**Terms of Reference – Accessibility Ally Network**

This Terms of Reference is created by the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility.

# **1. Background**

The Accessibility Ally Network (AAN) is part of the Disability Affinity Program, led by the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility, and the Disability Inclusion Coordinator (the Campus Accessibility team) within the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility, herein referred to as AAN leads.

# **2. Purpose**

The goal of the AAN is to support the advancement of accessibility and disability inclusion on campus by building a purposeful space for those with accessibility mandates or ambitions, academic areas of expertise, and/or disability lived experiences to collaborate and exchange knowledge. As a flexible, cross-campus network, the Accessibility Ally Network will focus on knowledge exchange and capacity building through expert presentations, showcases of meaningful work occurring across campus, and member-led discussions. Champions that elect to be part of the network will strive to be informal resources within their unique University teams by bringing back lessons learned.

The AAN will support the University in meeting its legislative requirements by increasing focus on the mandates of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11) (AODA, 2005) and the [AODA Postsecondary Education Standards recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/page/development-proposed-postsecondary-education-standards-final-recommendations-report-2022) (AODA PSES, 2022), facilitating cross-campus collaboration that amplifies and strengthens individual units’ efforts to meet these mandates and values, and creating opportunities for consultation with employees doing accessibility work.

The primary goal of the AAN is to provide continuous education, training, and collaboration opportunities. Participation in the AAN does not replace the requirement for each employee to complete mandatory Accessibility Training under the AODA. The AAN does not participate in advocacy. Should AAN members reach consensus for a desire to conduct these activities, the AAN leads will determine which existing institutional pathways are most relevant and how these can be accessed.

# **3. Objectives**

* Create opportunities for networking and collaboration between campus members with similar accessibility mandates, projects, or goals
* Raise awareness to campus members of relevant projects related to accessibility and disability inclusion
* Offer continuing education opportunities related to accessibility and disability inclusion for campus members

# **4. Membership**

Membership is open to all members of the University community, inclusive of staff, students, and faculty that have access to our Microsoft Teams system.

Participation is voluntary, and members may join or leave the Microsoft Teams channel or attend AAN meetings at their discretion.

# **5. Structure and Governance**

The Executive Sponsor for the AAN is the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility. The Program Manager is the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility. The AAN leads are the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility and the Disability Inclusion Coordinator.

The AAN leads are responsible for setting and upholding the mandate/scope of the network, coordinating meetings, recruiting presenters, and facilitating discussion.

Ideas on meeting activities and discussion topics will be generated via discussions at meetings, facilitated by the AAN leads.

Feedback on meeting activities, discussion topics, and settings (e.g. in-person or virtual) will be collected during AAN meetings by the AAN leads. Members are encouraged to provide input through the regularly scheduled meetings.

# **6. Meetings and Communication**

AAN meetings will be held virtually no more than monthly. Meetings will consist of a combination of formal presentation, question and answer period, and guided group discussion. Presentations will be recorded upon consent of the presenter and will be shared via the Microsoft Teams Channel along with notes from the discussion. Presenters do not need to be members of the AAN to present at a meeting.

Communication will occur only through the Microsoft Teams Channel that members can elect to join or leave. AAN members are encouraged to share topics and events related to accessibility and the University of Waterloo community in the Microsoft Teams Channel.

Upon request of one of the Networks, the Campus Accessibility Team may facilitate anonymized communication between the AAN and the Employee or Students Disability Community Network (EDCN or SDCN). This communication may include promotion of AAN member projects to the EDCN and SDCN, or sharing of ideas from the EDCN and SDCN to the AAN.

# **7. Engagement Guidelines**

***Meeting Coordination***

The AAN leads will manage all administrative activities, including booking virtual meetings, recruiting presenters, and resource requests.

***Meeting Facilitation***

The Disability Inclusion Coordinator will be the primary facilitator of all AAN meetings. Should the Disability Inclusion Coordinator be unable to facilitate a scheduled meeting, other members from the Office of the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility may support facilitation. All facilitators will have knowledge and understanding of the AAN Terms of Reference and uphold these principles as part of their employment with the University.

As a representative of the University and AAN lead, the AAN facilitator is responsible for ensuring all meeting discussions are in alignment with the AAN purpose and institutional values, policies, and procedures. As such, the AAN facilitator will end or redirect discussions that are harmful, breaches confidentiality, is inappropriate for the AAN, or is best held in other institutional spaces. To uphold this responsibility, the AAN facilitator may need to remove an individual from the network if these aspects are compromised.

***Feedback Pathways***

The AAN does not have a mandate to oversee or direct response to formal institutional feedback or incidents of ableism or other forms of identity-based harms. To ensure that AAN activities align with organizational policies and to protect the anonymity of members, all feedback, recommendations, or concerns raised by AAN members will be considered by the AAN leads and directed through established channels as appropriate and necessary. AAN leads may facilitate appropriate feedback pathways/mechanisms with individual members on their specific, individual concerns.

***Scope of Engagement***

The AAN does not function as a decision-making or advocacy body, but instead as a supportive community workplace resource group.

AAN activities must align with organizational values and policies and the stated scope of the network.

The AAN values confidentiality, respect, and inclusivity in all engagements. Members should avoid discussing confidential organizational matters outside of meetings, such as specific interactions with colleagues, managers, students, or others. Confidentiality may not be guaranteed should a member disclose harm to self, others, or members of the AAN. The University has a responsibility to uphold its statutory obligations, such as the Ontario Human Rights Code, AODA, and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

As a University of Waterloo space, all members of the AAN are bound by applicable University policies and processes. Violations, concerns, and dispute resolutions will follow applicable standard University processes.

# **8. Evaluation and Sustainability**

The AAN was developed under advisement of community engagement to ensure community wants and needs were reflected in the Network. Staff, students, and faculty continue to be integral partners in the AAN. Feedback will be collected and evaluated via what is noted below, with room to add and adapt responsively:

* Annual member surveys and organizational feedback
* Members are encouraged to email aoda@uwaterloo.ca with any feedback.

The Disability Inclusion Coordinator will document meeting attendance numbers, key accomplishments, and challenges to inform future initiatives.

# **9. Amendments**

This Terms of Reference document will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Any proposed amendments must be approved by the Associate Director, Campus Accessibility and submitted to the Associate Provost, Campus Support and Accessibility for final review.

# **10. Acknowledgment**

By participating in the AAN, members agree to uphold the principles outlined in this Terms of Reference and contribute to a respectful, inclusive, and constructive environment.

# **Revision History**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Change Made By | Date Change Made | Details of Change | Change Reviewed/ Approved by | Date change reviewed/ approved |
| Samantha Fowler | April 4, 2025 | Initial Draft |  |  |
| Joyce Barlow | April 11, 2025 | Editorial changes |  |  |
| Joyce Barlow | May 16, 2025 | Comments/editorial changes |  |  |
| Samantha Fowler | May 29, 2025 | Resolved edits and comments |  |  |
| Samantha Fowler | June 26, 2025 | Posted to Campus Accessibility website |  |  |