



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

<https://www.uts.utoronto.ca/ability/>  
<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility/>  
[www.accessibility.utoronto.ca](http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca)

# Tips for Accessibility When Moving to Online Course Delivery

While there are many advantages to online course delivery, including potential improvements to accessibility, there are also some notable pieces to keep in mind. Both the institution as a whole and individual instructors are considered “educational service providers” under the Ontario Human Rights Code, and are required to provide equitable access for students with disabilities. The duty to accommodate persists so long as teaching, learning and assessment continues - even in the face of disruptions due to severe weather, outbreaks of communicable illnesses, and labour unrest.

## New Software

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires that web content meet specific standards, which is something the University considers when selecting online tools.

1. Instructors are encouraged to use platforms that are endorsed by the University
2. If you are considering a new Web-based platform or software, ensure it meets the WCAG 2.0 web accessibility standards (Quercus and Blackboard meet these guidelines).

## Videos or Live Streaming

3. If you are posting video content for your class, captioning will be a valuable resource for all students. A transcript of the video or having the recording closed captioned is considered best practice (see “resources” below). For students who have this as an accommodation, Accessibility Services may contact you about having a remote captioner get access to your course material whether it is live-streamed or after it is recorded. See “Resources and Contact Information” below on transcription and captioning.
4. If you are live streaming lectures, continue to have your class at the same time as when it was originally scheduled. Keep in mind that some students are only able to function effectively at certain times of the day, and they have built their schedules around those medical needs.
5. If you have a student who normally uses a Sign Language Interpreter you may receive an email from Accessibility Services about next steps for content that is live streamed or recorded.
6. Volunteer notetakers will be encouraged to continue providing notes for students who use this as an accommodation. This service is intended for students who are participating in class to supplement their learning when they are unable to efficiently take notes for themselves. It is not a suitable replacement for attending class (either in person or online).
7. If your class has a computerized notetaker for a student with more complex notetaking needs, the notetaker will need access to the course platform, if they don’t already have it, in order to be able to watch live streaming or recordings of lectures

8. If you don't already provide copies of slides or notes from your lecture material, this would be valuable for all students to ensure a more accommodating online learning experience. This is especially important for students registered with Accessibility Services and will support a positive transition to the online learning experience.

## Virtual Proctoring

9. Depending on how accommodated tests/exams will be proctored, you may be asked to adjust time limits according to students' accommodations. Accessibility Services and Accommodated Testing Services will work together to communicate updates to Staff and Faculty. Please see the following website for additional information on utilizing accommodation options within Quercus: <https://library.utm.utoronto.ca/faculty/canvas/accommodations-quercus>
10. Be prepared for the possibility that some virtual proctoring software will likely present problems for students who use adaptive software. If a student contacts you to say they cannot access the test or exam because of a software issue (ex. a student requires screen reading software that can't properly read the test due to layout or content), offer a make-up opportunity once there has been time to find an appropriate solution.

## Assigned Readings

11. Some students with disabilities use "alternate format material" in order to access their readings using technology (screen readers for students who have reading disabilities or vision disabilities, text-to-speech for reading disabilities, screen enhancement software for students who have low vision). It will be important to have readings, syllabuses or other course materials converted to an appropriate format (see "Resources and Contact Information" below).
12. If a student (who may or may not be registered with Accessibility Services) approaches you with a reading challenge, please refer them to the Accessibility Services Office.

## Scheduling and Timeliness

13. Provide students with time to adapt when making changes to the delivery of a course. A minimum of 24-hours notice (preferably more) is essential. Keep in mind that students may need to make changes to their living environment in order to participate online (e.g. children who need attention, access to a suitable computer, a quiet place to work, etc.).
14. If there is a disruption that causes the University to close, there will initially be a period of time when many students are in transition as they move home. During this time, they may have limited capacity to participate in online learning.
15. Summarize all of the changes to the delivery of the course in one place. To the extent possible, avoid additional or ongoing changes as this can be very difficult for students with disabilities that affect executive functioning.
16. Consider offering virtual office hours - a time when you will be online (or available by telephone) and available to chat with students in your course(s). If this is not possible, let students know how long it will normally take you to respond to email (e.g. next business day).
17. Develop a plan for how you can be flexible around deadlines. Can you allow for a couple of days buffer in your plans for marking in case some students need some additional time to finish an

assignment? If a student approaches you with reasonable explanation about the need for extra time, can you accept their request in good faith without asking for additional documentation?

## New Requests for Accommodation

18. Many forms of academic accommodation are specific to both the individual's abilities and the requirements of the academic environment. When there are changes in teaching, learning and assessments, inevitably there will be new requests for accommodation. If there are a lot of changes all across the institution in a short period of time, it may take a while to work through the accommodation process. We will work diligently to respond to inquiries and requests as soon as possible

## Integrity of Learning Outcomes

19. Do not waive essential learning outcomes of your course(s). These are the indispensable academic requirements, without which, the very nature of the course would be fundamentally altered. It is better to defer an essential requirement than to waive it all together.

## Consultation about Disability-related Concerns

20. If you have questions about an accommodation that a student has requested, consult with Accessibility Services. You may ask the student for the name of their Accessibility Advisor and contact them. We appreciate your patience as our team works to diligently respond to inquiries and requests.

## Resources & Contact Information

### Guidelines and Teaching Support for Online Education

- Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation - [Checklist for Continuity Planning](#)
- Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation – [Basic Accessibility Design Guidelines](#)
- Council of Ontario Universities' Accessible Campus site - [Using Word documents or PDFs](#)
- AODA Office - [Teaching and Educational Resources](#)
- University of Toronto Libraries – [Request to have materials in library collection converted to alternate format](#)

### St. George Faculty Resources

- University of Toronto Information Commons – [Transcription and Captioning](#)
- [CTSI Education Technology Catalogue](#) of Services
- [University of Toronto Accessibility Library](#)

### UTSC Faculty Resources

- Centre for Teaching and Learning: <https://utsc.utoronto.ca/ctl/welcome-centre-teaching-and-learning>
- Quercus & Ed Tech Assistance: <https://utsc.utoronto.ca/ctl/quercus-ed-tech-assistance>

## **UTM Faculty Resources**

- [Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre: Teaching & Learning Support for Instructors](#)

## **St. George Campus**

### **Accessibility Services**

- Accessibility Services, St. George Campus
  - General Inquiries: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or 416-978-1496
  - Individual Accessibility Advisor contact information:  
<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/accessibility-advisors>

### **University of Toronto Accommodated Testing Services (formerly Test and Exams Services)**

- <https://www.ace.utoronto.ca/ats/>
- 416-946-8584

## **UTSC**

### **AccessAbility Services**

- General Inquiries: [ability@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:ability@utsc.utoronto.ca) or 416-287-7560
- Individual Disability Consultant contact information:  
[https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~ability/contact\\_staff.html](https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~ability/contact_staff.html)
- **Accommodated Tests and Exams** [accesssexams@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:accesssexams@utsc.utoronto.ca) - 416-208-4722

## **UTM**

### **Accessibility Services**

- General Inquiries: [access.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:access.utm@utoronto.ca) or 905-569-4455

## **External Resources**

- Otter (live transcription notetaking) - [Transcribing conversations](#)