



ELAC REPORT

2022-2023

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STUDENT
LIFE

Accessibility
Services

OVERVIEW

In 2020, the Government of Ontario added experiential learning as a performance metric for publicly funded universities. In part, this performance metric was added to ensure that students graduate with the skills and experience to secure employment after graduation. With an increase in experiential learning opportunities such as fieldwork, placements, and labs, the University of Toronto has the shared responsibility of ensuring that students with disabilities have equitable access to all aspects of their education.

Accessibility Services provides academic accommodations and supports for students with disabilities at the University of Toronto. The office mandate covers all curricular activities that are part of a student's academic program. Historically, the accommodations process has been focused on traditional classroom accommodations. Given the University of Toronto's commitment to all students having access to experiential learning

as part of their academics, a role was created to coordinate the accommodations process in experiential learning opportunities at the St. George Campus.

The Experiential Learning Accommodations Coordinator (ELAC) is an interim position created within Accessibility Services to map and support the accommodations process in experiential learning opportunities across the University of Toronto at the St. George campus. This role includes developing best practices and resources that academic divisions and experiential learning offices can access and utilize to support students with disabilities engaging in experiential learning. This report provides an overview of the ELAC's relevant projects, collaborations, relationships, presentations, and training for the 2022-2023 academic year as well as key ongoing and future objectives within the realm of experiential learning.

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KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Institutional

- Created and finalized 14 innovative resources across 3 different professional faculties
- Initiated collaboration on staff-facing resources with 4 additional professional faculties
- Presented *Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access in Experiential Learning* at the Arts & Science Registrarial Professional Development Day, in partnership with the Experiential Learning Education Developer, Office of Experiential Learning and Outreach Support
- Collaborated with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education (OVPIUE) and presented at two Forums on Experiential Learning
- Presented *A Collaborative Approach to Deciding on and Implementing Effective Accommodations in Professional Faculties* with the Accommodations Specialist for Practicums, Placements, and Laboratories at the [Strengthening Accessibility and Inclusion in Professional Faculties Conference](#)
- Co-facilitated programming with Career Exploration and Education including: *Disclosure in the Workplace, Networking, the Ready to Work Series*, and [Disclosure & Accommodation Guide for the Workplace](#)
- Nominated for Excellence Through Innovation Awards for [Disclosure & Accommodation Guide for the Workplace](#) and [Hiring & Retaining Diverse Students: an Employer Toolkit](#)
- Weekly consultations with Accessibility Advisors to streamline and address global and specific work-integrated learning queries across 28 faculties & divisions

Provincial

- Key author on the core project team for [Hiring & Retaining Diverse Students: an Employer Toolkit](#)
- Board member of provincial [Work-Integrated Learning, Accessibility, Accommodation](#) (WiLAA) community of practice
- Inter-University Disability Association (IDIA) representative on [David C. Onley Initiative \(DCOI\) Advisory Council](#) working to improve employment outcomes for students with disabilities
- Consulted and provided direct feedback on [AODA recommendations](#) related to accommodations and experiential learning

National

- Created an internal repository of existing resources from more than 40 institutions, companies, and non-profit organizations on experiential learning and accommodations.
- Member of the national Equity Diversity and Inclusion Council at [Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning](#) (CEWIL) Canada

International

- First author on *A Collaborative Disability Related Accommodations Process in Work Integrated Learning* (publish date Winter 2024), within the [International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning](#) (IJWIL)
- Peer reviewer for the [International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning](#) (IJWIL) Special Issue on Equity, Access, and Inclusion (publish date Winter 2024)

PROJECTS

PROFESSIONAL FACULTIES RESOURCES

Experiential learning accommodations in Professional Faculties are often complex due to the types of environments (i.e., clinical, community, etc.), the essential requirements of the program, and the required collaboration between faculty, supervisors, students, and Accessibility Services. The Experiential Learning Accommodations Coordinator (ELAC) in collaboration with the On-Location Accessibility Advisors and the Accommodations Specialist for Practicums, Placements, and Laboratories, met with various Professional Faculties to document the accommodations process in Experiential Learning opportunities. Through these discussions, a gap was identified between Accessibility Services and Professional Faculties when it came to the general accommodations process as it did not in its current state capture the unique needs and specificities of each individual program.

In order to address this gap, the ELAC collaboratively created resources for Accessibility Advisors as well as department faculty and staff to support the accommodations process. At this time, the following documents have been created and are currently utilized:

Faculty of Social Work

- Accessibility Advisor one-pager for practicums
- Accessibility Advisor one-pager for Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) accommodations
- Department facing document for practicum accommodations
- Department facing document for OSCE accommodations
- Sample letter of accommodation for practicum accommodations
- Sample letter of accommodation for OSCE accommodations

Faculty of Dentistry (awaiting final approval)

- Accessibility Advisor one-pager for clinical placements
- Department facing document for classroom and clinical accommodations
- Sample letter of accommodation for clinical placements

Faculty of Pharmacy (awaiting final approval)

- Accessibility Advisor one-pager for rotations
- Accessibility Advisor one-pager for medication management labs
- Department facing document for rotation accommodations
- Department facing document for medication management labs
- Sample letter of accommodation for rotation accommodations

In addition, the ELAC has engaged in preliminary conversations with the **Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)**, the **Faculty of Information, Emmanuel College**, and **Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE)** to create streamlined processes in experiential learning opportunities. These processes will need to be monitored, reviewed, and updated based on feedback from staff and faculty.

HIRING & RETAINING DIVERSE STUDENTS: EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

This project was funded by [Virtual Learning Strategy eCampus Ontario](#) to support employers working with students in developing equitable and inclusive workplaces. The ELAC was part of the core project team with partners from Career Exploration and Education, University of Toronto Scarborough, and York University. Three modules were created for employers focused on hiring, onboarding, and retaining equity-deserving students. The ELAC worked to ensure that students with disabilities and other intersecting identities were considered and incorporated within these modules. The future objective for these modules includes sharing and communication with internal and external partners (i.e., University of Toronto co-op programs, community partners and employers).

SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ACCEPTANCE

The ELAC collaborated with a Policy Development Officer with the City of Toronto, to write an article focusing on the importance of a collaborative accommodations process in work-integrated learning. The article is intended to highlight and share insights into work the University of Toronto has done specifically within professional faculties and disability-related accommodations. The article details innovative practices within experiential learning at the University of Toronto and includes an extensive background on disability, accommodations, and relevant legislation. The journal article *A Collaborative Disability Related Accommodations Process in Work-Integrated Learning* is set to be published in Winter 2024 in the [International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning](#). Through this submission, the ELAC was also a peer reviewer of an additional article to be published in the upcoming Special Issue on equity, inclusion, and access in work-integrated learning.

RESOURCE CREATION FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PRACTITIONERS

Given the size of the University of Toronto, large efforts were made to reach all offices involved in experiential learning. With support from the Manager, Teaching Initiatives and the Special Projects Officer, Teaching Initiatives in the OVPIUE, [a form was created](#) to gather feedback from various experiential learning practitioners tri-campus. This information gathering effort was presented at the Forum on Experiential Learning and will be used to create feedback driven resources based on categories of experiential learning (i.e., co-op, academic internships, etc.).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS GUIDE

Through work done with various faculties, staff, and departments, questions have arisen about roles and responsibilities in the accommodation process. More specifically, questions regarding responsibilities when working with external partners. The Experiential Learning Accommodations Guide is meant to help clarify roles and responsibilities in disability-related accommodations. The intended audience for this resource is faculty, staff, and community partners working with University of Toronto students. It includes a broad overview of responsibilities in the accommodations process, with particular attention to the specifics of curricular vs. co-curricular learning opportunities. The resource is currently under review by internal partner experiential learning offices. The intended release is Winter 2024.

RESOURCE REPOSITORY

This is an ongoing project that began while doing research for the IJWIL journal article. Resources and scholarly journals related to experiential learning and disability have been compiled and catalogued, focusing on experiential learning across post-secondary institutions in North America. There are separate resources for students, faculty, staff, and employers.

These resources have been instrumental for staff and faculty, to further guide access and problem-solving regarding accommodations in experiential learning settings.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Based on recent [small scale studies](#) and anecdotal reports, it is clear that students with disabilities are participating in experiential learning opportunities at far fewer rates than their peers. Students with disabilities are also refraining from requesting accommodations due to confusion about the process and a reported fear of discrimination. The available literature focuses on co-operative education settings with a small sample size. The Accessibility Services Annual Student Experience Survey has gathered a total of 4,628 responses between 2019-2022. Survey questions were developed that focus on the impact of disability on students during their experiential learning opportunities, whether or not they requested accommodations, and whether or not disability factored into their decision when choosing their experiential learning opportunity. The survey is set to be released in the 2023-2024 academic year.

RELATIONSHIPS & COLLABORATION

INTERNAL TO THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Career Exploration and Education (CxED):

- Co-facilitated programming for students on topics such as networking and disclosure of disability in the workplace with the Career Educator, Accessibility. With other members of CxED, four events in the month of March were hosted as part of the “Ready to Work Series” including a keynote speaker event, employer panel, student panel, and a resume and cover letter workshop. The goal of these workshops and events is to support students with disabilities entering the workplace.
- Supported the creation and launch of the [Disclosure and Accommodation Guide for the Workplace](#), a student-facing resource that provides guidance and supports around who, how, and when to disclose disability in the workplace.
- Reviewed language and added accessibility-related questions to the Work Study questionnaire, within CxED

Professional Experience Year (PEY):

- Worked with multiple staff members on individual consultations to discuss responsibilities and the disability

accommodations process in the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering’s PEY. Future plans include a presentation to all PEY staff on roles and responsibilities within the accommodations process.

Arts & Science Experiential Learning Office:

- Collaborated with an On-Location Accessibility Advisor and an Experiential Learning Officer to address the credit limit for the [Research Excursions Program](#). The credit limit has now broadened, allowing more students to participate, including those with a reduced course load.
- Worked closely with the Experiential Learning Educational Developer, including a co-presentation at the Registrarial Professional Development Day on EDIA concerns in experiential learning and how to refer students to appropriate resources.
- Integrated slides with information about the ELAC role and the experiential learning accommodations process for faculty in the Experiential Learning Faculty Fellows Program.

Arts & Science Internship Program (ASIP):

- Supported the development of the research stream by reviewing language related to accessibility.
- Connected with ASIP Coordinators working with students with disabilities. Through this collaboration, a process for these accommodations that clarifies responsibilities for the student, ASIP, the University, and the Employer is currently being created.

Centre for Community Partnerships (CCP):

- Ongoing discussions with the Coordinator, Staff Networks to review the process and outcomes of students with disabilities receiving appropriate accommodations on-site with community partners. A workshop on accessibility in community-engaged learning based on feedback from community partners is in development.

Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education (OVPIUE):

- Worked closely throughout the year with the Manager, Teaching Initiatives and the Special Projects Officer, Teaching Initiatives at OVPIUE on various projects, including multiple presentations at the Forum on Experiential Learning. The ELAC's collaboration with the OVPIUE has been crucial to ensuring an institutional focus on the work, that deliverables are applicable to all relevant faculties and departments and, when appropriate, tri-campus.

Accessibility Advisors:

- Presented an overview of the ELAC role and has since been meeting individually and in groups with Accessibility Advisors for case consultations. This includes meeting with all On-Location graduate and professional faculty Advisors weekly. New Accessibility Advisors meet with the ELAC as part of the onboarding process to review experiential learning accommodations and how they may differ from classroom accommodations. These consultations and meetings allow a centralized person to track and improve processes across academic departments and ensure consistency across Accessibility Advisors.

UTM/UTSC:

- All resources generated have been shared with relevant contacts at UTM and UTSC. Future work includes streamlined information-sharing and resources available tri-campus.

EXTERNAL TO THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Waterloo:

- Met with the Directors of the Career Centre and Accessibility Services at the University of Waterloo to discuss Co-op accommodations. Current work includes collaborating with Accessibility Services at University of Waterloo to create a sample verification letter for employers that confirms the student is registered with Accessibility Services and lists their accommodations. This letter would address the documentation and administrative efforts students need for employers during their work terms.

Carleton University:

- Met with the Employment Programs Coordinator to learn about the [Accessible Career Transitions \(ACT\) Program](#), a resource to support students with disabilities with the transition from school to work. Discussions regarding possible future collaborations and resource development occurred.

Work-Integrated Learning, Accessibility, Accommodation (WILAA):

- Currently serving as a board member on [WILAA](#), a community of practitioners supporting work-integrated learning. Other board members include staff from York University and George Brown.

Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL):

- Member of [CEWIL Canada](#)'s equity, diversity, and inclusion council to ensure students with disabilities are being considered in policies and procedures. Attended national conference in June 2023 in Halifax, NS, to connect with experiential learning practitioners across the country.

PRESENTATIONS

STRENGTHENING ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION IN PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS CONFERENCE

A session entitled *A Collaborative Approach to Deciding on and Implementing Effective Accommodations in Professional Faculties* was presented with the Accommodations Specialist for Practicums, Placements, and Laboratories. This focused on ways to optimize and clarify the accommodations process through communication and collaboration. The presentation also discussed essential core competencies of professional programs while still individualizing accommodations in clinical and practicum settings.

FORUM ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (FEL)

Over the last academic year, the ELAC presented at two Forums on Experiential Learning. The first presentation provided an overview of the role and accommodations in experiential learning. The second presentation focused on the [Resource Creation for Experiential Learning Practitioners feedback form](#) creation. Through both of the FELs, valuable and crucial connections for ongoing collaboration across the University of Toronto have occurred.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

A training session was delivered with the coordinators for experiential learning opportunities at the Faculty of Information in August 2023. This focused on experiential learning accommodations, responsibilities of faculty and external partners (employers/ key contacts), and relevant legislation. Similar sessions are being planned with Rotman Commerce, Professional Experience Year (PEY) and the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE).

The ELAC presented with On-Location Accessibility Advisors at events for faculty and staff at Emmanuel College, Regis-St. Michael's College, and Trinity College. These presentations included an overview of Accessibility Services and classroom accommodations, with specific focus on experiential learning accommodations relevant to that particular college. Information was well-received, and feedback included follow-up conversations with specific faculty members at these locations.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Priorities for the 2023-2024 academic year include:

- Continuation of work with Professional Faculties, including creation of individualized processes with engaged faculties and updating existing resources based on ongoing case consultations
- Tri-campus implementation of accommodations process in clinical placements for the Faculty of Medicine
- Finalizing Summer Abroad accommodation processes
- Creation of resources specific to the type of Experiential Learning (i.e., co-ops, internships, capstone projects, etc.) with individual faculties
- Development of student-facing resources informed by feedback from Accessibility Services' Annual Student Experience Survey
- Training and education for staff and faculty across the University of Toronto. Sessions are currently being planned with Rotman Commerce, Professional Experience Year (PEY) and the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE)
- Implementation and oversight of [AODA recommendations](#) related to experiential learning (pending government approval)
- Conference proposals based on IJWIL article *A Collaborative Disability Related Accommodations Process in Work-Integrated Learning*, and results from Accessibility Services' Annual Student Experience Survey
- Further collaboration with University of Toronto equity offices and students to gather feedback and insight about processes and experiences related to experiential learning
- Sharing and refining resource repositories to ensure on campus and external partners have access to the most accurate and up to date information
- Continued research of best practices and further collaboration with other post-secondary institutions (i.e., working with University of Waterloo to develop the Verification Letter)

The following critical issues have been identified as priority beyond 2024:

- Work with provincial and national organizations focused on experiential learning (i.e., CEWIL, EWO, etc.) to ensure practices and policies are inclusive and current for students with disabilities
- Continued training and support for incoming staff within Accessibility Services and experiential learning offices across St. George campus
- Collaboration with the Faculty of Occupational Therapy to trial the [Practicum Demands Measure](#) in other professional faculties
- Incorporate research, literature, and best practices into the current Accessibility Services framework
- Serve as a central resource for queries, consultations and questions related to experiential learning accommodations across St. George campus
- Focused data collection and analysis to support research-informed practices within and beyond Accessibility Services
- Expansion of student facing programming such as “Disclosure in the Workplace” and the Ready to Work” series
- Further publications and conference presentations related to the accommodations process for students with disabilities engaged in experiential learning
- Further research into barriers students with disabilities experience accessing experiential learning
- A comprehensive report highlighting students with disabilities in experiential learning settings at the University of Toronto

CONCLUSION

Students with disabilities are participating in experiential learning at rates far lower than their peers. The role of the Experiential Learning Accommodations Coordinator is one of the valuable tools at the University of Toronto that can work to ensure equitable access to experiential learning for students with disabilities. Some institutions in Ontario have created resources, websites, and processes for experiential learning accommodations, through short-term funding. However, a more sustainable and ongoing approach includes the advancements within the role of the Experiential Learning Accommodations Coordinator. Through participation at nation-wide events and conferences over the last year, the University of Toronto received universally positive feedback for the creation of this role and commitment to supporting students with disabilities in all aspects of their education. To our knowledge, there is no continuing role in a Canadian University doing the same work. This role gives the University of Toronto the opportunity to hold and share expertise in the area of accommodations in experiential learning at the international level and continue to uphold the institution's commitment to inclusive excellence.

