c. Adjustable lighting
 - d. Good acoustics
 - e. Microphones and speakers
3. Communication
 - a. Provide the contact information for the Accessibility Coordinator
 - b. The Accessibility Coordinator must provide an accommodation form for all Home Office, Steering Committee members, and delegates
 - c. Use accessible communication when initiating contact with those who have identified accommodations requests and provide an overview of the plan for the event
 - d. Ask the individual if they have any concerns about the plan and if so, make the appropriate accommodations and inform the individual
4. Inviting participants
 - a. In your email communications, or on the webpage that advertises the event, ensure that the name of the contact person processing accommodations is clearly provided.

- b. Include a pdf or link to Appendix C of the Accessibility Operating Policy which outlines how to request an accommodation, and the time by which the requests should be received.
- 5. Visual Aids
 - a. Designed in a manner that are AODA compliant (high contrast); refer to criteria above in virtual events
 - b. Spare copies of paper materials for ad hoc requests

During Event

1. Log on early to make sure the following features are working on your platform:
 - a. Live transcriptions
 - b. Closed-captioning for videos
2. Accessibility Coordinator:
 - a. The AC should be identified to participants at the start of an OUSA conference/event
3. Presentation
 - a. Describe accessibility features clearly at the beginning of your presentation
 - i. “The live interpretation is accessible by clicking ____ at the bottom of your screen...”
 - b. Give clear instructions on what to do if accessibility features malfunction
 - i. “If you experience any issues with translation, captioning or audio feedback, you can message (identify person) in the chat at any time during the presentation.”
 - c. Give a clear audio description of what you are sharing. Participants with visual impairments cannot fully see your screen.
 - i. “I’m sharing 3 charts on my screen. The first chart is data from 2021. The second chart is data from 2022. The third chart is data from 2023.”
4. Event Conduct
 - a. Make it a practice to build in breaks every 2 hours
 - b. Speak slowly, using simple and concise language
 - c. Ask your audience if they understand what you have presented. If not, go back and simplify.

VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON

Post-Event

1. It is essential that any feedback also include direct questions about accessibility:
 - a. "From 1-5, with 5 being most satisfied, how would you rate your experience as it relates to your accessibility needs?"
 - b. "Based on your accessibility needs were you satisfied with our virtual/in-person event?"
 - c. "Please describe any feedback/ideas/or insight for improving our accessibility design in the text box below"

Appendix C: Requesting an Accommodation

Planning of OUSA's conferences and events will automatically and inherently be planned with active integration of meeting accessibility needs. OUSA will follow a vertical principle, wherein information about your accommodation may only be shared with staff who are senior to the Accessibility Coordinator.

Attendees of OUSA's conferences and events can request an accommodation using the following process:

1. When registering for an OUSA conference and event, please use the associated accommodation form to identify any accessibility needs
2. The accommodation form should be filled out no later than 3 weeks before the scheduled event. If the form is submitted within 3 weeks of the event, the Accessibility Coordinator will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your request but this cannot be fully guaranteed.
 - a. A one-on-one meeting may be scheduled between the individual and Accessibility Coordinator to determine an appropriate strategy to meet the respective accommodation request.
3. During the event, any ad hoc accommodation requests can be made to the Accessibility Coordinator
 - a. For virtual events, the individual can email the Accessibility Coordinator at operations@ousa.ca
 - b. For in-person events, the individual can approach the Accessibility Coordinator, who will be identified at the beginning of every conference and event