# Accessibility Report *A Summary*

## May 2021

## Goals

- Understand accessibility on campus and issues students might face related to accessibility.
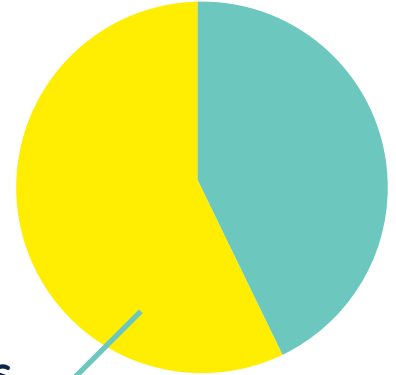
- Determine a way for WUSA to address issues moving forward.

**474** Survey respondents

**13** Interviewees

**58%** Of respondents self-identified as having a disability

## UWaterloo Services

### AccessAbility Services

Provides students with individualized plans which include a variety of academic accommodations.

69% knew how to register.

89% who identify as having a disability were registered.

#### Concerns

- Long wait times*
- Lack of communication
- Interpersonal issues (discrimination, ignorance, dismissal of needs, etc.)

### Health Services

Provides medical support and treatment to students, often needed to support accommodation requests and to register for AccessAbility.

22% of those who encountered issues accessing services experienced this with Health Services.

#### Concerns

- Lack of 2SLGBTQA+ support from doctors*
- Quality of care

### Counselling Services

Main office on campus that provides mental health and wellness care; provides documentation to AccessAbility Services for accommodation registration.

29% of those who encountered issues accessing services experienced this with Counselling Services

#### Concerns

- Lack of long-term care available
- 6 sesssion limit is not enough

\* been/ being addressed by WUSA

WATERLOO UNDERGRADUATE
WUSA
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

# Academic Experiences

**27%** of respondents faced accessibility barriers related to teaching/learning structure.

**21%** of respondents faced barriers relating to stigma against disabilities.

**43%** of respondents felt that their instructors were not understanding and accommodating enough when it concerns disabilities.

## Concerns

- Instructors refuse to provide accommodations due to not believing students' conditions or providing accomodations at all.

- Frustration at the university systems which allow instructors to ignore accommodation requests.

- Students want better communication between AccessAbility and instructors, including better follow-up to ensure accommodations are being provided.

# Online Learning

## Concerns

- Less accommodations through AccessAbility; created new concerns like lack of transcripts of lectures.

- Remote courses may have more assignments than in-person which negatively impacts persons with accessibility issues.

## Benefits

- Asynchronous schedule is helpful to some students as this allows them to work when they feel the best.

# Employment

## Concerns

- Some students might choose to NOT participate in a co-op program because they believe their functional limitations make co-op inaccessible to them.

- Strict co-op interview policies push students to attend interviews even when they do not feel capable of interviewing that day.

- Must communicate better: let students know CEE and AccessAbility can provide accommodations during interviews.

## Built Environment

**35%** of respondents felt that university buildings in general were not accessible to them/ that they were unsure if buildings had been made accessible to them.

## Finances

- High medication and support device costs can be a barrier to students with accessibility needs.

## Concerns

- Older buildings had the highest number of complaints.

- Internal signage, inaccessible entrances and unreliable elevators.

- Improper clearing of snow and ice/winter maintenance is a common accessibility barrier on campus.

- Issues in receiving accommodations for on-campus housing.

## Other Concerns

**52%** of students felt that there is not enough disability awareness on campus.

**64%** of respondents said there is not enough awareness for different types of disabilities on campus

## Recommendations

### Promotion of the Centre for Academic Policy Support (CAPS)

- Student-run resource for people who need to file a petition, grievance, or appeal to address an academic policy with the university (i.e., if accommodations were not provided or an assignment should be weighted differently but the instructor did not agree).

- Many students with accessibility needs indicated they had gone through this process but that help would have been beneficial.

## Continue work on the Student Safety Committee

- Include relevant data and information regarding the built environment collected in this project in the student safety committee portfolio.

- This information will supplement the existing evidence the committee has already and will serve to ensure physical accessibility issues are highlighted in their work.

## Creation of an Accessibility committee under WUSA

- To continue the work of this report and collaborate with the stakeholders mentioned in this report, a committee should be formed. The committee will look into:

  - AccessAbility Services: Registration, communication, advisor training/inclusivity.

  - Health Services: Reporting and Oversight systems, advocacy for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity, expansion of long-term, consistent care.

  - Counselling Services: Clarification of services offered and limits on said service, consistency of care, increased number of sessions available per student.

  - University wide inclusion training: improving existing training, expanding requirements of completion, emphasize the need for and expectation of providing accommodations.