

The 2024 Access Insights Report

By



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Foreword

Disabled Students UK (DSUK) is delighted to conclude Disability History Month with the release of the 2024 Access Insights Report.

In its second year, the Annual Disabled Student Survey (ADSS) has maintained its unique reach, with over 1200 disabled students participating from over 80 institutions. Through continuous improvements in both survey design and data analysis, this year the results are more representative than ever. The second year of data collection has validated the initial results, and the picture they paint of a sector that still has long ways to go to achieve accessibility for disabled students.

This project is driven by the time and expertise of our research team, fully constituted of current disabled students and disabled graduates. We have continued elevating our support to universities in spreading the survey in 2024 and have provided detailed institution-specific analysis to universities that have signed up to DSUK's Access Insights membership programme. Response numbers from students at the University of Bath and the University of East Anglia have set new records, enabling the rich level of institution-specific insight that is possible when institutions disseminate the survey widely.

We have been proud to work with Snowdon Trust and university partners on this research, who by raising the voices of participating disabled students, have demonstrated how the sector can collaborate with students to create the data sorely missing in the sector.

The Annual Disabled Student Survey continues to challenge our ideas about who disabled students are, how they experience their education and what the role of the sector is in supporting them. With the 2023 Annual Disabled Student Survey results providing a baseline for the Higher Education (HE) sector, the 2024 data publication additionally offers the first step in comparative analysis. This year's results reveal areas of clear progress as well as stubborn barriers.

This year one institution in our University Comparison has set a new record in meeting disabled students' needs. 53% of disabled student respondents at London South Bank University feel that they have the support they need, compared to 37% UK wide. Inspiringly, the university is continuing to use the Annual Disabled Student Survey in its work toward fulfilling the Disabled Student Commitment. We look forward to continuing to work with and expand our partnerships in order to realise the potential of Disabled Students in the UK and achieve true equity.

2024 has been shaped by the [Abrahart v University of Bristol](#) judgements and one of the most disappointing findings this year is the lack of improvement with regards to accessible assessments. After five years of the Abrahart v University of Bristol legal battle, almost half of disabled students who responded to our survey still report having received a lower mark on their course due to an assessment being inaccessible to them. 53% of disabled students report their physical health having suffered from their degree at some point, while 78% report their mental health having suffered. One student writes:

“I find some in-person assessments very stressful and cause me physical pain and emotional distress but when I asked they said there was no way I could do any other assessment. One time when I was unable to attend an exam due to my disability I was able to sit it at an alternative time but it was capped at 40% which has brought my whole degree mark down”

What is clear from this year's report is that there are students in the same position as Natasha Abrahart out there right now. By acting proactively rather than waiting for another student to suffer and another legal case, we can change the ending to their story. That is within our power as a sector.

Disabled Students are speaking out about their experiences, and they will continue speaking until they are heard. We hope you will join the conversation.

Mette Anwar-Westander
Founder and Chief Executive, Disabled Students UK

2024 Lessons and Learnings

Four lessons on the average disabled student

One of the advantages of our work on the Annual Disabled Student Survey over the years has been a better picture of who the average disabled student is. Here are four lessons from the data:

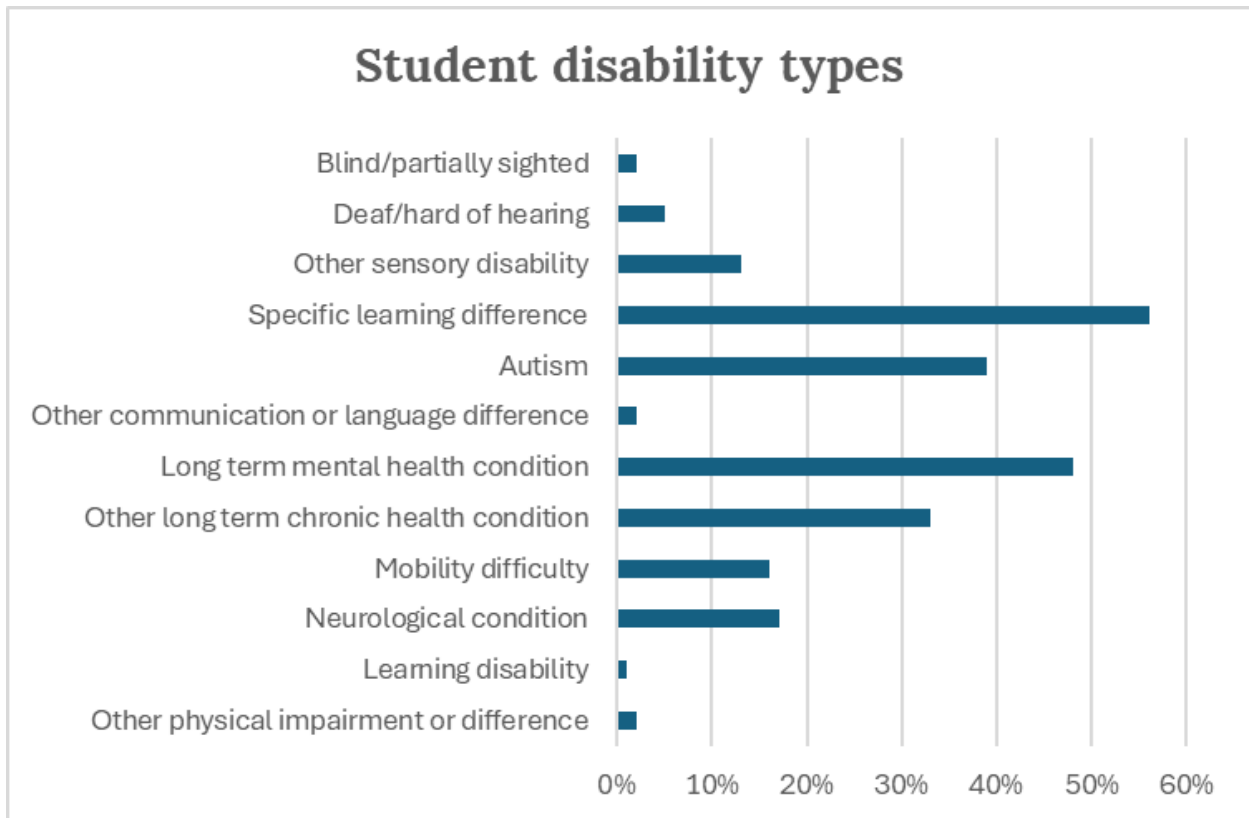
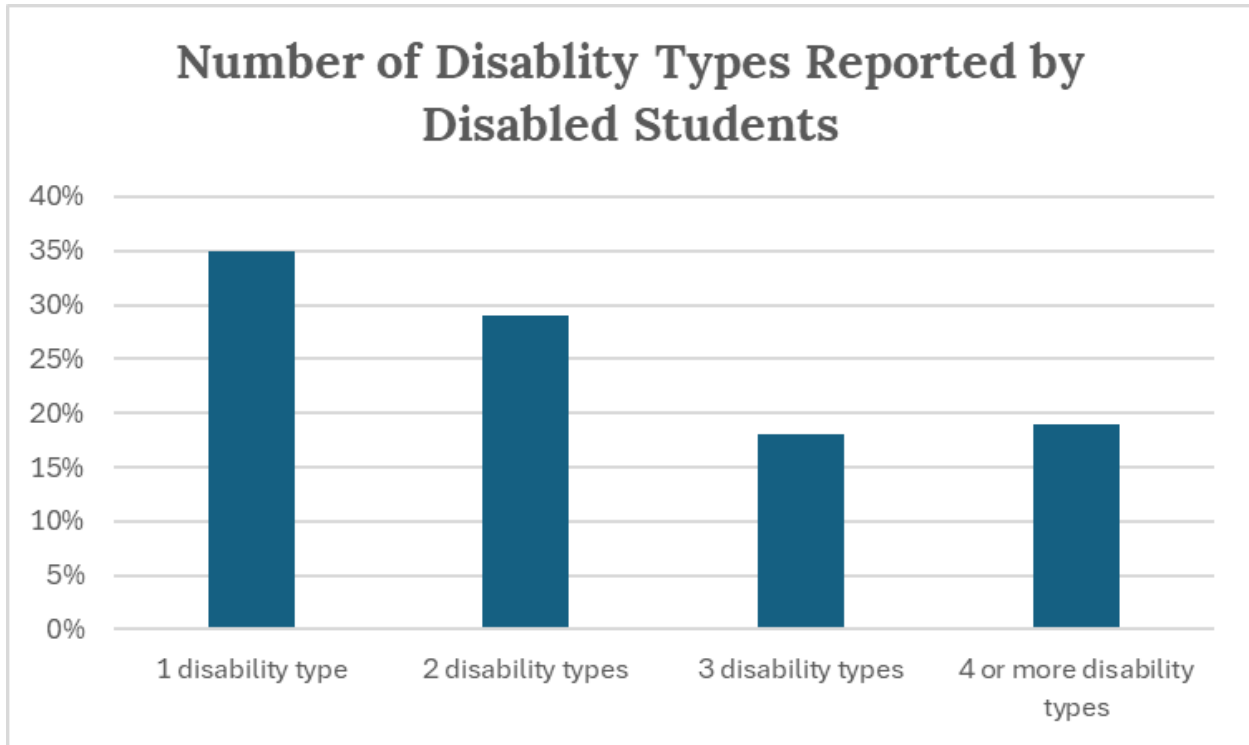
1. The average disabled student has more than one disability type

Most respondents to the Annual Disabled Student Survey report having more than one disability type. Often when institutions arrange support they focus on what disabled students consider their “primary” or “main” condition and can easily neglect potential co-occurring conditions. In particular, conditions which are just as disabling but less likely to be recognised as disabilities are often neglected, such as mental health conditions.

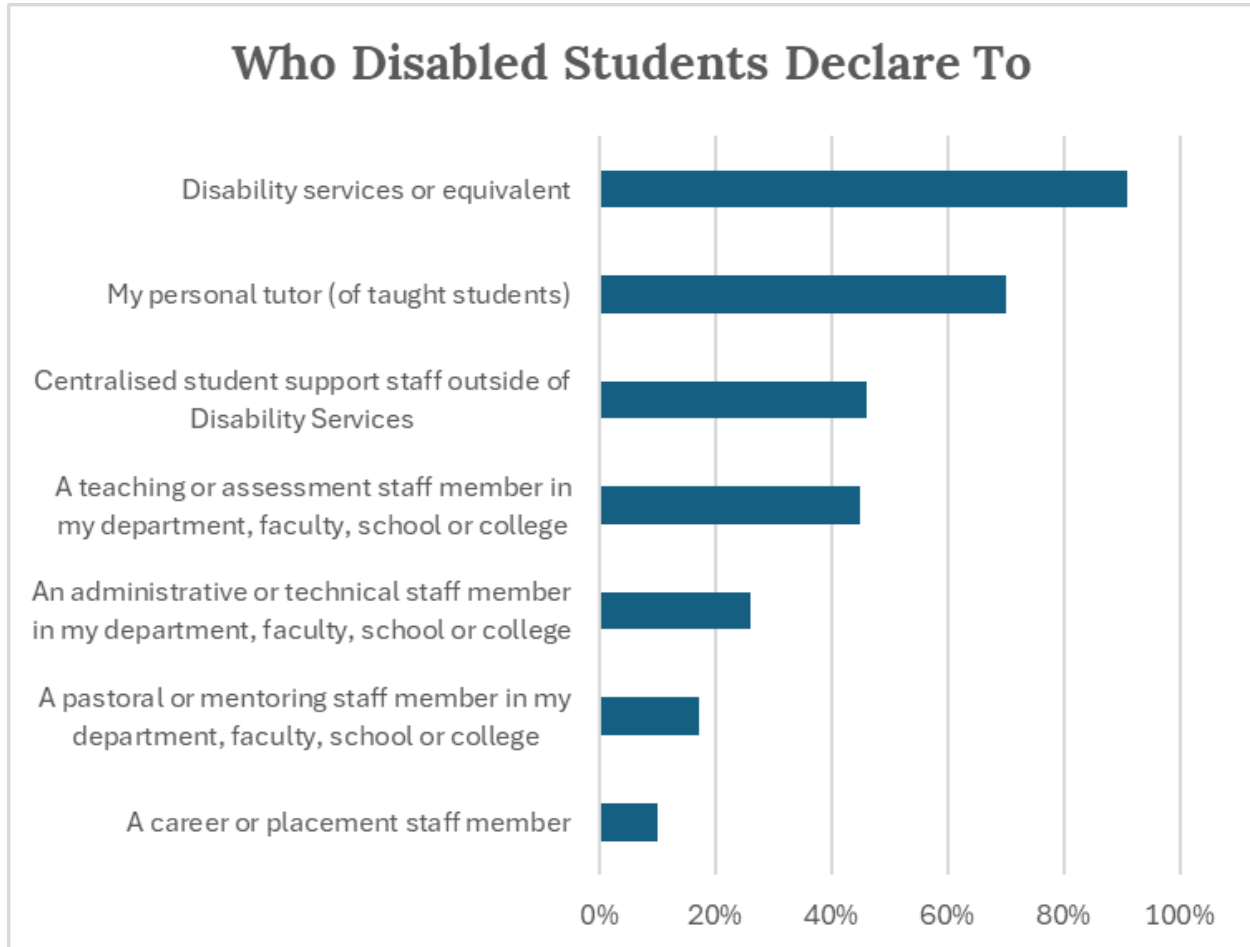
Without understanding a student's full set of disability related needs, institutions falter in providing support. Conditions often interact, resulting in individuals having unique and sometimes competing needs. Adjustments must always be tailored to the specific needs of the individual, not be based on a mould for which support would usually be provided given a specific diagnosis.

Currently most surveys do not allow students to select multiple disabilities. Both HESA and UCAS have recognised the issue with all of students' disabilities not being recorded and are starting to collect better information, so we look forward to

improved data next year.



2. The average disabled student is in an ongoing process of sharing the fact that they are disabled

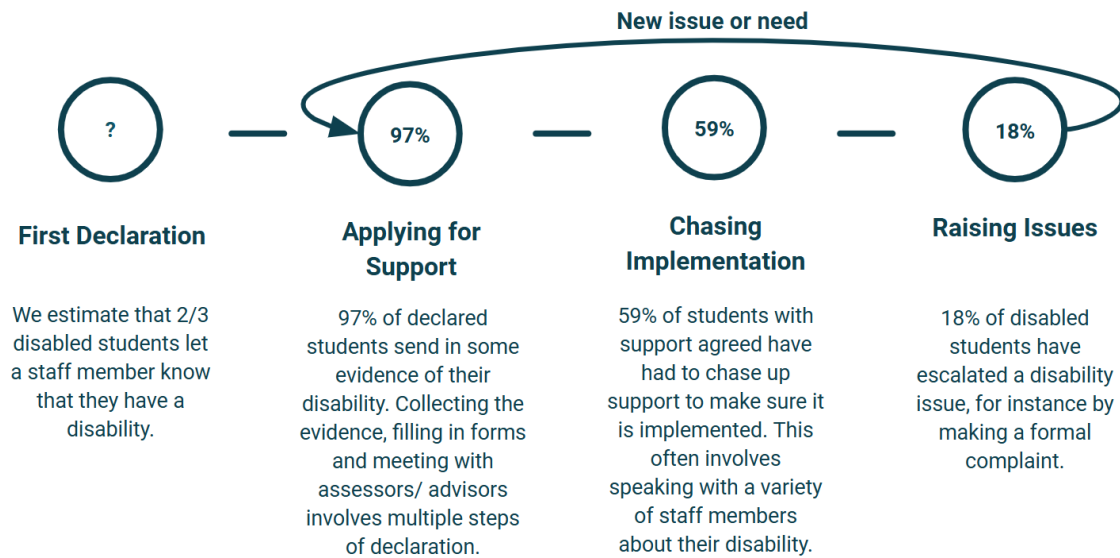


Often we talk about students “Declaring to” or “Sharing the fact that they have a disability with” their Higher Education provider as if it is a one-time-event. But data from the Annual Disabled Student Survey illustrates that most disabled students share that they have a disability with more than one staff member or team. It is easy to see why when we consider the often drawn out process of acquiring support: “Declaration” is not a one time event. It happens when disabled students first realise they need support, when they are signposted to the correct body, when they apply for support, when they chase agreed support and when they escalate issues that have not been resolved. In addition, they often need to repeat this process when their access needs change or new issues arise. Each of these “declaration

instances” is an opportunity for the institution to meet the student’s needs and reduce their administrative burden, if staff members are properly trained to do so.

“Declaration” is not a one time event

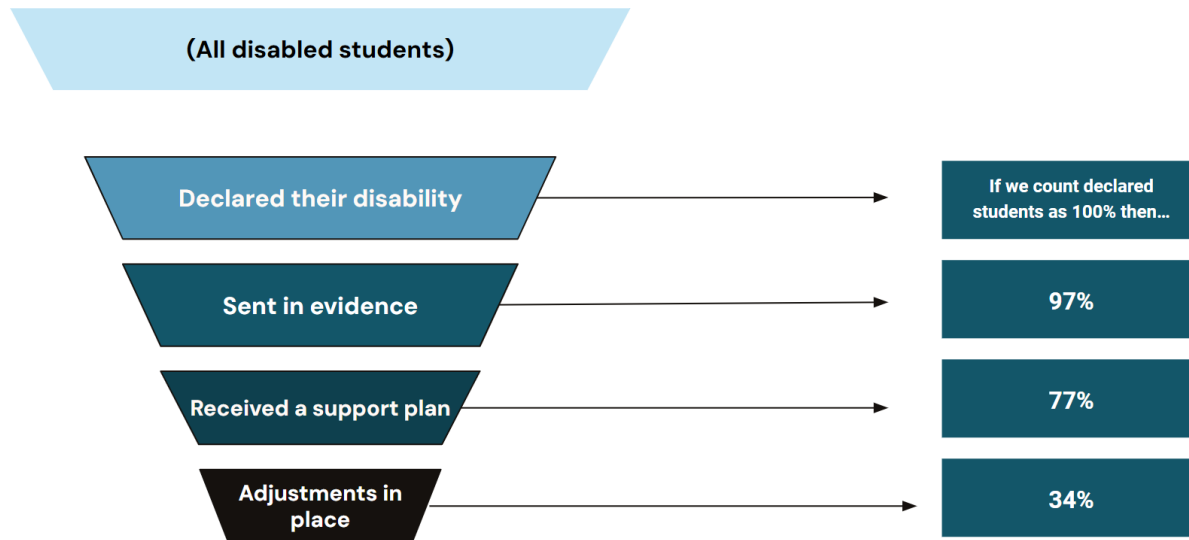
63% of students reported often having to explain the same thing about their disability or access needs to different staff members.



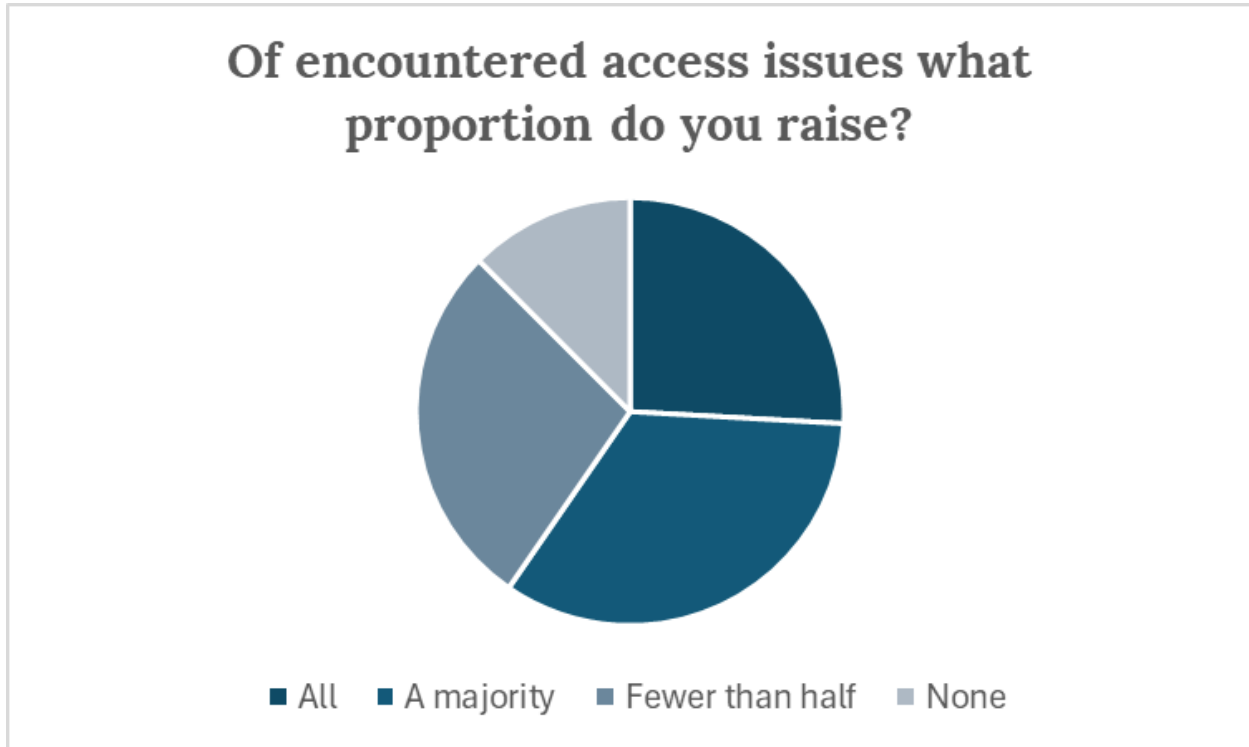
3. The average disabled student is stuck somewhere in the process of acquiring support

It can be tempting to think that the average disabled student is one who has applied for support and had that support implemented. However, this is not borne out in our data. Firstly, it is important to keep in mind that many disabled students do not “declare” their disability and as such do not have support agreed (we estimate that two out of three disabled students declare but this is very difficult to estimate). However, even among those students who have “declared” and are pursuing support, only 77% receive a full support plan and only 34% have had support both agreed and completely implemented. Thus, most disabled students seem to be in a perpetual state of support acquisition, rather than having received all of their agreed support. In particular, the gap between having support agreed and having the agreed support implemented is striking and highlights the communication difficulties between different institutional departments.

The average disabled student is stuck somewhere in the support arrangement process



4. The average disabled student holds back from raising accessibility issues



When Higher Education staff members seek to talk to disabled students about inaccessibility, they will be most likely to hear from disabled students who are vocal about the issues they have encountered. This can easily skew our ideas about how vocal the average disabled student is. According to our data, most disabled students hold back from raising access issues. Of those who have encountered access issues, only a quarter report having raised all of them. Three out of four students hold back from raising the access issues they encounter. The consequence is that only a fraction of access issues are raised, making it difficult for institutions to improve. This highlights the need to proactively support students to raise issues and to learn from it when they do.

Promising signs

In 2024, a variety of surveys of the wider student population showed an increased positivity around the student experience¹. This seems to be reflected in our data as well, with most questions being answered more positively than in 2024.

There are three specific areas where we are seeing especially promising developments. Whether this is due in part to changes in the demographics of disabled students (see the [Demographics](#) section of the report) or changes in Higher Education disability policy, remains to be seen. As disability declarations continue to rise, it could be that we are seeing the sector move toward a more modern understanding of disability. Policy improvements in the areas detailed below would also be a natural response to the improved sector understanding of its legal responsibilities in light of the *Abrahart v University of Bristol* case.

Knowledge

In 2024, disabled student respondents feel more knowledgeable about possible adjustments that could help them and how to raise issues. It could be that we are seeing the results of an improved approach to informing disabled students of support. This could be driven either by external bodies such as UCAS (which has been improving their disability information) or by Higher Education Providers. The 2023 Annual Disabled Student Survey may also have contributed to informing students (or prompting them to inform themselves).

Evidence barriers

A marked improvement is seen in the evidence burden experienced by students in 2024. 29% fewer students find evidencing their need for support burdensome compared to 2023 and lack of evidence is no longer one of the top three reasons why students refrain from sharing their disability. We know several Higher Education Providers have reviewed their evidence requirements after the pandemic lockdowns and we hope to see the rest of the sector follow suit.

¹ e.g. the National Student Survey ([NSS](#)), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey ([PGTES](#)) and the Student Academic Experience Survey ([SAES](#))

Raising issues

Finally, students are more likely to have somewhere to turn with disability issues this year. In 2024, students are less likely to report that one of the access issues they have raised is still unresolved. They are more likely to know how to escalate an issue and are more likely to feel heard if they do.

As would be expected given these results, overall satisfaction with one's institution has also improved in 2024 and fewer students consider leaving their institution. If indeed these developments are trends (as will become clear when we once again survey students in 2025) it bodes well for the sector as a whole meeting the 2033 goals in these three areas. The question is which providers will keep up. Our [University Comparison](#) provides some clues.

Positive examples

London South Bank University (LSBU) has long been a leader in the field, championing disabled students' access, and with the Annual Disabled Student Survey we can measure the effect on their disabled students. 53% of disabled students at LSBU feel that they have the support they need, compared to 37% UK wide. The consequences for student wellbeing at the institution are clear. LSBU is not settling but rather taking aim for the 2033 goals and fulfilling the Disabled Student Commitment with a number of new initiatives. Jonathan Thompson, Disability & Dyslexia Services Manager at LSBU, comments on the usefulness of their Access Insights Member Report for this work.

"The structure of the report and discussions with the Access Insights team has helped us identify themes to articulate where we are in terms of our service and inclusive practice for disabled students. It's been encouraging to see where we are doing well and identify areas that need further development using the traffic light rating towards the 2033 goal. We're keen to use the report to help shape policy and practice as well as find methods of reporting and support from our senior management team."

Another University with clear areas of strength this year is University of Bath.

- Only 11% of disabled student respondents at the university reported having been made to feel unwelcome at the institution (compared to 25% UK wide).
- 52% of disabled student respondents at the university reported having received all agreed support (compared to 39% UK wide).
- 77% of disabled student respondents at the university felt that there was a person or system within the institution that they could turn to about access barriers (compared to 67% UK wide).

Lack of movement on key issues

Just as telling as the Higher Education sector's areas of progress are the areas where the sector is not progressing – or in some cases even moving backwards. For instance the proportion of students who agree that they had the support they need remained low in 2024.

While the NSS shows a general increase in student positivity this year, they also show [disabled students falling behind](#), the gap between disabled and non-disabled students widening. The positivity gap between disabled and non-disabled students increased in five out of seven areas measured by the NSS. The Annual Disabled Student Survey provides some insight into this: While general satisfaction is indeed rising (53% of disabled students are now satisfied with their institution overall), stubbornly persistent barriers are preventing disabled students from sharing in the positive developments to the same extent as non-disabled students. For instance, of disabled students with agreed support, only 39% report having all this support implemented in 2024.

One of the most striking takeaways from the data comes from the areas where we expected to see improvement that has not materialised. In the wake of the Natasha Abraham legal case there has been much discussion about the rights of disabled students. Despite this, even areas where legal guidance is rather transparent do not appear to be improving:

- When the cost of accessible accommodation was passed from DSA to Higher Education Providers in 2016/17, [SLC DSA guidance](#) started specifying that “HEPs should not pass any additional costs of specialist accommodation on to the student” (see section 7.69 and 10.25 in the [Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education](#)). Despite this, in 2024 almost half (46%) of disabled students who need accessible student housing state that they have had to pay extra.
- [Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education from 2014](#) demonstrates clearly that disability related absences should be given special consideration (pp.95, 165, 166). Despite this, in 2024, 43% of disabled students report that their course counts disability related absences toward the attendance average.
- [The 2022 and 2024 Abrahart v University of Bristol judgments](#) showed the legal importance of making adjustments to examinations to ensure that they are accessible to disabled students. Despite this, in 2024 48% of disabled students believe that they have received a lower mark within their current course because an assessment was not accessible to them.

It is worth noting that satisfaction with assessment also [decreased for disabled students in the NSS this year](#). It seems that despite the Abrahart case and subsequent [EHRC guidance](#), the sector is showing resistance to making adjustments to assessment.

The failure of the sector to improve these statistics despite the focus on legal risk over the last few years is enough to leave us wondering whether universities are acquiring updated and robust advice on these issues. Crucially, it also raises the question of what steps the sector regulators are taking to enforce the guidance.

This report

Disabled Students and the Higher Education Sector

Disabled students made up 20% of home student enrollments in 2022/23 (HESA), a proportion that has more than doubled since 2010. If this growth trend continues, one in four home students will declare a disability by 2027. ²

At the same time, disabled students are [one of the least satisfied student groups in the National Student Survey](#). Recent reports have revealed inaccessibility in Higher Education, including [Models of Support](#), [Arriving at Thriving](#), [Going Back is Not a Choice](#), [The Disabled Student Commitment](#) and countless local disabled student network reports. The issue has received increased attention since 2019 with the high profile *Abrahart v University of Bristol* legal case revealing the extent of the sector's legal responsibilities.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to address the issue:

- UCAS has improved information to disabled students, increasing declarations among accepted applicants by 20% in a single year 2022–2023.
- The Office for Students (OfS) has created the Disabled Student Commitment, which Higher Education Providers can sign up to, in order to hold themselves accountable for improving the disabled student experience.
- The Department for Education has made several changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Large scale improvements for disabled students however, have been few and far between. The increase in disabled student numbers, coupled with an increased reporting of the issues experienced by this group, is leading the sector to realise that we lack adequate information about disabled students' experiences. Reports

² In 2024 [22% of accepted UCAS applicants](#) declared a disability.

have called for the sector – including Higher Education (HE) providers, Office for Students and the Department for Education – to increase their monitoring of disabled students’ experiences and those university practices which would allow institutions to meet disabled students’ needs³. As of yet there is no state funded systematic year on year survey of the experiences of disabled students.

The Annual Disabled Student Survey

To fill the sector’s insight gap, Disabled Students UK built the Annual Disabled Student Survey – a survey designed to map disabled students’ experience of university accessibility over a ten year period, allowing us to find solutions and track progress over time.

We collaborated with university accessibility staff and accessibility consultants in designing the survey. Fundamentally, however, the survey was written by disabled students, for disabled students, investigating issues and solutions only this group has experienced.

In its first year, the survey gathered responses from over 1300 disabled students, making it the largest survey into university accessibility to date. In 2024 we once again gathered more than 1200 respondents, and further increased the representativeness of the data. The second year of data collection has validated the initial results and provided additional insight into how the sector can work toward equity of disabled students.

The Access Insights Project

The Access Insights Project developed around the survey as a way of inviting the sector to join in. As the largest UK disabled student-led project to date, it connects the sector with disabled students’ insight and brings a data driven approach to HE accessibility. Universities that disseminated the survey are able to see a snapshot

³ [Arriving at Thriving](#) recommendation 11, [Models of Support](#) recommendation 11 and [The Disabled Student Commitment](#) recommendation 34

of their results on the [Access Insights website](#) while universities that became members can receive a full report of their institutions' results, allowing them to tailor their accessibility work to their specific institution. Access Insights membership has been recommended by the [Disabled Students' Commission](#) and in 2023, Disabled Students UK was crowned Changemaking Organisation of the Year in [Disability Power 100](#) for our work on the project.

We are very thankful to Snowdon Trust and our university members, who invest in their disabled students through this project.

Over to you

The Access Insights project is built on the work of students who put in the time and effort to fill in our survey. We are above all grateful to their contributions and committed to making sure their voices are heard. Each year we ask disabled students what they would advise their institution to do in order to improve the disabled student experience. Many students have a very straightforward answer: listen to disabled students. In "the wall of 'listen'" below we have displayed these quotes. We hope that this report provides you an opportunity to do just that.

The 2024 wall of “listen”

What would you advise that your institution does to improve the disabled student experience?

“Listen to disabled students and acknowledge where they've messed up. I spent over [a] year trying to show what they'd done to negatively impact me only to be told I shouldn't be so disabled then and they didn't care. It was devastating.”

“Listen and act upon [disabled students'] feedback and needs.”

“Listen to the student and understand their needs and tailor adjustments to their needs[,] not give them 'general' adjustments.”

“Listen to us, ask us, learn from us”

“Listen to the people asking for help.”

“Honestly just listen to disabled people. stop trying to shut us down as soon as we raise something with you”

“Listen to a [student's] requirements and take their needs seriously e.g., needing to have rest breaks.”

“Concentrate more on students with disabilities and listen to them”

“Ultimately, the university should be talking and listening to disabled students much more. In many cases, there are [student] groups that do a wonderful job advocating on disabled students' [behalf], but the extreme bureaucracy of the university committees and councils means that change is painfully slow to come.”

“Have an Estates team that actually [listens and responds] to both disabled students and to Disability Services.”

“Listen to disabled [students'] complaints and issues”

“Listen, adjust and give more time; we are all different.”

"Introduce more systems of accountability for listening to the feedback and suggestions of disabled students"

"Listen to students needs and follow through so they can access the course"

"The university needs to be willing to meaningfully listen to disabled students, provide meaningful support, and address systemic prejudice that currently means that, in at least some cases, issues are ignored or minimised, leaving disabled students seriously disadvantaged at the institution currently."

"Listen to disabled students; stronger leadership; prioritise disability; design of spaces; cultural shift; accessible materials always."

"Actually listen to the issues raised and try to find a proper solution rather than brushing them off and saying 'every other student has to cope, why are you any different'"

"Listening to disabled students"

"Listened to them."

"Seriously listen to disabled student and staff voices and take our needs into account when designing spaces, planning events, and setting up infrastructure."

"Listen to disabled students and consider [them] from the beginning and at all times. We are not an after thought."

"listen to them, actually provide the required reasonable adjustments"

"actively get regular feedback from disabled students and listen to it! lived experience is crucial to finding out what needs to be improved"

"Listen to disabled students and educate staff."

"actually listen to their experiences and be more proactive instead of expecting the students to seek out the support they are entitled to every single time they need it"

"Listen to the disabled students, make lectures recorded and accessible, stop trying to obstruct Disability Services, make us feel valued, repair the damn lifts."

"Listen to the disabled students in what they need"

"They need to listen and try and actively help disabled students rather than try and beat them into submission. I was dragged through an appeals procedure (including a hearing after spending the night in hospital and was not offered to postpone it) while incredibly ill with Long Covid. I was ignored and forced to produce things in very short timescales when it was over an issue the institution caused."

"[University name] needs to listen to their disabled staff and students, work with disabled-led organisations, and make visible and drastic changes to stop disabled students being treated like second-class citizens."

"More staff dedicated to supporting and listening to disabled students, especially staff with lived experiences, more consultation with the disabled student community that recognises their labour in contributing and advocating for themselves."

"actually listening to the demands and requests made by disabled students"

"listen to our concerns and believe us when we say something is not accessible - stop assuming that all students are just lazy teenagers who want to get out of doing work."

"They need to stop allowing ABA and conversion therapy tactics on campus and listen to disabled students more"

"Listen to students experiences of disabilities and consider needs outside the stereotype."

"Listen to what we have to say, keep burden of evidence reasonable, don't ask invasive questions."

"Listen to disabled people"

"Continue listening to students"

"Consult us or at least be willing to listen when mistakes are made (There was a situation where some merchandise was made with somewhat insensitive

language and that was only picked up by disabled students after it had been made and publicised)”

“Simply listening more to the voice of the disabled student body”

“Listen”

“Listen to disabled voices and raise disability awareness amongst staff and students”

“Actually listen to what disabled students are saying”

“Actually listen to the disabled students issues and not brush them off all the time”

“listen to them”

“Be proactive not reactive [...]Ask questions, listen to the answers and act on these”

“Make them feel listened to, take pro-active measures so that students do not have to single themselves out”

“less surveys and more open discussions by disabled people for disabled people. Really listen!”

“My institution should be more open to listening to disabled students and staff. The University currently has a defensive attitude towards disabled people speaking out about their lived experiences on campus, but I hope they would instead be more receptive of constructive criticism and take them into account to improve accessibility.”

“Hold more focus groups and listen to disabled voices. Implement mandatory access training and anti-ableism training. Take disabled students at their word.”

“The SU and Uni itself should listen to disabled students and their own experiences rather than make ‘changes’ to benefit disabled students without consulting them”

“Listen to disabled students and what they need. To value disabled students and support them so they can achieve their potential. To appreciate the struggles they face daily because of their disabilities and not make this any more difficult by

creating barriers in their education. To not make disabled students feel guilty for asking for help.”

“Listen to disabled people.”

“Listen to students”

“Actually listening to students and communicating [better]. Recognising that all disabilities are different and everyone’s access needs are different”

The Access Insights Framework

The Disabled Student Experience

In “The Disabled Student Experience” we measure the disabled student experience against 6 principles, making up 6 sections of the report:

1. Universal design
2. An inclusive culture
3. A barrier-free path to support
4. Sufficient adjustments
5. Somewhere to turn
6. Equal opportunities

The 2024 results are compared against the 2023 results and against a 2033 goal. By setting actionable targets on a 10-year timescale we hope to provide a standard for the sector. The goals, which have been created in consultation with disability staff, take into consideration both the current state of the sector and whether there are best practice examples enabling the sector to reach the goals within 10 years.

Structures Underlying Accessibility

In “Structures Underlying Accessibility” we focus on the questions which relate most directly to university practices, policies and structures, facilitating conclusions about positive policies which may improve the disabled student experience.

Together, the disabled student experience statistics, 10 year goals and “Structures Underlying Accessibility” create a framework allowing the sector to see where we are, where we have been, where we want to go and how to get there.

University Comparison

As different institutions will face different challenges in improving the disabled student experience, the Access Insights project shares a snapshot of the results of

those universities with sufficient respondents. This data is weighted separately so that all samples have the same gender balance. With the help of both student activists and various institutions that disseminated the survey to their disabled student mailing lists, this year we were able to include 6 more universities in this comparison. Ultimately our aim is to include every UK Higher Education Provider, allowing each institution to see a snapshot of their disabled students' experiences and allowing prospective students to make informed choices.

What you need to know about the statistics

The 2024 data is weighted by gender and Higher Education Provider to improve the representativeness of the statistics. The data is weighted to match the following gender balance:

Gender Balance after Weighting

Women	57%
Men	33%
Non-binary/other	10%

The weighting also ensures that students from a single institution do not make up more than 11% of the sample. Unless otherwise specified, when we discuss the results in this report we are talking about the weighted results. Note that responses to a question may not always sum to 100% due to rounding. Read more about the statistics under [Survey Demographics](#).

The Disabled Student Experience

1. Universal Design

Principle: Disabled Students should be greeted by an environment, practices and policies designed with accessibility in mind

To have the same access to their studies, disabled students need accessibility to be built into teaching and learning, assessment, policy and the digital and physical environment in an anticipatory way.

Unlike individual adjustments, universal design measures reach a larger proportion of disabled students, does not add an administrative burden onto disabled students and is often helpful to non-disabled students as well.

The ADSS provides a snapshot of some key universal design measures which are relevant to a large proportion of students.

As the proportion of students who declare a disability increases, universal design has long been lauded as the future of accessibility in the HE sector (sometimes problematically even being used as an argument against individualised adjustments). Despite this, fewer than a third (31%) of disabled students agree that their institution successfully builds accessibility into environments, practices and provisions in an anticipatory way. This year we are seeing progress in some areas, such as “Teaching and Learning” and “Digital Accessibility”. Meanwhile, universal design in “Assessment” and “Policy” remain surprisingly stagnant.

1.1. Summary

1.1.1. “My institution successfully builds accessibility into their environments, practices and provisions in an anticipatory way, before a student asks for adjustments”

“I don’t know” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	31%	31%	>75%
Disagree	43%	43%	
Neither	26%	26%	

1.2. Teaching and learning

Inaccessibility in teaching and learning persists. Disabled students in the the National Student Survey (NSS) are significantly less likely than non-disabled students to feel that their course is well organised, a gap that grew in 2024. The ADSS provides some insight into this. Only 21% of disabled students feel like their modules have been designed with accessibility in mind.

Despite this, universal design in teaching and learning appears to have improved somewhat in 2024. For instance, 67% of disabled students state that lecture slides or notes are provided in advance of lectures the vast majority of the time.

The availability of lecture recordings is of special importance to many disabled students. 63% of disabled students report that they have access to recordings of a majority of lectures, however there are vast differences between universities on this

issue: 92% of disabled student respondents at University of Bath state the same. Online lectures and lecture recordings continue to be perceived as more accessible than in-person lectures are by those that attend each.

1.2.1. "I think my educators are aware of how to make their teaching and material accessible for disabled students"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	31%	34%	37%	37%	>75%
Disagree	38%	36%	32%	33%	
Neither	31%	30%	31%	30%	

Advice from a disabled student

"Providing lecturers with clear guidance on how to present lecture slides – or making them so that text and backgrounds can be easily changed"

1.2.2. "I feel like my modules have been designed with accessibility in mind"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	16%	19%	21%	21%	>60%
Disagree	50%	50%	46%	45%	
Neither	33%	32%	33%	34%	

Insight from a disabled student

"[I] personally feel that some modules place too much weight on group work [...] which can be detrimental to me as someone with communication issues"

1.2.3. Are lecture slides or notes made available to students before the lectures more than 80% of the time?

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Yes	62%	64%	69%	67%	>80%
No	38%	36%	31%	33%	

1.2.4. "I find in-person lectures/classes accessible"

Of students who have attended at least some lectures/classes in person in the last year

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	52%	55%	58%	58%	>80%
Disagree	23%	21%	16%	17%	
Neither	25%	24%	27%	25%	

Advice from a disabled student

"Hold some academic staff to greater accountability to make teaching accessible to disabled students – some are amazing, some don't even [bother] to read and/or act upon awareness documents and reasonable adjustments."

Of taught in-person students:

- 40% had attended some lectures live online in the last year (compared to 48% in 2023).
- 66% had watched lecture recordings (compared to 70% in 2023).

1.2.5. Do you have the option of attending a majority of your in-person lectures/classes live at a distance?

Of taught in-person students

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	26%	28%	33%	31%	>75%
No	57%	55%	53%	54%	
I don't know	17%	17%	14%	14%	

1.2.6. What proportion of your lectures in the last year have been recorded?

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
A majority or all	62%	62%	69%	63%	>80%
A minority or none	38%	38%	31%	37%	

Advice from a disabled student

"Firstly, take lecture recordings, and secondly, make these recordings available!"

1.3. Digital accessibility

Digital accessibility is continuing to improve 4 years after the start of the pandemic. In 2024 we see the biggest improvement in captioning. 45% of disabled students now report the vast majority of lecture recordings having useful captions (up from 40% in 2023). However, considering the 2018 Public Sector Body Accessibility Regulations, the pace of improvement for digital accessibility overall is slow.

1.3.1. "I find the online platform(s) for my modules (e.g. Moodle, Panopto, Blackboard) easy to navigate and use"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	59%	60%	67%	64%	>75%
Disagree	22%	21%	17%	18%	
Neither	18%	18%	17%	17%	

1.3.2. "I find the online library resources easy to navigate and use"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	58%	59%	57%	55%	>75%
Disagree	20%	19%	20%	20%	
Neither	22%	22%	24%	25%	

1.3.3. "I find the live online lectures/classes I attend accessible"

Of those that attended some live online lectures

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	66%	69%	73%	71%	>80%
Disagree	14%	12%	10%	12%	
Neither	20%	19%	17%	18%	

1.3.4. "I find the recorded lectures/classes I am provided with accessible"

Of those that watched some lecture recordings

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	65%	67%	71%	68%	>85%
Disagree	17%	16%	14%	16%	
Neither	18%	17%	15%	16%	

Advice from a disabled student

"ensure all lecture recordings are clear as sometimes voices are hard to hear and captions are inaccurate."

1.3.5. Do more than 80% of recorded lectures have useful captions?

“I don’t know, I don’t notice captions” excluded
 Of those that watched some lecture recordings

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	37%	40%	49%	45%	>90%
No	63%	60%	51%	55%	

1.4. Assessment

In the NSS, disabled students’ satisfaction with assessment actually decreased in 2024. The ADSS offers further detail: Almost half of disabled student respondents (48%) believe that they have received a lower mark on their course due to inaccessible assessments. Solutions such as alternative assessments are not currently widely available. While extensions are relatively common, only 28% of disabled students have the option of uncapped resits if they are unwell on the day of an exam.

Surprisingly, after 5 years of a highly publicised legal case which revolved around disability discrimination in assessment, this continues to be an area of arrested development for the sector.

1.4.1. Do you think you've ever received a lower mark on this course because an assessment wasn't accessible to you? ⁴

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	49%	48%	47%	48%	<15%
No	51%	52%	53%	52%	

Insight from a disabled student

"I had one module marked poorly because the person marking didn't take my extended deadline into account, resulting in one submission being a fail [...] I did not chase it up further [...] [it] was taking all my energy."

1.4.2. "Sometimes the style of assessment doesn't allow me to demonstrate my knowledge or skill effectively."

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	58%	56%	58%	57%	<30%
Disagree	19%	20%	21%	22%	
Neither	23%	24%	21%	22%	

⁴ Question changed from 2023 to add "on this course".

Advice from a disabled student

“Actually listen to students and have alternative modes of assessment available to people with disabilities. I find some in-person assessments very stressful and cause me physical pain and emotional distress but when I asked they said there was no way I could do any other assessment.”

1.4.3. For what proportion of your assessments do you have the option of alternative forms of assessment (e.g. sitting an exam as an alternative to delivering a presentation) ⁵

“I don’t know” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
The majority or all	12%	13%	10%	12%	>35%
None	75%	74%	76%	73%	<20%

Advice from a disabled student

“I would like to see an alternative provision to exams, having different types of assessments to choose from in core modules give all students a level playing field to work to their strengths.”

⁵ Question changed from 2023. The question previously read “For what proportion of your assessments do you/will you have the option of alternative forms of assessment (eg sitting an exam as an alternative to delivering a presentation)”

1.4.4. If you are unable to take an exam at the intended time due to being unwell, are you generally allowed to take it at a later time (without the results being capped)?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	25%	26%	27%	28%	>60%
No	23%	23%	22%	25%	
I don't know	52%	51%	51%	48%	

Insight from a disabled student

“One time when I was unable to attend an exam due to my disability I was able to sit it at an alternative time but it was capped at 40% which has brought my whole degree mark down which is ableist.”

1.4.5. “I find it easy to get extensions when I require it due to my disability.”

“Not applicable” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	55%	55%	55%	55%	>85%
Disagree	27%	27%	23%	24%	
Neither	19%	19%	22%	21%	

Insight from a disabled student

“they said they ‘couldn’t guarantee that they would give me an extension”

1.5. Physical environment

The questions in section 1.5. were asked only of in-person students with physical or sensory access needs this year. As such they are not comparable with the 2023 results, which were from all in-person students.

- 38% of students with physical/sensory needs find the physical/sensory environment on campus accessible.
- 44% of students with physical/sensory needs report having been unable to attend an in-person teaching session/supervision at their institution because the location was not accessible to them.
- Over one in five (22%) students with physical/sensory needs did not feel confident that they would be able to exit all the on-campus buildings they use in case of emergency.

In addition, 46% of disabled students who need accessible student housing have had to pay extra for this.

53% of disabled in-person students had some physical or sensory access needs such as needing a quiet environment, lifts, urgent access to toilets, hearing loops, special signage or ergonomic equipment.⁶

⁶ Note that the men were underrepresented and non-binary students overrepresented in this group relative to the UK wide sample. Gender balance after weighting: Men – 28%, Non-binary/other – 14%, Women – 58%.

1.5.1. "I find the physical/sensory environment on campus accessible"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	38%	38%	>75%
Disagree	40%	39%	
Neither	23%	24%	

Advice from a disabled student

"Have more [quiet]/sensory rooms dotted around campus so if I needed a calming [quiet] environment away from people [...] there'd always be one close enough."

Advice from a disabled student

"Have basic wheelchair access. Access routes are frequently locked, social spaces have lifts turned off and I have been frequently assigned 'group work' in classrooms that are not wheelchair accessible, isolating me. I hate being at university"

1.5.2. Have you ever been unable to attend an in-person teaching session/supervision at this institution because the location was not physically/sensorily accessible to you?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	45%	44%	<15%
No	55%	56%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Timetable in person lectures and seminars in rooms that are accessible when a student with physical needs is present. The majority of lectures across the last year were timetabled in inaccessible rooms and disabled students could not attend despite being on campus.”

Advice from a disabled student

“I know of multiple occasions where students have been left to sit outside the teaching space and listen in from the corridor because their space was not appropriate for their needs and the university didn’t change it.”

1.5.3. Are you confident that you would be able to get out of all the campus buildings you use in case of emergency?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	80%	79%	>95%
No	20%	22%	

- 43% of disabled students with physical or sensory access needs report having lived in student housing in the last year.
- 59% of students with physical or sensory access needs that report living in student housing have access needs that relate to their housing.⁷
- 48% of students with physical or sensory access needs sometimes need to use accessible toilets.⁸

1.5.4. Does your student housing meet your access needs?

Of students that live in student housing and have student housing access needs

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	73%	69%	>90%
No	27%	31%	

Insight from a disabled student

“In a ‘wheelchair accessible’ accommodation at the University, the radiator control was placed underneath a desk and completely inaccessible.”

⁷ Note that the men were underrepresented and non-binary students overrepresented in this group relative to the UK wide sample. The gender balance after weighting: Men – 25%, Non-binary/other – 18%, Women – 58%.

⁸ Note that the men were underrepresented and non-binary students overrepresented in this group relative to the UK wide sample. The gender balance after weighting – Men – 23%, Non-binary/other – 19%, Women – 58%.

1.5.5. Did you have to pay more for housing that meets your access needs?

Of students that live in student housing and have student housing access needs

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	45%	46%	<5%
No	55%	54%	

1.5.6. Are the accessible toilets on campus sufficient, easily located and well maintained?

Of students who sometimes need to use accessible toilets

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	69%	69%	>80%
No	31%	31%	

Insight from a disabled student

“Accessible toilets - why are there so little and why are the functioning ones not maintained??”

1.5.7. Do you know of any available work spaces on campus that meet all your access needs?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	67%	66%	>90%
No	33%	34%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Increase number of assistive technology rooms as they are helpful but sometimes become full”

Insight from a disabled student

“The lack of available study spaces allocated without sensory overload on campus is worrying, especially for those students with sensory processing disorder. The library is not usable.”

1.5.8. Do you find the physical library facilities accessible?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	68%	66%	>90%
No	23%	24%	
I don't know	10%	10%	

1.6. Policy

Just like universal design in assessment, universal design in policy was surprisingly stagnant this year, even moving backward in some places. Only 26% of disabled students believed that they would be allowed to study part time if they needed to. 43% of disabled students believed that their course counts disability related absences toward the attendance average.

1.6.1. If you fail to attend a lecture for disability reasons, is this counted toward your attendance average?

“There is no attendance requirement for this course” excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Yes	46%	44%	42%	43%	
No	15%	16%	18%	17%	>60%
I don't know	39%	40%	40%	40%	

Advice from a disabled student

“understand that low attendance due to disability and health conditions does not equal low engagement!”

Insight from a disabled student

“Being able to attend [a set of] lectures at home as part of disability provision would have meant so much to me, and would have cost the institution nothing to implement. Instead I was told it wasn't 'policy' to allow hybrid working. [...] I ended up burnt out, having an increasing number of migraines, and ultimately suffering in terms of my mental health”

1.6.2. Do you think you would be allowed to complete this course part time if needed?

Of full time students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	30%	30%	25%	26%	>60%
No	34%	34%	35%	35%	
I don't know	36%	36%	40%	39%	

1.6.3. Have you ever faced disciplinary action at this institution as a result of your disability?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	7%	7%	6%	7%	<2%
No	93%	93%	94%	93%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Not jumping straight to disciplinary action for disability related attendance issues”

1.6.4. If needed, would you be allowed to interrupt your studies for a year?

	2023 UK	2023 UK	2024 UK	2024 UK	2033 goal

	wide	wide Weighted	wide	wide Weighted	
Yes	42%	41%	45%	44%	>70%
No	15%	16%	8%	9%	
I don't know	42%	44%	48%	47%	

Advice from a disabled student

“fix the [interruption of studies] process so that it isn't treated like a punishment – being banned from college grounds is socially isolating, being cut off from the faculty makes it difficult to resolve issues that led to [the interruption] being necessary in the first place.”

2. An Inclusive Culture

Principle: Disabled students should experience a positive culture at their institution, which promotes inclusion, belonging and a healthy approach to productivity.

Accessibility and inclusion is the job of every staff member within a Higher Education Provider. As such the attitudes of staff members are crucial for the disabled student experience.

An inclusive culture is crucial for disabled students' experience not just because it minimises the overt ableism that students encounter. An inclusive culture also underpins staff members:

- Considering accessibility in an anticipatory fashion
- Recognising and acknowledging when academic content contains ableism
- Implementing agreed adjustments
- Being flexible and understanding in response to students' needs.

If students know that they may be judged by staff on the other hand, they hold back from raising issues, declaring their disabilities, or escalating unresolved issues.

The most common staff attitudes that students encounter are positive, with 67% of students reporting that a staff member has stated or implied that "it is ok to need support". Positive attitudes toward disability among staff remain similar to 2023 and we see a reduction in common negative attitudes. Despite this development, a quarter of disabled students continue to report having been made to feel unwelcome by staff at the university due to their disability. This is by no means an inevitability: the University Comparison reveals that only 11% of respondents from University of Bath had been made to feel unwelcome.

The failure to implement agreed support remains common in 2024 with 43% of disabled students reporting a staff member treating their agreed support as a

suggestion. Considering this it is heartening to see in [Structures Underlying Accessibility](#) that 78% of disabled students report a staff member at the institution being willing to advocate for them and speak to other staff to help ensure that their needs are met.

The sometimes harsh academic environment, with educators having very limited time, can be seen played out in these statistics. Support from educators is considered among the least helpful by disabled students (see question 4.5.2.). Training and information campaigns are an important part of the solution, as highlighted under [Structures Underlying Accessibility](#), but so is the creation of a healthy working environment for university staff members.

2.1. Summary

2.1.1. Have you ever been made to feel unwelcome at the institution by a staff member due to your disability?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	26%	24%	23%	25%	<5%
No	74%	76%	77%	75%	

2.2. Culture

2.2.1. Which of the following attitudes do you feel have been stated or implied by a staff member at your institution?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
"It's ok to need support"	65%	65%	69%	67%	>80%
"Mental health problems are valid"	52%	51%	54%	52%	>70%
"Not all disabilities are visible"	48%	48%	51%	50%	>65%
"Accessibility is the responsibility of all staff members, not just disability staff"	33%	34%	34%	34%	>55%
"Accessibility is a responsibility, not a favour"	30%	30%	31%	31%	>55%
"Being disabled can bring strengths as well as limitations"	29%	29%	28%	28%	>50%
"It is understandable for access needs to change from day to day"	21%	21%	24%	24%	>45%
"Your accessibility"	22%	21%	17%	18%	<5%

needs are a nuisance or unreasonable”					
“Adjustments won’t work in the “real world”	21%	20%	16%	16%	<5%
“If you are so disabled you should interrupt your studies”	19%	18%	15%	16%	<8%
“You are lazy or incompetent”	16%	16%	12%	13%	<3%
“You are not as disabled as you say”	16%	15%	13%	13%	<3%
“Your adjustments are unfair to other students”	19%	18%	11%	12%	<5%
“You are trying to ‘cheat the system’ by asking for adjustments”	15%	14%	9%	10%	<3%
None of the above	8%	8%	10%	11%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Departmental staff need to be aware that adjustments are about levelling the playing field for disabled students and are not a ‘favour’ or ‘optional’ or something the student can manage without if they choose”

Advice from a disabled student

“Improve the culture and mindset about disability and disabled individuals. When I am seen as the same and as someone with amazing insight to offer I can thrive, when I am seen as ‘less than’ I can’t. No amount of reasonable adjustments will solve people’s mindset”

Advice from a disabled student

“Stop threatening students with fitness to study and offering a leave of absence when you fail to accommodate their disability”

2.2.2. “I feel that the majority of my educators at this institution sufficiently prioritise my wellbeing”

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	49%	48%	>65%
Disagree	20%	21%	
Neither	31%	31%	

2.2.3. “The majority of my educators at this institution are understanding when my disability impacts my attendance or performance”

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	52%	52%	>65%
Disagree	19%	20%	
Neither	29%	29%	

Insight from a disabled student

“I felt misunderstood by the majority of teaching staff I encountered at university and faced ableism every day of my degree.”

2.2.4. In lectures, academic materials or academic discussions at this institution, have you ever encountered teaching that devalues disabled people or is built on stereotypes of disabled people (ableism)?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
No, I have not encountered such content at this institution	66%	68%	71%	69%	
Yes, and the educator didn't identify it as prejudice	20%	18%	17%	19%	<5%
Yes but the educator identified it as a type of prejudice	15%	14%	12%	12%	

2.2.5. Has a staff member at the institution ever treated the adjustments that have been agreed for you as mere suggestions?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of those who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	49%	45%	41%	43%	<20%
No	51%	55%	59%	57%	

2.2.6. Have you experienced bullying or harassment by a staff⁹ member or student at this institution?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
No	71%	72%	78%	75%	>90%
Yes	15%	14%	13%	15%	
I don't know	10%	10%	7%	7%	
Prefer not to say	3%	3%	3%	3%	

⁹ 2023 question phrasing: “Have you experienced bullying or harassment by staff or students at this institution?”

Insight from a disabled student

“My experience has been marred by bullying, discrimination, and a feeling of having no voice [...]I will describe my experience as systematic discrimination for my disability and race. There needs to be a greater emphasis on empathy and real support to prevent these negative experiences for other students in the future.”

2.2.7. “My personal tutor/primary supervisor is supportive and flexible when it comes to my disability and access needs”¹⁰

“Not applicable” excluded

Of those who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	56%	57%	57%	58%	>75%
Disagree	17%	16%	16%	15%	
Neither	27%	27%	27%	27%	

Also see the responses to Question 5.3.3. “Please select the reasons why you have held back from raising an accessibility issue/asking for disability support at the institution”

- “I didn’t think the particular staff member would understand or believe me”
- “I didn’t want others to see me as difficult, incompetent or like I’m trying to get an advantage over other students”
- “I was afraid I would be treated worse or that it would affect my academic prospects”

¹⁰ 2023 question phrasing: “My personal tutor/ supervisor is supportive and flexible when it comes to my disability and access needs”

Also see these responses to Question 3.3.1. about why students have not disclosed:

- “I don’t think staff would understand or believe me”
- “I am afraid I would be treated worse or that it would affect my academic prospects”

Finally, see section 2 in [Structures underlying Accessibility](#)

3. A barrier-free path to individualised support

Principle: Disabled students should not have to go through a support application process which is so difficult that it puts them at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled peers.

One of the biggest barriers to equal access is the administrative burden disabled students experience when pursuing individualised support. In practice, administrative hurdles and delays often form a bigger barrier than outright refusal of support. Even if students eventually receive the support they require, having to undertake this process often puts them at a disadvantage compared to their peers. The *Abrahart v University of Bristol* case showed that a student does not need to have gone through a formal application process in order to have the right to support.

To minimise the administrative barriers, Higher Education Providers should give students the information they need to apply for the right support from the right body and should implement agreed support without requiring the student to chase it. Disability Services should be efficient in their communication, minimise delays and avoid creating an unnecessarily heavy evidence burden.

While 77% of declared students have a support plan in place only 39% of students with support agreed, have all this support implemented (see question 4.4.1). Thus most students are perpetually in a state of arranging support. This naturally takes a toll on students. Of students who have had adjustments agreed, 62% report having gone without some adjustments because they take too much time and energy to chase up.

3.1. Summary

3.1.1. Do you ever go without adjustments because it feels like it takes too much time and energy to chase them up?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of declared students who have had at least one accessibility adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	70%	67%	63%	62%	<20%
No	30%	33%	37%	38%	

3.2. Information

Disabled students must know where to turn, know their rights and know what access adjustments to ask for. Currently only half of students (52%) feel that they know their rights.

3.2.1. "It is easy to understand where one would turn for disability support within my institution"

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	69%	70%	75%	73%	>85%
Disagree	16%	16%	11%	12%	
Neither	15%	16%	15%	15%	

Insight from a disabled student

“I have had such a difficult time navigating [the] bureaucracy to the point where it has made me so much more stressed and anxious, not knowing where to turn to, and information being so unclear/hidden.”

3.2.2. "I know my rights as a disabled student in terms of accessibility and support at my institution"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	50%	51%	50%	52%	>75%
Disagree	22%	22%	23%	23%	
Neither	28%	28%	27%	25%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Potentially making it more obvious that a full diagnosis isn't required to get support provided- If you are in the process of getting a diagnosis it doesn't mean you can't access support at [name of university] (which is amazing) but I didn't look into it until I was most of the way through as it didn't occur to me that I could ask before the full diagnosis”

Also see Question 4.2.1. “Do you feel you have been provided with enough relevant information about different possible adjustments that could help you?”

Also see the response to Question 5.3.3. “Please select the reasons why you have held back from raising an accessibility issue/asking for disability support at the institution”

- “I didn’t know who to raise the issue with”

3.3. Declaration

The Annual Disabled Student Survey includes disabled students who have not shared that they have a disability with anyone at their institution. Of these students, only around a fifth (22%) held back because they did not require support. The most common reasons for holding back were the administrative burden, not wanting to take up resources that others needed and fearing that staff would not understand or believe them.

95% of the weighted sample had shared the fact that they have a disability with someone at their institution, for instance through telling a staff member or filling in a form.

3.3.1 Students who had not shared that they have a disability selected the following explanations:¹¹

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Usefulness of support			
I don’t need any support	21%	22%	

¹¹ Note that a larger proportion of undeclared respondents were men, compared with the sample as a whole. After weighting the group has the following gender balance: men: 40%, non-binary or other: 10%, women 51%

I need support but I don't think the adjustments this institution would offer me are going to be helpful	22%	21%	<20%
Administration			
I don't want to go through the administrative process of applying for support	43%	41%	<20%
I don't think I have the evidence they require	38%	27%	<10%
My institution has not asked me if I have a disability	19%	22%	<10%
Attitudes			
Others need the resources more than me	40%	34%	
I don't think staff would understand or believe me	24%	32%	<10%
I feel embarrassed to be needing adjustments or like I should be able to study without adjustments	31%	28%	<20%

I don't want others to see me as difficult, incompetent or like I'm trying to get an advantage over other students	36%	28%	<10%
I am afraid I would be treated worse or that it would affect my academic prospects	28%	26%	<10%
I have had bad experiences in the past when sharing my disability	19%	21%	
Knowledge			
I didn't realise I had a disability	22%	18%	
I don't know who I would raise it with	17%	19%	<10%
Other			
I didn't have a disability until recently	7%	8%	
Other	7%	4%	

Insight from a disabled student

“I am scared that I don't have enough proof of anxiety because I don't have a diagnosis[...] I also don't know what I would want the service to do, all I know is that I am really struggling.”

3.4. Disability Services

Disability Services holds a key role in supporting disabled students to access their education. In 2024 Disability Advisors continue to be positively regarded, but delays are significant. Only 58% of those who evidenced their disability more than two months before the start of their degree had a support plan in place by the time they started.

The statistics below in [A barrier-free path to individualised support](#) and [Sufficient Adjustments](#) cover only those students who have shared the fact that they have a disability with their institution.

Of declared students, 91% declared to Disability Services and 88% received some support from Disability Services. 86% were offered to speak with a disability advisor and 83% did speak with a disability advisor. 79% were invited to agree on a support plan and 77% had a support plan created for them.

68% of disabled students with support from Disability Services found it helpful.

3.4.1. “My disability advisor was knowledgeable and helpful”

Of those that spoke with disability advisor

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	67%	69%	75%	75%	>85%
Disagree	13%	13%	9%	9%	
Neither	19%	18%	16%	16%	

Insight from a disabled student

“My disability advisor at the university has been very helpful and has always helped me resolve issues without delay.”

3.4.2. Are Disability Services (or equivalent) quick to respond and put you in touch with someone who can help when you contact them?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students who declared their disability to Disability Services

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	63%	61%	73%	70%	>80%
No	37%	39%	27%	30%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Ensure support plans, adjustments and other disability information is communicated more comprehensively to relevant members of staff.”

3.4.3. When was a student support plan created for you?

Of students invited to agree a support plan

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Of students who sent in evidence before starting					
Before start of term	51%	53%	53%	49%	
Of students who sent in evidence at least 2 months before starting					
Before start of term	60%	62%	60%	58%	>95%

3.4.4. Has disability services (or equivalent) had delays which have impacted you?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students who shared that they have a disability with Disability Services

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	48%	47%	38%	41%	<20%

Advice from a disabled student

“They need to improve the speed of disability services response time. This year, I waited over 8 months for a useful response.”

Also see the response to Question 5.3.3. “Please select the reasons why you have held back from raising an accessibility issue/asking for disability support at the institution”

- “It would take too much of my time or effort to advocate for myself”

Under Question 3.3.1 about reasons for nondisclosure, see response:

- “I don’t want to go through the administrative process of applying for support”

3.5. Evidencing

97% of declared students sent in evidence of their disability to their institution. The fact that medical evidence is still required by institutions in almost all cases indicates how far we have to go to leave the medical model of disability behind. However, in a positive trend, the amount of evidencing Higher Education providers require may be easing, as the percentage of students who found evidencing to be burdensome fell to 22% this year.

54% of students who sent in evidence of their disability did so before they started their course. Only 32% did so over two months before they started, which would have provided the institution with ideal circumstances for putting support in place before the start of term. The most common reason for not applying for support before starting their degree was not knowing how. A third of students indicated that this was one reason. This shows the need for improved information to students about disability support after they are accepted onto their course.

97% of the declared students had sent in evidence of their disability to their institution. Of those who had sent in evidence and could remember when, 54% did so before they started their course. 32% did so over two months before they started.

3.5.1. “The amount or kind of evidence that the university has asked me to provide in order to receive adjustments has been burdensome”

“Not applicable” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	31%	31%	20%	22%	<15%
Disagree	44%	44%	56%	53%	
Neither	25%	25%	24%	24%	

Under reasons not to disclose (Question 3.3.1.) see the response:

- “I don’t think I have the evidence they require”

Advice from a disabled student

“Reduce the burden of medical evidence[...] This is a time burden, an emotional burden to explain it to people, and often also a financial burden, as most medical professionals will not produce reports for free.”

3.5.2. Why did you not send evidence of your disability to the institution before starting? (please select all that apply)

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
I did not know who to talk to/how the support application process worked	35%	33%
I initially was not intending to apply for support	28%	27%
It took a long time to get the evidence	19%	20%
The application process for Disabled Students' Allowance delayed the application process for support from my institution	8%	9%
I went through the support application process without being asked for evidence	5%	5%
Other	29%	30%

3.6. Follow up

One of the most demanding parts of arranging support is following up on support which has in principle already been agreed. While there are improvements in 2024, the majority of students (59%) continue to have to chase up support that has been agreed for them.

3.6.1. Do you often have to explain the same thing about your disability or access needs several times to different staff members?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	73%	71%	63%	63%	<33%
No	27%	29%	37%	37%	

See also question 2.2.1 under “Structures Underlying Accessibility”

3.6.2. After an adjustment has been agreed, how common is it for you to have to chase it up at least once in order for it to be put in place?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students who have had at least one accessibility adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
More than half the time/always	41%	40%	29%	31%	<10%
Never	31%	33%	43%	41%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Improve communication between teaching staff about students with accessibility needs so disabled students don’t need to chase it constantly and repeat themselves”

4. Sufficient Adjustments

Principle: Disabled students should receive all reasonable adjustments needed to enable them to access their degree on equal terms with their non-disabled peers.

For students to have all the support they need, the support provided must be both effective and sufficient. Students must be offered the support they need and the agreed support must then be implemented.

In 2024, disabled students generally perceive provided support to be more effective than in 2023. Almost three quarters of disabled students now find a majority of their support effective. There is one caveat to this: one on one support staff is rated more poorly this year, perhaps a consequence of DSA changes being echoed in the support provided by Higher Education Providers as well.

While the support students receive is generally effective, it is not always sufficient. This is sometimes because the support that has been agreed is not sufficient (students may not be sufficiently informed about support options or they may ask for something and be rejected) and sometimes because the support that has been agreed is not implemented. Half of declared students report having been offered insufficient support at some point while 61% report some of their agreed support not being put in place. All in all only 38% of declared students report having the support they need.

4.1. Summary

4.1.1. "I have all the support and adjustments I need to be able to access my studies on equal terms with my non-disabled peers"

"Not applicable" excluded

Note: declared students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	35%	37%	38%	38%	>75%
Disagree	49%	47%	36%	37%	
Neither	16%	16%	26%	25%	

4.2. Asking for the right adjustments

Starting a new university degree will come with access barriers the student may not have experienced before. In order to be able to ask for the right support, students must be offered information about different types of support that may suit their needs. Currently 53% of declared students feel that they have received this.

4.2.1. Do you feel you have been provided with enough relevant information about different possible adjustments that could help you?

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal

Yes	45%	47%	52%	53%	>75%
No	55%	53%	48%	47%	

See also

- Question 3.4.1. "My disability advisor was knowledgeable and helpful"
- Question 3.2.2. "I know my rights as a disabled student in terms of accessibility and support at my institution"

Insight from a disabled student

"I am constantly the one asking for how the university can support me. I wish the university would approach me and show me what they can offer to support me. Constantly having to ask for adjustments is a burden oftentimes not recognized. Tell me what you can do for me, that would show universities actually care."

4.3. Adjustments agreed

Which adjustments are agreed is a function both of which adjustments students are empowered to ask for and which adjustments are rejected. In 2024, 59% of students with a support plan have felt empowered to have sufficient influence over what is in their plan.

89% of the declared students have had at least one adjustment agreed by their institution such as an exam adjustment, a service like study skills tuition or a change to teaching such as providing slides in advance of lectures.

4.3.1. "I have felt empowered to have sufficient influence over what is in my support plan"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of students who have had a support plan agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	60%	60%	58%	59%	>85%
Disagree	17%	16%	16%	16%	
Neither	24%	24%	26%	26%	

Insight from a disabled student

"My support plan was [set up] via email and I only ever spoke to my Disability Practitioner once, via the phone[...] other times I've told him I'm struggling and asked for a chat and he's deflected it"

4.3.2. Are there any adjustments that the institution could provide to make your experience more equal to the experience of non-disabled students, which they have refused to provide?

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	55%	53%	41%	44%	<25%
No	45%	47%	59%	56%	

4.3.3. Have you ever been in a situation where the only adjustment the institution offered to resolve an access barrier was insufficient to put you on equal footing with your non-disabled peers?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	48%	50%	<15%
No	52%	50%	

4.3.4. Have you ever been in a situation where the only adjustment the institution offered to resolve an access barrier was isolating, dangerous or humiliating?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	22%	24%	<5%
No	89%	76%	

4.4. Implementation

Little progress was made on improving implementation of agreed support in 2023. Only 39% of disabled students have had all their agreed support provided in 2024.

4.4.1. What proportion of the adjustments that have been agreed upon by your institution have been provided?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students with at least one adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
All	36%	37%	40%	39%	>80%
None	2%	2%	2%	2%	

See also 2.1.2. in “Structures Underlying Accessibility”.

4.5. Effectiveness

Support provided to disabled students continues to be generally effective. 73% of disabled students now find the majority of adjustments effective. Support from pastoral staff and research supervisors is considered most helpful, with Disability Services and other centralised support following closely. Support from personal tutors, departmental administrators and teaching and assessment staff is considered less helpful.

4.5.1. Out of the adjustments that have been provided for you by your institution, what proportion have been effective in completely removing the disadvantage they were supposed to remove and allowing you to access your studies on equal terms with your non-disabled peers?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students with at least one adjustment implemented

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
The majority or all	65%	65%	73%	73%	>85%
All	19%	21%	40%	39%	
The majority	46%	44%	45%	44%	
Fewer than half	29%	28%	13%	14%	
None	7%	7%	2%	2%	

Insight from a disabled student

“There was a long wait for support, but once I got it, it was amazing”

4.5.2. “The support I have received from [the individual/team in question] since they were made aware that I have a disability has been helpful”

“Not applicable – I have not received any support” excluded

Of students who have shared that they have a disability with the individual/team in question

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Pastoral or mentoring staff in my department, faculty, school or college	69% agree	70% agree
Research supervisor(s)	67% agree	69% agree
Disability Services or equivalent	68% agree	68% agree
Centralised student support staff outside of Disability Services (e.g. mental health or wellness team, counsellors)	66% agree	66% agree
Personal tutor	61% agree	61% agree
Administrative or technical staff members in my department, faculty, school or college	61% agree	60% agree
Another teaching or assessment staff member in my department, faculty, school or college	58% agree	56% agree

Advice from a disabled student

“If someone discloses they have a disability, make sure you take that into account”

One-on-one support effectiveness

52% of the weighted sample have received some one on one support funded by their institution (compared to 44% in 2023).

4.5.3. Some students receive one-on-one support funded by their institution instead of DSA (e.g. if they are international students or receive counselling etc). Please select any one-on-one support your institution has funded for you (do not select any support funded by DSA).

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Mentoring	21%	21%	19%	21%
Counselling	19%	19%	19%	20%
Study skills tuition	17%	17%	19%	20%
Note taking	5%	5%	5%	7%
Text assistance (e.g. scribing or reading aloud)	3%	3%	4%	5%
Transcription services	2%	2%	4%	4%
Physical	2%	2%	1%	1%

assistance				
Sign language Interpretation	0%	0%	1%	1%
Other	1%	1%	2%	2%

4.5.4. "I feel that one-on-one support staff members are skilled in providing the support I need"

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Agree	56%	63%	57%	59%	>85%
Disagree	24%	16%	13%	13%	
Neither	20%	21%	29%	29%	

Insight from a disabled student

"The learning support from the special tutor that was provided wasn't enough. The tutor didn't have the required skills to help students with learning difficulties."

4.5.5. “The one-on-one support I have received has been helpful”

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	65%	67%	61%	62%	>85%
Disagree	16%	15%	15%	14%	
Neither	19%	19%	25%	24%	

Tools

4.5.6. Do you have the assistive technology, software, access equipment and ergonomic furniture that you need to be able to access your education on equal terms with your non-disabled peers?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	67%	67%	68%	67%	>80%
No	33%	33%	32%	33%	

Insight from a disabled student

“[T]he assistive tech team were brilliant, got everything I needed really quickly, the right stuff, and the right attitude.”

5. Somewhere to turn

Principle: Disabled students should have a person or place to go to within their institution to effectively resolve accessibility issues.

We know that even with a support plan in place, access barriers do appear for disabled students. Either because the plan is not followed or because new situations occur and students' needs change. In addition, some students do not have a support plan in place. In all these situations it is crucial that disabled students have somewhere to turn.

The proportion of students that feel that they have somewhere to turn with access barriers increased to 67% in 2024. While most disabled students still hold back from raising access issues, the proportion that raise the majority of the issues they encounter is growing. This is likely in part because students receive a better response when they do – in 2024 65% of students who have raised access issues have had at least one resolved. Unfortunately only a third of students know how to appeal a decision that puts them at a disadvantage, or how to make a formal complaint. Of those students that do make a complaint, 39% feel heard.

5.1. Summary

5.1.1. “There is a person or system within the institution that I could turn to who would be able to effectively address access barriers I may face”

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	59%	61%	67%	67%	>75%
Disagree	17%	16%	12%	13%	
Neither	23%	23%	21%	20%	

5.2. Proactivity

The *Abrahart v University of Bristol* case made it clear that institutions need to actively work with their students to arrange appropriate support, rather than waiting for students to request it. In 2024, 59% of disabled students report that when they have been struggling someone has recognised this and offered effective support.

5.2.1. When you have been struggling, has someone at the institution recognised this and offered effective support?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	51%	51%	57%	59%	>70%
No	49%	49%	43%	41%	

Insight from a disabled student

“When it comes to mental health issues I think they are pushed aside as it’s easy to think the student is acting up or unapproachable or doesn’t care about their studies. When really they’re struggling”

See also questions 1.3.3. And 1.3.4. in “Structures Underlying Accessibility”.

5.3. Raising issues

We know that most disabled students will encounter accessibility barriers after the start of their degree. Currently most students hold back from raising many of these issues due to the process being time consuming and not wanting to appear difficult. In 2024, a majority of students who have raised access issues have had at least one resolved. If this continues to be the case, students will become empowered to raise more of the access issues they encounter, ultimately leading to improved accessibility.

75% of the weighted sample have encountered at least one accessibility barrier/support need since starting their degree. The questions in 5.3. apply to them.

5.3.1. Of all the times you have encountered accessibility barriers/support needs, what proportion of the times have you raised this with someone?

Of those who have encountered at least one access need

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
A majority or all	55%	55%	58%	60%	>80%
Fewer than half	32%	32%	29%	28%	
None	13%	13%	14%	13%	

5.3.2. If you have ever raised issues with accessibility, please select all statements that you agree with:

Of those who have raised at least one access issue

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
"At least one accessibility issue I have raised was left unresolved"	53%	53%	42%	43%	<15%
"At least one accessibility issue I have raised was resolved"	53%	53%	67%	65%	>75%

"At least one accessibility issue I have raised took so long to sort out that it affected my health or studies"	43%	43%	38%	38%	<20%
"At least one accessibility issue I have raised was handled quickly and proactively"	35%	35%	36%	36%	>75%
"I was treated worse as a consequence of raising an accessibility issue in at least one case"	16%	16%	15%	17%	<2%

Insight from a disabled student

"The disability support team [...] within the university (who produce learning support plans) do not have any role in ensuring that the plans are implemented and/or reviewed appropriately. There is no oversight whatsoever on whether departmental staff actually implement the plans and information sent to them by the disability support team). When departmental staff do not implement the plans as intended the student has no recourse except to the formal complaints / academic appeal process"

5.3.3. Please select the reasons why you have held back from raising an accessibility issue/asking for disability support at the institution

Of students who have held back from raising at least one accessibility barrier/support need

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
University operations					
It would take too much of my time to advocate for myself	50%	48%			
"It would take too much of my time or effort to advocate for myself"			52%	50%	<10%
"I didn't believe the institution could do anything about the issue" ¹²	49%	48%	42%	39%	<20%
"Although I believe they could, I didn't believe the institution would do anything"			39%	39%	<10%

¹² Response changed from 2023. The response previously read: "I didn't believe it's something the university can do anything about"

about the issue"					
"It would have taken too long for them to put support in place"			30%	29%	<10%
"I didn't know who to raise the issue with" ¹³	34%	32%	30%	29%	<10%
Staff attitudes					
"I didn't want others to see me as difficult, incompetent or like I'm trying to get an advantage over other students"	58%	57%	54%	51%	<15%
"Raising issues hasn't helped/has been harmful for me in the past"			39%	39%	
"I didn't think the particular staff member would understand or believe me"	34%	33%	27%	27%	<5%
"I was afraid I would be treated worse or that it	34%	33%	28%	26%	<15%

¹³ Response changed from 2023. The response previously read: "I didn't know who to raise the issue to"

would affect my academic prospects"					
"I don't have the required evidence"			23%	20%	<10%
Internalised attitudes					
"I don't like to ask for too much support"	57%	57%	57%	57%	<25%
Other	4%	4%	2%	3%	

5.4. Somewhere to turn

A problem for disabled students within many institutions is the lack of clear structures of responsibility, meaning that staff members are often uncertain who is responsible for accessibility. 33% of disabled students feel that they are sometimes pushed from person to person due to this lack of clarity.

5.4.1. “Sometimes I feel I am pushed from one person to the next because it is unclear who is responsible for my access”

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	40%	39%	33%	33%	<15%
Disagree	35%	36%	44%	44%	
Neither	25%	25%	23%	22%	

Also see Question 2.2.7. “My personal tutor/supervisor is supportive and flexible when it comes to my disability and access needs”

5.5. Escalating issues

Due to poor disability rights awareness among staff there are situations where disabled students may have to escalate issues. In 2024, disabled students respondents are more informed about this process, with approximately a third knowing how to go about “appealing” a decision or “escalating” an issue.

5.5.1. If someone made a decision about accessibility that put you at a disadvantage, do you know who you could “appeal” the decision to?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	24%	26%	32%	33%	>70%
No	76%	74%	68%	67%	

5.5.2. Do you know how you could go about making a formal disability-related complaint at the institution?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	24%	26%	30%	32%	>55%
No	76%	74%	70%	68%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Give the advice on where to appeal when they do not uphold decisions.”

18% of disabled students have at some point made a complaint or otherwise “escalated” a disability issue.

5.5.3. Did you feel heard when escalating a disability issue?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students who escalated a disability issue

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Yes	34%	34%	41%	39%	>75%
No	66%	66%	59%	61%	

Advice from a disabled student

“All successful complaints should be published[...] and accessible by students, [...] otherwise we don't know how complaints will be dealt with and do not have access to (many) previous cases”

See also section 3 in [Structures underlying Accessibility](#).

6. Equal Opportunities

Principle: Disabled students should be provided with the same non-academic opportunities from their institution as their non disabled peers.

Disabled students deserve the same value for money from their degree as non-disabled students. Students come to university not only to study but to build networks, gain experience and expand their career opportunities. These opportunities must be equal for disabled and non-disabled students.

As would be expected, given the improvements in the rest of the survey results in 2024, disabled students are more satisfied with their institution in 2024 compared to 2023. At the same time 53% of disabled students report their physical health suffering from their degree at some point. Shockingly, almost one in five current disabled students have left a Higher Education Provider, switched degrees, interrupted their studies or switched to part-time studies specifically because of inaccessibility or lack of disability support in the past.

Institutions still have a long way to go to support disabled students in their careers. Only a quarter of students feel informed about supports such as Access to Work and disabled students' perception of Student Unions has not improved in 2024.

6.1. Summary

6.1.1. "I feel part of a community at this institution"

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	42%	43%	50%	50%	>65%
Disagree	34%	33%	24%	25%	
Neither	24%	25%	26%	25%	

6.2. Career

The theme of Disability History Month this year is employment. Disabled students often leave university with worse career prospects than non-disabled students. In addition to improving students' access to their academics, there are significant gaps that Higher Education Providers can fill to improve disabled students' chances on the job market:

- Of disabled students who have pursued a placement or internship as part of their course, only 50% currently feel that they have received the support they need to access this.
- Although many Higher Education Providers do offer disability informed career advice, only 29% of disabled students are aware of such a programme within their institution.
- Only 25% of disabled students feel informed about supports such as Access to Work which they will need to understand to be ideally supported in their careers.

Another important and often forgotten part of equipping students for the job market is ensuring that they are able to build a network, see section 6.3.

34% of disabled students have pursued a placement or internship as part of their course.

6.2.1. “I have received the support I need to access my placement/internship on equal footing with my non-disabled peers”¹⁴

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students who have pursued a placement or internship

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	49%	50%	>75%
Disagree	31%	31%	
Neither	20%	19%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Disabled students who have to go for placements or internships should be allocated to conducive places from the onset and not left to sort it out when they get to the placement/internship because they will not get the support from all the staff there.”

¹⁴ Question not comparable with last year as it was conditional this year

6.2.2. Does your institution offer career advice which takes your disability into account?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	29%	29%	>65%
No	23%	24%	
I don't know	48%	47%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Put more specific expertise into career advice and help for remote students. I found the career services at my university provided too much generic advice to autistic students and ignored mature and remote students”

6.2.3. Do you feel informed about supports such as Access to Work which you could apply for to make your workplace accessible to you as a disabled person?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	25%	25%	>65%
No	75%	75%	

6.3. Health

It is not uncommon for the inaccessibility experienced by disabled students to negatively impact their health. 53% of disabled students report their physical health having suffered from their degree, while 78% report their mental health having suffered.

6.3.1. Has your physical health ever suffered from this degree?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	54%	53%	30%
No	46%	47%	

6.3.2. Has your mental health ever suffered from this degree?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	80%	78%	50%
No	21%	22%	

Insight from a disabled student

“I have often been made to feel like an inconvenience because of this and feel it has impacted my mental health”

6.4. Satisfaction

Shockingly, almost one in five respondents have at some point left a Higher Education Provider, switched degrees, interrupted their studies or switched to part-time studies specifically because of inaccessibility or lack of disability support.

The proportion of disabled students who are satisfied with their institution has increased in 2024, now making up a majority of respondents. The proportion of students who have considered interrupting their studies has been reduced to 38%. It is most common for students to consider interrupting their studies or completely leaving their institution as few students believe they would be allowed to switch to part time studies (1.6.2).

6.4.1. "I feel satisfied with my institution"

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	46%	46%	55%	53%	75%
Disagree	30%	30%	21%	23%	
Neither	23%	23%	24%	25%	

Insight from a disabled student

"I am happy with the support received by the university as they meet my needs."

6.4.2. In the last year, have you considered any of the following:

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Interrupting your studies	48%	46%	40%	38%	
Leaving your institution	45%	43%	37%	37%	<25%
Switching to part time studies	21% (of full time students)	20% (of full time students)	17% (of full time students)	18% (of full time students)	
Switching to a different degree	20%	20%	18%	17%	
None of the above	34%	35%	41%	42%	

Insight from a disabled student

“I left the university after my second year due to the disability and accessibility issues left unresolved, shrugged off by staff as insignificant for their effort.”

6.4.3. In the past, have you ever left a Higher Education Provider, switched degrees, interrupted your studies or switched to part-time studies specifically because of inaccessibility/lack of disability support?

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Yes	18%	18%
No	82%	82%

6.4.4. As a disabled student, do you feel you have received the same value for money on this course as your non-disabled peers?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Yes	53%	53%	63%	60%	>80%
No	47%	47%	37%	40%	

See also Question 1.6.2.

6.5. Social and representation

Half of disabled students feel part of a community at their institution this year, an improvement from 2023. This can be compared with the responses to the NSS question "I feel part of a community of staff and students." In [2022 66% of UK students agreed to this NSS question](#). Within the ADSS University Comparison University of Oxford and University of Cambridge are once again closest to reaching the 2033 goal of 65%.

That disabled students are less likely to feel part of a community is unsurprising when we consider that only 46% find extracurricular activities related to their institution accessible to them. Another barrier to belonging is being unable to see themselves represented within their programme. However this looks to be improving. Almost a third of disabled students now report there being an openly disabled academic at their institution who they look up to.

6.5.1. "Extracurricular activities related to the institution are accessible to me e.g. sports, societies, socials"

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	40%	41%	48%	46%	>65%
Disagree	29%	26%	21%	21%	
Neither	31%	32%	19%	21%	
I don't know			11%	12%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Academically they are amazing [it] would be great to add some [support] to access social activities. E.g., a buddy system for students with sensory impediments, so there is someone to accompany students to activities if needed”

6.5.2. Are there any openly disabled academics at your institution that you look up to? (This includes academics who have disclosed their disability to you privately)

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	25%	24%	29%	32%	>55%
No	75%	76%	71%	68%	

See also Question 6.6.1.

6.6. Advocacy and Student Union

Student voice is one of the areas in the NSS where the gap between disabled students and non-disabled students is the biggest. Many disabled students feel unrepresented and unsupported by their Student Union, something that has not improved in 2024. For disabled students to have a voice, it is essential that they have access to platforms where they can come together and discuss. A third of disabled students who are interested in talking with other disabled students at their institution about their experiences, are not currently able to do so.

6.6.1. Do you have other disabled students at the institution who you can talk with about your experiences?¹⁵

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Yes	56%	56%	52%	53%	>75%
No	36%	36%	30%	30%	
Not applicable	7%	8%			
Not interested			18%	17%	

Advice from a disabled student

“The institution should have more social events for disabled students so that there is a greater sense of a community for disabled people on campus.”

¹⁵ Question changed from 2023. The question previously read: “Are there other disabled students at the university who you can talk with about your experiences and get practical tips from?”

6.6.2. "I feel represented by my Student Union"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	23%	25%	27%	26%	>55%
Disagree	34%	33%	29%	32%	
Neither	43%	43%	44%	43%	

6.6.3. "I feel supported by my Student Union"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	24%	25%	27%	25%	>60%
Disagree	32%	31%	28%	31%	
Neither	43%	43%	46%	44%	

Advice from a disabled student

"A Student Union that is actually a union, owned and run by the students, to properly convey the appropriate information to the Uni."

See also section 6 in [Structures Underlying Accessibility](#).

6.7. Other

6.7.1. Do you believe you have been discriminated against at this university because of your disability?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
No	55%	56%	66%	64%	>90%
Yes	20%	19%	14%	16%	
I don't know	24%	23%	18%	18%	
Prefer not to say	2%	2%	2%	3%	

Structures Underlying Accessibility

In this section of the report we look at the structures within a Higher Education Provider which contribute to accessibility and inclusion.

1. Administration

1.1. Budget

1.1.1. Do you feel those staff members who work to make the institution accessible have enough resources to do so?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	17%	18%	26%	27%	
No	44%	43%	35%	35%	<10%
I don't know	39%	38%	39%	38%	

Insight from a disabled student

“[O]ur disability services team are FANTASTIC but chronically understaffed”

1.2. The process of applying for disability support

1.2.1. Have you been offered to speak with a disability advisor or equivalent at the institution about your access needs?¹⁶

“I can’t remember” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Yes among declared students	87%	87%	87%	86%
Yes among students who declared to Disability Services	90%	90%	89%	89%

83% of students who had declared a disability to their institution and 79% of the whole weighted sample had spoken with a disability advisor.

¹⁶ Question changed from 2023. The question previously read: 22. Have you had the opportunity to speak with a disability advisor or equivalent at the university about your access needs?

1.2.2. Have you been invited to agree on a support plan/list of adjustments to make your course more accessible to you?

“I can’t remember” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Yes among declared students	79%	80%	80%	79%
Yes among students who have declared to Disability Services	83%	83%	83%	83%
Yes among students who have met with a Disability Advisor	90%	91%	90%	89%

77% of students who had declared a disability to their institution and 74% of the whole weighted sample had received a list of agreed adjustments.

1.3. Coordination and follow up

1.3.1. Do you think different parts of the institution which are supposed to provide support for disabled students, such as Disability Services and your academic department, communicate well with each other?

"I don't know" excluded

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2023 goal
Yes	34%	38%	38%	37%	>70%
No	66%	62%	62%	63%	

Insight from a disabled student

"In my experience, it feels as though my support plan [is] meaningless. My tutors or relevant members of staff are not aware of my disability status, let alone more specific requirements. I have to repeat the process of trying to ensure my adjustments are put in place by my individual tutors multiple times every term."

Advice from a disabled student

"Read and implement support plans"

1.3.2. Once adjustments had been decided for you, were all relevant staff members quickly informed of this?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students with at least one adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	35%	37%	39%	42%	>70%
No	36%	34%	28%	29%	
I don't know	29%	28%	33%	29%	

1.3.3. Has someone followed up with you to make sure the agreed adjustments are being implemented and to check whether you need any changes to your adjustments?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students with at least one adjustment agreed

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	40%	41%	46%	51%	>80%
No	60%	59%	54%	49%	

1.3.4. Is there a staff member at the institution who is willing to advocate for you and speak to other staff to help ensure that your needs are met?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	78%	78%	>95%
No	22%	22%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Have a college and/or department member of staff reach out to students and let them know that they are available to be contacted if a student has any concerns related to their disabilities and signpost clearly support that is available. Advocate for students as opposed to fighting against them.”

See also section 3 and 4.4 in [The Disabled Student Experience](#)

2. Staff Training and campaigns

2.1. Universal design and providing adjustments

2.1.1. "I think my educators are aware of how to make their teaching and material accessible for disabled students"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	31%	34%	37%	37%	>75%
Disagree	38%	36%	32%	33%	
Neither	31%	30%	31%	30%	

2.1.2. "The majority of staff members at the institution who do not have disability support as their primary job, still seem knowledgeable regarding how to provide any agreed adjustments"

Of students with at least one adjustment agreed

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	37%	38%	>75%
Disagree	29%	29%	
Neither	22%	22%	
I don't know	12%	11%	

2.2. Understanding the support framework

2.2.1. “The majority of staff members within my department understand how disability support works practically at the institution, for instance where to signpost students for disability support or how to access their list of adjustments”

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	41%	42%	<70%
Disagree	24%	24%	
Neither	19%	19%	
I don't know	16%	15%	

See also 4.5.2. in [The Disabled Student Experience](#).

2.3. Ableism and Law

2.3.1. “The majority of staff members outside of Disability Services understand their legal responsibility to make my experiences as a disabled student as close as is reasonably possible to the experiences of non-disabled students”

Of those who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	39%	40%	>70%
Disagree	23%	24%	
Neither	19%	19%	
I don't know	20%	18%	

Insight from a disabled student

“None of the staff seemed knowledgeable about disability or their legal obligations”

2.3.2. “I feel like the majority of staff members outside of Disability Services understand what ableism is and how to avoid it”

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	36%	35%	>65%
Disagree	25%	26%	
Neither	39%	39%	

Advice from a disabled student

“Offer more guidance and training to staff about accessibility – there is a lack of consistency between and within the different colleges about what they should be doing[.] This then should also be made clearer at the policy level”

3. Complaints and Accountability

3.1.1. Have you ever been told how you could escalate an unresolved accessibility issue?

Of students who have raised at least one access issue

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Yes	20%	22%	24%	25%
No	80%	78%	77%	75%

Advice from a disabled student

“Overhaul the complaints system to allow for more processes and more clarity in existing processes for reporting discriminatory practice”

Advice from a disabled student

“Formal processes need to be more accessible as they are workload-intensive and this can be a barrier to making use of them. [...]The university has a 'report and support' system which they present as a route for reporting discrimination and harassment etc. I have used it. It was totally ineffective in my case. [...]There needs to be meaningful, effective support for students who are subject to discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation by the university. The systems in place do not provide this. Signposting is provided by university staff to the student advice centre (run by the student union) but advisors have [no] training in or knowledge of disability discrimination and do not provide this support.”

3.1.2. If you have ever been treated poorly by a staff member due to your disability (e.g. refused reasonable adjustments) were you made aware of any consequences for that staff member?

“Not applicable” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
In the majority of cases or always	7%	8%	8%	9%	
Never	74%	73%	82%	80%	<40%

Advice from a disabled student

“There needs to be proper accountability where decision / actions taken by staff members are discriminatory in intention or effect. There has been no accountability in my experience, despite the university acknowledging (to a limited extent) that I have been discriminated against on account of my disabilities.”

See also section 5.5. in [The Disabled Student Experience](#).

4. Leadership and responsibility

4.1.1. Do you know who within your institution’s leadership is ultimately responsible for accessibility at the institution?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	14%	16%	23%	25%	>60%
No	86%	84%	77%	75%	

Advice from a disabled student

“The university would benefit from more visible, bold leadership when it comes to supporting disabled students.”

Advice from a disabled student

“Seriously listen to disabled student and staff voices and take our needs into account when designing spaces, planning events, and setting up infrastructure. Be aware that accessibility needs to be appropriately financed and resourced and do not attempt to cut corners to save money.”

5. Evaluation and learning

5.1.1. In the last year, have you been asked by the institution in a survey, focus group or module/staff evaluation whether you find your teaching or wider Higher Education experience accessible?

“I can’t remember” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	37%	39%	35%	38%	>80%
No	63%	61%	65%	62%	

5.1.2. Do you feel the institution has made sufficient and appropriate changes as a result of this evaluation?

Of those that have been asked about accessibility

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	16%	19%	26%	28%	>50%
No	30%	28%	27%	29%	
I don’t know	54%	54%	47%	43%	

Advice from a disabled student

“The university needs to be willing to acknowledge and effectively address the situation when things go wrong, and learn from these kinds of problems. Unfortunately my experience has been of extreme resistance to this. When I

raised concerns formally they were disregarded / covered up or only partially acknowledged”

Insight from a disabled student

“I then did a formal complaint that was mostly upheld in my favour. My biggest frustration of it all is that they don't seem to have learned from it. My biggest motivator for pushing the way I did was making sure no one else ended up in the position I did. I sadly don't think that it [is] the case 3 years later.”

6. Student voice

6.1.1. "I feel that the institution listens to the disabled student voice"

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Agree	29%	32%	38%	38%	>75%
Disagree	34%	32%	25%	27%	
Neither	37%	36%	37%	36%	

6.1.2. Is there a group of disabled students who advocate for disabled students' interests at the institution?

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted	2033 goal
Yes	40%	39%	43%	44%	>75%
No	11%	11%	8%	9%	
I don't know	50%	50%	50%	46%	

University comparison

We know that each institution has strengths and weaknesses when it comes to accessibility. In this section you can see a snapshot of how disabled students at different institutions have responded in the Annual Disabled Student Survey.

We want to thank the countless disabled students and staff members who supported the dissemination of our survey. We have added new data from 6 institutions to the comparison this year. Our goal is to include all UK Higher Education Providers over time. The tables demonstrate how each institution's results compare to the sector and to the 2033 goals, using the following colour code:

Below UK average
Reached UK average
Halfway to 2033 goal
Reached 2033 goal

As we move closer to 2033, we aim to see these tables turn green – so that no matter which institution you attend you will have the same opportunities as a non-disabled student.

This comparison is a snapshot of the Annual Disabled Student Survey results. Institutions that become Access Insights Members can receive a full institution-specific report. Access Insights Members are marked with a star (☆) in the tables below, indicating that they are investing in understanding the situation so that they can improve the experience for their disabled students.

A note on statistics

The institution specific results below are from a sample of the institutions' disabled students (see sample sizes below) and are not necessarily representative of all disabled students at the institution. The more students at an institution participate in the Annual Disabled Student Survey, the more representative their data will be.

All institutions with more than 45 respondents have been included in the university comparison. If an institution has data from more than one year, only the latest data is included. To improve comparison between institutions, each sample has been weighted to achieve the same gender balance as the UK wide sample.

Sample sizes

Institution	Sample size (n)
University of Bath ☆	n=320
University of East Anglia	n=188
University of Manchester	n=102
Cambridge University	n=88
London South Bank University ☆	n=82
University College London	n=80
University of Exeter	n=79
Canterbury Christ Church University	n=70
Bath Spa University	n=59
University of Plymouth	n=64
University of Leicester	n=56
Oxford University	n=48
Royal Holloway	n=47
Heriot-Watt University	n=46

Proportion of disabled students who feel that they have the support they need

Weighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	75% agree	
London South Bank University ☆		53% agree (15% disagree)
University of Leicester	48% agree (29% disagree)	
Bath Spa University		47% agree (19% disagree)
University of Bath ☆		47% agree (25% disagree)
Heriot-Watt University	47% agree (40% disagree)	
University of Exeter	44% agree (36% disagree)	
University of Manchester	43% agree (44% disagree)	
Canterbury Christ Church University	39% agree (41% disagree)	
University of East Anglia		38% agree (32% disagree)
UK wide 2024		37% agree (36% disagree)
UK wide 2023	37% agree (47% disagree)	
Oxford University		34% agree (52% disagree)
University College London	32% agree (59% disagree)	
University of Plymouth	31% agree (44% disagree)	

	disagree)	
Royal Holloway	31% agree (46% disagree)	
Cambridge University		27% agree (55% disagree)

Note that only declared students were asked this question in 2023 while both declared and undeclared students were asked it in 2024. In practice this did not significantly influence the results.

Proportion of disabled students who feel that they have the support they need

Unweighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	75% agree	
London South Bank University ☆	-	50% agree (16% disagree)
University of Leicester	49% agree (29% disagree)	-
Bath Spa University	-	47% agree (24% disagree)
University of Bath ☆	-	46% agree (25% disagree)
Heriot-Watt University	46% agree (41% disagree)	-
University of Manchester	43% agree (44% disagree)	-
University of Exeter	40% agree (40% disagree)	-
UK wide 2024 (weighted)	-	38% agree (35% disagree)
University of East Anglia	-	36% agree (32% disagree)
Canterbury Christ Church University	35% agree (45% disagree)	-
UK wide 2023	35% agree (49% disagree)	-
University of Plymouth	30% agree (46% disagree)	-
Royal Holloway	30% agree (46% disagree)	-
University College London	29% agree (62% disagree)	-
Cambridge University	-	26% agree

		(56% disagree)
Oxford University	-	25% agree (54% disagree)

Proportion of disabled students who had a majority of their lectures recorded in the last year

Weighted

	2023	2024
University of Exeter	94%	
University of Bath ☆		92%
University of Leicester	83%	
2033 goal	80%	
Oxford University		74%
University of Plymouth	72%	
University of Manchester	70%	
Cambridge University		68%
University of East Anglia		65%
2024 UK wide		63%
Canterbury Christ Church University	62%	
2023 UK wide	62%	
Bath Spa University		53%
Royal Holloway	43%	
University College London	43%	
London South Bank University ☆		39%
Heriot-Watt University	34%	

Proportion of disabled students who had a majority of their lectures recorded in the last year

Unweighted

	2023	2024
University of Bath ☆		93%
University of Exeter	91%	
University of Leicester	82%	
2033 goal	80%	
University of Plymouth	71%	
University of Manchester	70%	
Oxford University		69%
Cambridge University		69%
2024 UK wide		69%
University of East Anglia		64%
2023 UK wide	61%	
Canterbury Christ Church University	60%	
Bath Spa University		52%
Royal Holloway	45%	
University College London	41%	
London South Bank University ☆		38%
Heriot-Watt University	33%	

Proportion of disabled students who have been made to feel unwelcome by a staff member due to their disability

Weighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	5% yes	
University of Leicester	9% yes	
University of Bath ☆		11% yes
London South Bank University ☆		12% yes
Bath Spa University		13% yes
University of East Anglia		15% yes
Heriot-Watt University	15% yes	
University of Exeter	15% yes	
Oxford University		18% yes
Royal Holloway	20% yes	
University of Plymouth	21% yes	
University College London	22% yes	
2023 UK wide	24% yes	
2024 UK wide		25% yes
Canterbury Christ Church University	26% yes	
University of Manchester	30% yes	
Cambridge University		37% yes

Proportion of disabled students who have been made to feel unwelcome by a staff member due to their disability

Unweighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	5% yes	
University of Leicester	9% yes	
University of Bath ☆		11% yes
Heriot-Watt University	15% yes	
London South Bank University ☆		15% yes
Bath Spa University		17% yes
University of East Anglia		17% yes
Royal Holloway	19% yes	
University of Exeter	20% yes	
University of Plymouth	22% yes	
2024 UK wide		23% yes
Oxford University		25% yes
University College London	25% yes	
Canterbury Christ Church University	26% yes	
2023 UK wide	26% yes	
University of Manchester	31% yes	
Cambridge University		38% yes

Proportion of declared students who have been provided with enough information about different adjustments

Weighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	75% yes	
London South Bank University ☆		67% yes
Bath Spa University ☆		63% yes
University of Bath		60% yes
University of East Anglia		55% yes
2024 UK wide		53% yes
Heriot-Watt University	51% yes	
University of Leicester	50% yes	
University of Manchester	49% yes	
University of Exeter	48% yes	
Oxford University		47% yes
Canterbury Christ Church University	47% yes	
Royal Holloway	47% yes	
2023 UK wide	47% yes	
Cambridge University		45% yes
University College London	39% yes	
University of Plymouth	39% yes	

Proportion of declared students who have been provided with enough information about different adjustments

Unweighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	75% yes	
Bath Spa University ☆		63% yes
London South Bank University ☆		62% yes
University of Bath		59% yes
Heriot-Watt University	53% yes	
2024 UK wide		52% yes
University of East Anglia		52% yes
University of Leicester	51% yes	
University of Manchester	48% yes	
Royal Holloway	46% yes	
2023 UK wide	45% yes	
University of Exeter	44% yes	
Cambridge University		44% yes
Oxford University		43% yes
Canterbury Christ Church University	42% yes	
University of Plymouth	39% yes	
University College London	38% yes	

Proportion of disabled students who have had all agreed adjustments provided

Weighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	80%	
University of Leicester	55%	
University of Bath ☆		52%
Royal Holloway	51%	
University of Plymouth	48%	
Bath Spa University		48%
University of Manchester	47%	
Oxford University		51%
London South Bank University ☆		46%
University of East Anglia		43%
Canterbury Christ Church University	40%	
2024 UK wide		39%
2023 UK wide	38%	
Heriot-Watt University	37%	
University of Exeter	37%	
Cambridge University		35%
University College London	28%	

Proportion of disabled students who have had all agreed adjustments provided

Unweighted

	2023	2024
2023 goal	80%	
University of Leicester	57%	
University of Bath ☆		51%
Royal Holloway	50%	
University of Manchester	48%	
Bath Spa University		45%
University of Plymouth	45%	
Oxford University		43%
London South Bank University ☆		43%
University of East Anglia		41%
University of Exeter	40%	
2024 UK wide		40%
Canterbury Christ Church University	36%	
Heriot-Watt University	36%	
2023 UK wide	36%	
Cambridge University		35%
University College London	29%	

Proportion of disabled students who have somewhere to turn to resolve their access barriers

Weighted

	2023	2024
Bath Spa University		77% agree (6% disagree)
University of Leicester	75% agree (11% disagree)	
2033 goal	75% agree	
London South Bank University ☆		74% agree (5% disagree)
University of Bath ☆		72% agree (8% disagree)
University of East Anglia		72% agree (9% disagree)
Oxford University		70% agree (17% disagree)
Royal Holloway	67% agree (13% disagree)	
Cambridge University		67% agree (17% disagree)
2024 UK wide		67% agree (13% disagree)
Heriot-Watt University	62% agree (14% disagree)	
University of Plymouth	62% agree (16% disagree)	
2023 UK wide	61% agree (16% disagree)	
University of Exeter	59% agree (16% disagree)	
University of Manchester	58% agree	

	(18% disagree)	
University College London	56% agree (18% disagree)	
Canterbury Christ Church University	51% agree (21% disagree)	

Proportion of disabled students who have somewhere to turn to resolve their access barriers

Unweighted

	2023	2024
Bath Spa University		78% agree (7% disagree)
University of Leicester	75% agree (11% disagree)	
2033 goal	75% agree	
University of Bath ☆		73% agree (8% disagree)
London South Bank University ☆		71% agree (8% disagree)
University of East Anglia		68% agree (11% disagree)
Cambridge University		67% agree (17% disagree)
2024 UK wide		67% agree (12% disagree)
Royal Holloway	64% agree (13% disagree)	
Heriot-Watt University	61% agree (17% disagree)	
Oxford University		60% agree (23% disagree)
2023 UK wide	59% agree (17% disagree)	
University of Plymouth	58% agree (17% disagree)	
University of Exeter	57% agree (18% disagree)	
University of Manchester	57% agree	

	(18% disagree)	
University College London	55% agree (20% disagree)	
Canterbury Christ Church University	47% agree (24% disagree)	

Proportion of disabled students who feel part of a community at their institution

Weighted

	2023	2024
2023 goal	65% agree	
Cambridge University		63% agree (23% disagree)
Oxford University		62% agree (14% disagree)
University of Bath ☆		54% agree (18% disagree)
University of East Anglia		50% agree (23% disagree)
UK wide 2024		50% agree (25% disagree)
Bath Spa University		49% agree (25% disagree)
London South Bank University ☆		46% agree (15% disagree)
University of Plymouth	43% agree (35% disagree)	
University of Manchester	43% agree (38% disagree)	
UK wide 2023	43% agree (33% disagree)	
University of Exeter	42% agree (37% disagree)	
Royal Holloway	41% agree (39% disagree)	
Canterbury Christ Church University	40% agree (30% disagree)	
University of Leicester	40% agree	

	(34% disagree)	
University College London	38% agree (36% disagree)	
Heriot-Watt University	35% agree (47% disagree)	

Proportion of disabled students who feel part of a community at their institution

Unweighted

	2023	2024
2033 goal	65% agree	
Cambridge University		63% agree (24% disagree)
Oxford University		56% agree (19% disagree)
University of Bath ☆		55% agree (17% disagree)
Bath Spa University		54% agree (20% disagree)
University of East Anglia		51% agree (23% disagree)
UK wide 2024		50% agree (24% disagree)
London South Bank University ☆		43% agree (16% disagree)
University of Exeter	43% agree (38% disagree)	
Royal Holloway	43% agree (38% disagree)	
University of Plymouth	42% agree (36% disagree)	
UK wide 2023	42% agree (34% disagree)	
University of Leicester	41% agree (34% disagree)	
Canterbury Christ Church University	40% agree (33% disagree)	
University of Manchester	40% agree	

	(40% disagree)	
University College London	39% agree (41% disagree)	
Heriot-Watt University	39% agree (43% disagree)	

Survey Demographics

Domicile status

"Prefer not to say" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
EU students	5%	5%	3%	3%
Non-EU international students	9%	10%	7%	8%
Home Students	86%	86%	90%	89%

EU and international students make up only 9% of declared disabled student enrollments according to [HESA](#). However these groups may be less likely to declare their disability than home students.

Racial marginalisation

"Prefer not to say" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Black	5%	5%	7%	9%
Asian (including Arab)	10%	10%	10%	11%
Other racially marginalised group	6%	6%	5%	6%

No racially marginalised group	80%	79%	78%	74%
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Despite disabled people in society as a whole being more likely to be racially marginalised, university applicants that declare a disability are more likely to be white, making up 80% of the group according to [UCAS](#). The relative overrepresentation in our sample could be due to disabled racially marginalised students not being registered in official statistics, either because they declare their disability informally or do not declare their disability at all.

Gender

“Prefer not to say”, “Uncertain” and “Questioning” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Woman	66%	57%	67%	57%
Man	17%	33%	20%	33%
Non-binary or other	17%	10%	13%	10%

Men are underrepresented in our samples relative to the disabled student population. This is likely partly due to an [underrepresentation of men as survey respondents more generally](#). This year we have weighted the data to better match the estimated gender balance of the disabled student population. Last year we repeated a claim by [UCAS](#) that male applicants are more likely to declare a disability. This was an error. Male applicants were more likely to declare a disability only if mental health conditions were excluded. See [Weighting](#) below to find out how we estimated the gender distribution in the disabled student population.

Queerness

“Prefer not to say” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide

		Weighted		Weighted
Queer/LGBTQI A+	56%	52%	50%	47%
Trans	18%	15%	12%	12%

The overrepresentation of queer people in the disabled community is well documented (e.g. [Next Steps: What is the experience of LGBT+ students in education?](#)). Identifying as queer is especially common among autistic students and students with mental health conditions, explaining why our sample has a particularly high number of LGBT+ respondents.

Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

“Prefer not to say” excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
From a low socioeconomic background	30%	29%	27%	28%
Home student born outside of the UK ¹⁷	6%	6%	9%	10%
Child of immigrants	8%	8%	10%	10%
Carer	8%	8%	7%	8%
Mature student	31%	31%	29%	34%

Level of study

	2023 UK	2023 UK wide	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide
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¹⁷ Response option changed from 2023. Previous response read: “Immigrated to the UK at some point before university (home student)”

	wide	Weighted		Weighted
Undergraduate	70%	70%	70%	69%
Taught postgraduate	14%	14%	14%	15%
Research postgraduate	16%	16%	15%	16%

Research postgraduates are overrepresented in our sample compared to [HESA's](#) disabled student enrollment figures. The relative overrepresentation in our sample could be due to disabled PhD students not being registered in official university statistics, either because they declare their disability to their supervisors informally or do not declare their disability to their research institution at all.

Disability type

"Prefer not to say" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Blind/partially sighted (if you have normal vision when wearing glasses, this does not count as a disability)	3%	3%	2%	2%
Deaf/hard of hearing	5%	6%	4%	5%
Other sensory disability (e.g. light and auditory sensitivities, Irlen syndrome, Auditory processing disorder)			12%	13%
Specific learning difference (SpLD e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD)	51%	49%	55%	56%

Autism	41%	40%	38%	39%
Other communication or language difference (e.g. Stammer)	2%	2%	2%	2%
Long term mental health condition (e.g. Depression, Eating Disorder, Schizophrenia)	57%	54%	52%	48%
Other long term chronic health condition (e.g. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME, Heart disease, Cancer, Diabetes, Asthma, Chronic sleep disorder, Chronic Pain) ¹⁸	37%	35%	34%	33%
Mobility difficulty	20%	19%	15%	16%
Neurological condition (e.g. Epilepsy, Migraines, Cerebral Palsy, Tourettes, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Stroke, Cognitive Impairment) ¹⁹	11%	10%	15%	17%
Learning disability (e.g. Down's Syndrome)	1%	1%	0%	1%
Other physical impairment or difference that it not a chronic illness, not	2%	2%	1%	2%

¹⁸ Response option changed from 2023. Previous response read: Other long term chronic health condition (Eg. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME, Autoimmune conditions, Heart disease, Cancer, Diabetes)

¹⁹ Response option changed from 2023. Previous response read: Neurological condition (eg. Epilepsy, Cerebral Palsy, Tourettes, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Stroke, Stammer)

neurological, and does not impact primarily on mobility (e.g. Visible Difference, Dwarfism)				
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%

It is very difficult to estimate the real distribution of disabilities in the disabled student population as a whole as most data collected on this issue do not allow students to select more than one disability type. Most likely autistics are overrepresented in our sample in both 2023 and 2024. The increase in students with neurological conditions compared to 2023 can be attributed to an update to the wording of this response option. The increased proportion of students with an SpLD could be due to lowered evidence barriers: the long NHS waiting times have caused many institutions to accept interim evidence such as GP letters or proof of assessment referrals as sufficient to put adjustments in place.

Number of disability types each respondent identifies with

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
1	32%	35%	35%	35%
2	31%	32%	29%	29%
3	20%	18%	19%	18%
4 or more	17%	16%	18%	19%

As we found in 2023, allowing students to choose multiple disability groups led the majority of disabled students to select multiple conditions. In particular, a large proportion of students selected having a mental health disability in addition to another condition.

Medical support context

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
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Have at least one diagnosis	95%	94%	95%	95%
Lack at least one diagnosis	37%	39%	39%	37%

Many disabled students struggle to identify as such before their diagnosis. Students are therefore unlikely to fill in our survey if they do not have a diagnosis. However, while almost all of our respondents have at least one diagnosis a significant proportion of students also lack a diagnosis for at least one of their conditions. This proportion is likely larger than normal due to the [NHS backlog](#).

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) status

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Are in receipt of DSA	50%	48%	49%	50%
Going through the DSA application process	10%	10%	8%	8%
Were rejected for DSA	3%	3%	2%	2%
Have not applied for DSA	38%	39%	41%	39%

Half of respondents are in receipt of DSA and another 8% are going through the application process at the time of filling in the survey. This is an overrepresentation

compared to the proportion of students that receive DSA in the disabled student population as a whole, estimated at 20–40%²⁰.

Flexible modes of study

	2023 UK wide	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide	2024 UK wide Weighted
Part time students	13%	14%	13%	14%
Remote student	6%	6%	7%	7%

Part time and remote students are underrepresented in our sample if we compare it to HESA data on the proportion of students who study [remotely](#) or [part-time](#).

Overall the demographics of the respondents in 2024 are surprisingly similar to those of the 2023 sample but there are a few notable differences. The 2024 sample is more representative of the disabled student population as a whole in having:

- More men
- More black students
- Fewer queer students
- More first and second generation British (home fee) students

In 2024 the sample also has:

- More students with specific learning differences
- Fewer students with mental health disabilities

²⁰ SLC and HESA have provided differing figures. [Holmes \(2022\) estimates that 29% of declared students received DSA in 2021.](#)

How representative is the Annual Disabled Student Survey?

Dissemination and sampling bias

The Annual Disabled Student Survey is the largest survey into university accessibility to date. In 2024 it had over 1200 respondents from over 80 Higher Education Providers. It is disseminated widely using a variety of methods meant to reduce sampling bias such as using inclusive language and imagery, offering anonymity, utilising a variety of dissemination routes and explaining the definition of disability. By working closely with universities and providing detailed guidance on dissemination, this year we further increased the representativeness of the sample by for instance reaching a larger proportion of male participants and participants outside of Russell Group universities.

Our methods make the ADSS more representative than many other surveys of disabled students. Despite this, the students that answer disabled student surveys will tend to differ from the whole disabled student population in some ways, for instance by being:

- More likely to identify as disabled. Filling in the survey requires students to be aware that their condition qualifies as a disability.
- More likely to be women than men. Women are more likely to answer surveys.
- More likely to be engaged with Disability Services. Disability Services is the part of the university most likely to disseminate the survey.
- More likely to be in community with other disabled students. Disabled students share the survey between themselves.

A degree of sampling bias is hence inevitable and results in some of the data being skewed:

- A larger proportion of our sample have declared a disability. Undeclared students make up only 4% of our weighted sample in 2024, whereas we estimate that they make up 1/3 of the disabled student population as a whole.

- A larger proportion of the sample is engaged in a support system. 89% have had an adjustment agreed and half of our respondents are in receipt of DSA. The real proportion of DSA recipients in the disabled student population as whole is likely closer to 30%.

Measures of being caught by the official support net

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted
Declared	94%	96%
Declared to Disability services or equivalent	85%	87%
Spoke with Disability Advisor	73%	79%
Have a support plan set up	71%	74%
In receipt of DSA	48%	50%

- A larger proportion of our sample is made up of in-person full-time students. Likely part-time and distance learners are less connected to their institutions and thus harder to reach through the survey.
- A larger proportion of our sample is queer. This is likely due to the survey being spread through student communities.
- Conditions that are less associated with a strong disabled identity are likely underrepresented in our sample, such as mental health disabilities.
- A larger proportion of our sample is likely informed about disability support.

Proxies for level of knowledge

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted
Feel it is clear where to turn for Disability Support	70% agree	73% agree
Feel informed about possible supports (of declared students)	47% Yes	53% Yes
Feel they know their rights	51% agree	52% agree
Know how to appeal a bad disability decision	26% yes	33% yes
Know how to raise a formal complaint	26% yes	32% yes
Has been told how to escalate an unresolved issue (of students who have raised at least one access issue)	22% yes	25% yes
Do not know if they have been discriminated against	23%	18%

However, some sampling bias will apply to all surveys that enquire about disability and is not necessarily worrying as long as we are aware of it while interpreting the results. To further increase the meaningfulness of the data this year we used two techniques: conditional questions and weighting.

Conditional questions

The disabled student population is extremely diverse and The Annual Disabled Student Survey has always contained conditional questions (questions which are relevant only to a subset of survey respondents). We further increased the use of

such questions this year to improve the meaningfulness of the data. In 2023 we saw large differences in perceived availability of accessibility support depending on whether respondents belonged to the group that had the most need for the accessibility support in question. For instance, disabled students who needed accessible bathrooms were far less likely to report that accessible bathrooms were easily available and maintained than those who did not need accessible bathrooms. If an access barrier does not affect them, the default assumption among many disabled students is that it must not affect other students either. Thus to improve accuracy this year we have made more parts of the survey limited to students within the affected groups. Note that this does mean that some results this year (e.g. questions on physical/sensory accessibility, are hard to compare to the results from 2023).

Weighting

Gender weighting

Last year we saw the large impact that gender has on the disabled student experience. For instance, the different genders are differently likely to report having the support they need:

- Men: 45% agree
- Women: 37% agree
- Non-binary: 23% agree

This year we have weighted the results by gender to represent what we believe to be the real gender balance in the disabled student population, and to make the results of different samples more comparable.

The exact gender balance of the disabled student population is unknown, however a comparison between different groups is most telling if all samples have the same gender balance. We weighted the UK wide sample and each university sample to match the following gender balance:

Women	57%
Men	33%
Non-binary/other	10%

To estimate the gender balance in the population we decided to use the balance of men and women found among both disabled UCAS applicants in 2023 as well as disabled respondents to the 2024 HEPI Student Academic Experience Survey. UCAS did not provide a figure for non-binary students. Instead we used a midpoint between our sample and the HEPI sample to estimate the proportion of disabled students in the population who are non-binary/other. Considering the lack of clear data on the matter, it was more important for us that we settled on a gender distribution that allowed us to compare results across samples, than for the gender distribution to be exactly the same as the disabled student population.

University weighting

In addition to weighting the data by gender, we weighted it by university to ensure that participants from a few universities did not make up more than 11% of the results and skew the data. The 2024 sample included 85 UK Higher Education Providers (compared to 107 UK in 2023). Three quarters of students come from the 12 providers with over 20 respondents each (compared to 18 providers in 2023).

We did notice a shift in which universities participated in the dissemination of the survey this year. Students at Russell group universities went from making up 45% of the sample to 18%. More generally we note that the universities with large sample sizes this year were more likely to perform well in comparison with the UK mean. In the University Comparison for instance, the participating universities performed above average 74% of the time, compared to 59% of the time in 2023. While we are thrilled that the universities that engage with us and disseminate the survey are doing well, if only above-average institutions participate in disseminating the survey this will lead to overly positive results. In 2025 we will look to increase student based dissemination to reduce the risk of such bias.

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted
Respondents from the three universities with the largest samples	University of Cambridge 11% University of Manchester 9% University of Oxford 6% = 25%	University of Bath 11% University of East Anglia 10% University of Cambridge 11% =32%
Respondents from the universities with at least 20 respondents each	73% (18 universities)	72% (12 universities)
Russell group students	45%	18%

How to get involved

If you are a disabled student you can:

- [Sign up to receive the Annual Disabled Student Survey](#) when it is time to fill it in
- [Engage more with DSUK](#)

If you are a university staff member you can encourage your university to:

- Contact us for support in spreading the Annual Disabled Student Survey in the beginning of 2025
- Sign up to [Access Insights Membership](#)

Access Insights Membership

DSUK offers HE Providers and Student Unions Access Insights Membership²¹. Members make a financial contribution to the project to receive the following assets, which allow them to effectively tackle inaccessibility:

Gold (£2,500):

- Monthly Brief with news from the sector and videos from lived experience experts
- Data dives from the Annual Disabled Student Survey
- 25% discount on DSUK event tickets
- Membership badge

Platinum Membership (£6,400):

Everything in Gold plus:

²¹ Membership has been recommended by the [Disabled Students Commission](#) as part of their Disabled Students' Commitment.

- [Annual Member Report](#) with university-specific statistics from the Annual Disabled Student Survey
- 50% discount on DSUK event tickets
- 20% discount on bespoke consulting, training and speaking

Diamond (£9,700):

Everything in Platinum plus:

- [Annual Premium Member Report](#) into the disabled student experience at the university, including student quotes and DSUK policy recommendations.
- 15h of bespoke consulting
- Free access to DSUK events
- Co-created video on university's work to support disabled students

* Memberships are billed annually. Institutions with fewer than 15,000 students are entitled to a 10% discount and institutions with under 8,000 students are entitled to a 20% discount.

Advantages of Membership

Improving accessibility benefits Higher Education Providers in many ways. It allows institutions to gain academic contributions from an underutilised population, avoid reputational and financial damages from complaints, and rise on university rankings as the experience and performance of nearly one in five students improve.

DSUK's 2022 [report](#) found that the second most common lesson disabled students want universities to learn from the pandemic was to consult them more. Students who had been proactively consulted about accessibility during the pandemic were 3 times less likely to consider leaving. The 2023 Annual Disabled Student Survey shows that students who feel that their institution values the disabled student voice are 3 times more likely to have the support they need.

DSUK embodies a new model of disabled students as experts and creators of change rather than recipients of charity. Disabled students have invaluable

knowledge about what works when it comes to accessibility and we want the whole Higher Education sector to benefit from this through the Access Insights Project.

Access Insights membership allows the Higher Education Provider to address inaccessibility more effectively. The authentic advice and evidence-based recommendations we offer lead to more cost-effective interventions. This also improves staff morale and productivity, as staff members can be more confident and proactive in their accessibility measures rather than having to rectify issues in an ad-hoc manner.

Members can proudly display the Access Insights membership logo on their website, sending a clear message to current and prospective disabled students that they value their voices and are investing in their access.

To learn more and sign up, get in touch at abi@disabledstudents.co.uk.

About Disabled Students UK

DSUK has quickly become the largest disabled student-led organisation in the UK and has been recognised thrice by [Disability Power 100](#) as one of Britain's most influential disabled-led organisations, winning the Changemaking Organisation category in 2023. Made up of over 500 current and former disabled students from over 70 different Higher Education Providers, the organisation empowers students to share their insight into accessibility to inform policy.

DSUK has built a reputation with its evidence-based approach. Their [2020 report](#), which warned the sector about the impact of the pandemic on disabled students, was mentioned in parliament. Their [2022 report Going Back is Not a Choice](#) presents key accessibility lessons from the pandemic. The report was [featured](#) in The Independent, and hailed as “a potential game changer in its review of UK HE inclusive provision”. The launch was attended by over 100 university staff members, with 92% reporting that they found the contents helpful for improving the situation for disabled students in HE.

DSUK has a collaborative approach to change and regularly provides consulting and training services to researchers, access consultants, decision makers and institutions. Their mission is to achieve a truly accessible HE experience, ensuring disabled people equal access to education and the societal and self-development opportunities associated with this.

Read more about DSUK and their work here: disabledstudents.co.uk

Find out more about Access Insights: accessinsights.co.uk

Find DSUK across the web: linktr.ee/DisabledStudentsUK