

## **Module 2 Understanding Employment Equity**

Managing your career strategies for graduates with disabilities module to understanding employment equity.

Welcome to module two of our career and disability series brought to you by the UTSC AccessAbility Services and the Academic Advising and Career Centre.

This module focuses on employment equity, what it is and who is covered under relevant laws. We will also be defining the term persons with the disability as well as employer obligations and accountability.

Employment equity means more than just treating persons equally. Employment equity is a means to ensure systemic discrimination does not occur by removing barriers in practices and policies and attitudes. Providing equity requires that organizations put in place measures to accommodate the unique differences among people. Employment equity practices strive to achieve equality in the workplace by particular groups of Canadians especially indigenous people persons with disabilities, racialized persons, LGBTQ individuals and women.

Under the federal employment equity act, the term persons with disabilities is defined: “as persons who have a long term or recurring physical mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment or be believed that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment.”

This federal law impacts federally regulated industries such as federal, provincial, regional and municipal government. Transportation, banking, communications utilities, mining and federal contractors or companies that do business with the federal government remaining sectors of the economy are covered by provincial law.

The accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or AODA and the Ontario humans rights code tackle issues of equity in the workplace for persons with disabilities. The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination based on a wide range of factors including disability and requires employers to assess, respond and implement appropriate accommodations for employees with disabilities. The AODA draws on the Ontario Human Rights Code, the AODA employment standard Act requires employers to proactively identify and eliminate employment barriers.

The standard addresses the policies and practices throughout the employment cycle, from recruitment, retention, promotion and workplace accommodation processes. You can find links to these laws in the resources section during your job search, you can research if a company has an Employment Equity policy in place by reviewing company websites and job postings.

For equity statements, search engines like Google and indeed allow you to search top employers based on the specific criteria as well as, company reviews provided by users. Large organizations may publish reports on their equity efforts. See the resources section for

a link to the University of Toronto's employment equity report. Here is an example of an employment equity statement at the University of Toronto, “we strive to be an equitable and inclusive community rich with diversity protecting the human rights of all persons and based upon understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of every person we seek to ensure to the greatest extent possible that all students and employees enjoy the opportunity to participate as they see fit in the full range of activities that the university offers and to achieve their full potential as members of the university community”.

Understanding employment equity and accommodation policies can assist you in identifying employers that really demonstrate support for employment equity and help you to target your job search.

Keep in mind that when employers post equity statements indicating that they encourage applications from persons with disabilities you want to apply for the position based on your strengths. Highlight your relevant skills credentials and experiences to demonstrate why you are a great candidate. You can also review articles in disability focused magazines and websites, organizations and associations. These online and/or print resources are often promoted through your campus accessibility, and/or Career Centre office and feature relevant employers and opportunities for students and new graduates. Please review our resources section for a list of magazines, organizations and associations.

Networking with professionals can also be a strategy for identifying equitable employers. In these meetings, you can inquire about the reputation practices and services of potential employers. Please refer to module 1 on Career Planning for strategies and resources related to information interviews and networking.

If you would like to provide feedback on these videos or if you have questions or concerns. Please contact the Academic Advising and Career Centre at [aacc.utsc@utoronto.ca](mailto:aacc.utsc@utoronto.ca) or the AccessAbility Services at [ability.utsc@utoronto.ca](mailto:ability.utsc@utoronto.ca)