hire**western**u **Ability**

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Western
UNIVERSITY · CANADA

Land Acknowledgement

As part of our strategic plan, Western University is working to improve employment outcomes for students with disabilities. We would like to take a moment to acknowledge that Western currently operates on the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapéewak and Attawandaron (sometimes referred to as Chonnonton or Neutral) Nations. These territories are connected to the McKee (1790), London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

With this, we must honour these Treaties and respect the longstanding relationship that Indigenous Peoples have to this land, as its stewards and original caretakers. We recognize the historic and ongoing injustices that First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada face. In doing so, we accept responsibility as a public institution dedicated towards revealing and correcting miseducation on Indigenous Peoples and history, while renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our inclusive approach to teaching, research and community service.

With this land acknowledgment we also invite readers to consider the ways that Indigenous people are disproportionately affected by unemployment in Canada. In an effort to create space for Indigenous students with disabilities on campus, we strive towards the recognition and strategic support of the many challenges students can face at the intersections of two marginalized identities.

We are committed to strengthening the supports, opportunities and resources we offer to students with disabilities here at Western.

We invite readers to continue these important discussions within their organizations.

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A Message from Dr. John Doerksen

It is our hope that when students leave Western, they feel equipped to create positive change and contribute to a better world – they are the leaders of tomorrow. Our job is to prepare them with the confidence and competencies they need to cultivate a meaningful life and career. It is for this reason that we value so greatly our relationships with employers. Western University is committed to inclusivity and accessible opportunities for all students and strives to foster an environment in which all students feel a sense of belonging. We invite you to learn more about best practices through this booklet and hope you will join us as we work together to nurture extraordinary talent and empower students to reach their full potential.

Dr. John Doerksen

Vice-Provost, Students
Western University

A Message from Dr. Opiyo Oloya

Karibuni is a Kiswahili word that means welcome. As the Associate Vice-President of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, I warmly welcome you and your team through this hirewesternuAbility booklet. Within these pages, discover recommended best practices for accessible recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies.

Our campus is more than a mere collection of individuals; it's a community that embodies inclusion, diversity, and equity. Aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, we strive for accessibility, ensuring everyone feels valued and a strong sense of belonging. Join us in promoting excellence through these shared values and commitments. Karibuni!

Dr. Opiyo Oloya

Associate Vice-President, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
Western University

Content Disclaimer

During the development of this resource, hirewesternuAbility has endeavoured to use inclusive language and concepts where possible. We acknowledge that language used to describe disability can be individual and change with time.

These resources were developed with the intent to respect the dignity and inherent rights of all individuals. We recognize that individuals living with disability have varied history and experiences around employment, disability, and personal preferences around language.

Celebrate **Ability**

In celebrating the diverse abilities of Western students, we move one step closer to a more inclusive workplace and community.

Individuals who are disabled reflect a broad diversity of knowledge, talents, and special skills—which make for significant and valuable contributions to the workplace and beyond!

According to Statistics Canada *(2018)*, approximately 6.2 million Canadians are considered disabled—that is almost 1 in every 5 people. Disabled Canadians of working age (ages 25-64), are much less likely to be employed (59%) compared to those without disabilities (80%).

Disabilities are unique and can range from being: visible or invisible; permanent, temporary or episodic; present at birth, or acquired during one's lifetime.

More familiar categories of disability include: physical, mobility, sensory, intellectual, neurodiversity, mental health, and learning disabilities.

Meet the **Students**

Western students are:

High **Achieving**   Community **Engaged**

Research **Oriented**   **Entrepreneurial**

Global **Ready**   Leaders of **Tomorrow**

They also reflect diverse ability:

- Within Canada, **13%** of individuals aged 15-24 identify as having a disability *(Morris et al, 2018)*.

- Within Western, more than **5,600** students were registered with Accessible Education in 2023.

- The **best indicator** of job success after graduation for youth with a disability is a paid job while in school *(Morris et al, 2018)*.

As part of our continued dedication to equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, Western is committed to increasing work integrated learning and new graduate opportunities for students who identify as having a disability and changing the narrative about disability in the workplace and community.

Workplace **Ability**

Ability is good for business!

Creating a more inclusive workplace not only addresses systemic barriers to EDI, it makes good business sense! There are clear advantages for businesses who hire people with disabilities.

Benefits to Workplace Culture

Diverse teams show increased engagement, productivity, and better business outcomes *(Government of Ontario, 2019)*.

Fostering an inclusive workplace environment increases employee satisfaction rates and leads to a creative, productive, and innovative workplace environment.

Increased Access to a Highly Skilled and Motivated Labour Pool

Hiring people with disabilities provides access to a largely untapped and underappreciated labour pool. People with disabilities have high rates of post-secondary and graduate level education and higher retention rates than non-disabled employees *(Morris et al, 2018)*, making them the ideal fit for many positions.

Increased Profitability

Companies that champion employing people with disabilities have been shown to experience increased profitability and shareholder returns *(Government of Ontario, 2019)*.

People with disabilities hold a shared buying power of over $50 billion in Canada and $1 trillion globally—representing the third-largest market segment in North America *(Government of Ontario, 2019)*.

Companies who openly advocate for and demonstrate pride in employees with disabilities welcome consumers with disabilities (an increasingly growing population), and their personal networks.
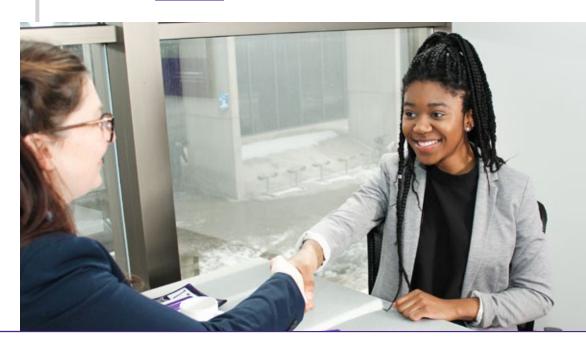
Legal and Ethical **Obligations**

The Accessible Canada Act *(2019)* intends to achieve a barrier-free Canada by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in priority areas including employment.

The adequate accommodation of an employee's disability, regardless of the time of disclosure, is a protected right under provincial and federal law.

Legislation such as the Canadian Human Rights Act, Employment Equity Act, Ontario Human Rights Commission, and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), all outline the need for workplaces to provide a fair, equitable, and accessible chance at success for those with disabilities.

For more information, please visit Accessible Employee Recruitment, Assessment, and Selection Processes on the AODA website at **aoda.ca**.

Recruit **Ability**

Developing a more inclusive onboarding process for all employees prepares new hires for job-readiness and success! Here are some best practices to facilitate the recruitment and onboarding process.

Accessible Job Postings

• Determine and list only the essential qualifications and skills required for success (with concrete examples when possible).

• Use clear, inclusive, and unbiased language.

• Describe your workplace culture, EDI policies and action plan, and resources and environment (physical, virtual, hybrid).

• Identify how the successful candidate will interact with others on the job.

• Use language that focuses on abilities over experience.

• Ensure your posting is accessible whether in print or online.

• Include a clear statement that you will respect and adhere to on interview accommodations.

Interviewing and Applicant Selection

• Centre your hiring process around selecting the best candidate for the job, not the candidate who interviews the best. Accessible interviews allow candidates to demonstrate their strengths and abilities.

• Invite interview accommodation requests. Consider providing the same accommodations to all candidates to avoid unconscious bias.

• Provide information in advance with regard to the length of interview, panel members, and types of questions that will be asked.

• Consider alternative formats for the interview (see next page).

• Utilize a panel to evaluate candidates from a pre-determined rubric.

• Ensure hiring managers have sensitivity and awareness training and understand unconscious bias.

• All documents should have alternative formats available.

Alternatives to the Traditional Interview Format

1. **Meet and Greet**: Less formal than a traditional interview and may take the form of an informal conversation while still evaluating set topics.

2. **Task Replication/Simulation**: Allow candidates to complete an actual task or process they would be required to do on the job (for example, a sample written document).

3. **Networking Event**: Invite potential talent to mingle while hiring managers circulate to interact with applicants.

4. **Evaluations**: May be used to determine if a candidate has entry-level skills.

5. **Questions in Advance**: Providing interview questions in advance allows candidates to best present their skills and ability with reduced anxiety.

Sourcing Talent

• Advertise widely using social media and community resources to reach candidates with disabilities.

• Connect with colleagues, community members, and local employment agencies to promote the position and reach talent through post-secondary institutions like Western.

• Consider conducting a strategic recruitment process that is limited to candidates with disabilities and clearly communicate in the posting that the process is focused as such.

• Keep track of promising students as they progress through their careers.

Looking to make your interview process more accessible?

Contact us for tips and support with job applications, interviews, and recruitment!

Onboard **Ability**

Create onboarding practices that will strengthen job retention and career advancement for all employees, including those with disabilities. Consider the following onboarding timeline to foster an inclusive and barrier-reduced approach.

Prior to arrival

- Ensure onboarding materials are in an accessible format.
- Ensure previously discussed accommodations are in place for their arrival.
- Consider identifying a new employee mentor for any questions.
- Consider repeating your invitation to share accommodation needs and outline the process.
- Develop an emergency safety plan if the new employee identifies a need.

Day One

- Provide an individualized orientation to the job and workplace in a manner that meets employee needs (consider format, timing).
- Orient your new employee to their surroundings. Consider an in-person or virtual tour ahead of time, highlighting accessible parking, washrooms, quiet spaces, etc.
- Ensure facilities meet any accommodation needs.
- Arrange a first day mentor for breaks/lunches if desired.
- Encourage job shadowing those in similar roles or those who employ similar skill sets.

First Month

- Provide all employees with specific expectations and measurement tools (for example: learning outcomes, achievement goals, performance reviews, etc.).
- Provide check-ins and identify any needed supports for success.
- Ensure current accommodations are meeting needs and confirm whether any changes are required.
- Develop evaluation criteria that relate to required job performance measures and account for accommodations.
- Support the new employee's learning and development with input from them and others in related job functions.

Retain **Ability**

Universally, organizations should ask the question: "what do our employees need to succeed?"

Retaining ability is a matter of re-enforcing an inclusive workplace by developing a culture of accessibility while providing consistent supports for all employees.

Accommodations are shifts in attitudes, processes, and the workplace environment that allow an employee to maximize their ability while performing the essential duties of their role.

Upon disclosure of the need for accommodation, the employer and employee have a shared responsibility to facilitate the accommodations process.

Key elements of supporting accommodation include having an implementation plan, confidential communication, and an evaluation. Workplace accommodations should reflect the individuality of the employee.

Individual accommodation plans should be developed collaboratively between the employer and employee, through open dialogue and needs assessment.

Accommodations can be:

- **Physical Accommodations** such as the provision of assistive equipment/ technology, or modification of existing equipment or amenities as needed and without undue hardship.
- **Services and Resources** such as granting personal support workers, therapists, interpreters, or care providers access to the workplace.
- **Adjustments to Existing Processes** such as working collaboratively with an employee to adjust when, where and/or how an essential task is completed.

Visit **hirewesternu.ca/ability** to find more resources on providing workplace accommodations.

MYTH BUSTING FACT

For every dollar invested in accommodations there is a $28.69 return of investment. Most accommodations cost less than $500, with a majority having no cost at all!

AbleTo.ca

Examples of Common Workplace Accommodations

Work Schedules
» Modified/flexible schedule
» Hybrid work models
» Changes to breaks
» Sick leaves

Task Modifications
» Changes to task priorities or routines
» Modifications to training
» Provision of coaching/ mentoring

Modifications to Location
» Changes to the physical workspace or environment
» Provision of special equipment
» Altered sensory environment

Technology
» Use of assistive devices
» May include screen reader, grammar checker, or text to voice software

Communication Process
» Establishing preferred methods of communication
» Increased check ins, if requested
» Provision of notes, if needed

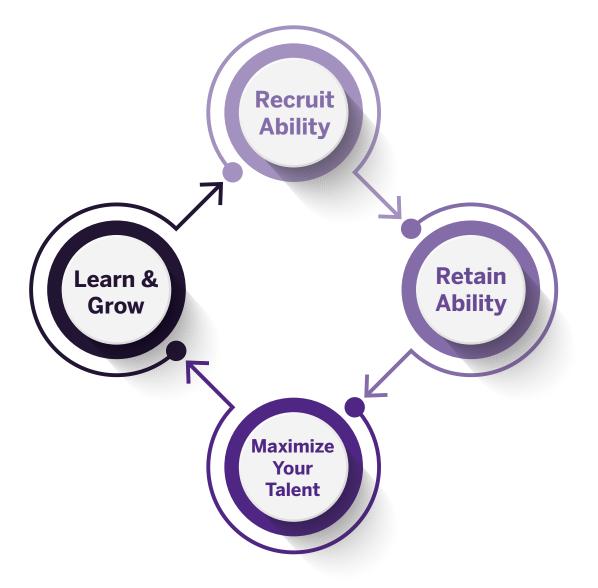**Successful implementation of these recruitment, onboarding and retention best practices allows organizations to maximize their talent, while continuing to sustainably learn and grow.**

Recruit Ability

Retain Ability

Maximize Your Talent

Learn & Grow

Together is **Ability**

By providing work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities, your organization can help students with disabilities increase their transferable skills, form a professional identity, increase confidence in their employability, and build career related skills and professional networks.

WIL formats at Western include internship, co-op, and practicum.

Western's WIL programs are flexible and give you access to talent from across various disciplines. There are more than 45 WIL programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-degree levels.

When you partner with Western, you will find a streamlined recruitment process, full-service supports from program staff, and manageable supervision requirements.

Build Your **Diverse Talent Pool**

Recruit Ability at Western Through Our Services

We ensure all of our events are universally designed and can arrange ASL interpreters, provide accessible rooms, arrange for accessible parking, and support other accommodations. We can also assist you in reaching equity-deserving groups, including students with disabilities.

Information sessions give you the opportunity to connect with students and promote employment opportunities with your organization. We provide you with the space for in-person, virtual, or hybrid information sessions, connect you to catering services, and lead the promotion and delivery of your session.

hirewesternu Career Fairs are large-scale, in-person exhibition-style events that provide a unique opportunity to recruit talent and expand your brand on campus. Employers with a strong approach to accessibility in their workplace are encouraged to opt into the hirewesternuAbility Accessible Employer Champions List, highlighting accessible employers to our students.

Job postings can indicate preferred talent pools such as students with disabilities. Organizations can post opportunities to Western Connect, Western's free self-serve job portal, or contact us for assistance. In your posting, include an invitation for candidates to request accommodations and consider including essential tasks and/or physical and cognitive requirements.

Interview students in a quiet, accessible, centrally located suite on campus. An easy and convenient solution for both recruiters and students. Reach out for assistance with providing accommodations requested by candidates.

If you have an idea for a recruiting event you wish to hold that is not listed above, please let us know. We would love to collaborate!

Contact us at **519-661-3619** or **hirewesternu@uwo.ca**.

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Hire a Western student with **Ability** today.

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