

# ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION



## Overview

The following information is designed to help in ensuring that student accessibility needs are being met, and that a safe and helpful learning environment is being cultivated, across all learning methods here at Algoma. Accessible Education is a pedagogical framework that focuses on designing and teaching courses in a way that meets the varied needs of students of all different abilities, backgrounds and learning styles. All student characteristics, from disability, race, class, age, gender, ethnic background and language ability each contribute to the strength and diversity of Algoma University's student body, and should be carefully considered when thinking about how to make your course more accessible.

Accessible education is not at all about making compromises in terms of academic rigour, but rather about making sure an inclusive learning environment is curated from design, to lectures, and assessment. Accessibility, in other words, is not something tacked on to a course afterwards, but instead something that should be foundational consideration from concept to execution. Essential aspects of the course should be clearly communicated, while also maintaining flexibility and understanding about the many different ways students learn and demonstrate their knowledge.

# Accessibility and Course Materials

## AODA

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act



The Integrated Accessibility Standards of the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) require universities to provide accessible materials for students with disabilities upon the student's request. While these materials only need to be provided after a request, it is essential that instructors and course designers work to make sure their materials reach at least a minimum threshold of accessibility from the outset, in order to ensure that students who require such accommodations can receive them in a time frame that is respectful of their time and which guarantees their rights to materials of equivalent quality in a similar timeframe.

## Minimum Accessibility Standards for Courses



- Text and slides should include alt-text for images, make use of high contrast between text and background, and use meaningful hypertext labeling
- When using PDFs, make sure that they are not image-only. These are sometimes referred to as 'flat PDFs', where text cannot be selected for the purposes of services like text-to-speech, and can make it difficult for some students to use.
- Resources taken from textbooks should be accessible or else clearly labeled as supplementary.
- Whenever possible, when using video resources, try to ensure they have transcribed audio, subtitles or captions.
- For all these points, please do not hesitate to consult Accessibility Services or our Graphic Design Specialist here at Algoma University for guidance.