



HEQCO Policy 1.7 — Approved December 8, 2021

INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COUNCIL OF ONTARIO — POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“the AODA”) is a provincial act with the purpose of developing, implementing and mandating accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities, with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

HEQCO is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and Ontario’s accessibility laws.

HEQCO is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

HEQCO understands that obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

HEQCO is committed to excellence in serving and providing goods, services or facilities to all customers including people with disabilities. Our accessible customer service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Training

HEQCO is committed and shall provide training on the AODA and accessible customer service standard to employees, volunteers and, in particular, those providing services and who are involved in the development and approval of policies, procedures and practices.



Training of our employees and volunteers on accessibility relates to their specific roles.

Training will include the following:

- The purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards
- How to communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- When applicable, how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- When applicable, how to use the equipment or devices available on site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities
- When applicable, what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our organization's goods, services, or facilities

When applicable, we train staff members as part of their orientation materials and provide refresher training as required to provide updates on any changes to the policies.

We maintain records of the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Assistive Devices / Service Animals / Self-service Kiosks / Support Persons

As a virtual agency, we will ensure that our staff are trained, and accommodations are made to facilitate individuals with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person when HEQCO is hosting a conference or meeting.

When applicable, we will incorporate accessibility features and/or consider accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring customer service equipment such as self-service kiosks.

Communication

We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take their disability into account.

We will work with the person to determine what method of communication works best for them.



Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, HEQCO will notify customers promptly. A clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Notice must be given by posting the information in a prominent place on premises owned or operated by HEQCO (if applicable), and on HEQCO's website or social media. The information may also be included on telephone recordings, or shared by other methods as is reasonable under the circumstances.

Feedback Process

HEQCO welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

All feedback, including complaints, will be collected by phone or in writing (letter or email) and customers can expect a response within five business days.

HEQCO ensures our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

Notice of Availability of Documents

HEQCO will provide documents in an accessible format or with communication support, on request. We will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. We will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and, at no additional cost.

Procurement

When applicable, HEQCO will incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, including self-service kiosks. If it is not possible and practical to do so, we will provide an explanation upon request.

Information and Communications

When asked, we will provide information about HEQCO and our services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports:



- a) In a timely manner, taking into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability; and
- b) At a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

HEQCO consults with the person making the request when determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. If HEQCO determines that information or communications are unconvertible, HEQCO shall provide the requestor with:

- a) An explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and
- b) A summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

HEQCO notifies the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports by including information on our website on how to request information in alternative formats.

We also meet internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

Employment

HEQCO notifies employees, job applicants and the public that accommodations can be made during the recruitment and hiring process. We notify job applicants when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodations are available upon request. We consult with the applicants and provide or arrange for suitable accommodation(s).

We notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities as soon as practicable after they begin their employment. We provide updated information to employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodation that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.

We will establish a return-to-work plan for employees who have been absent from work due to disability or a change in disability resulting from injury or illness.

Our performance management and career development processes take the accessibility needs of all employees into account.



Changes to Existing Policies

Any HEQCO policies that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

This document is publicly available. Accessible formats are available upon request.