Accessibility Plan Update

Submitted by: Brandon University

Date of first approval:
December 2016

Dates updated:
July 2019
October 2022

Years Applicable:
2020-2022

Contact person: Kristen Fisher, Associate Vice-President, People & Talent

Contact information: Brandon University, 270-18th Street, Brandon, MB R7A 6A9 | (204) 727-7416 | fisherk@brandonu.ca

Accessibility Working Group members: Kristen Fisher, Katie Gross, Michelle Magnusson, Erica Brown, Andrea Cruise

Statement of Commitment

Brandon University promotes diversity, inclusion and accessibility in our programs, services, employment, activities, and in the conduct of the University's affairs. We believe in the inherent dignity of all people. We are committed to identifying and removing the barriers that prevent full and meaningful participation in all aspects of campus life. The University will comply will all

applicable Federal, Provincial, and Municipal legislation with respect to accessibility and will implement the standards specified under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA).

Policies

Accessibility Policy
Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy
Student Academic Accommodation Procedures
Workplace Accommodation Policy
Workplace Accommodation Procedures
Assistive Devices Policy
Support Person Policy
Service Animal Policy
Pre-Employment Practices (attached as appendix)
Employment Practices (attached as appendix)

Actions:

The pandemic challenged us to seek different ways to educate our students and to support our employees. Remote learning and remote work were unplanned initiatives with positive outcomes that supported accessibility and reduced barriers.

Education and Training Initiatives:	
Actions:	Incorporate accessibility training into orientation and onboarding sessions.
Outcomes:	Sessions are provided to all new hires using virtual delivery method. By offering sessions virtually, employees can access the information in a manner that serves their needs.
Actions:	Provide training to new hires regarding the Accessible Employment Standard.

Outcomes:	Raise awareness around the Pre- and Employment practices and how they support accessible employment throughout their time at BU.
Actions:	As part of the new hire process, have new employees read and review the applicable policies related to accessibility and accommodations.
Outcomes:	Informs and educates employees regarding accessibility and accommodations and how these policies and practices serve all employees.
Actions:	Offering access to training through virtual platforms.
Outcomes:	Increased attendance, ease of access to training, reduces barriers to access training.
Actions:	Offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training on campus. Offer Working Minds training virtually.
Outcomes:	While the MHFA training program requires in-person delivery, our in-house trainer provides Working Minds training virtually. This allows access to various mental health training both in-person and virtually. 74 employees and managers have participated in The Working Minds virtual training to date.
Actions:	Offering programs through various means, including courses being held within rural/remote communities, and evening and virtual course delivery.
Outcomes:	This allows individuals to continue to work and attend post-secondary education concurrently. It reduces barriers to education.

Accessible Employment Initiatives:

Actions:	Implemented the Workplace Emergency Response Worksheet and communicated its importance.
Outcomes:	Employees are aware of the importance of disclosing a situation or disability that could negatively affect their ability to evacuate in an emergency situation.
Actions:	Recruitment guidelines updated to incorporate the active offer at various stages of the recruitment process.
Outcomes:	With a decentralized approach to recruitment, hiring areas have access to the tools required to successfully recruit for their areas, understanding the importance of the active offer and being open and mindful of accessibility needs. Incorporates awareness of accessibility practices at all stages of recruitment.
Actions:	Vacancy postings are posted electronically and shared through email distribution lists. Employment contracts are emailed to new hires, with the associated employment forms being fillable documents.
Outcomes:	Sharing vacancies through electronic means makes it easier for individuals to access the information when it is convenient for them and they can view the documents in enhanced font sizes. The employment forms are in a fillable format to allow for ease of completing.
Actions:	Provide printed copies of interview questions to candidates at the time of interviews and/or posting of interview questions in chat feature when interview is being conducted virtually.
Outcomes:	Interviewees have the ability to read the interview questions as they are being verbally asked the questions. It helps to reduce stigma and possible anxiety in the situation.

Information and Communication Initiatives:

Actions:	The purchase and use of LiveChat online software allows Student Services area to answer questions promptly.

Outcomes:	This software provides students and their parents quick access to questions related to their admission and attendance to university.
Actions:	Inclusion of alt-text in web and social images.
Outcomes:	Allows for fuller access for those using screen readers with plans to create alt-text guidelines for campus, including best practices and how-to guides.
Actions:	Now using Monsido on web documents which scans for accessibility and provides user training.
Outcomes:	Allows for better awareness of existing accessibility limitations and provides the user with the ability to fix issues.
Actions:	The purchase and use of LibCal online appointment booking software system.
Outcomes:	This software system allows student to book appointments with the Academic Skills Centre 24/7 using different devices (tablets, phones, and computers). This removes the barrier of having to schedule appointments during regular business hours.
Actions:	Enabling of internet access throughout areas on campus for both indoor and outdoor activities.
Outcomes:	This allowed everyone (students, employees, the general public) to access WiFi. This reduces the barrier to technology. It also allowed for students to access online courses from any location on campus.
Actions:	Purchased Zoom and WebEx licenses across campus.
Outcomes:	This allows for convenient access to services when conversations are confidential in nature (e.g., access through WebEx allows Counsellors to meet with students in a secure and confidential manner).

Actions:	Building the active offer into public communications, including public events and news posts.
Outcomes:	Allows anyone viewing campus communications to be aware of the ability to request an accommodation. The intent is to build the active offer as a requirement for future news and events posts.

Customer Service Initiatives:

Actions:	Service areas remain open during peak times (including lunch hour) on most business days.
Outcomes:	Students and guests can make inquiries during a time that works for them. Staggered lunch breaks allow for access to services during the full business day and provides a better level of overall service.
Actions:	Student account inquiries no longer require individuals be in-person.
Outcomes:	Allows students to conduct their business through email, over the phone or in person. Better access to service. Allows for sensitive financial information to be shared securely without risk of being overheard, as is the case when conducting in-person transactions.
Actions:	Implemented appointment booking process to conform with public health orders as well as maintaining access to resources for learning.
Outcomes:	Allowed access to WiFi, computer labs, study spaces to support online learning at the height of the pandemic within tight public health restrictions, thereby reducing barriers to accessing reliable resources including internet connections.
Actions:	Established a student laptop loan program to support online learning.

Outcomes:	This program no longer requires a condition of financial need in order to access a laptop on loan, thereby reducing any stigma when applying to use a loaner laptop.

Physical Environment Initiatives:

Actions:	Installation of accessible door operators in several buildings.
Outcomes:	Barriers to accessing buildings have been reduced or removed. Access improved for students and general public (McKenzie Building, Harvest Hall – Dining Hall, and George T Richardson Library).
Actions:	Renovation of washrooms to be accessible and gender neutral.
Outcomes:	Inclusivity for all on campus.
Actions:	Improvements to accessibility ramp at one of the student residence buildings.
Outcomes:	Safer access to residence building.
Actions:	Rightsizing space, removing shelving and opening egress paths.
Outcomes:	This reduced and removed barriers to materials and to hallways.

Goals

1. Review the process for return to work planning to potentially include the Emergency Response Plan Worksheet as a requirement. This will support timely disclosure if their limitations will affect their ability to evacuate a building in an emergency.

2. Plan to enable the Applicant Management module in our HRIS system that would allow for better access to vacancy postings and a consistent method for applying for positions and greater access to employment information.

3. Areas on campus continue to have renovations done to modify workspaces, including reception areas or areas where guests with different needs seek help from staff.

4. Expanding use of online platforms such as LibCal, LiveChat, Zoom, WebEx, etc., to help bridge access and offer a variety of ways for individuals to access our services.

5. With the Information and Communication Standard currently underway, the focus will be on the review of existing documents to ensure they meet WCAG compliance. In addition, standardized templates and training for those who post documents to the BU website will ensure they follow the WCAG requirements.

6. Continue to assess campus repairs to determine if additional modifications are required to ensure accessibility (e.g., replacing uneven sidewalks can include assessing if the curbs need to be sloped, etc.).

7. Continue to purchase technology and equipment that supports and facilitates online and hybrid activities and events.

Student Accessibility Services Report

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) continues to offer accessibility and accommodation supports to students with disabilities as indicated in previous reports (2016, 2019). Demographics of students requesting accommodations or having accessibility needs continues to grow, likely due to reduced stigma amongst students and increased awareness of accessibility and accommodation across campus. Students are primarily referred by faculty or other students who have received support from SAS. In March 2020, the emergence of the pandemic resulted in a significant shift in teaching and learning for all students, however, for students with disabilities, there were often additional challenges. Accessibility needs of all students was a significant focus as the university shifted online. Online learning had advantages for some students while for others' it created additional barriers. A focus on accessibility for both faculty and students was a priority.

As a result of the positive outcomes experienced by students and the institution, the Student Accessibility Services Associate position, which was initially a term position, was made a permanent in late 2020. This position focuses on learning and technology supports for students and includes hiring of support staff (i.e. tutors, note takers, academic attendants, and test/exam invigilators) as funding and needs dictate.

Initiatives:

Education & Training	- New employee presentation on Accessible Education - Resident Assistant Training (yearly) - Centre for Teaching, Learning Technology – faculty session - Use of inclusive language
Customer Service	- Read & Write software available for all students (site license) with training - Glean for Education software available for students with training - Training sessions on Service Animal Policy - Accommodation & Accessibility statement on all course outlines - Emergency Plans for students in residence - Communication of accommodation process during COVID-19 pandemic - Updated medical questionnaire for student accommodations - Flexibility in scheduling meetings with students, faculty, and other staff (i.e., Zoom, Teams, in-person, phone) - Clear masks available upon request
Information & Communication	- Updated website, including developing accessible forms - Provided information to faculty on captioning and transcription features of Zoom and Teams - Communication of accessibility features in Microsoft and Chrome with both students and faculty - Many faculty recorded and posted lectures for increased accessibility for all students - Alternate format learning material (textbooks, readings, test/exams) available for students upon request (i.e., PDF)
Physical Spaces	- Removal of carpeting in Student Accessibility office - Purchase of portable sit/stand desks to use in classrooms - Renovations to SAS office and testing space to increase accessibility for students
Other	- Successful nomination of a BU student for Mattison National Award - Bachelor of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition promoting accessibility through the inclusion of braille, audio description, and touch tours - Inclusive Post-Secondary Education re-initiated in partnership with Career Connections

SAS: 3-Year Statistics:

		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Blind/Visual		7	5	8
Deaf/Hard of Hearing		7	6	7
Communication		1	1	1
Cognitive		85	97	135
	ADHD	31	51	87
	Autism Spectrum	20	17	17
	Learning Disability	25	21	22
	Acquired Brain Injury	9	8	8
	ID			1
Mental Health		112	115	144
Physical / Medical	Chronic	33 7	21 6	15 20
Temporary		16	14	17
Other/Unclassified/in process of assessment		20	39	8
Other protected characteristics (e.g. pregnancy)		2	5	5
Total		**290**	**309**	**360**

COVID-Related Requests:

Type of Request	2021-22
Remote learning	11
Vaccine exemption	10
Temporary	3
COVID +	5
Other	1
Inquiry only	6
Total	**36**