



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AT SCARBOROUGH

ACCESSABILITY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2004-2005

Prepared for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Universities Branch
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is an international human right essential to the life of an individual and to a community as a whole...

In Canada, education is recognized and legislated as a fundamental social good. A publicly funded education system, accessible to all, is recognized as a core responsibility of government.

Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003

The University of Toronto has a long-standing commitment to leadership as one of the world's best teaching and research universities. In keeping with this commitment, AccessAbility Services at the University of Toronto at Scarborough (UTSC) upholds the U of T vision through the implementation of a best-practices model of service delivery. In the University of Toronto's academic plan, *Stepping UP* (2004), there is a commitment to excellence and equity and a clear objective to enhance the student experience. With this in mind, the aim of AccessAbility Services is to ensure that students with disabilities at UTSC are provided with a rich student experience through the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to curricular and co-curricular activities.

The number of students with disabilities participating in post-secondary education in Ontario has risen significantly over the past ten years. This growth is reflected at UTSC when we consider 75 students with disabilities utilized the service in 1996-97 compared to 239 during the 2004-05 year. Consequently, AccessAbility Services has undergone significant changes over the past year in personnel, an expansion of the administrative offices, an increased service demand and an increase in operating costs.

In 2004-05, the office continued to provide a range of services to assist students in developing the skills and knowledge necessary for managing their disability in the university environment. Direct service delivery included, but was not limited to:

- Accommodations for 1235 exams
- Note taking services provided by 247 volunteers in 586 courses
- Computerized note taking services
- Assistive technology training and support
- Screening and diagnostic activities (provision of psycho-educational assessments)

- Provision of resources for skills development through one-to-one support and transition programming for students with learning disabilities (i.e., application of strategies for memory retention and retrieval, effective reading, time management, note taking, exam preparation and writing, etc.)
- Provision of multiple format materials (i.e., electronic readings)
- Facilitating tutoring services
- Non-therapeutic counselling (i.e., setting realistic academic goals given the students' disability related needs, balancing personal life [family, children] and academic life, setting realistic course loads, acceptance and understanding of one's disability, coping skills)
- Support for effective self advocacy skills
- Funding and financial aid supports
- Addressing accessibility on campus
- Assistance with mobility on campus through the provision of student assistants

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (1999) has identified that the inclusion of students with disabilities in student life plays a large role in the student experience. In addition to direct service delivery, the unit was active in student related initiatives to increase awareness regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into activities such as orientation and residence life.

AccessAbility Services also completed a major project with Teaching and Learning Services at UTSC to increase awareness practices that make learning more accessible to students. A Universal Instructional Design handbook was developed to introduce faculty and teaching assistants (TAs), in a practical sense, to the concept of Universal Instructional Design (UID) and demonstrate the relative simplicity with which inclusive teaching practices can be used. This resource was distributed across UTSC and will be distributed to Principals, Deans, Academic Advisors and Chairs (PDAD&C) in the fall of 2005. The next step for 2005-06 is to explore the expansion of the handbook to include case studies of faculty and TA's who are implementing the principles of UID.

While the service continued to meet the needs of students, it was not without challenges. The key challenges the service encountered were adequate space for test/exam accommodations, the provision of assistive technology, and funding. The space and technology challenges will be addressed during this upcoming year with a planned new test centre, which will increase students' access to technology. Computing and Networking Services at UTSC will also conclude an expansion in the fall of 2005. This expansion includes an increase in accessible workstations and assistive technology within the CNS centre and across UTSC.

The service expects to face further challenges this coming year, especially in regard to funding and personnel. The Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist (LS/AT) position, which was funded through a two-year pilot Enhanced Services Fund (ESF) project, concluded April 2005. The project was under the leadership of the Learning Opportunities Task Force (2004). With the completion of the project the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) assumed full responsibility. *AccessAbility* Services is awaiting confirmation from the MTCU regarding a permanent funding allocation for the LS/AT position. In addition to the uncertain funding, our LS/AT resigned in May 2005. The service must now address the difficult challenge of losing a full-time staff member while

maintaining a high level of specialized service provision to students with learning disabilities during a period of enrollment growth.

Despite all the challenges, students with disabilities at UTSC continue to report a high level of satisfaction with *AccessAbility Services*. However, with the increase in enrollment at UTSC and the continued increase of students with disabilities attending post-secondary institutions, the service must be mindful of the impact that this increase may have on service delivery. We will continue to review successful and unsuccessful practices to determine which of these must be improved and/or modified. The measure of student satisfaction is an ongoing process designed to ensure we are implementing best practices and supporting the *Stepping UP Plan* (2004), that “every student will have the opportunity for an outstanding and unique experience” at the University of Toronto.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

POLICY

- Successfully sought, identified and removed systemic barriers which included physical, environmental, attitudinal, and communication barriers at UTSC.
- Continuously reviewed and revised *AccessAbility Services* policy and procedures to ensure students are accommodated as per the Ontario Human Rights Code and provincial legislation.
- Service staff members actively participated as members of the University of Toronto Ontarians with Disability Act Committee.

STAFFING

The University of Toronto's Stepping *UP* academic plan (2004) noted, "staff are the first point of contact and are essential to ensuring the quality of the student experience." With this in mind, the service:

- Hired one full-time staff member and now shares a Budget Officer with another department. The new *AccessAbility* Services Assistant position, funded by UTSC, provided a new reception service and coordinated the note taking program.
- Further enhanced case management through an internal service delivery review.
- Hired one casual student staff member, funded by the *AccessAbility* Enhancement Fund (UTSC Council on Student Services funding), whose focus was to enhance outreach and education initiatives.

Refer to Appendix A: Organizational [Chart](#)

The staff is encouraged to participate in ongoing professional development activities throughout the year. These included:

- Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) Conference
- Inter-University Disabilities Issues Association (IDIA) Activities
- Standard First Aid and CPR Training offered through Human Resources Services.
- Disability, Ability, Ableism 1-day workshop – Faculty of Social Work
- Universal Instructional Design Regional Provincial Meeting
- Community Information Forum: Advancements in Bipolar Disorder offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist Courses
- Rehabilitation Certificate Courses: Interviewing and Counselling; Rehabilitation Practices
- Accessibility Workshop: Auditing Students Residences
- CUPE 3902 – Supervising Teaching Assistant's
- Dealing with Difficult Behaviour - Staff Development Conflict Resolution Program

Professional Memberships

- Inter-University Disabilities Issues Association (IDIA)
- Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS); Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education [Division of CACUSS)
- Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
- NACADA – National Academic Advising Association
- Ontario Learning Disability Association

SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

TRANSITION

The National Educational Association for Disabled Students (NEADS) and the Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF) has identified transition as critical to student success.

AccessAbility Services strives to ensure, that students with disabilities know there are services and supports available from their first year at university through to graduation.

- The service focused on transition issues for three target groups:

First year students

- Individual Transition Meetings were conducted for incoming students. Community Health Care professionals and/or itinerant teachers often accompanied the students to these meetings in order to facilitate a smooth transition to the university environment. Where appropriate, follow up included the provision of formal Transition Reports which clearly outlined meeting minutes and provided the student with an individualized action plan.

Students with learning disabilities

- An LD Transition day was conducted for students with Learning Disabilities coming from high school to UTSC.

Senior Year Transition Program

- Delivered Senior Year Transition Pilot Program in partnership with Financial Aid, Health and Wellness Centre, and the Career Centre. The program involved students who were in their senior year, and were accessing multiple services. The objective of the program was to work with the student in developing a plan for post-graduation.

EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS

- Accommodated 1235 exams. Exam supports included extra time, assistive technology, and ergonomic furniture (see Table I).
- Implemented a system designed to increase the students' ability to access and review their individual final exam schedules.

NOTE TAKING PROGRAM

Peer Note Takers

- Continued to meet 100% of requests for note taking accommodations through the peer volunteer note taking program. The service implemented a pilot program of recruiting volunteer Note takers via the UTSC Intranet, an internal communication system.

Computerized Note taking

- The service was presented with an unanticipated increase in students requiring computerized note taking accommodations. This increase resulted in the

development of formal hiring practices (i.e., review of required and preferred skills), which improved upon the existing Computerized Note taking process.

EQUIPMENT ACQUISITION/TECHNOLOGY

- The Service provided assistive technology support to students with disabilities through demonstration, training and individual coaching.

MULTIPLE FORMAT MATERIALS

- Facilitated the production of multiple format materials (i.e., readings, syllabi, texts).
 - Offered services to supplement the existing provincial agency supports which often have long wait times. Utilizing the *AccessAbility* Enhancement Fund, the service purchased a high speed scanner and designated the Work Study Participation Assistants to produce the materials (i.e., enlarged material and e-text).

SUPPORT PROGRAMMING

- Facilitated diagnostic testing for students with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Facilitated tutoring services for students with Learning Disabilities.
- Arranged for the Financial Aid Office to offer a seminar to discuss OSAP, bursary programs available to students with disabilities, budgeting and money management strategies.
- Utilizing the *AccessAbility* Enhancement Fund, the service:
 - Delivered an eleven week Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Support Group lead by a trained ADHD Coach. The service received excellent feedback from the participants.
 - Hosted a social for students registered with the service.

Feedback through an annual survey measures the levels of student satisfaction with the service. The surveys are distributed electronically and in hard copy to all students registered with the service and solicit feedback on a variety of topics including responsiveness of staff, accommodations, and access to technology. Feedback from students was extremely positive.

ACCESSIBILITY

PERSONAL AID

- Continued to hire and train Participation Assistants through the Work Study Program for students who required assistance with mobility on campus.

UTSC ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

- Played an active role on the UTSC Accessibility Committee. The Committee's primary goal is to identify, prevent and remove physical barriers at UTSC. The committee is funded through the UTSC operating budget and a Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU) levy.

U OF T ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

- Participated in the University's Ontarians with Disabilities Act Planning Committee.

MARKETING/OUTREACH TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNITY

- Conducted presentations and/or arranged displays for the following:
 - Orientation Leader Training; Residence Advisor Training; UTSC Recruitment Events; Co-hosted the Wellness Fair; Volunteer and Internship Fair; Wellness Wednesdays Launch through Student Housing and Residence Life.

PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS/LINKAGES

It is well known that advancing disability issues and supports cannot be done in isolation. UTSC has long demonstrated a desire to move forward in partnership to ensure students with disabilities are supported. The service fosters collaborative efforts wherever and whenever possible.

- Partnerships were further developed with Student Housing and Residence life, Academic Advising and Career Centre, Financial Aid, Health and Wellness Centre, and Teaching and Learning Services.
 - Completed a major project with Teaching and Learning Services at UTSC to increase awareness practices that make learning more accessible to students. A Universal Instructional Design handbook was developed to introduce faculty and teaching assistants (TAs), in a practical sense, to the concept of Universal Instructional Design (UID) and demonstrate the relative simplicity with which inclusive teaching practices can be used. This resource was distributed across UTSC.
 - Presented a workshop for the Office of Teaching Advancement, St. George on Designing an Inclusive Curriculum, informing the participants on the principles of Universal Instructional Design (UID) through a partnership with Teaching and Learning Services UTSC and Academic Resource Centre, UTM.
 - Presented at the UTSC TA Conference on UID.

An important linkage to the UTSC community is through the representation of disability issues on relevant committees. The service was represented on:

- The Student Affairs Advisory Group in order to promote a developmentally supportive and inclusive student life on campus.
- The University of Toronto Equity Issues Advisory Group. The group continued to address how the university can best realize its commitment to human rights and provided guidance on specific equity issues as they arose.
- University of Toronto's Advisory Group for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- UTSC Advisory Committee on Accessibility to Persons with a Disability
- Fire Safety Steering Committee
- Safety and Security
- Joint Health and Safety
- UTSC Wellness Fair Committee

- UTSC Health and Wellness Advisory Group
- Prudential Awards Committee
- Branko Vojnovic *AccessAbility* Award Selection Committee
- Athletics Advisory Committee
- Academic Committee

CHALLENGES

While the service continued to meet the needs of students, it was not without challenges. The key challenges the service encountered were funding, finding adequate space for test/exam accommodations, and the provision of assistive technology. Another challenging area was delivery of the note taking program.

FUNDING

- The Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist (LS/AT) position, which was funded through a two-year pilot Enhanced Services Fund (ESF) project, concluded April 2005. The project was under the leadership of the Learning Opportunities Task Force (2004). With the completion of the project the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) assumed full responsibility. *AccessAbility* Services is awaiting confirmation from the MTCU regarding a permanent funding allocation for the LS/AT position. In addition to the uncertain funding, our LS/AT resigned in May 2005. The service must now address the difficult challenge of losing a full-time staff member while maintaining a high level of specialized service provision to students with learning disabilities during a period of enrollment growth.
- Provision of assistive technology (AT) plays a key role in accommodation. With assistive technology constantly changing, keeping the AT (hardware and software) current is challenging, but important, as students receive funding for the latest version of software and newest advances in hardware.

SPACE

- Lack of space in our current test site has made it difficult to accommodate students writing tests/exams especially if students require a private room, assistive technology or specialized software.

NOTE TAKING PROGRAM

- Tri-mestering at UTSC has significantly impacted the note taking program. The service received 586 requests in 2004-05 compared to 265 in 2002-03. Tri-mestering has directly impacted workload and resources, as setting up and monitoring the service was required for more than double the number of courses (i.e., Arrangements required for two half-credit courses vs. for one full-credit course).
- Recruitment of Computerized Note takers can be difficult when a shift is one hour in length.

PROPOSED INITIATIVES

With the increase in enrollment at UTSC, and the continued rise in students with disabilities attending post-secondary institutions, the service must be mindful of the impact this growth will have on service delivery. We will continue to review successful and unsuccessful practices to determine which of these must be improved and/or modified. The measure of student satisfaction is an ongoing process to ensure that we are implementing best practices. The challenges that impacted service delivery in 2004-2005 will be addressed this upcoming year:

FUNDING

- Promote the need for continued funding of the LS/AT position.

SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY

- Develop a design of the new test site, in consultation with Facilities Management and Computing and Networking Services. This expansion will increase students' access to technology.
- Continue collaboration with Computing and Networking Services (CNS) at UTSC to increase access to assistive technology at UTSC. The expansion of CNS will be complete in the fall of 2005, which includes an increase in accessible workstations and access to assistive technology.

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Develop strategies to ensure that policies, practices and staffing keep pace with demand on the service.
- Further explore the recruitment process to improve first year transition supports.
- Review and expand strategies to reach students in their senior year.
- Continue to offer specialized programming for students with learning disabilities.
- Continue to explore the possibility of using the UTSC Intranet to facilitate an online test/exam accommodation request process. This process may include posting the exam schedule through the Intranet to allow students the flexibility to confirm their exam accommodations at their convenience.
- Review the efficiency of the current note taking service process. Due to the success of the Intranet pilot project, the service will implement recruitment via the Intranet on a permanent basis.
- Continue to develop and evaluate contractual agreements with professional support services (i.e., Computerized Note takers).
- Review and develop the formal in-service multiple format materials process.
- Continue to offer the ADHD Support Group.

MARKETING/OUTREACH TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNITY

- Continue to target students, staff, faculty and the external community. Through these initiatives we seek to increase awareness of our service among the student population. This in turn will make it more likely that students will seek services, or be referred to the service, early in their academic career.

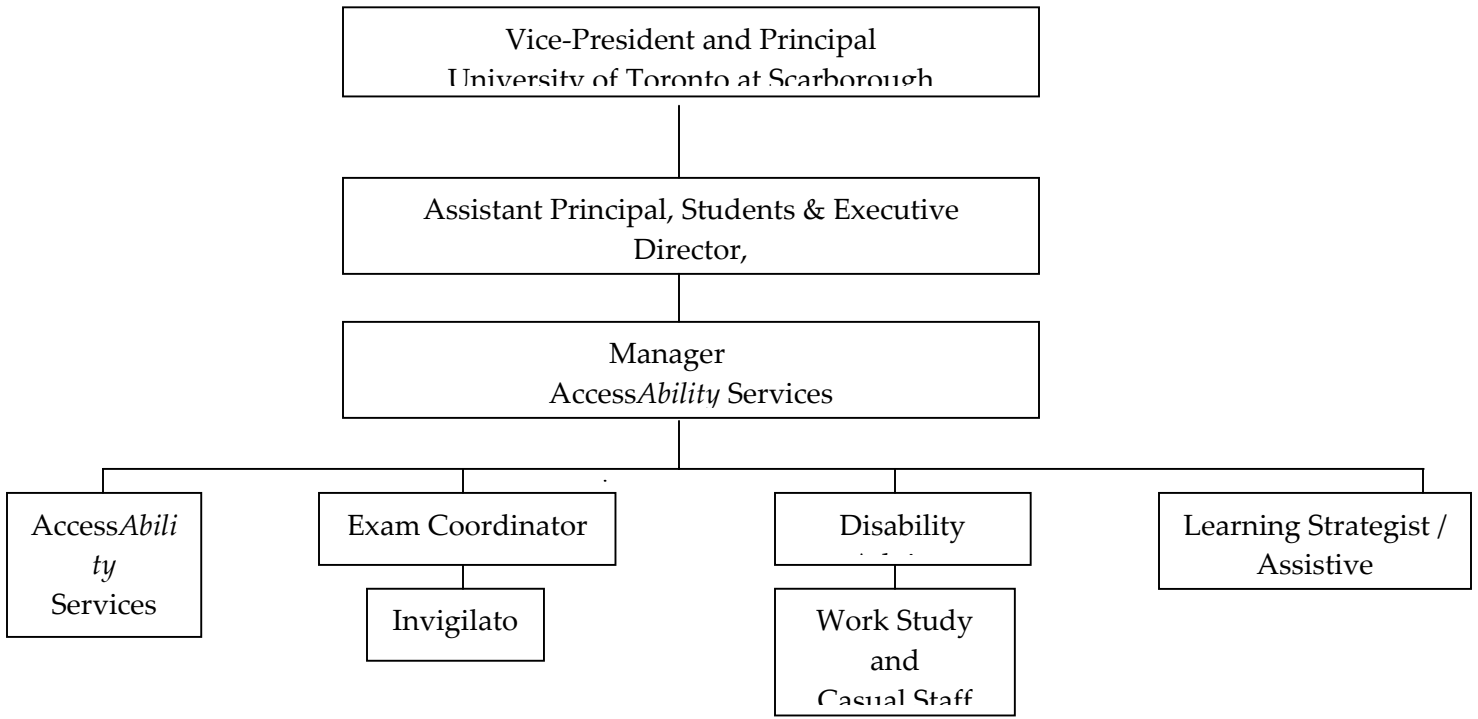
PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS/LINKAGES

- Explore the expansion of the UID handbook to include case studies of faculty and TA's who are implementing the principles of UID, in partnership with Teaching and Learning Services.
- Continue to participate in existing committee and professional memberships.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Continue to participate in the review of the University design standards for inclusion with the Managers at U of T offices for students with disabilities and the Assistant Vice-President, Space and Facilities Planning.

APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Services Contracted:

Registered Psychologist (Diagnostic Testing)

Clinical Specialist (Assistive Technology/OT)

Computerized Note takers

APPENDIX B: SERVICE STATISTICS

I. Demographics for 2004-05

Table I: TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY REPORTED ACCORDING TO PRINCIPAL DISABILITY	
01 - Acquired Brain Injury	5
02 - Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder	21
03 - Chronic Illness/ Systemic/Medical	20
04 - Deaf, deaf, Deafened, Hard-of-Hearing	10
05 - Learning Disability	81
06 - Low Vision, Blind	10
07 - Mobility/Functional	48
08 - Psychiatric	44
09 - Other	0
TOTAL	239

<p>Table II: Total # of Students in Table I who received services and supports for multiple disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student requires services and supports for more than one diagnosed disability, or; • The impact of the disability spans more than one category and the student received services and supports for more than one impact. 	69
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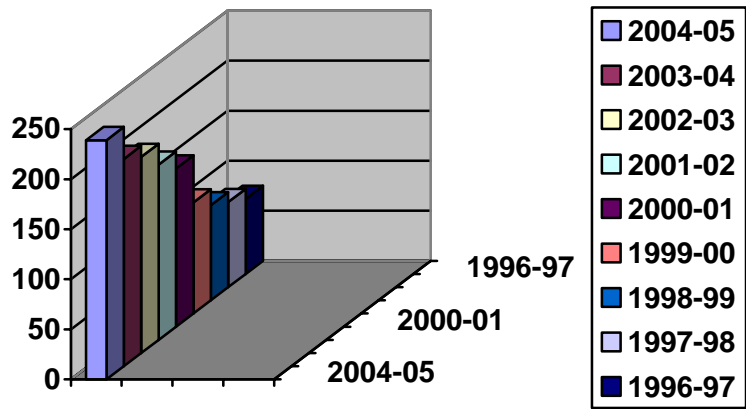
Table III: DATA COLLECTION ACCORDING TO ACCOMMODATED DISABILITIES (I.E. TO CAPTURE STUDENTS WITH MORE THAN ONE DISABILITY)	
Students may be reported more than once in Table III if they are supported for more than one disability	
01 - Acquired Brain Injury	05
02 - Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder	43
03 - Chronic Illness/ Systemic/Medical	28
04 - Deaf, deaf, Deafened, Hard-of-Hearing	13
05 - Learning Disability	87
06 - Low Vision, Blind	13
07 - Mobility/Functional	57
08 - Psychiatric	75

09 - Other	0
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TOTAL	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999	1997-1998	1996-1997
	239	207	196	175	158	111	95	85	75

TOTAL # of disability types accommodated (vs. number of students in Table I)	321
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Table IV: Comparison- The total number of students registered with the service over a nine-year period



APPENDIX C: SERVICE DELIVERY STATISTICS

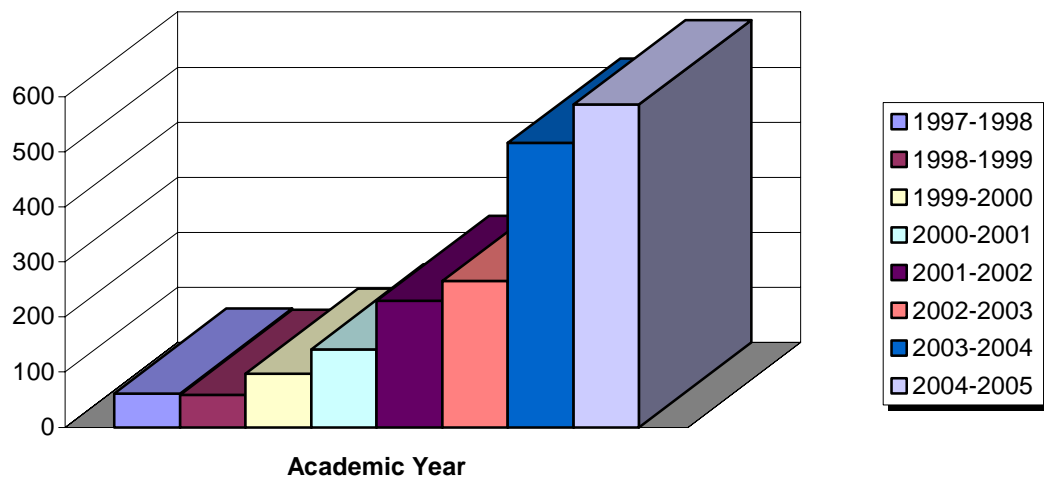
Table I: Number of Tests/Exams Arranged with accommodations by AccessAbility Services

MONTH	2004-2005	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999	1997-1998
May	1	1	15	43	23	26	25	44
June	40	40	42	23	36	22	23	19
July	25	24	31	19	24	9	8	6
August	52	60	48	31	41	23	14	14
September	3	5	3	7	2	2	-	1
October	193	219	141	128	102	82	55	60
November	43	46	64	66	76	65	58	22
December	293	275	184	182	158	120	91	94
January 2005	13	18	17	21	16	23	9	19
February	184	195	133	125	116	109	71	64
March	50	65	38	77	53	41	34	41
April	338	264	250	203	196	161	147	131
May (until the end of the April Exam Period)	0	0	16	32	42	18	26	22
TOTAL	1235	1212	982	962	885	701	561	537

Table II: Peer Note taking Statistics

NOTETAKING REQUESTS	
Academic Year	Total Number of Requests
2004 - 2005	586
2003 – 2004	516
2002 – 2003	265
2001 – 2002	230
2000 – 2001	141
1999 – 2000	97
1998 – 1999	59
1997 – 1998	61

Number of Note taking Requests



Note: Tri-mestering at UTSC has significantly impacted note taking services. The service received 586 requests in 2004-05 compared to 265 in 2003-04. Tri-mestering has directly impacted workload and resources, as setting up and monitoring the service was required for more than double the number of courses (i.e., Arrangements required for two half-credit courses vs. for one full-credit course).

Table III: Computerized Note taking Services

COMPUTERIZED NOTE TAKING	2004- 2005	2003- 2004	2002- 2003	2001- 2002	2000- 2001
# Of Students Who Received Computerized Notes	4	1	0	1	1
# Of Courses Covered	25	7	0	5	7