

CAMPUS ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2009-2010

YEAR SEVEN

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

**DRAFT
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INTRODUCTION

Accessibility planning at Durham College and UOIT began six years ago with a momentous investigation into the fundamental accessibility needs of the institutions. This exploration resulted in the groundwork goal of creating a collective commitment to building a campus that is free of barriers; a commitment that would not be bound by institutional, departmental, or program divisions. As evidenced in six years of plans replete with stories of accessibility successes, DC and UOIT have created a learning and work environment where accessibility concerns have taken a front seat. As collective awareness has grown so too has individual responsibility for building a barrier-free environment been nurtured within the institutions' management, employees, faculty and students. Clearly, what began in response to a provincial mandate has grown to have life in and of itself at DC and UOIT, fully sustained by all who live, work, learn and play on its shared campuses.

Accessibility objectives of the 2008-2009 planning year sought to expand institutional and individual awareness of the broad spectrum of disabilities beyond the visible and familiar and simultaneously to begin planning for the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, the first standard created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). Projects such as the Campus Mental Health Report of the Campus Health Centre which seeks to define and understand mental health issues on campus, the establishment of the Student Threat Assessment Team (STAT), a centralized body charged with developing safety procedures and protocol related to "at-risk" student behaviour, and the Centre for Students with Disabilities poster campaign which featured the hidden disabilities of members of the DC-UOIT community, highlight the progress made in the past year towards expanding knowledge and understanding of the meaning of the term "disability". Additionally, the Centre for Students with Disabilities secured \$230,722.80 in funding from Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), the largest amount awarded among 19 approved post-secondary projects. The project focus is on researching the elements of success for students with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Regarding the latter objective of the 2008-2009 Plan, once the Ministry of Community and Social Service published the guidelines for the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service last year, the foundation necessary for developing a coordinated response to this legislation was set down. Indeed, the proposed amendment to the Accessibility Policy titled *Accessible Customer Service* that will drive the institutions' planning in this area has been drafted, a subcommittee has been created to review the legal requirements of this new regulation, and a proposal for the customer service training of faculty and staff at the institutions has been developed.

The 2009-2010 year will mark the institutions' return to a focus on the legislated aspect of accessibility planning with an emphasis on understanding and meeting the obligations set out by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Specifically, objectives of the current planning year will centre on the policy, training, feedback and documentation implications of this new standard of the AODA.

The present plan will summarize the progress of the institutions towards meeting the accessibility goals of 2008-2009 as identified above, as well as the achievements made toward goals of years past. Further, this plan will delineate institutional objectives for the current year in regards to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. These objectives will, as always, be created and carried out within the wider context of DC and UOIT's ongoing commitment to building a campus community that is fully accessible to all.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2008-2009

Toward the Goals of the 2008-2009 Planning Year

The primary objectives of the 2008-2009 planning year were first, to broaden understanding of the spectrum of disabilities beyond the visibly familiar and second, to prepare for the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, the first accessibility standard created under the AODA, 2005. The following review of DC and UOIT's accessibility accomplishments in the past year begins by outlining initiatives related to these most recent objectives. Following this, projects and undertakings that continue to advance the framework goals of previous planning years are summarized.

Broadening the Disability Spectrum Achievements

According to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, approximately 14.3 percent of Canadians report having a disability (2009). The Ontario Human Rights Code's definition of disability includes those of differing severity, those that are visible or not, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go. Disabilities related to mental health often go unnoticed despite the Canadian Mental Health Association's report that 1 in 5 Canadians have a mental health disability (2009). These national statistics are likely reflected within the combined student population of approximately 35 000 at DC and UOIT. Understanding this, the institutions took several steps this past year to both raise awareness about the wide range of disabilities, particularly those related to mental health, and to remove associated accessibility barriers.

Campus Health Centre Mental Health Study

In 2007, the Council of Ontario Universities published a paper on mental health issues in universities. This paper addressed the institutional challenges that campuses face in providing support to individuals with mental health disabilities. In response to this paper, the Campus Health Centre (CHC) developed a campus study designed to gain greater understanding of this issue as it presents itself at DC and UOIT. With the help of UOIT students, the project involves gathering the mental health perceptions of faculty and staff, taking stock of the services available and making recommendations for those services still needed on campus. An anticipated second phase of this study will further gather information from the perspective of the student in order to provide an account of mental health issues at DC and UOIT from the student standpoint. Upon completion of this study in September 2009, a clear and comprehensive picture of the state of mental health issues at the institutions will be available and strategic planning for campus health will be likewise informed.

Connections

This seven-page guide designed by CHC to help faculty and staff deal with students who are experiencing personal set backs that might include thoughts of harm to self or others, substance abuse and/or eating disorders, realized it's first year of implementation at the institutions. In this past year, *Connections* was handed out to all new faculty and an overview of the contents and use of the document was included as part of faculty and staff orientation sessions. In addition, CHC counselors used the *Connections* document as a tool to discuss these student issues at faculty and staff meetings at DC and UOIT over the course of the year.

Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) Poster Campaign

In order to promote appreciation for the varied nature of disabilities affecting individuals on campus and to bring to light the remarkable potential of these individuals, CSD developed a two-phase poster campaign; the first of which was implemented this past year. Designed to challenge and defy stereotypical notions of disabilities and the individuals behind them, the posters featured students with less visible disabilities such as spina bifida, visual impairments, learning disorders, depression and anxiety. Each poster displayed an individual student sharing their interests, talents, program affiliation and achievements followed by the question "Would you treat me any differently if you knew I had a disability?" and the tag line "My possibilities are endless." These posters were displayed in faculty offices, on the DC and UOIT websites, at bus stops and in high schools throughout the local community. Phase two of this poster campaign is anticipated to similarly feature faculty and staff at DC and UOIT.

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) Funding

In recognition of their ongoing research towards understanding the keys to success for students with learning disabilities, the Centre for Students with Disabilities received more than \$230 000 from HEQCO; the largest amount awarded among the 19 applicants. This funding will ensure the continued investigation into the types of services students with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) use, the learning strategies they employ, and the potential barriers they face. Findings from this research will serve to enlighten not only students with these particular disabilities but the entire campus community on the critical components of student success at DC and UOIT.

This study puts DC and UOIT at the forefront of research on learning disabilities and ADHD as they impact the student experience. Indeed, this innovative research, the findings of which will be shared with other colleges and universities, makes DC and UOIT leaders in the promotion of knowledge on the broad range of disabilities affecting students and the impact that these disabilities have on student life.

Mental Health First Aid Conference

In December of 2008, four representatives from DC and UOIT attended the Mental Health First Aid Canada Workshop at Ryerson University in Toronto. This workshop involved training in the provision of support to individuals who may be developing mental health problems or are experiencing a mental health crisis. The course empowered delegates to 'take action' when faced with at-risk or questionable behaviour by providing guidelines on response to issues such as depression, psychosis, deliberate self-injury, substance-related abuse and mood, anxiety and psychotic disorders.

Knowledge gained by the DC and UOIT representatives who attended this two-day workshop has been shared with faculty and staff at the institutions. Specifically, the five mental health first aid actions that were gleaned from this conference and applied to operations at DC and UOIT are: assess the risk of suicide and/or harm; listen non-judgmentally; give reassurance and information; encourage the person to get appropriate professional help; and encourage other supports. As conference delegates continue to share knowledge gained from Mental Health First Aid Canada, so does this information begin to take root, grow and inform practice at DC and UOIT.

Student Threat Assessment Team (STAT)

In response to concerns regarding the college's ability to keep abreast of suspicious, problematic or otherwise "at risk" student behaviour and associated matters regarding student privacy, a committee comprised of the Vice President Student Affairs, Director of Campus Safety, Director of Health Services, Manager of Student Rights and Responsibilities and Secretary, UOIT Academic Council was struck this past year to develop a Student Threat Assessment protocol. The purpose of this protocol is to outline the identification and reporting of at-risk conduct, the responsibilities of the Student Threat Assessment Team, the appropriate response to at-risk conduct and the ongoing management of implicated students.

The STAT protocol will clarify issues and procedures related to at-risk student behaviour for faculty and staff and will thereby serve to minimize the risk of harm to students and individuals involved in the campus community. The existence of STAT

on campus broadens awareness of the gamut of disabilities that may lead to inappropriate or troubling student behaviour. The Student Threat Assessment Team further provides a point of contact for individuals who have concerns and are seeking expert direction, advice and/or insight into questionable behavioural matters related either to themselves or others. The creation of this committee reflects the proactive and enlightened culture on campus regarding accessibility, barrier removal and collective commitment to a student experience that is safe and successful.

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Achievements

The AODA was passed in 2005 with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province. The first standard developed under the AODA, the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service was developed in January 2008. This standard states what businesses and other organizations must do to ensure that the goods and services they provide are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities.

While six years of accessibility planning at DC and UOIT has already done much to ensure that all individuals, including those with disabilities, are welcomed, accommodated and respectfully serviced on campus, explicit initial steps have been taken to make certain that the institutions are operating in accordance with these new provincially mandated standards. In this past year, while awaiting the ministry's publication of the *Guide to Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, DC and UOIT have initiated policy, committees and training proposals that puts them well-positioned for full compliance to the standard by the January 2010 deadline.

Accessibility Policy: AODA Standards Amendment

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service lists 14 requirements for all providers that employ 20 or more people (See Appendix A). The first of these requirements states that providers must establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods and services to people with disabilities. Under the governance of the Vice President, Student Affairs, Durham College has developed a draft amendment to its Accessibility Policy entitled *AODA Standards: Accessible Customer Service* that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the college with regards to each of 14 requirements set out in the standard. The amendment further details the implications for non-compliance and states that individual departments will be responsible for ensuring that internal policies and procedures reflect the institution's commitment and obligation to the standard. UOIT is also amending their existing Accessibility Policy to reflect a commitment to new AODA standards. As each of the new 5 regulations is released, they will be incorporated as appendices to DC and UOIT current Accessibility Policies.

Customer Service Standard Sub-Committee

In November 2008, the Accessibility Working Group (AWG) struck a Customer Service Standard Sub-Committee. This committee was created to review the legislation, gain full understanding of the requirements therein and report back to the AWG on the work required and progress to date. This committee consists of the Chair of the AWG, the Vice President Student Affairs and a representative each from the Centre for Students with Disabilities and Human Resources at both DC and UOIT.

Proposal for Customer Service Training

While Colleges Ontario and the Council of Ontario Universities have each developed an online customer service training module which will be made available to all colleges and universities, Human Resources at DC and UOIT have further developed their own proposal for training for the Customer Service Standards which adapts these standard training modules to the DC and UOIT environment. This proposal gives staff the option of attending either a ninety minute workshop or completing an on-line training module. Further, this training will become part of the orientation program for all new staff. In preparation for the delivery of this training in fall 2009, Human Resources have developed a communication plan to raise awareness among all campus employees of the standard and its training requirements.

Tips for Accessible Customer Service

In order to begin the process of education the DC and UOIT campus on the customer service standard, the Centre for Students with Disabilities in conjunction with Human Resources at the institutions prepared three tips for providing accessible customer service for publication in the Daily Report and Weekly Report. These tips served to alert the campus community to the necessity of providing customer service that is mindful of disabilities and offered specific strategies for achieving accessible service delivery.

Toward the Goals of Years Past

Each Accessibility Plan since 2003 has outlined at least one guiding objective for the planning year ahead. Following is a summary of the goals that have been identified in the past and progress that has been made in the 2008-2009 year toward these standing objectives.

Culture of Accessibility Achievements

The inaugural objective of DC and UOIT as they set out on the road to create a fully accessible campus community was to create a culture where concern and regard for accessibility issues was an ingrained part of the collective conscience. Initiatives of the past year have continued to service this critical preliminary goal and to further strengthen institutional commitment and collective responsibility to accessibility.

Abilities Day

Abilities Day, hosted by the Student Association and Students for Equal Access Committee was held in January 2009. This year's keynote speaker was internationally acclaimed author Ryan Knighton, who addressed students, faculty and staff in the Campus Recreation and Wellness Centre gymnasium. Knighton, who was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa - a congenital disease marked by a progressive pathology of night-blindness, tunnel vision and eventually total blindness - on his 18th birthday, shared his perspective on losing his vision and the challenges and triumphs he has faced along the way to becoming a talented writer, speaker and storyteller.

Advocacy Award

As part of their commitment to an educational environment that puts accessibility at the forefront, the Accessibility Working Group celebrates innovation and outstanding work in the field of accessibility through its annual Accessibility Advocate Award. Each year, this award is bestowed upon that individual who exemplifies best practices in accessibility and/or offers services that demonstrate the principle of inclusiveness. The 2008-2009 recipient of this award was Willona Blanche, director of the Centre for Students with Disabilities.

Willona was recognized as a campus leader in forging an accessibility mandate not only at DC and UOIT but in the Durham Region and the province of Ontario. Through her expertise, undying dedication and ongoing advocacy, Willona has challenged the status quo and her efforts have improved access to postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. Highlights of Willona's achievements at DC and UOIT include the development of the Transition program for learning disabled and non learning disabled students as they embark on their post-secondary career, the spearheading of research into success and self-advocacy for students with disabilities, and the creation of a CSD Test Centre and Adaptive Technology training lab. Over the last 4 years, Willona has co-chaired the Accessibility Working Group where her contribution is highly esteemed. Willona received this award not just in deference to these program achievements, but more importantly for her central role in helping to create a culture of accessibility on campus by challenging management,

faculty, staff and students to be more accessibility minded in their day to day work and activities.

Centre for Students with Disabilities Awareness Sessions

Over the course of the past year, CSD delivered a total of 14 accessibility awareness sessions to faculty at DC and UOIT as well as Special Education and Guidance staff at the Durham District School Board. Content of these sessions ranged from requests for information on specific disabilities to information on accommodations for students and the creation of barrier-free classrooms. Faculty were also assisted with making their online lesson resources accessible. All 14 of these sessions were well attended and well received by those present.

Innovation Centre

The Innovation Centre continues to increase awareness of accessibility issues through a variety of means. The newsletter Catalyst, which is printed 4 times annually, publishes tips for creating accessible classrooms and workshops on accessibility issues including Universal Design for Learning which as well as the Accessible Classroom which provides hands-on practice in making documents and web course sites accessible were held throughout the past year. The Innovation Centre has also created a web site for faculty that includes how-to videos, links and other materials on making accessible documents.

Conference Attendance

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) National Conference

In November of 2008, the chair of the Accessibility Working Group attended the NEADS National Conference in Ottawa, the goal of which was to explore key issues of equal access to post-secondary education and employment for students with disabilities. The conference served to highlight the role of students themselves in authoring their own success and this message empowered DC and UOIT's own Students for Equal Access Committee and particularly their role as the yardstick by which accessibility is measured on campus. Information on job searching, opportunities in the field of science and technology, access to library/print materials and accessibility issues from students' perspectives was brought back to the AWG table where it reignited enthusiasm and informed related DC and UOIT initiatives. The conference was also an opportunity to share with partners on the national stage the accessibility

achievements of DC and UOIT and served to confirm the institutions' vanguard position in accessibility planning.

College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) Conference

This year's College Committee on Disability Issues Conference was planned and chaired by the director of DC and UOIT's Centre for Students with Disabilities and attended by most of the CSD staff.

Ontario Library Association (OLA) Conference

In January 2009, the DC/UOIT librarian attended the OLA conference entitled "Teaching Research Skills to Students with Learning Differences". This workshop highlighted several library practices of working with and serving students with disabilities and particularly meeting their research needs.

Partnership Achievements

In an effort to uphold the early commitment to collective responsibility for accessibility, DC and UOIT identified as its primary 2004 objective the development of campus and community alliances for accessibility and as outlined below, the past planning year marked further developments in this area.

Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE)

The Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) program entered its third year in September 2009 again accepting 20 new students to begin their modified college program. The 2 year program for students with intellectual disabilities or other significant learning challenges continues to be oversubscribed and CICE students continue accessing courses and integrating in many program areas throughout the college. The 20 first year and 20 second year students continue to participate in field placements in various departments within the college and with diverse employers throughout the community. A highlight for this program in 2009 was the graduation of the first CICE cohort at the Durham College Convocation.

Additionally, CICE staff have attended a provincial workshop and participated in various professional development opportunities over the past year in an effort to continue to provide quality service to CICE students. CICE is working in cooperation with the Student Association on a new initiative entitled 'Perfect Pals', to provide interested CICE students with volunteer Durham College or UOIT student mentors in the hopes of better engaging CICE students in campus life. This program is further discussed below.

Perfect Pals

The Perfect Pals program is a new program developed and funded by the Student Association this past year that promotes one-on-one friendships between individuals with intellectual disabilities and non-disabled students on campus. The program, governed by the Student Association in collaboration with Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE), gives people with intellectual disabilities the chance to experience the social interactions that all students deserve to enjoy by matching them with volunteers who share similar interests. The “Perfect Pals” will accompany each other to 4 planned events held on campus (Welcome BBQ, Movie Night, Dance and Goodbye BBQ). The friendships that the Perfect Pals program creates helps to ease the isolation that individuals with intellectual disabilities might face and fosters a sense of belonging. The Perfect Pals Committee consists of representatives of the Student Association, one faculty member, CICE program coordinator, 2 buddies and 2 students. The committee oversees the operation of the program which includes interviewing potential “pals” and ensuring the completion of background checks.

Accessibility Research Achievements

In 2005, DC and UOIT targeted accessibility research as their main planning objective in order to be better equipped to examine and quantify accessibility needs on campus, to measure accessibility successes, and to broaden the institutions collective knowledge of accessibility issues.

Centre for Students with Disabilities Research

As mentioned above, the CSD received funding from The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) to conduct research into how post-secondary schools can develop and deliver services and supports to enhance the potential for success in students with learning disabilities (LD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As previously noted, the \$230,722.80 in funding that was awarded was the largest amount awarded among 19 approved post-secondary projects.

The study being conducted by CSD will look at the types of services students do or do not use, how certain services contribute to their success, how they interact with the services, who they go to for assistance, how they engage with professors, and potential barriers to their success.

Presentation at Canadian Association of Colleges and University Student Services (CACUSS)

Durham College and UOIT were represented at the annual CACUSS conference held in June 2009 at Wilfred Laurier University. The theme of the 2009 conference focused on fostering innovation and encouraging integration and intelligence within and across college and university education. Representatives from CSD presented a workshop entitled *Integrating Emotional Intelligence into your Student Practice*. The presentation summarized research connecting emotional intelligence with student retention and student success and provided practical, hands-on activities for participants. This innovative examination into an alternative definition of intelligence and its application in the classroom demonstrates DC and UOIT's commitment to creating a learning environment that accommodates and celebrates individual differences and further that recognizes the various ways that intelligence may be defined.

Self-Determination for Individuals with Disabilities Achievements

In 2006, DC and UOIT turned their planning efforts toward empowering individuals with disabilities to develop their own plans for a successful post secondary experience. Since the inception of this goal, DC and UOIT have been promoting self-determination through a variety of initiatives that were expanded upon in this past planning year.

The Students for Equal Access Committee

Conceived in the fall of 2006, this student group continues to play a pioneering and applied role in examining and improving accessibility at DC and UOIT. This past year, Students for Equal Access initiated an accessibility audit to uncover the current state of affairs regarding barriers that might still remain on campus. This audit that will continue into the current academic year will reveal those accessibility issues that have been resolved since an earlier audit conducted at the inception of accessibility planning and those that remain to be addressed.

The Students for Equal Access are looking forward to providing their input to the planning stages of the new Student Services building which is scheduled to begin construction in the fall of 2009.

Transitions Program and Student Homepage Project

This past year, the CSD continued to run and expand the Transitions Program that was designed in 2005 to orient students with learning disabilities to DC and UOIT and to ease the challenges of moving on to post secondary education. The

associated Student Homepage project which allows students with disabilities to develop a personal website to introduce themselves and their particular learning needs to faculty and staff, also continued successfully in the past year. Powered by WebCT technology, this homepage project was recently expanded to include both college and university students with learning disabilities as well as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Research into these CSD initiatives continues to show that they serve to bridge the student's transition from high school to the post-secondary environment and increase the likelihood of students experiencing success at DC and UOIT.

Accessible Environment for Staff and Community

In the 2007 planning year, DC and UOIT focused on creating a campus environment that is fully accessible to its staff and community partners. Staff-related accessibility achievements in the past year are reflected primarily in the initiatives of the Human Resources department. Projects that have contributed to campus accessibility for the wider community are largely reflected in the goals and achievements of the Facilities department. Details of these diverse and wide-ranging initiatives are outlined in the *Accessibility Working Group Final Progress Report* found in Appendix B.

Identifying and Removing Barriers Within Program Areas

An ongoing goal of each year's plan is to continue identifying and removing barriers to accessibility within program areas. In addition to those already highlighted above, the achievements of each program area are outlined in the *Accessibility Working Group Progress Report 2008-09* found in Appendix B. The report details the many initiatives of the past year that have been developed and implemented both towards the realization of goals established in years past and specifically towards the 2008-09 pertaining to broadening awareness of the disability spectrum and preparing for the customer service standards.

2009/10 ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING OBJECTIVES: Responding to Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

The primary objective for this year's accessibility planning will be to ensure that the institutions have met the requirements for the Customer Service Standards by the January 2010 deadline.

To begin planning for these requirements, it is imperative that DC and UOIT gain an understanding of what these standards mean in the context of their working and learning environment. Toward this end, the Accessibility Working Group and indeed all departments should aim to hold discussions that pose introductory questions such as: What is customer service? What service(s) do the institutions provide? Who are the providers of each of these services? Who are the recipients or customers for each of these services? Thorough contemplation of these questions will help to build the necessary mindset that will provide a backdrop for customer service planning that is meaningful and relevant to the specific work of DC and UOIT. It is this collective understanding of the standards as they apply to DC and UOIT that will help to ensure that accessibility becomes a part of everyday service delivery at the institutions.

The 14 requirements of this standard (found in Appendix A) can be organized under the following four categories: Policy Development, Training, Feedback Processes, and Documentation and Reporting. Accordingly, this year's accessibility planning objectives relate specifically to these four categories of requirements. Following is a discussion of each objective as it relates to the customer service standards.

Objective 1: Policy Development

The Durham College Accessibility policy and the UOIT Accessibility Policy and their accompanying amendments, outline institutional requirements for compliance with the Customer Service Standard. The next step is for each department within the institutions to review its policies and procedures with the aim of either modifying existing policies to ensure that they comply with the broad institutional policy or creating new policies where no relevant policy exists.

According to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, all policies must follow these guiding principles:

- Dignity and Independence
Policies must respect the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities. This principle refers to allowing individuals with disabilities to be free from the control or influence of others; to make their own choices, or to do things their own way.

- Integration
Policies must allow individuals with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.
- Equal opportunity
Policies must allow for persons with disabilities to have equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services offered by the institutions. Individuals with disabilities should not have to make significantly more effort to obtain or access service or they should not be required to access service of lesser quality than other customers.

Guiding Questions for Departmental Policy Development

- *Does our policy reflect the principles of dignity, integration and equal opportunity?*
- *Does our policy address the use of personal assistive devices?*
- *Does our policy address communication needs of individuals with disabilities?*
- *Does our policy address the issue of service animals and support persons?*
- *Does our policy address issues regarding disruption of service?*

Objective 2: Training for Customer Service Standards

The customer service standard requires the institutions to train staff on providing customer service to individuals with disabilities. This training must be provided to all those who deal with the public (whether as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise) and to all those who participate in developing policy, practices and procedures related to the provision of goods or services to the public. While Colleges Ontario and the Council of Universities have prepared preliminary training guidelines, DC and UOIT have begun the process of preparing training procedures specific to their needs.

The standards state that regardless of the format of training (i.e. online, handout, classroom setting etc.) all training must cover the following information:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
3. How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
4. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.

Training must be provided to current employees, volunteers, contractors and others who must receive training by January 1, 2010. From this date forward, training must be

provided as soon as practicable after an individual has been assigned work that includes interaction with the public or development of policies, practices and procedures that relate to customer service. Additionally, the institutions will be required to keep records of training that includes the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Guiding Questions for Training Development and Delivery

- *Who will require training? Who are the individuals or groups who deal with the public? Who are the individuals or groups who develop or influence the development of policy, practices and procedures related to service delivery?*
- *Who will provide training?*
- *What format will training take for which group of individuals?*
- *When will training take place?*
- *Does the training cover the required information (items 1-4 above)?*
- *How will a record of training be implemented and updated?*

Objective 3: Feedback Process

The institutions will be required to establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about how they deliver goods and services to customers with a disability. This process must address the actions to be taken if a complaint is received and information about the feedback process must be available to the public. Feedback processes must enable individuals to provide their comments in person, by telephone, in writing, or by email or other electronic format. The process must further specify the actions that DC and/or UOIT will take if a complaint is received.

Guiding Questions for Feedback Process

- *Who will be responsible for developing a feedback process?*
- *Who will receive feedback?*
- *Is information about the feedback process available to the public?*
- *Does the feedback process allow individuals to provide feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, or electronic text?*
- *Does the feedback process include information on what actions will be taken if a complaint is received?*

Objective 4: Documentation and Reporting

The final objective of DC and UOIT relates to compliance with documentation and reporting guidelines of the customer service standard. Requirements for documentation come from several areas of the standard. Specifically, DC and UOIT will be required to prepare and provide documentation on: general policy governing the deliver of goods and services;

procedures related to service animals and support persons; notice of temporary disruptions to service; procedures related to training; and feedback processes. According to the standards, DC and UOIT are free to prepare one or multiple documents that address the above noted topics and the standards do not dictate the format, length or level of detail required.

Once documentation is prepared, DC and UOIT will be required to notify persons to whom it provides goods or services that documentation is available upon request. Further, documentation must be available to individuals with disabilities in a format that takes into account the person's disability. DC and UOIT must be in compliance with these documentation requirements by January 1, 2012.

Guiding Questions for Documentation and Reporting

- *Is policy, practices and procedures related to delivery of goods and services published and available upon request?*
- *Is policy, practices and procedures with regards to the use of animals and support persons published and available upon request?*
- *Are steps to be taken in connection with temporary disruption of services documented and available upon request?*
- *Is a description of training policy and a summary of training contents and delivery mechanisms documented available upon request?*
- *Has the public been informed of the availability of prepared documents?*
- *Is documentation available in alternative formats upon request?*

Objective 5: Program Area Goals

In order to ensure that program areas continue to make progress in their barrier identification and removal plans, each area has identified accessibility goals for the 2009-2010 year. These goals as they have been set out by individual program areas are captured in the *Accessibility Plan Goals 2009-2010* document found in Appendix C.

COMMUNICATION OF 2009 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

By the time of public posting on September 30, 2009, the draft Accessibility Plan 2009-2010 will have been approved by the membership of the Accessibility Working Group and the Executive Teams of Durham College and UOIT.

The final plan will reside with the Accessibility Working Group.

References

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APPENDIX A

REQUIREMENTS OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD

The following requirements of the customer service standard apply to all providers that are covered by the standard. If you are a provider, you must:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods and use your services and about any other measures your organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access your goods and use your services.
3. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
6. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
7. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.
8. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.
9. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.
10. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about your feedback process readily available to the public.
12. Document in writing all your policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meet other document requirements set out in the standard.
13. Notify customers that documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request.

14. When giving documents required under the customer service standard to a person with a disability, provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2008-2009
YEAR END PROGRESS REPORT
APPENDIX B

AS OF AUG 31/09