

Final Report: Accessibility at TMU's Downtown Campus

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Table Of Contents

Executive Summary	Pg. 3
Introduction	Pg. 4
Accessibility at TMU	Pg. 4
Primary Research	Pg. 5
Secondary Research	Pg. 7
Conclusion	Pg. 9
Recommendations	Pg. 9
References	Pg. 12
Appendix	Pg. 14

List of Figures

Figure 1	Pg. 6
Figure 2	Pg. 6

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report examines the accessibility of Toronto Metropolitan University's (TMU) downtown campus. The purpose is to recommend practical solutions that TMU can implement within three months to improve campus accessibility and support the Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion (OVPECI) in creating a more inclusive campus. To examine TMU's accessibility and develop recommendations, this report draws on both primary and secondary research, including a student campus accessibility survey, academic literature, and accessibility policies.

Accessibility at TMU

TMU has publicly committed to creating an accessible campus for all students, faculty members, and staff, particularly those with disabilities. The OVPECI has supported this commitment by developing TMU's multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines strategies to prevent, identify, and remove barriers to access. However, despite these efforts, TMU's downtown campus remains largely inaccessible due to broken elevators, a lack of automatic doors, and damaged signage.

Primary Research

The survey results show that accessibility remains a significant issue at TMU's downtown campus. 80% of students reported having difficulty navigating the campus due to physical barriers, with the most common being long elevator wait times and broken elevators, specifically in Kerr Hall. 64% of students reported having to change their route, miss class, or arrive late, and another 50% reported feeling stressed and frustrated due to these barriers. To improve campus accessibility, students recommend that TMU implement more frequent elevator maintenance, faster elevator response times, and a dashboard that shows students the most accessible routes.

Secondary Research

Research shows that having an inaccessible campus negatively impacts students with disabilities, as barriers like broken elevators can prevent them from attending classes, meeting with instructors, and attending events on campus. TMU has a legal obligation to accommodate students with disabilities and ensure they are afforded equal access to education. Research shows that, to comply with accessibility standards and improve accessibility, other post-secondary institutions have successfully implemented automatic doors, personalized accessibility maps and preventive elevator maintenance.

Recommendations

To improve campus accessibility, TMU should implement preventive elevator maintenance and an interactive campus map. For approximately \$1,500 per month, TMU can contract Element Elevators to conduct monthly elevator maintenance in Kerr Hall, reducing the likelihood of elevator failures and improving access to campus buildings and facilities. Furthermore, for approximately \$8,000, TMU can purchase an ArcGIS subscription to develop an interactive campus map that provides students with accessible routes and real-time updates on barriers.

1.0 Introduction

Located in the heart of the city, Toronto Metropolitan University's (TMU) downtown campus serves a large and diverse student body. However, despite the university's efforts to improve its accessibility, students continue to encounter barriers across campus. This report examines the accessibility of TMU's downtown campus, focusing on issues such as out-of-service elevators, the lack of automatic doors, and damaged signage that make navigating the campus difficult.

The purpose of this report is to recommend practical short-term solutions that TMU can implement to improve campus accessibility within three months. The findings are intended to support the Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion (OVPECI) in its efforts to create a more accessible and inclusive campus environment. The report focuses on physical accessibility and does not address issues related to digital learning tools or course content.

To examine the accessibility of TMU's downtown campus and develop recommendations, both primary and secondary research were conducted. Primary research was collected through a short student survey. The survey included both open-ended and multiple-choice questions to determine how often students encounter barriers on campus, where they occur, what impact they have on students, and what solutions they recommend that TMU implement to improve campus accessibility. Secondary research was collected from academic literature and relevant accessibility policies.

To ensure readability, the report is divided into six sections: the introduction, overview of accessibility at TMU, primary research findings, secondary research findings, the conclusion, and recommendations. Each section includes clearly numbered headings and subheadings to guide the reader through the report.

2.0 Accessibility at TMU

2.1 TMU's Commitment to Accessibility

Toronto Metropolitan University has publicly committed to creating an accessible campus for all students, faculty members, and staff, particularly those with disabilities (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2026). The OVPECI supports this commitment by working with departments across TMU to improve access for community members with disabilities. For example, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), the OVPECI has developed and implemented a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines strategies to prevent, identify and remove barriers to access.

The plan outlines a variety of strategies TMU will use to meet their long-term accessibility goals, including conducting awareness training to "improve accessibility competencies of staff, faculty and students" (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2025) and taking the necessary steps to comply with accessibility standards and policies. Furthermore, the plan outlines how the university will measure and report its progress toward meeting these goals. However, despite these efforts, students continue to encounter barriers across campus, suggesting that these strategies have not been fully effective. This gap between the university's commitment to accessibility and students' experiences highlights the need for more practical short-term solutions to improve campus accessibility.

2.2 Accessibility Issues on TMU's Downtown Campus

For years, physical barriers have been an issue at TMU's downtown campus. According to TMU's student newspaper, students have repeatedly raised concerns about out-of-service elevators, a lack of automatic doors, and damaged signage, which make it difficult to navigate and access campus buildings and facilities (Nour, 2025). These barriers are particularly concerning because TMU's downtown campus is located in a densely populated area, meaning the majority of classrooms and facilities are inside multi-story buildings that require elevator access.

While these barriers affect the entire student body, they have a greater impact on students with disabilities who rely on accessible infrastructure to navigate campus. According to the 2023 Student Diversity Self-Identification results, 15% of TMU students identify as having a disability (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2023). Therefore, without working elevators and automatic doors, many students are unable to navigate multi-story buildings on campus or even enter them. As a result, these students often have to take longer routes or avoid certain buildings altogether, preventing them from attending classes, meeting with instructors, and accessing student services. These barriers are more than a minor inconvenience. If left unaddressed, they can negatively impact students' academic success and their overall university experience.

3.0 Primary Research

3.1 Campus Accessibility Survey

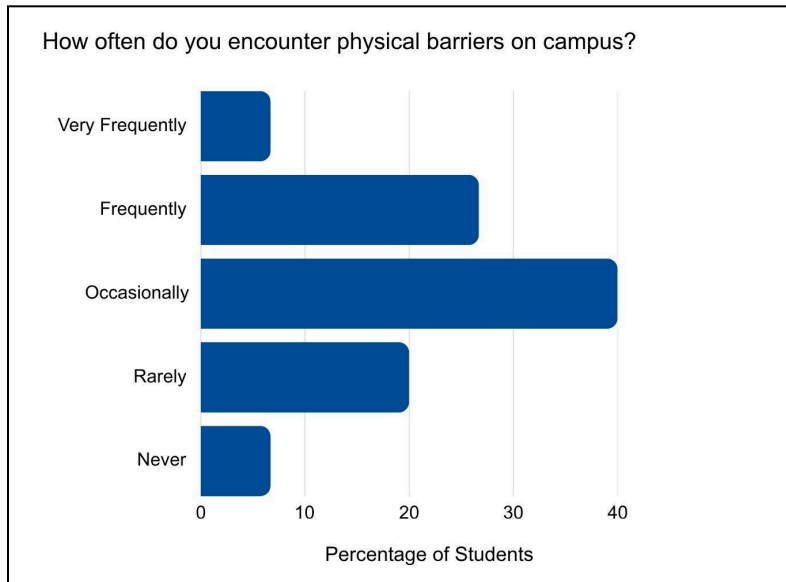
To examine the accessibility of TMU's downtown campus, a short survey was provided to students enrolled in CCMN 313: Organizational Report Writing. The survey included questions to determine how often students encounter barriers on campus, where they occur, which are the most common, how they impact student success and well-being, and what solutions students recommend that TMU implement to improve campus accessibility. A total of 16 students completed the survey, 15 of whom attend TMU's downtown campus.

3.2 Prevalence of Barriers on Campus

The survey results indicate that accessibility remains a significant issue at TMU's downtown campus. When asked whether they've ever had difficulty accessing a building on campus due to barriers such as broken elevators, 80% of students responded yes, suggesting that these barriers affect a large portion of the student population. As seen in Figure 1, when asked how often they encounter barriers on campus, 7% of students reported encountering them very frequently, 27% reported encountering them frequently, and 40% reported encountering them occasionally. These findings suggest that these barriers are recurring issues that will require regular maintenance and monitoring to improve campus accessibility, rather than one-time fixes.

Figure 1

The Prevalence of Barriers on TMU's Campus

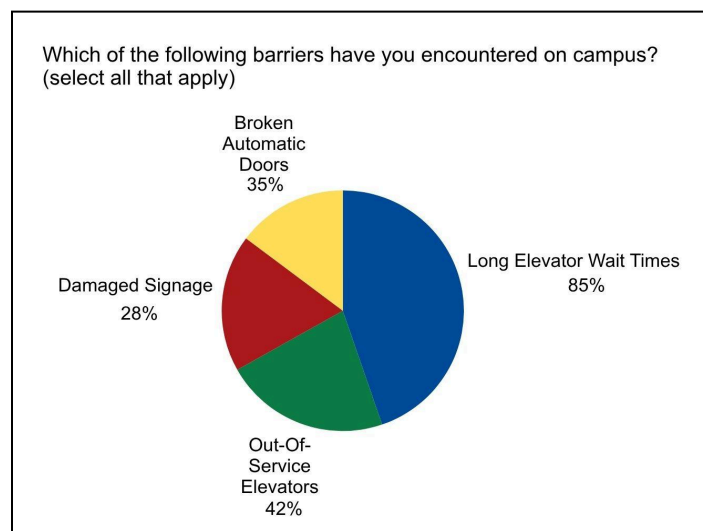


3.3 Most Common Barriers and Problem Areas on Campus

The survey results also helped identify the most common barriers students encounter on TMU's downtown campus. As shown in Figure 2, when asked which barriers they encounter most often, 85% of students reported long elevator wait times, 42% reported out-of-service elevators, 35% reported broken automatic doors, and 28% reported damaged signage. These findings suggest that broken elevators and long elevator wait times are the most common barriers on campus; therefore, improving elevator access should be TMU's top priority.

Figure 2

The Most Common Barriers Students Encounter on Campus



Furthermore, the survey results helped pinpoint where on campus students encounter these barriers. When asked which buildings they had encountered barriers in, 46% of students reported encountering them in Kerr Hall, 18% reported encountering them in Ted Rogers School of Management, 18% reported encountering them in the Student Learning Centre, and 18% reported encountering them in the Rogers Communications Centre. Together, these findings suggest that more frequent elevator maintenance in problem areas such as Kerr Hall could significantly improve campus accessibility.

3.4 Impact of Barriers on Student Success and Well-Being

The survey results also identified which barriers have the greatest impact on students. When asked which barriers they found the most disruptive, 64% of students said out-of-service elevators and long elevator wait times. As a result, 64% of students reported having to change their routes, arrive late, or miss class due to these barriers, while another 50% reported feeling frustrated or stressed. Together, these findings highlight the importance of reliable elevator access, as broken elevators can negatively impact student success and well-being by restricting their access to classrooms, instructors, and other important student services.

3.5 Student Recommendations for Improving Campus Accessibility

Lastly, the survey results helped identify the solutions students believe would most improve campus accessibility. When asked which solutions they thought would be most effective, 80% of students said more frequent maintenance, while 54% said faster elevator response times. When asked for additional suggestions, a majority of students recommended creating a dashboard or tool that provides students with the most accessible routes and shows where barriers, such as broken elevators, are located so they can avoid them.

4.0 Secondary Research

4.1 Campus Accessibility and Students with Disabilities

Improving campus accessibility is especially important given the large number of students with disabilities at TMU and how physical barriers disproportionately affect them. In their study, Moritz et al. (2022) found that barriers such as broken elevators made it difficult for students with disabilities to access buildings and facilities, as elevators and other accessible building features are often their only means of navigating campus.

As a result, they found that many students reported missing classes and struggling to keep up with their coursework due to barriers such as broken elevators and damaged signage (Moritz et al., 2022). These findings show that campus accessibility directly affects students' ability to learn. Over time, being unable to attend classes or meet with instructors can lead to lower academic performance, putting students with disabilities at a disadvantage compared to their able-bodied peers.

In addition, inaccessible campus environments can affect students' well-being. In their study, Assefa & Zenebe (2025) found that inaccessible campuses can lead to feelings of loneliness and frustration, as these barriers can make it difficult for students with disabilities to attend campus events and socialize with their peers. As a result, these students may feel excluded, as though the campus was not designed for them or with their needs in mind. These findings

indicate that barriers such as broken elevators and damaged signage can negatively affect students' academic performance and overall well-being, highlighting how important it is for TMU to implement short-term solutions to improve campus accessibility.

4.2 Accessibility Policies and Standards

Due to Ontario accessibility standards, TMU is legally required to remove barriers for students with disabilities. For example, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and the Ontario Human Rights Code (1990), post-secondary institutions have a duty to accommodate students with disabilities and ensure they are afforded equal access to education. As a result, universities must take reasonable steps to identify and remove barriers that may restrict access to campus buildings where learning takes place.

At TMU, this applies to barriers such as broken elevators and damaged signage, which restrict students' access to classes and other educational resources. If TMU does not address these barriers, they may prevent students with disabilities from accessing the same opportunities as their able-bodied peers, which can place the university at risk of failing to meet its legal responsibilities.

4.3 Best Practices for Improving Campus Accessibility

Various studies have identified solutions that other institutions have implemented to improve campus accessibility. For example, in their review of inclusive practices in higher education, Fillippou et al. (2025) found that many universities have installed automatic doors across campus and developed interactive maps to support students with disabilities. They note that automatic doors improved access to buildings by reducing the need for assistance, and interactive maps made it easier for students to navigate campus by providing real-time updates on barriers and routes to avoid them.

Similarly, in their study, Karimi et al. (2014) highlight the benefits of more advanced personalized accessibility maps. Their study explains how universities have implemented interactive maps that provide students with routes based on their specific needs. For example, students who use wheelchairs would be directed to routes with ramps and working elevators. To keep the maps up to date, users can report barriers on campus, such as construction, damaged signage or broken elevators, and the maps will update accordingly.

Several studies have also shown that improving campus accessibility requires regular elevator maintenance, especially in densely populated areas with tall buildings. According to Yamashina & Otani's (2001) study, elevators require routine maintenance and inspections to ensure they are safe and running properly. Therefore, many universities, including Oregon State (2023), conduct monthly elevator maintenance to catch issues early and prevent them from escalating to the point where the elevators completely break down.

Each of these studies has shown that universities successfully implemented these solutions within a relatively short time frame without major renovations. For example, installing automatic doors, developing interactive maps and having more frequent elevator maintenance all focus on improving existing infrastructure rather than starting from scratch, making them practical and

relatively cost-effective. These findings suggest that TMU could implement similar solutions to improve campus accessibility.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research indicates that accessibility remains a significant issue at TMU's downtown campus. Key findings include:

- A majority of students have encountered barriers on TMU's downtown campus and continue to encounter them regularly. As these are ongoing issues, they will require regular maintenance and monitoring rather than one-time fixes.
- The most common barriers students encounter on campus are out-of-service elevators and long elevator wait times, and the building with the most reported issues is Kerr Hall. Therefore, more frequent elevator maintenance in Kerr Hall could improve campus accessibility.
- These barriers disrupt a majority of students by forcing them to change their route, arrive late, or miss class, causing stress and frustration. As a result, they can negatively impact student success and well-being.
- To improve campus accessibility, students recommend that TMU implement more frequent elevator maintenance, faster elevator response times and a dashboard that shows students the most accessible routes across campus.
- While these barriers affect all students, they disproportionately impact students with disabilities, who rely on accessible infrastructure to navigate campus.
- TMU is legally obligated to accommodate students with disabilities and provide them with equal access to education. As a result, TMU is required to remove barriers that may restrict students' access to classrooms and other learning environments.
- Implementing more frequent elevator maintenance and an interactive campus map are feasible and cost-effective solutions that TMU could implement to improve the accessibility of its downtown campus.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Implementing Preventive Elevator Maintenance

TMU should implement preventive elevator maintenance to improve campus accessibility. As research has shown, out-of-service elevators and long elevator wait times are the most common barriers TMU students face on campus. Therefore, preventive elevator maintenance will help ensure that elevators on campus remain operational and that all students, including those with disabilities, can attend classes, meet with instructors, and access other services and facilities.

Implementing preventive elevator maintenance will require contracting an elevator company. Element Elevators, located in Toronto, offers a platinum maintenance package that includes monthly maintenance and 24/7 emergency support for approximately \$500 per elevator per

month (Element, 2026). To reduce costs, TMU can focus on servicing the elevators in the buildings with the most reported issues, such as Kerr Hall.

The cost of preventive maintenance at Kerr Hall would be approximately \$1,500 per month, as the building has three elevators. While this is an ongoing cost, it is relatively low compared to the cost of elevator modernization projects, which can exceed \$110,000 per elevator (Element, 2026). Without preventive maintenance, each elevator in Kerr Hall would likely need to be replaced or modernized in the next five years. Therefore, by conducting monthly elevator maintenance, TMU is saving money and making the campus more accessible.

Given that this is a standard maintenance contract, TMU could likely arrange and begin elevator maintenance within a few weeks (Muddasir Law, n.d.), making this solution feasible within the three-month timeline. By investing in preventive maintenance, TMU can reduce the likelihood of elevator failures and ensure all students, especially those with disabilities, can navigate the campus more easily. Overall, implementing preventive elevator maintenance is a practical, cost-effective solution that will significantly improve campus accessibility.

6.2 Developing an Interactive Campus Map

TMU should also develop an interactive campus map to improve campus accessibility. Research shows that when students encounter barriers on campus, they often have to take longer, indirect routes, which can cause them to arrive late or miss classes altogether. Therefore, having an interactive map that shows students the most accessible routes, as well as where there are barriers such as broken elevators, will make it significantly easier for students to navigate campus and help them avoid disruptions.

To develop an interactive campus map, TMU should purchase an ArcGIS subscription. ArcGIS is a spatial mapping tool that offers a wide variety of subscription options based on the type of map being created. In this case, the most practical option would be their professional package. For \$8,000 a year, users can “create production-ready cartographic maps and perform comprehensive analysis that scales to big data” (ArcGIS, 2026). The professional package is the best option as it supports advanced mapping, which will be important in later stages of development.

While the cost may seem high, using ArcGIS is still inexpensive compared to hiring a vendor to create a custom map, which can cost upwards of \$50,000 (Mazheika, 2026). It also reduces costs by allowing the map to be embedded in TMU’s existing website, eliminating the need to develop a separate web application or platform. In addition, ArcGIS is cost-effective because it allows TMU to create and update the map itself, reducing the need for outside support.

Not only is developing an interactive map cost-effective, but it’s also practical. Because ArcGIS is a user-friendly platform, TMU can likely develop a prototype within a month, making this solution feasible within the three-month timeline. This phased approach will then allow the team to create a basic version of the map first and test it with a small group of students. After gathering feedback, the team can gradually upgrade the map and add more complex features, such as real-time reporting and routes tailored to each student’s accessibility needs. Overall,

developing an interactive campus map in ArcGIS is a practical solution that will significantly improve the accessibility of TMU's downtown campus.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Copy of Student Accessibility Survey

1. Do you attend classes at TMU's downtown campus?
 - Yes
 - No
2. Have you ever had difficulty accessing or navigating a building on campus due to physical barriers (e.g., out-of-service elevators, long elevator wait times, lack of automatic doors, unclear or damaged signage)?
 - Yes
 - No
3. How often do you encounter physical barriers on campus?
 - Very frequently
 - Frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
4. Which of the following barriers have you encountered on campus? (select all that apply)
 - Out-of-service elevators
 - Long elevator wait times
 - Automatic doors not working properly
 - Unclear or damaged signage
 - Other (please specify)
5. Have physical barriers on campus ever caused you to: (select all that apply)
 - Change your route significantly
 - Miss a class or arrive late
 - Experience stress or frustration
 - Be unable to meet with an instructor
 - Be unable to access campus resources
 - None of the above
6. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the overall accessibility of TMU's downtown campus? (1 = poor, 5 = excellent)
7. In which buildings on campus have you encountered physical barriers?
8. In your opinion, which type of physical barrier is the most disruptive?
 - Out-of-service elevators
 - Lack of door openers
 - Unclear or damaged signage

- Long elevator wait times
 - Other (please specify)
9. Which of the following strategies would most improve accessibility at TMU's downtown campus? (select up to two)
- Faster elevator repair response times
 - More frequent maintenance checks
 - Improved signage
 - Clearer maps of accessible entrances
 - More automatic door openers
10. What is one additional strategy TMU could implement to improve the accessibility of its downtown campus within a three-month time frame?