

# The 2025

# Access Insights Report

By



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## Acknowledgements

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Most importantly, we thank the disabled students who gave their time, insight, and energy to complete the survey and share their experiences. This report exists because of their honesty and generosity. We hope we have represented their voices with the seriousness and respect they deserve.

*This report is intended to support understanding and discussion of disabled students' experiences and does not constitute legal advice.*

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## Disabled Students UK

Disabled Students UK (DSUK) is the UK's largest disabled student-led organisation. It has been recognised three times by the Disability Power 100 as one of Britain's most influential disabled-led organisations, including winning the Changemaking Organisation category in 2023. DSUK brings together over 600 current and former disabled students from more than 80 UK higher education providers to ensure disabled students' lived experience informs policy and institutional decision-making.

DSUK is known for its evidence-based approach. Its research on disabled students' experiences has been cited in Parliament and is widely used by higher education providers to inform practice. Through research, training, and advisory work, DSUK supports institutions and policymakers to improve accessibility and reduce systemic barriers in higher education.

## Foreword

Disabled students are not new in higher education. What is new is the growing body of evidence that shows, year after year, where and how our systems continue to fail them.

The 2025 Access Insights report comes at a moment of real pressure for the sector. Higher education providers are operating under significant financial strain, managing rising demand, and navigating heightened regulatory scrutiny. In this context, there is a temptation to see accessibility as something that must wait for better conditions. This report shows why that approach is both risky and wrong.

Across the data, disabled students report greater understanding, more positive attitudes, and increased willingness from staff to support them. These shifts are real and should be acknowledged. Yet they sit alongside a persistent and damaging gap between commitment and delivery. Support is often agreed, but too often not implemented. Flexibility that worked is being rolled back. Assessment continues to disadvantage disabled students. Physical access and safe escalation remain unresolved.

These are not marginal issues. They shape whether disabled students can attend, participate, progress, and complete their studies on an equal footing. They also shape institutional risk, credibility, and educational quality.

This report builds on a decade of evidence, including what disabled students told us during the pandemic: that going back to systems that exclude them is not a neutral choice. The last few years demonstrated that higher education can change quickly when it chooses to. The question in 2025 is not whether improvement is possible, but whether institutions are willing to embed what they already know works.

Access Insights is not a ranking exercise. It is a diagnostic tool. It highlights where systems are breaking down, where responsibility is unclear, and where leadership attention is needed most. The findings point consistently to the same conclusion: awareness has improved faster than accountability, and culture has improved faster than systems.

Disabled students are not asking for exceptional treatment. They are asking for reliable access, fair assessment, safe ways to raise concerns, and institutions that take responsibility for delivery rather than placing the burden on individuals. These are reasonable expectations. They are also legal and regulatory obligations.

The choices institutions make now will shape disabled students' experiences for years to come. They will also shape institutional risk and reputation. In a time of constraint, the most sustainable path forward is not retreat, but focus: reducing administrative burden, designing inclusively, delivering what is agreed, and holding systems to account.

We invite leaders, regulators, and practitioners to use this report as it is intended: not as a snapshot to be acknowledged and filed away, but as a basis for action. Disabled students have been clear about what needs to change. The responsibility to act now lies with institutions.

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# Executive Summary

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The 2025 Access Insights report shows a higher education sector that has become better at expressing commitment to disabled students, but not yet good enough at delivering access reliably in practice.

Disabled students in 2025 are more likely to report positive attitudes from staff and greater understanding of disability than in previous years. These cultural shifts matter. However, they coexist with persistent structural barriers that continue to undermine disabled students' ability to participate, progress, and succeed on an equal footing.

## Key findings

### **1. Support agreed does not mean support delivered**

Most disabled students who disclose their disability have some form of individualised support agreed. Fewer than half report that all agreed adjustments are consistently implemented. Many go without support at least some of the time because the effort required to chase delivery is too high.

### **2. Fewer students are receiving support plans**

In 2025, fewer disabled students are accessing formal, personalised support from Disability Services. The proportion of declared students with a support plan fell from 77% in 2024 to 66% in 2025 and fewer students met with a Disability Advisor, suggesting a shift towards more informal or automated models of support under growing capacity pressure.

### **3. Pandemic-era accessibility is being rolled back**

Measures such as lecture recording, remote or hybrid participation, and flexible engagement improved access for many disabled students. In 2025, access to these

measures has declined. Rolling them back undermines anticipatory accessibility and disproportionately harms students with fluctuating conditions.

#### **4. Physical access and accommodation remain major barriers**

Disabled students continue to miss teaching due to inaccessible buildings and unsuitable teaching spaces. Many are not confident they could evacuate all buildings safely. Accessible accommodation is limited and often more expensive, creating ongoing inequity.

#### **5. Administrative burden is itself a barrier to access**

Complex, fragmented systems require disabled students to repeatedly provide information, explain needs, and manage delays. This burden disproportionately excludes students with less capacity to navigate bureaucracy and undermines access even where support exists in theory.

#### **6. Escalation and complaints processes are not safe or effective**

Awareness of complaints and appeals routes is low, and trust in those processes is weak. Some students report being treated worse after raising access issues. As a result, many failures are never formally recorded or resolved.

#### **7. Culture has improved faster than systems**

More disabled students report supportive attitudes from staff, but this has not translated into consistent practice. Goodwill is undermined by unclear responsibilities, limited training, and lack of accountability.

These failures create legal, regulatory, and reputational risk for institutions. Duties to provide reasonable and anticipatory adjustments are not met by policy alone. When agreed support is not delivered, assessment is inaccessible, or escalation is unsafe, institutions are exposed to challenge and scrutiny.

Financial pressure does not remove these risks. In many cases, it intensifies them by stretching systems and increasing the likelihood of failure.

## What Needs to Happen Next

The evidence does not point to a need for further consultation. It points to the need for action. Institutions should prioritise:

- Making delivery of agreed support non-negotiable
- Creating dedicated capacity to coordinate and monitor universal design
- Reducing administrative burden as a matter of access
- Resourcing Disability Services to advise rather than compensate for inaccessible systems
- Making escalation safe, visible, and effective
- Assigning clear senior ownership and governance
- Protecting progress in times of financial pressure
- Measuring what matters

Disabled students are not asking for exceptional treatment. They are asking for systems that work. The responsibility to close the gap between commitment and delivery now lies with institutions.

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# The Reality for Disabled Students in 2025

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Over the last three years we have seen disabled students in UK higher education become more likely to report positive experiences. In 2025, 61% of disabled students feel satisfied with their institution, compared to 46% in 2023. This reflects a broader trend across the sector, with disabled and non-disabled students expressing increased positivity across every subsection of the National Student Survey.

These shifts matter. They point to real changes in the student experience. At the same time improvements for all students have not always translated into reliable access for disabled students. The National Student Survey shows an increased satisfaction gap between disabled and non-disabled students.

The clearest pattern in the Annual Disabled Student Survey (ADSS) is that attitudes have been improving faster than systems. Increased agreement that institutions are supportive coexists with persistent barriers to delivery and accountability.

## 1. Support Agreed Does Not Mean Support Delivered

The vast majority of disabled students who disclose their disability have some form of individualised support agreed. However, only a minority (44%) report that all agreed adjustments have been implemented.

Students describe spending significant time and energy chasing adjustments, repeatedly explaining their needs to different staff, and managing breakdowns in communication between services, departments, and individual educators. 63% report having gone without support because of the effort required to secure it, this is of course especially the case when they are already unwell.

The result is a system in which access exists on paper but fails in practice. This is not a failure of individual staff goodwill. It is the predictable outcome of systems that rely on disabled students to monitor, prompt, and repair the delivery of their own access.

In many institutions, once adjustments are approved, responsibility for implementation is diffused across the institution with no single point of ownership. As a result, delivery depends heavily on individual staff knowledge, time, and willingness rather than on systems that ensure consistency. In 2025 [OfS reported](#) that only 15% of providers have an established process for systematically evaluating the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments.

When adjustments are not delivered, students are expected to notice, chase, explain, and escalate. This places responsibility for access on the very people the system is meant to support. Where delivery works, it often does so because of individual effort rather than institutional design.

This failure is not inevitable. It reflects the absence of clear accountability structures, monitoring mechanisms, and consequences when agreed support is not implemented.

## 2. Fewer Students are Receiving Support Plans

In 2025, a smaller proportion of disabled students report accessing formal personalised support from Disability Services. While a similar proportion of students report receiving some form of support from Disability Services, fewer describe meeting with a Disability Advisor or having a formal support plan in place. In 2024, 77% of declared disabled students reported having a support plan. In 2025, this figure has fallen to 66%, indicating a shift towards more informal or less structured models of support.

When Disability Services are accessible, they are widely valued. However, these teams are operating under increasing capacity constraints. Delays in setting up support plans and limited follow-up are common. These pressures are driven by rising numbers of disabled students alongside wider institutional cost-cutting. While

Disability Services remain the most positively rated support function within institutions, one in five students now report that the support they received from Disability Services was unhelpful.

For some students with straightforward needs, a more informal or automated approach to support may reduce friction. For others, particularly those with complex or fluctuating conditions, it results in reduced access and weaker outcomes. The data is clear that relational support matters: 80% of students who met with a Disability Advisor found them knowledgeable and helpful, and 72% of students with a support plan felt empowered to influence its content.

Without wider institutional change to reduce demand through universal design and widened responsibility for access beyond Disability Services, a shift towards informal support risks leaving some of the most marginalised disabled students without effective or reliable support.

### 3. Pandemic Access is Being Rolled Back

The pandemic demonstrated that higher education could change quickly when required. For many disabled students, the expansion of lecture recording, remote access, and flexible participation transformed their ability to engage with learning.

Over the last three years we have seen those gains starting to be withdrawn by some institutions. Access to remote participation has declined, and lecture recording provision has plateaued. For many disabled students with fluctuating conditions, fatigue, pain, or who otherwise struggle to always attend their course in person, this represents a return to exclusion.

Decisions to reduce remote participation are often made without meaningful consideration of disabled students' access needs. These decisions are frequently justified as restoring educational quality or campus experience, yet they disproportionately exclude already marginalised students.

This represents a failure to learn from evidence. Universities have seen that these measures work. Choosing not to retain them is a choice that prioritises convenience or tradition over accessibility.

## 4. Physical Access Remains a Stubborn Barrier

Progress on physical access remains stagnant. Disabled students continue to miss teaching due to inaccessible buildings, unsuitable teaching rooms, and timetabling that fails to account for access needs. A significant proportion are not confident they could evacuate all university buildings safely in an emergency.

Accessible accommodation remains limited and costly. Many disabled students report paying more for housing that meets their needs. The alternative is accepting accommodation that compromises safety, independence, or wellbeing.

These failures are typically treated as long-term or unavoidable, yet their impact is immediate and cumulative. Physical access is a prerequisite for participation, not an optional enhancement. Where estates make decisions without accountability to disability law, disabled students pay the cost.

## 5. Culture is Improving Faster Than Systems

More disabled students now report that staff are supportive of their access needs and prioritise their wellbeing. A smaller proportion of disabled students report being made to feel unwelcome or dismissed outright. This shift in tone is real and important.

However, cultural improvement has not been matched by system change. Many students still encounter staff who treat adjustments as optional, raise concerns about “fairness”, or lack clarity about their responsibilities. Supportive attitudes cannot compensate for inaccessible design or unreliable delivery.

Underlying these failures is a lack of clear ownership at senior level. Accessibility is frequently positioned as a support issue rather than a core component of educational quality, risk management, and institutional performance. Responsibilities are delegated downward, while decision-making power remains elsewhere.

Without systems that make accessibility routine, cultural change alone cannot deliver equality. Without explicit leadership, accessibility competes with other priorities and loses out, particularly in times of financial pressure. Policies exist, but enforcement is weak. Data is collected, but not acted upon. Problems recur without resolution.

## 6. Raising Issues Feels Risky and Ineffective

When access fails, many disabled students do not feel able to challenge decisions or seek resolution. Awareness of complaints and appeals processes remains low, and trust in those processes is weak. A significant minority report being treated worse after raising an access issue, and many report seeing no meaningful change as a result. The scale of the problem is reflected in the fact that [40% of the complaints that reached OIA](#), the higher education ombudsman, in 2024 were by disabled students.

As a consequence, disabled students often do not raise the issues they encounter and many access failures are never formally recorded. Institutions lose visibility of problems, and patterns of harm remain hidden. Harm is absorbed privately by disabled students through stress, ill health, disrupted study, or withdrawal.

Effective accessibility requires mechanisms that allow problems to be raised, addressed, and learned from without risk to the student.

## The Cumulative Impact

The cumulative impact of these barriers is significant. Disabled students report negative effects on mental and physical health and high levels of consideration of withdrawal due to inaccessibility.

The reality for disabled students in 2025 is not defined by lack of goodwill. It is defined by implementation failure, administrative burden, and weak accountability.

Disabled students are navigating systems that require them to work harder, accept greater risk, and tolerate barriers that their non-disabled peers do not face. These

conditions are not inevitable. They are the result of choices about design, governance, and priorities.

The failures described in this report are not only matters of student experience or institutional values. They carry clear legal, regulatory, and reputational risks for higher education providers. In 2025, these risks are increasing, not diminishing, as expectations around accessibility, equality of opportunity, and student protection continue to rise.

Financial constraint does not remove legal or regulatory obligations. In some cases, it increases exposure by encouraging minimum compliance rather than robust solutions and adequate monitoring. Institutions that treat accessibility as expendable in times of financial stress are likely to face greater long-term risk.

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# What Institutions Should Do Next

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The evidence in this report does not point to a need for new principles or further consultation. It points to a need for decisive, practical action – putting systems in place that close the gap between commitment and delivery.

What follows is a prioritised set of actions that institutions can take now, even in a context of financial pressure.

## 1. Make delivery of agreed support non-negotiable

Institutions must move beyond agreeing support to ensuring it is delivered consistently. This requires:

- Clear assignment of responsibility for implementation at departmental and institutional level
- A simple mechanism for monitoring whether adjustments have been delivered which does not rely on disabled students flagging issues
- Rapid routes to resolve failures without requiring formal complaints
- Consequences when delivery failures are repeated or ignored

Delivery should be monitored as a core performance issue, not left to disabled students to manage.

## 2. Create dedicated capacity to coordinate and monitor universal design

Monitoring and coordinating universal design across teaching, assessment, digital systems, estates, and administration is substantial, ongoing operational work and requires dedicated capacity. Coordinating and monitoring universal design reduces pressure elsewhere by preventing predictable access failures and reducing reliance on Disability Services to firefight systemic issues.

Institutions should:

- Resource a dedicated role or small function responsible for coordinating and monitoring universal design across the institution
- Embed this role within a team such as Quality Assurance, rather than within Disability Services or time-limited working groups
- Ensure the role is properly resourced, empowered, and connected across digital, estates, academic, and student support systems, so that it can influence design and escalate barriers

Without dedicated capacity, responsibility fragments and universal design is likely to stall or regress.

### **3. Resource Disability Services to advise, not compensate**

Disability Services cannot fix inaccessible systems on their own. Institutions should:

- Align staffing and capacity with demand and complexity
- Protect advisory time from being consumed by crisis management
- Clarify the role of Disability Services as partners in design, not sole owners of access
- Involve Disability Services in strategic decision-making about universal design

This enables Disability Services to contribute to sustainable change rather than firefighting.

### **4. Reduce the administrative burden as a matter of access**

Administrative complexity is a significant and preventable barrier. Institutions should:

- Minimise evidence requests and unnecessary renewals
- Integrate systems so information is not lost at transition points
- Design processes that work when students are unwell or overloaded

Reducing administrative burden improves access and frees staff time.

## 5. Make escalation safe, easy and effective

Institutions need to ensure that when access fails, students can raise concerns without risk. This requires:

- Clear, accessible information on how to raise access issues
- Commitments that ensure that students will not be penalised for doing so
- Clear processes for staff on how to process access complaints
- Systematic learning from complaints and informal feedback

Escalation should be treated as a source of improvement, not reputational threat.

## 6. Assign clear senior ownership and governance

Accessibility requires leadership attention and accountability. Institutions should:

- Assign a named senior leader responsible for disabled students' access and outcomes
- Integrate accessibility into quality assurance, risk management, and performance monitoring
- Use data to identify patterns and prioritise action
- Report progress and failures transparently to governing bodies

Without senior ownership, responsibility fragments and progress stalls.

## 7. Protect progress in times of financial pressure

Financial constraint does not remove obligations or risks. It changes how they must be managed. Institutions should:

- Prioritise low-cost, high-impact actions such as universal design and process simplification
- Avoid rolling back measures that demonstrably improve access

- Assess cost-cutting decisions for their impact on disabled students
- Recognise that failure to invest in access increases long-term legal and reputational risk

Protecting accessibility is a risk management strategy.

## 8. Measure what matters

Institutions should move beyond measures of which support has been agreed to understand whether systems are working. This includes tracking:

- Whether agreed adjustments are delivered
- Time from disclosure to effective support
- Frequency and resolution of access failures
- Differences in universal design across departments
- Patterns in assessment outcomes and interruptions linked to access
- Student satisfaction with administrative processes

Data is necessary to understand issues and improve systems.

## From commitment to delivery

Disabled students are not asking institutions to do everything at once. They are asking institutions to do the basics well, consistently, and at scale. The actions set out here do not require perfection. They require clarity, ownership, and follow-through.

Institutions that take these steps will reduce risk, improve outcomes, and demonstrate that their commitments to disabled students are not just statements of intent, but obligations they are prepared to meet.

## When Systems Work, Outcomes Improve

The 2025 data shows that some institutions are achieving consistently stronger outcomes for disabled students in specific areas, including support delivery, inclusive teaching practices, safe escalation, and belonging.

### At the University of Bath and London South Bank University:

- More than three quarters of disabled students say they have somewhere to turn when access barriers arise.
- A majority of disabled students report feeling part of a community

### At the University of Bath and the University of Kent:

- Lecture recording is near-universal, with over 90% of disabled students reporting that most of their lectures are recorded.
- Very small proportions of disabled students report being made to feel unwelcome because of their disability.

### At the University of Kent and Bath Spa University:

- Over 60% of disabled students report having all the support they need.

### At London South Bank University:

- 63% of disabled students report that all their agreed adjustments have been provided.

Each institution shows areas of strength alongside growth points, underlining the value of learning from each other across the sector. The positive outcomes listed here demonstrate that reliable support, inclusive teaching, safe escalation, and a sense of belonging are achievable in practice, even within current sector constraints.

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# What Disabled Students Say

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Each year we ask our survey respondents what they'd advise their institution to do to improve the experience of disabled students moving forward. Each year students provide many nuggets of wisdom. This year we found an emphasis on resourcing the holistic relationship between disabled students and their institution:

“it’s not just about making things accessible on paper – it’s about making students feel respected, understood, and supported in daily interactions.”

Disabled students’ relationships with their institution are built not just through individual adjustments but through students’ daily interactions with staff, their ability to access the environment, the reliability of support systems, and whether they feel listened to and taken seriously when access fails. Ensuring that disabled people can access, participate in, and thrive in higher education requires the sector to take a genuinely holistic approach.

## A Whole-institution Responsibility

“The disability services is not solely responsible for disabled students – all staff are.”

Disabled students consistently described fragmented systems, uneven staff confidence, and unclear responsibility for access. These are not problems that can be solved by Disability Services alone. A whole-institution approach means recognising that:

- academic staff shape access through teaching, assessment, and supervision
- professional services shape access through systems, communication, and timeliness
- student life shape access through social inclusion

- estates, accommodation, and digital services shape access through the physical and digital environment
- leadership shapes access through priorities, resourcing, and accountability

Relationships are not just interpersonal. They are structural. When responsibility is unclear or systems fail, trust erodes, regardless of individual goodwill.

## Students Appreciate Individual Effort, but See Resourcing as the Solution

“Invest in more resource so that individuals are not burning out trying to support as many disabled students as possible within their limited means.”

Meaningful inclusion requires institutional prioritisation and investment. Students are acutely aware of the pressures facing both academic and support staff, they see the consequences of under-resourcing. Only 47% of disabled students believe staff are resourced well enough to support them.

At the same time, students express strong appreciation for staff effort and care, particularly from Disability Services and individual academics. This coexistence is telling: students value staff commitment while recognising that the system does not support staff to succeed.

Where services are stretched and supportive structures are limited, the burden of access shifts onto disabled students themselves, who must chase support, explain needs repeatedly, or decide it is safer to say nothing. This is not sustainable for staff or students.

## Supporting Staff to Support Students

“Give lecturers resources on how to help disabled students – eg. Making lectures more accessible, making reasonable adjustments in classes etc”

Disabled students consistently emphasised the importance of staff training and confidence beyond specialist services. Students highlighted gaps in knowledge,

access to information, and system usability that undermine these relationships.

Training alone is not enough. Staff need:

- clear expectations about their role in access
- systems that make support plans easy to find and apply
- time and institutional backing to act

Resourcing relationships means enabling staff to do the right thing without relying on personal sacrifice.

## Listening Must be Structural, not Symbolic

“It is important that all are considered, not just the loudest voices.”

Nearly half of disabled students agree that their institution listens to them. At the same time, a large proportion disagree. This polarisation reflects uneven experience rather than ambiguity.

Disabled students are asking institutions to move beyond consultation and towards shared responsibility. Listening must be embedded in governance, planning, and decision-making, particularly during times of financial constraint.

Effective listening requires:

- accessible and trusted feedback mechanisms
- meaningful opportunities for co-production
- clear evidence that student input influences decisions

## Understanding Individual Staff Limits Without Excusing Institutional Priorities

Disabled students recognise the financial pressures facing higher education, however acknowledging constraints must not become a justification for inaction. When institutions treat inclusion as burdensome or optional, disabled students internalise the message that they do not belong.

## What This Means

Resourcing relationships with disabled students is not about asking staff to care more. It is about designing systems, priorities, and governance so that care can be delivered consistently and sustainably. This report shows that disabled students value relationships built on trust, reliability, and respect.

## The 2025 Wall of "Listen"

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

"My institution needs to listen to distance-learning disabled students."

**"It's very simple. Listen to us and stop fighting us at every turn."**

"Listen to the student first. I know what helps me. I know what makes things worse. Support should begin by listening, not with assumptions based on a diagnosis."

**"Listen to the needs of each student rather than taking a one-size fits all approach to accessibility, especially around timetabling."**

"Listen to disabled student voices especially when it comes to immediate physical safety risks ie. evacuation plans for physically disabled students."

**"Listen, Act, Fund."**

"Listen to disabled students and work with them to make changes."

**"Listen to the disabled students' voices and not see us as an inconvenience."**

"Listen to what disabled people are saying. You agree we need the support but do nothing to help us."

**"Listen to students and their needs."**

"Listen to your disabled students, we are not just another facetime of your Widening participation agenda."

**“Listen and implement.”**

“Listen to disabled people and make it clear to lecturers.”

**“Listen to adjustments. I have repeated several times that I am deaf and need lecturers to use a microphone and turn captions on for online lectures. This is never done.”**

“Listen further to disabled students, and what they are saying they need.”

**“Listen to us. Every single step of the way I have fought just to be heard and even still I’m ignored.”**

“Listen.”

**“Listen to disabled students when they tell you things.”**

“To listen [to] disabled students and consult them before making changes to accommodation & accessibility things”

**“Listen to them!”**

“To listen to their students. Don’t ignore us and our needs. Please.”

**“True inclusion requires more than policy; it demands cultural humility, a willingness to listen, and the courage to think differently about what it means to learn, to know, and to belong.”**

“Listen to disabled students.”

**“Listen to disabled students, follow up with students, i felt i was ignored, forgot, allowed to fall behind due to a lack of support.”**

“Listen to them.”

**"What I would ask of them is? listen to your students."**

"Listen to disabled students and honour their accessibility arrangements, do not change or 'bend the rules' so that you can offer us less but claim that it is 'basically the same'"

**"Listen to disabled voices. Believe disabled voices. Value disabled lives."**

"Listen to us."

**"Staff and administration need to LISTEN to the concerns and complaints of disabled students without taking them personally or focusing only on the individual incident without considering the wider implications."**

"Listen to us and believe what we are saying about our experiences."

**"Listen to neurodivergent students' needs for specific spaces on campus that are accessible to them – such as quiet spaces or sensory friendly spaces specifically for them."**

"Listen and allow them to suggest things to their own support plans."

**"Actually listen to us when trying to implement things to help us."**

"Every barrier I've faced is a reflection of systemic inertia. You can choose to listen and change – or continue to exclude disabled students through passive neglect."

**"Listen to us. Stop making excuses for why things couldn't possibly be accessible."**

"Listen to the disabled voices of what needs to change."

**"Listen and inquire about the student's needs."**

"The easiest thing to do would be to simply listen to disabled students and their [support plans]"

**"To actually listen and not make me feel like a burden."**

"Please listen to the individuals about their experience of their disability (especially when they have a rare disease) since we do not fit into the 'usual' accessibility arrangements."

**"Listen to us. Do what the Equality Act says you should be doing. Do the things you say you are going to do, when you say you are going to do it. Be accountable for your mistakes."**

"Listen closely to disabled students' needs, prioritise wellbeing and concerns over academic performance"

**"Listen to disabled students. Actually collaborate with us instead of doing it performatively when it suits you."**

"Potentially listen to the Disability Service's recommendations more/ be more proactive rather than mainly reactive."

**"Listen to students better and take their concerns seriously."**

"My lecturer could have listened when I spoke about my disability."

**"Listen when students speak, you can't imagine the hoops they've jumped through to get their voice to you."**

"Listen to students, help empower them and grow their student community, make disability and inclusion central to your policies and ideas."

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**"I would advise them to actually listen to disabled students and ensure this information is accurately recorded in a factual manner."**

"Pay even the slightest bit of attention to disabled students and listen to our needs."

**"Transparency is key, and listen to all disabled students! UG and PGT students receive so much more support than PGRs."**

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# Using the Data in This Report

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The sections above have set out the key findings, risks, and priorities emerging from the 2025 data. The pages that follow are intended for those who want to engage more deeply with the evidence and use the data to inform institutional decision-making.

The Annual Disabled Student Survey is a longitudinal, disabled-led survey conducted annually since 2023. It prioritises lived experience, institutional accountability, and year-on-year comparability. It is the largest disabled student-led dataset of its kind in the UK, with over 1000 respondents per year covering more than 100 institutions. The robustness of the results across different institutions and year-groups indicates its effectiveness as a measure of the disabled student experience.

## The Access Insights Framework

The Access Insights Framework is a practical tool for understanding where and why disabled students' access breaks down, and what institutions need to prioritise to fix it. It reflects disabled students' lived experience and long-standing evidence from the sector.

The framework is not a checklist for compliance. It is a way of assessing whether institutional systems are capable of delivering equality of opportunity reliably and at scale.

## What the Framework is For

The framework is designed to help institutions and the sector:

- Identify structural barriers rather than isolated incidents
- Distinguish between intent and delivery

- Prioritise high-impact, cost-effective change
- Hold the right parts of the institution accountable

It is particularly useful in times of constraint, when institutions must decide where to focus limited capacity.

## Interpreting the Findings

The statistics in this report are weighted by gender and provider to improve representativeness. In 2025, several questions were moved from a three-point Likert scale to a five-point Likert scale, which tends to reduce the proportion of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" responses. Further detail on methodology, demographics, and representativeness can be found in Appendix 1.

*(Note: responses may not sum to 100% due to rounding.)*

## Elements of the Report

### The Disabled Student Experience

In *The Disabled Student Experience*, we examine disabled students' experiences against six core principles, which form the main analytical 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 2025 results are compared with findings from 2023 and 2024, as well as against a 2033 ambition. By setting clear, actionable goals on a ten-year timescale, we aim to provide a shared reference point for the sector. These goals have been

developed in consultation with disability practitioners and reflect both the current realities of higher education and evidence of what is already achievable in practice.

## Structures Underlying Accessibility

In Structures Underlying Accessibility, we focus on survey questions that relate most directly to institutional policies, practices, and systems. This section supports analysis of how universities design and resource accessibility, and where structural change is most likely to improve disabled students' experiences.

Taken together, the disabled student experience data, the ten-year goals, and the underlying structures form a framework that allows the sector to understand where we are, how we arrived here, where we aim to go, and what will be required to get there.

## University Comparison

Recognising that institutions face different contexts and challenges, the Access Insights project also includes a comparative snapshot of results for universities with sufficient numbers of respondents. For this analysis, data is weighted separately so that each institutional sample has the same gender balance.

Thanks to the support of student activists and the institutions that disseminated the survey, we were able to include three additional universities in this year's comparison. Our long-term aim is to include every UK higher education provider, enabling institutions to understand their disabled students' experiences in context and supporting prospective students to make more informed choices.

## Appendix 1: Methodology, Representativeness and Demographics

Appendix 1 provides detail on how the Annual Disabled Student Survey was designed and delivered and analysed, including information on sampling, weighting, and changes to question design over time. It also sets out the demographic profile

of respondents and explains how representativeness and comparability have been approached when interpreting the results.

## Appendix 2: How to Get Involved

Appendix 2 sets out ways in which disabled students, universities, and student unions can support the Annual Disabled Student Survey and engage with Disabled Students UK's wider work. It includes information on participation, dissemination, and opportunities for deeper engagement

# The Disabled Student Experience

## 1. Universal Design

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

For disabled students to have equal access to their studies, accessibility must be built in anticipatorily across all aspects of the university experience. This includes teaching and learning, digital systems, assessment, the physical environment, and institutional policy.

Unlike individual adjustments, universal design measures benefit a wide range of disabled students without placing additional administrative burden on individuals. They are also frequently beneficial to non-disabled students, improving access and usability for the wider student population.

The Annual Disabled Student Survey provides a snapshot of key universal design measures that are relevant to large numbers of students and indicative of how effectively institutions are embedding accessibility by design.

### 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

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>1</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	31%	31%	42%	>75%
Disagree	43%	43%	41%	
Neither	26%	26%	16%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"You are pretty much left to your own devices and feel that you would need to fight for everything. It's a tough adjustment to make as is and if that had been anticipated it would have made a positive difference to my experience."***

## 1.2. Teaching and Learning

New questions this year focusing on research students give us additional information, especially honing in on the important relationship between students and their supervisors – 56% of research students believe their supervisor(s) are aware of how to make their supervisions and feedback accessible for disabled students

Inaccessibility in teaching and learning persists. Data from the National Student Survey shows that disabled students remain significantly less likely than non-disabled students to feel that their course is well organised, with this gap widening in both 2024 and 2025. Findings from the Annual Disabled Student Survey help to explain this pattern. Only 33% of disabled students report that their modules have been designed with accessibility in mind. Nonetheless this represents a notable improvement from 19% in 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Note that this question changed from a 3 point Likert to a 5 point Likert scale this year. 5 point Likert scales are associated with decreased number of respondents choosing "neither agree nor disagree", tending to lead to an increase in "agree" and "disagree" responses. See Appendix 1: A Note On Statistics for further detail. 2025 results for "Agree" and "Disagree" reflect cumulative responses for both "Somewhat Agree" and "Strongly Agree", and "Somewhat Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree", respectively.

At the same time, there has been a year on year reduction in distance access, which is particularly important for many disabled students. The trend is concerning but not all progress made during the pandemic has been lost. In 2025, 61% of disabled students still report that most of their lectures are recorded. Maintaining and embedding these practices remains critical.

New questions introduced this year provide further insight into the experiences of postgraduate research students, particularly the role of supervision. Only 56% of research students report that their supervisor or supervisors are aware of how to make supervision and feedback accessible for disabled students, indicating significant scope for improvement in supervisory practice.

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

Of taught students only

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>2</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	34%	37%	49%	>75%
Disagree	36%	33%	33%	
Neither	30%	30%	18%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"I would advise that the institution takes further steps to make lectures and other sessions more accessible to students like me, including those with autism and epilepsy. This includes clearer communication of materials in advance, more consistent use of captions or transcripts, and better management of the lecture environment to reduce noise and distractions."***

<sup>2</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

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

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>3</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	19%	21%	33%	>60%
Disagree	50%	45%	45%	
Neither	32%	34%	22%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I had one year long module for which the whole assessment was a test at the end of the year for ALL of the material. I have a depressive disorder (dysthymia) which affects memory encoding and retrieval. I don't think these types of test show real understanding by any student, but for me, it was very difficult. I would've preferred other assignments."***

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

"Not applicable" and "I don't know" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	64%	67%	70%	>80%
No	36%	33%	30%	

<sup>3</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

#### 1.2.4. "I find the in-person lectures/classes at my institution accessible"

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

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>4</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	55%	58%	69%	>80%
Disagree	21%	17%	19%	
Neither	24%	25%	12%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"[My] University has been really proactive in ensuring my needs are met, especially making sure the space is wheelchair accessible"**

Of taught in-person students:

- 37% had attended some lectures live online in the last year (compared to 40% in 2024 and 48% in 2023).
- 62% had watched lecture recordings in the last year (compared to 66% in 2024 and 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	28%	31%	24%	>75%

<sup>4</sup> Changed in 2025 from "I find in-person lectures/classes accessible" and from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

No	55%	54%	56%	
I don't know	17%	14%	20%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"When I was unable to attend an in-person meeting and asked them to do an online meeting they refused saying it would be "too difficult" which I found really frustrating as during COVID pandemic everyone was using online meetings and screen sharing."***

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

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
A majority or all	62%	63%	61%	>80%
A minority or none	38%	37%	39%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"While some lecturers already record sessions, it needs to be consistent across all subjects."***

#### 1.2.7. "I think my supervisor(s) are aware of how to make their supervisions and feedback accessible for disabled students"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of research students

	2025	2033 goal
Agree	56%	>80%
Disagree	30%	
Neither	14%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"I had to dismiss one supervisor [who] insisted if I just practised more I could say the academic words. This was even after I explained to her the basics of Dyspraxia."***

1.2.8. Do you have the option of attending a majority of training events and seminars live at a distance?

"Not applicable" excluded

Of research students

	2025	2033 goal
Yes	55%	>75%
No	29%	
I don't know	17%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"[Provide] readily available Teams links to seminars, training sessions or other events that can be hybrid without remarking on how much staff miss having students in person, a mention of 'lazy', or the hassle of asking for one in advance because life is unpredictable."***

### 1.3. Digital accessibility

Despite reductions in distance access to teaching, digital accessibility continues to improve, more than five years after the start of the pandemic. In 2025, 77% of disabled students report that the lecture recordings they are provided with are accessible. However, only 41% say that the vast majority of recordings include useful captions, indicating uneven implementation of accessibility standards.

Given that the 2018 Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations came into force years ago, the overall pace of improvement remains slow. Nonetheless, the data shows that progress is being made, and that further gains are achievable where accessibility is treated as a core requirement rather than an optional enhancement.

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	2024	2025 <sup>5</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	60%	64%	70%	>75%
Disagree	21%	18%	22%	
Neither	18%	17%	8%	

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

“Not applicable – I have not used the library resources” excluded

<sup>5</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>6</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	59%	55%	66%	>75%
Disagree	19%	20%	23%	
Neither	22%	25%	10%	

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

Of those that watched some lecture recordings

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>7</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	67%	68%	77%	>85%
Disagree	16%	16%	16%	
Neither	17%	16%	7%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

**"Better quality lecture recordings – my recordings are almost useless as it can't pick up things written on the whiteboard."**

### 1.3.4. 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	40%	45%	41%	>90%
No	60%	55%	59%	

<sup>6</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

<sup>7</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

## 1.4. Assessment

In the National Student Survey, disabled students' overall positivity towards assessment increased in 2025. However, the gap between disabled and non-disabled students continued to widen. Findings from the Annual Disabled Student Survey help to explain the gap: 46% of disabled students believe they have received a lower mark on their course as a result of inaccessible assessment practices. Key adjustments such as uncapped resits and alternative assessments, which are critical for many disabled students, remain far from standard practice.

Despite this, some progress is evident. 32% of disabled students report having access to uncapped resits if they are unwell on the day of an exam, up from 26% in 2023.

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

"Not applicable" excluded

Of taught students only

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>8</sup>	2033 goal
Yes	48%	48%	46%	<15%
No	52%	52%	54%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"Stammering also makes some forms of oral assessment difficult and stressful  
– I know that I've got worse grades in some areas of my course due to a**

<sup>8</sup> Question changed from 2023 to add "on this course".

***perceived departmental unwillingness to change the setting of these assessments to accommodate me."***

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

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Agree	56%	57%	55%	<30%
Disagree	20%	22%	19%	
Neither	24%	22%	27%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"during that meeting I pointed out that some students, especially those who have a certain disability, may find a timed online exam extremely difficult to complete. What's more, it sometimes may not reflect their true abilities."***

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)

"I don't know" excluded

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
The majority or all	13%	12%	14%	>35%
None	74%	73%	71%	<20%

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I had two presentations as part of my fourth (final) year, and it was unclear whether these presentations were optional or could be adjusted."***

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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	26%	28%	32%	>60%
No	23%	25%	22%	
I don't know	51%	48%	46%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I was not offered any alternative travel and my only option was to take the train by myself, in a surgical boot, while on strong pain medication that made me delusional to sit an exam so that I would not be capped at 40%."***

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

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Agree	55%	55%	58%	>85%
Disagree	27%	24%	20%	
Neither	19%	21%	23%	

Advice from a disabled student

***"Reduce the evidence requirements for disabled students who require extensions on projects, or adjustments for exams."***

## 1.5. Physical Environment

Questions in section 1.5 were asked only of in-person students with physical or sensory access needs (625 respondents). Overall perceptions of the physical and sensory environment have improved, with over half of students now finding it accessible, however more detailed questions reveal limited progress. Compared with other areas of universal design, change in the physical environment has been notably slow.

- 45% of students with physical or sensory access needs report having been unable to attend an in-person teaching session or supervision because the location was not accessible.
- 21% do not feel confident that they would be able to exit all the on-campus buildings they use in an emergency.
- 47% of disabled students who require accessible student housing report having had to pay extra for it.

Together, these findings indicate that while surface-level improvements may be occurring, significant structural barriers in the physical environment remain unresolved.

57% 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.

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

"Not applicable" excluded

	2024	2025 <sup>9</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	38%	52%	>75%
Disagree	39%	38%	
Neither	24%	10%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

**"All doors need to be made automatic for people with mobility issues or wheelchair users. A designated quiet room needs to be provided for people with sensory overwhelm."**

*Advice from a disabled student*

**"Remember that it is possible to have both mobility and sensory disabilities at once and that putting hearing loops up a flight of stairs or the only level access at a distance from the lecturer that makes it impossible to lipread is not equal access."**

## 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	2025	2033 goal
Yes	44%	45%	<15%
No	56%	55%	

<sup>9</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I have been made to feel isolated and missed valuable learning that I have paid for as I was unable to access my classroom on more than one occasion".***

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"They need to make the entrance wheelchair accessible at the very least. I can't access half the rooms."***

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	2025	2033 goal
Yes	79%	80%	>95%
No	22%	21%	

- 41% of disabled students with physical or sensory access needs report having lived in student housing in the last year.
- 60% of students with physical or sensory access needs that report living in student housing have access needs that relate to their housing.
- 48% of students with physical or sensory access needs sometimes need to use accessible toilets.

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	2025	2033 goal

Yes	69%	64%	>90%
No	31%	36%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"In terms of accommodation, I have received the worst room for someone with sensory issues. My wall is part of the stairwell corridor and so it is extremely noisy."***

#### 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	2025	2033 goal
Yes	46%	47%	<5%
No	54%	53%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I don't understand why I need to pay extortionate amounts for accommodation on campus for my needs."***

#### 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	2025	2033 goal
Yes	69%	71%	>80%
No	31%	29%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"The disabled toilets also need improvement - some of them are mouldy or broken or aren't up to government standards with space or grab rails."***

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

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	66%	66%	>90%
No	34%	34%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"They have a sensory room where I used to be able to focus and work but we're no longer allowed to work in there and the current 'quiet' place we've now been told to work in is not sensory friendly."***

## 1.6. Policy

As with universal design in the physical environment, progress in institutional policy has been limited over the past three years. This is a critical area for attention, as policy shapes how access is interpreted and enforced in practice.

- 43% of disabled students believe that disability-related absences are counted towards attendance requirements on their course.
- Only 28% believe they would be permitted to move to part-time study if they needed to.
- 9% report having faced disciplinary action as a result of their disability.

Together, these findings suggest that inflexible or poorly communicated policies continue to create barriers for disabled students, with significant implications for retention, wellbeing, and equity of experience.

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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	44%	43%	43%	
No	16%	17%	12%	>60%
I don't know	40%	40%	45%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"[I] wasn't forwarded to disability services during my first year, even though my personal tutor and year lead were aware that I had a chronic illness. As a result, I was placed on attendance monitoring and reprimanded for attendance."**

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

Of full time students only

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	30%	26%	28%	>60%
No	34%	35%	33%	
I don't know	36%	39%	39%	

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

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	7%	7%	9%	<2%
No	93%	93%	91%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I have been threatened repeatedly with 'fitness to practice' as my health condition deteriorated and really they should have been looking at ways to support me."***

## 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 are the responsibility of every member of staff within a higher education provider. As a result, staff attitudes and behaviours play a central role in shaping disabled students' experiences.

An inclusive culture matters not only because it reduces overt ableism and increases disabled students' sense of belonging, but because it underpins day to day practice. Where inclusive values are embedded, staff are more likely to:

- consider accessibility proactively rather than reactively
- recognise and address ableism within teaching content
- implement agreed adjustments consistently
- respond flexibly and appropriately to students' needs

Where students anticipate judgement or negative responses from staff, they are less likely to raise access issues, disclose disabilities, or escalate unresolved problems. An inclusive culture is therefore foundational to effective accessibility, not an optional addition.

Most of the attitudes students encounter about disability are positive – 84% of disabled students have encountered at least one positive attitude toward disabled students from a staff member while 51% have encountered at least one negative attitude. 69% of students felt a staff member had said or implied that “it is ok to need support”. However, a quarter reported that a staff member had said or implied that “Adjustments won’t work in the ‘real world’” reinforcing harmful assumptions about disability and competence.

Attitudes are reflected in practice. 41% of disabled students report encountering staff who treated agreed adjustments as optional rather than required. At the same

time, 57% feel that most of their educators sufficiently prioritise their wellbeing, indicating variability in implementation across staff and contexts.

More serious negative experiences remain a concern. One in five disabled students report having been made to feel unwelcome by staff because of their disability.

## 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	24%	25%	20%	<5%
No	76%	75%	80%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

*"I'm really pleased with everything. I started as a mature student lacking all formal education, and slowly worked my way up from a level 2 science course right to PhD [...] The disability support really had the capacity to make or break my achievements. The extra time, extensions for assignments, and the accessibility provision of typing answers in exams really made it work for me and I am immeasurably pleased and grateful for it. I cannot imagine how bad my grades would be or whether I would fail altogether without these support. I believe disabled people have a lot to offer, it just takes a bit of adjustments"*

## 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?<sup>10</sup>

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
“It’s ok to need support”	65%	67%	69%	>80%
“Mental health problems are valid”	51%	52%	55%	>70%
“Not all disabilities are visible”	48%	50%	55%	>65%
“Accessibility is the responsibility of all staff members, not just disability staff”	34%	34%	41%	>55%
“Accessibility is a responsibility, not a favour”	30%	31%	34%	>55%
“Being disabled can bring strengths as well as limitations”	29%	28%	32%	>50%
“It is understandable for access needs to change from day to day”	21%	24%	30%	>45%
None of the above			16%	

<sup>10</sup> The positive and negative attitudes investigated in this question and the following were included in the same question in 2023 and 2024, so “None of the above” is not comparable across the three years.

2.2.2. Which of the following attitudes do you feel have been stated or implied by a staff member at your institution?<sup>11</sup>

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
"Adjustments won't work in the 'real world'"	20%	16%	25%	<5%
"Your accessibility needs are a nuisance or unreasonable"	21%	18%	20%	<5%
"If you are so disabled you should interrupt your studies"	18%	16%	17%	<8%
"You are lazy or incompetent"	16%	13%	17%	<3%
"You are not as disabled as you say"	15%	13%	16%	<3%
"Your adjustments are unfair to other students"	18%	12%	18%	<5%
"You are trying to 'cheat the system' by asking for adjustments"	14%	10%	13%	<3%
None of the above			49%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"Generally a really inclusive attitude in my department"***

*Advice from a disabled student*

<sup>11</sup> The positive and negative attitudes investigated in this question and the previous question were part of the same question in 2023 and 2024, so "None of the above" is not comparable across the three years.

***"The university needs to create a centralised authority that holds all departments accountable for their disability policies and potentially discriminatory attitudes. Currently, departments enjoy too much autonomy."***

2.2.3. "I feel that the majority of my educators at this institution sufficiently prioritise my wellbeing"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	48%	57%	>65%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	21%	24%	
Neither	31%	19%	

2.2.4. "The majority of my educators at this institution are understanding when my disability impacts my attendance or performance"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	52%	58%	>65%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	20%	26%	
Neither	29%	16%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"My attendance was 0% at one point, and there have been no adjustments to support me."***

2.2.5. 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
No, I have not encountered such content at this institution	68%	69%	74%	
Yes and the educator didn't identify it as prejudice	18%	19%	16%	<5%
Yes and the educator identified it as a type of prejudice <sup>12</sup>	14%	12%	12%	

<sup>12</sup> Changed in 2025 from "Yes but the educator identified it as a type of prejudice".

2.2.6. 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	45%	43%	41%	<20%
No	55%	57%	59%	

2.2.7. Have you experienced bullying or harassment by a staff member or student at this institution?

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
No	72%	75%	77%	>90%
Yes	14%	15%	12%	
I don't know	10%	7%	8%	
Prefer not to say	3%	3%	3%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**“The way I have been treated is unacceptable, disgusting, ableist, transphobic, homophobic. Just disgusting. All from staff members. Who are you supposed to go to if your personal tutor is bullying you?”**

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

“Not applicable” excluded

Of those who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>13</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	57%	58%	65%	>75%
Disagree	16%	15%	19%	
Neither	27%	27%	17%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I experienced bullying and discrimination from a previous primary supervisor who refused my adjustments and blamed me for them. I reported it and got advised to drop it because they were a powerful person in their department and it would be hard to prove."***

2.2.9. "I feel my funding body is flexible, accommodating and values my wellbeing"

"Not applicable" and "I don't know" excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	36%	>70%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	39%	
Neither	26%	

Also see the responses to Question 5.3.3. "You report having held back from raising some accessibility issue(s)/asking for disability support. Please select all the reasons why"

- "I didn't think the particular staff member would understand or believe me"

<sup>13</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

- “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”

Also see these responses to Question 3.3.1. in [section 3.3](#) 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 that is so difficult that it puts them at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled peers.

A major barrier to equal access for disabled students is the administrative burden involved in securing individualised support. In practice, complex processes, delays, and repeated requests for information often present a greater barrier than outright refusal of support. Even where support is eventually put in place, navigating these systems can place disabled students at a sustained disadvantage compared with their peers.

The *Abrahart v University of Bristol* case clarified that a student's right to support does not depend on completing a formal application process. This reinforces the need for institutions to design systems that are responsive to need, rather than reliant on procedural compliance.

A barrier-free path to individualised support requires institutions to:

- provide clear, accessible information about available support and where responsibility sits
- implement agreed adjustments reliably, without requiring students to repeatedly follow up
- ensure Disability Services communicate efficiently, minimise delays, and avoid imposing unnecessary or excessive evidence requirement

Reducing the administrative burden is essential to ensuring that individualised support is timely, equitable, and effective.

#### 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	67%	62%	63%	<20%
No	33%	38%	37%	

### 3.2. Information

Disabled students must know where to turn, know their rights and know what access adjustments to ask for.

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

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>14</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	70%	73%	79%	>85%
Disagree	16%	12%	14%	
Neither	16%	15%	6%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"I felt very isolated as a disabled student and didn't know where to turn to for support."**

<sup>14</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

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

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>15</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	51%	52%	67%	>75%
Disagree	22%	23%	23%	
Neither	28%	25%	11%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

**"Tell students about their rights and options. Check in on them."**

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"I didn't know how to access the tech help that was in place."**

Also see Question 4.2.1. "I have been provided with enough relevant information about different possible adjustments that could help me" in [section 4.2](#).

Also see the response to Question 5.3.3. "You report having held back from raising some accessibility issue(s)/asking for disability support. Please select all the reasons why"

- "I didn't know who to raise the issue with"

### 3.3. Declaration

<sup>15</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

98% 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 (95% in 2024).

### Declaration rates

	2023	2024	2025
Disability Services or equivalent	91%	91%	88%
Personal tutor (for taught students)	74%	70%	69%
Teaching or assessment staff members in my department, faculty, school or college	48%	45%	56%
Centralised student support staff outside of Disability Services (e.g. mental health or wellness team, counsellors)	N/A	46%	41%
Administrative or technical staff members in my department, faculty, school or college	N/A	26%	26%
Pastoral or mentoring staff in my department, faculty, school or college	N/A	17%	19%
Research supervisor(s) (for PGR students)	92%	87%	88%
Staff within my Doctoral Training Partnership/Centre for Doctoral Training (for PGR students)	N/A	17%	43%
Funding body (for PGR students)	N/A	21%	22%

Occupational Health or Human Resources (for PGR students)	26%	14%	23%
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3.3.1 Students who had not shared that they have a disability selected the following explanations:

	2024 (n=58)	2025 (n=77)	2033 goal
<b>Usefulness of support</b>			
I don't think the adjustments my institution would offer me would be helpful <sup>16</sup>	21%	9%	<10%
<b>Administration</b>			
I don't think I have the evidence they require	27%	25%	<10%
I don't want to go through the administrative process of applying for support	41%	12%	<10%
My institution has not asked me if I have a disability	22%	19%	<10%
<b>Attitudes</b>			
I don't want others to see me as difficult, incompetent or like I'm trying to get an advantage over other students	28%	38%	<10%

<sup>16</sup> Changed in 2025 from "I need support but I don't think the adjustments this institution would offer me are going to be helpful".

I feel embarrassed to be needing adjustments or like I should be able to study without adjustments	28%	27%	<10%
I have had bad experiences in the past when sharing my disability	21%	25%	
I am afraid I would be treated worse or that it would affect my academic prospects	26%	22%	<10%
Others need the resources more than me	34%	18%	
I don't think staff would understand or believe me	32%	17%	<10%
<b>Knowledge</b>			
I didn't think my condition counted as a disability <sup>17</sup>	18%	37%	<10%
I don't know who I would raise it with	19%	32%	<10%
<b>Other</b>			
Other	4%	9%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I would have disclosed my suspected disabilities much earlier if someone had explicitly asked me - I wanted to tell people, but was scared to bring it up because I didn't know whether I would be judged or dismissed for mentioning it."***

<sup>17</sup> Changed in 2025 from "I didn't realise I had a disability"

### 3.4. Disability Services

Disability support within higher education has always extended beyond Disability Services, but these teams have traditionally played a central coordinating role. In 2025, the data suggests that this role is shifting.

Disability Services appear to be operating differently. Compared with previous years, students were less likely to be offered a meeting with a disability advisor or the option to set up a formal support plan. Students' behaviour also appears to have shifted: fewer declared directly to Disability Services or accepted the offer of a meeting when one was available. Despite these changes, the overall proportion of students receiving some form of support from Disability Services has not significantly declined, suggesting a move towards less formal or less structured models of support.

The drivers of this change are not fully clear, but it is likely linked to rising numbers of disabled students alongside institutional cost-cutting. While many pandemic-related pressures have eased, timelines for putting support in place have not improved as expected. Even among students who submitted evidence more than two months before the start of term, only 59% had a support plan in place when their course began. In addition, 42% of students who declared a disability to Disability Services report experiencing delays that negatively affected them.

At the same time, the value of relational support remains clear. 80% of students who met with a disability advisor found them knowledgeable and helpful and 72% of students with a support plan felt empowered to influence its content. These findings suggest that personalised advice and structured support continue to play a critical role in effective access.

Of declared students, 88% declared to Disability Services and 86% received some support from them. 75% of declared students were offered to speak with a disability advisor and 69% did speak with a disability advisor. 69% were invited to agree on a support plan and 66% had a support plan created for them.

See section 1.2 in Structures underlying accessibility.

### 3.4.1. "My disability advisor was knowledgeable and helpful"

Of those that spoke with disability advisor

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>18</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	69%	75%	80%	>85%
Disagree	13%	9%	12%	
Neither	18%	16%	8%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I wish the disability advisor was more proactive in checking in with me occasionally rather than waiting for me to reach out to her".***

<sup>18</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

### 3.4.2. When was a student support plan created for you?

Of students invited to agree a support plan

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
<b>Of students who sent in evidence before starting</b>				
Before the start of term	53%	49%	51%	
<b>Of students who sent in evidence at least 2 months before starting</b>				
Before the start of term	62%	58%	59%	>95%

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"The disability service team is absolutely wonderful and constantly does the best with what they have in terms of funding and support from the university."***

### 3.4.3. 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	47%	41%	42%	<20%

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"My disability support advisor has at times either not replied or taken a long time to reply to emails. I do not feel supported at uni as a disabled person because of this."***

Also see the response to Question 5.3.3. "You report having held back from raising some accessibility issue(s)/asking for disability support. Please select all the reasons why"

- "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

In 2025, a smaller proportion of respondents reported having submitted formal evidence of their disability to their institution. The most commonly cited reason for not doing so (29%) was that the support they required was informal and did not involve an application process. 20% of students who had not submitted evidence reported having gone through a support process without being required to provide evidence.

This suggests that, for some students, access to support is becoming less administratively burdensome. However, barriers remain at the other end of the spectrum. 27% of students who had not submitted evidence reported that this was due to not having sufficient evidence to do so. 31% of all declared disabled students found the amount or type of evidence requested by their institution to be burdensome.

85% of the declared students remember sending evidence of their disability to their institution in 2025 (compared to 97% in 2024). Of those who could remember when they had sent in evidence, 56% did so before they started their course. 33% did so over two months before they started.

### 3.5.1. Why have you not sent evidence of your disability to your institution?

	2025
All the support I have asked for has been informal, it has not required an application process	29%
I do not have enough evidence	27%
I have not had time to go through the support application process yet	20%
I have gone through a support application process but it has not required me to send in evidence	20%
I do not want to go through the support application process	14%
I did not know who to talk to/how the support application process works	13%
I do not need any support	11%
Other	15%

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I didn't think they would believe me since the only evidence I had at the time was my medical records and I thought it might have been a pain to just arrange the support."***

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

	2024	2025
I did not have a disability/know I had a disability	N/A	39%
I did not know who to talk to/how the support application process works	33%	38%
I initially was not intending to ask for support	27%	27%
It took a long time to get the evidence	20%	18%
The application process for Disabled Students' Allowance delayed the application process for support from my institution	9%	11%
Other	30%	14%

3.5.3. "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	2024	2025 <sup>19</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	31%	22%	31%	<15%
Disagree	44%	53%	48%	
Neither	25%	24%	21%	

<sup>19</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

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

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

*Insight from a disabled student*

***“Overall, my experience with my institution and the general attitude towards disabilities in the UK is positive. The only matter that I find stressful is the amount of evidence that is required in order to prove one’s disability (especially if it is hidden).”***

### 3.6. Follow Up

For many disabled students, one of the most demanding aspects of arranging support is following up on adjustments that have already been agreed in principle. Most report having to repeatedly explain the same needs to different staff, and 63% have had to chase the delivery of agreed adjustments.

3.6.1. "I often have to explain the same thing about my disability or access needs several times to different staff members"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	57%	<33%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	26%	
Neither	17%	

See also Question 2.2.1 under “Structures Underlying Accessibility” [section 2.2](#).

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	2024	2025	2033 goal
More than half the time/always	40%	31%	34%	<10%
Never	33%	41%	37%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

*“I have always needed to chase up adjustments due to university lack of resources and/or understanding of accessibility in general by facilities teams, timetabling via the access support staff and/or my head of department.”*

## 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, that support must be both effective and sufficient. While the support disabled students receive is often effective, it is frequently insufficient to fully meet their needs. Insufficiency can arise either because students are not offered or agreed adequate support, or because agreed support is not implemented consistently in practice. This may reflect gaps in information about available support, rejected requests, or failures in delivery.

### 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

Of students who have declared a disability

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>20</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	37%	38%	52%	>75%
Disagree	47%	37%	38%	
Neither	16%	25%	10%	

<sup>20</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

## 4.2. Asking for the Right Adjustments

Starting a university degree often brings new access barriers that students may not have encountered previously. To request appropriate support, students need clear information about the types of support available and how these may relate to their needs. Currently, 64% of declared disabled students report having received this information.

71% of declared students have asked for at least one adjustment from a staff member or system within the institution

4.2.1. “I have been provided with enough relevant information about different possible adjustments that could help me”

“Not applicable” excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	64%	>75%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	26%	
Neither	9%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**“The disability advisor who created my action plan said that they would look up adjustments for PGRs, but none of this was in the document – just something that looked like it was copied and pasted from an undergraduate’s.”**

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”

### 4.3. Adjustments Agreed

Which adjustments are ultimately agreed reflects both the adjustments students feel able to request and how institutions respond to those requests. Among students with a support plan, 72% report feeling empowered to have sufficient influence over its content.

Despite this, gaps in provision remain common. Half of declared disabled students report having been offered insufficient support at some point, and 44% report being discouraged from requesting, or refused, an adjustment. Beyond non-responses such as “it is not something we provide”, the most frequently cited reasons for refusal relate to comparisons with non-disabled students or appeals to competence standards, including statements such as *“it would not be fair to the other students”* or *“it is a requirement of the course”* and thus cannot be adjusted.

87% 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	2024	2025 <sup>21</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	60%	59%	72%	>85%
Disagree	16%	16%	15%	
Neither	24%	26%	12%	

<sup>21</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"Have the students involved in making support plans. Once my evidence was sent I then received a copy of the support plan. A more inclusive approach would be to discuss with me and some adjustments would have been made (had I been involved) which would have prevented negative events/outcomes from inappropriate provision."***

4.3.2. Has a staff member or system within your institution ever

	2025	2033 goal
Discouraged you from getting an adjustment	21%	<25%
Refused to agree to an adjustment	24%	
None of the above	64%	

4.3.3. Reasons given to the student for discouraging/refusing an adjustment

	2025
"It is not something we provide"	49%
"It would not be fair to the other students"	46%
"It is a requirement of the course that you complete this task/test without the adjustment"	42%
"It is too costly, impractical or difficult to provide this adjustment"	34%
"It is not within my power to decide if you can have this adjustment"	32%

"You should try harder/do the task in a different way/skip the task instead"	31%
"If you get this adjustment, everyone will start asking for it"	31%
"Needing this adjustment would call into question your fitness to study"	29%
"You do not really need this adjustment"	28%
"You made the request in the wrong way (e.g. too late or too nagging or not in writing)"	26%
"If you are so disabled you should interrupt your studies instead"	22%
"You do not have the right evidence for this adjustment"	11%
Other	64%
No reason was given	12%

*Advice from a disabled student*

**"The excuse that recording equipment is not available in every lecture theatre is not good enough."**

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"I was told by a lecturer that I was one of 20,000 students and it wasn't fair to expect lift access because think of how many people are also on this course."**

4.3.4. 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	2025	2033 goal
Yes	50%	51%	<15%
No	50%	49%	

4.3.5. Have you ever been in a situation where the only adjustment the institution offered was isolating, dangerous or humiliating?<sup>22</sup>

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	24%	26%	<5%
No	76%	74%	

## 4.4. Implementation

We are seeing a positive trend in the implementation of support over the last three years, however 56% still report some of their agreed support not being put in place.

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	2024	2025	2033 goal
All	37%	39%	44%	>80%
None	2%	2%	3%	

<sup>22</sup> Changed in 2025 from “Have you ever been in a situation where the only adjustment the institution offered to resolve an access barrier was isolating, dangerous or humiliating?”.

4.4.2. On average, how long does it take for an agreed adjustment to be put in place?

“Not applicable” excluded

Of students with at least one adjustment agreed

	2025	2033 goal
Less than two weeks	58%	>80%

*Insight from a disabled student*

**“I’ve been asking for a piece of technology for months that I need for my studies and I keep getting passed along or told to email someone else.”**

*Advice from a disabled student*

**“Actually implement the adjustment students ask for – I asked if the mic could be on in lectures and the lecturer said he would. But never ended up doing it even when ask a second time.”**

See also Q2.1.2. in “[Structures Underlying Accessibility](#)”.

## 4.5. Effectiveness

As in previous years, 68% of disabled students report that most of the support they receive is effective once it has been implemented. Support from Disability Services, personal tutors, and pastoral or mentoring staff is most consistently rated as helpful. By contrast, support provided by administrative or technical staff, as well as staff within Doctoral Training Partnerships, is rated as less helpful, suggesting variability in accessibility knowledge and practice across roles.

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, no adjustments have been provided for me" excluded

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
More than half or all	65%	73%	68%	>85%
All	21%	39%	28%	
More than half	44%	44%	41%	
Fewer than half	28%	14%	25%	
None	7%	2%	7%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"There appears to be very little room for reasonable adjustments as a disabled student that allow you to access education on the same level as non-disabled peers."***

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"My requirements are simply to sit the exam in a separate room, yet every time it feels like a circus. Why am I sent the wrong room number? Why do I stand in front of a dark, locked room until after the exam start time? Why am I pin-balled between rooms and staff members for 20 minutes? It makes me feel like I'm asking for too much."***

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"<sup>23</sup>

"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	2025
Disability Services or equivalent	68% agree 15% disagree 17% neither	71% agree 20% disagree 9% neither
Personal tutor	61% agree 16% disagree 23% neither	68% agree 20% disagree 12% neither
Pastoral or mentoring staff in my department, faculty, school or college	70% agree 16% disagree 13% neither	68% agree 22% disagree 10% neither
Research supervisor(s) (PGR only)	69% agree 11% disagree 20% neither	67% agree 23% disagree 10% neither
Teaching or assessment staff in my department, faculty, school or college	56% agree 21% disagree 24% neither	64% agree 22% disagree 14% neither
Centralised student support staff outside of Disability Services	66% agree 17% disagree 17% Neither	65% agree 22% disagree 13% neither
Career or placement staff	69% agree 13% disagree 18% neither	62% agree 24% disagree 14% neither

<sup>23</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

Administrative or technical staff members in my department, faculty, school or college	60% agree 20% disagree 19% neither	57% agree 26% disagree 17% neither
Staff within my Doctoral Training Partnership/Centre for Doctoral Training (PGR only)	Excluded as sample size <40	53% agree 39% disagree 9% neither

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I have found the mentor and study skills invaluable."***

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"There is 1 lecturer who has been my saving grace throughout and I wouldn't have got this far without her!"***

## One-on-one Support Effectiveness

In 2025 we expanded our questions about one-on-one support to also include support provided by DSA. It is notable that an increased number of respondents report feeling that their one-on-one support staff is skilled at providing the support they need this year.

66% of the disabled students have received some one on one support. Last year we asked only about one-on-one support funded by their institution (not DSA), 52% of the sample had received such support in 2024.

### 4.5.3. Please select any one-on-one support you have received

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>24</sup>
Mentoring	21%	21%	34%
Counselling/ Wellbeing support <sup>25</sup>	19%	20%	38%
Study skills tuition	17%	20%	32%
Note taking	5%	7%	12%
Text assistance (e.g. scribing or reading aloud)	3%	5%	9%
Physical assistance	2%	1%	5%
Sign language Interpretation	0%	1%	0%
Other	1%	2%	5%

4.5.4. “I feel that one-on-one support staff members are skilled in providing the support I need” <sup>26</sup>

Of those who have received some one-on-one support

<sup>24</sup> The question changed to include both DSA-funded and institutional support in 2025. In 2023 and 2024 the question was “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).”.

<sup>25</sup> Changed from “Counselling” in 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Note that this question includes DSA funded support for the first time this year. The question also changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Agree	63%	59%	74%	>85%
Disagree	16%	13%	13%	
Neither	21%	29%	14%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I was receiving weekly one-to-one study support from someone in the faculty, which had been incredibly helpful. Without it, I honestly think I might have left the university. However, due to recent budget cuts, that support has now been discontinued."***

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"The ASD mentor I was assigned I found patronising and set so many boundaries for the meetings that they were only willing to discuss issues that are completely academic, which I don't struggle with."***

## Tools

4.5.5. 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	67%	67%	67%	>80%
No	33%	33%	33%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I had to use an accessible desk as my wheelchair did not fit under a standard one. For weeks, I was without an accessible desk in a classroom and was told to go to different departments to sort it. In the end the tutor requested a different room, which had an accessible desk in."***

## 5. Somewhere to Turn

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

Even where a support plan is in place, disabled students continue to encounter access barriers. Plans may not be implemented consistently, circumstances may change, or new barriers may emerge over time. In addition, some disabled students do not have a support plan at all. In all of these situations, it is essential that disabled students have somewhere clear, safe, and effective to turn when access fails.

### 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	2024	2025 <sup>27</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	61%	67%	69%	>75%
Disagree	16%	13%	15%	
Neither	23%	20%	10%	
I don't know	N/A	N/A	6%	

### 5.2. Proactivity

The *Abrahart v University of Bristol* case clarified that institutions have a responsibility to work proactively with students to arrange appropriate support, rather than relying solely on students to request adjustments. In practice, 45% of

<sup>27</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

disabled students report that when they were struggling, someone at their institution recognised this and offered effective support.

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

"Not applicable" excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	45%	>70%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	38%	
Neither	17%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"Look out more for signs that a student is struggling. I believe I showed clear signs of mental illness however I would not have received help had I not gotten to the desperate point of asking myself, at which point my studies had been severely affected."***

See also Questions 1.2.2. and 1.2.3. in "[Structures Underlying Accessibility](#)".

### 5.3. Raising Issues

Most disabled students encounter accessibility barriers after their degree has begun. For access needs to be met, students must feel able to raise these issues when they arise. However, the data shows that many disabled students hold back from doing so. The most commonly cited reasons are that the process is time-consuming and concerns about being perceived as difficult.

Whether students raise access issues is strongly influenced by their confidence that those issues will be resolved. In 2025, 47% of disabled students reported that

none of the access issues they raised were resolved. In addition, more than one in five students who raised an access issue reported being treated worse as a result. These experiences undermine trust in institutional processes and discourage future reporting.

72% 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
A majority /All	55%	60%	59%	>80%
Fewer than half	32%	28%	28%	
None	13%	13%	13%	

5.3.2. You report having raised some accessibility issue(s), please select all the statements that you agree with<sup>28</sup>

Of those who have raised at least one access issue

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
At least one accessibility issue I have raised has been left unresolved	53%	43%	46%	<15%
At least one accessibility issue I have raised took so long to sort out that it affected my health or studies	43%	38%	40%	<20%
At least one accessibility issue I have raised was handled quickly and proactively	35%	36%	39%	>75%
At least one accessibility issue I have raised was resolved	53%	65%	63%	>75%
I was treated worse as a consequence of raising an accessibility issue in at least one case	16%	17%	21%	<2%

*Advice from a disabled student*

<sup>28</sup> Changed in 2025 from "If you have ever raised issues with accessibility, please select all statements that you agree with".

*"When concerns are raised, actually try to reach a resolution and help the student access support from other services rather than just telling them to ask someone else without any support or following up, because most likely no one will reply to their email for weeks and they'll just give up on getting any support."*

5.3.3. You report having held back from raising some accessibility issue(s)/asking for disability support. Please select all the reasons why:

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

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
<b>University operations</b>				
It would take too much of my time or effort to advocate for myself	48%	50%	48% <sup>29</sup>	<10%
I didn't believe the institution could do anything about the issue	48%	39%	34%	<20%
Although I believe they could, I didn't believe the institution would do anything about the issue		39%	36%	<10%
"It would have taken too long for them to put support in place"		29%	29%	<10%
I didn't know who to raise the issue with	32%	29%	29%	<10%

<sup>29</sup> Changed in 2025 from "It would take too much of my time to advocate for myself"

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"	57%	51%	55%	<15%
Raising issues hasn't helped/has been harmful for me in the past		39%	36%	
I didn't think the particular staff member would understand or believe me	33%	27%	28%	<5%
I was afraid I would be treated worse or that it would affect my academic prospects	33%	26%	32%	<15%
"I don't have the required evidence"		20%	16%	<10%
Internalised attitudes				
"I don't like to ask for too much support"	57%	57%	50%	<25%
Other	4%	3%	6%	

## 5.4. Somewhere to Turn

A persistent barrier for disabled students is the absence of clear institutional responsibility for accessibility. Where roles and accountability are unclear, staff are often uncertain who is responsible for addressing access issues. As a result, 40% of

disabled students report being passed from person to person when seeking support.

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	2024	2025 <sup>30</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	39%	33%	40%	<15%
Disagree	36%	44%	41%	
Neither	25%	22%	19%	

Also see Question [2.2.8](#). “My personal tutor/primary supervisor is supportive and flexible when it comes to my disability and access needs”

## 5.5. Escalating Issues

When access issues are not resolved at first point of contact, disabled students need to know how to escalate them safely and effectively. However, only 30% of disabled students report knowing how to appeal a decision, and just 28% know how to make a formal complaint.

Willingness to escalate is shaped by institutional response. It is therefore concerning that only 32% of students who escalated an issue felt heard. Weak escalation mechanisms not only limit resolution but actively deter future reporting.

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?

<sup>30</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	26%	33%	30%	>70%
No	74%	67%	70%	

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

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	26%	32%	28%	>55%
No	74%	68%	71%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I have no idea how to make a complaint without being singled out."***

17% of disabled students have at some point made a complaint or otherwise "escalated" a disability issue (compared to 18% in 2024).

### 5.5.3. "I felt heard when escalating a disability issue"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of students who escalated a disability issue

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	32%	>75%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	57%	
Neither	11%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

**"My experience has been that concerns and formal complaints are shut down (or ignored entirely) rather than opportunities taken to learn and put things right."**

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 are entitled to the same value for money from their degree as non-disabled students. Higher education is not only about academic study, but about building networks, gaining experience, and expanding career opportunities. These opportunities must be equally accessible to disabled and non-disabled students.

### 6.1. Summary

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

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>31</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	43%	50%	50%	>65%
Disagree	33%	25%	32%	
Neither	25%	25%	18%	

### 6.2. Career

Disabled students are more likely than their non-disabled peers to leave higher education with weaker career prospects. While access to teaching and assessment remains critical, the data highlights significant gaps in how institutions support disabled students' transitions into employment.

- Among disabled students who have pursued a placement or internship as part of their course, only 50% feel they received the support they needed to

<sup>31</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

access this opportunity.

- Although many higher education providers offer disability-informed careers advice, only 24% of disabled students are aware that such support exists at their institution.
- Just 28% of disabled students feel informed about external support such as Access to Work, which is essential for navigating employment successfully after graduation.
- Among postgraduate research (PGR) students, 41% disagree that they have equal access to training and networking opportunities.

Networking and informal professional development play a critical role in shaping graduate outcomes, yet these opportunities are frequently inaccessible to disabled students. Addressing these gaps requires institutions to take a more proactive and integrated approach to careers, placements, and employability support (see section 6.3).

33% 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"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of students who have pursued a placement or internship

	2024	2025 <sup>32</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	50%	50%	>75%
Disagree	31%	34%	
Neither	19%	13%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"It is impossible for me to complete my course due to my disability, however I would be able to do the job. (I can't do the course/placement part time but I could do the job part time, my health was also not considered when allocating placements)"***

6.2.2. "I am able to access the training and networking opportunities that are part of this research degree on equal terms with non-disabled students"

"Not applicable" excluded

Of postgraduate research students

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	47%	>75%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	41%	
Neither	12%	

<sup>32</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"Hot-desking, removal of common rooms, 90% of academic staff working from home 90% of the time, loss of departmental physical spaces, the massive over-recruitment of PGRs and other students – all of this has contributed to the absolute destruction of any kind of PGR community. Never mind other PGRs with disabilities, I hardly know any other PGRs at all."***

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

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	29%	24%	>65%
No	24%	22%	
I don't know	47%	55%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I also receive regular emails about disability career support, but have not booked an appointment for that."***

6.2.4. "I feel informed about supports such as Access to Work which I could apply for as a disabled person to make my workplace more accessible"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	28%	>65%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	56%	
Neither	16%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I didn't know that the Access to Work Scheme existed until I completed this survey."***

### 6.3. Health

It is not uncommon for the inaccessibility experienced by disabled students to negatively impact their health. 41% of disabled students report their physical health being negatively affected by undertaking their course while 54% report their mental health suffering.

#### 6.3.1. How has your physical health been affected by undertaking this course?

	2025	2033 goal
Somewhat or very positively	18%	30%
Neither positively nor negatively	41%	
Somewhat or very negatively	41%	

### 6.3.2. How has your mental health been affected by undertaking this course?

	2025	2033 goal
Somewhat or very positively	25%	50%
Neither positively nor negatively	22%	
Somewhat or very negatively	54%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***“My experiences in requesting support and adjustments on this course and getting it in a timely and acceptable manner, and sometimes not getting it, have been generally traumatic and have negatively impacted my mental and physical health.”***

## 6.4. Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction among disabled students continues to increase. However, this sits alongside high levels of disruption to study. In the past year, a majority of disabled students have considered switching degrees, interrupting their studies, leaving their institution, or moving to part-time study. One in five report having taken one of these steps before specifically due to inaccessibility. This aligns with [findings from the Higher Education Policy Institute \(HEPI\)](#), which show that disabled students are 17 percentage points more likely than non-disabled students to consider withdrawing from higher education.

### 6.4.1. “I feel satisfied with my institution”

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>33</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	46%	53%	61%	75%
Disagree	30%	23%	11%	
Neither	23%	25%	11%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I am satisfied with certain aspects such as applying for an extension, but it is not clear what other support is available."***

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

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Interrupting your studies	46%	38%	37%	
Leaving your institution	43%	37%	41%	<25%
Switching to part time studies	20% (of full time students)	18% (of full time students)	16% (of full time students)	
Switching to a different course	20%	17%	17%	
None of the above	35%	42%	41%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

<sup>33</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

***"Stop encouraging disabled students to defer or withdraw whenever staff don't want to follow support plans."***

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

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	18%	21%	<10%
No	82%	79%	

See also Question [1.6.2](#). "Do you think you would be allowed to complete this course part time if needed?"

## 6.5. Social and Representation

Only 50% of disabled students report feeling part of a community at their institution. This can be compared with responses to the former National Student Survey question "*I feel part of a community of staff and students*", to which [66% of UK students agreed](#) in 2022. The lower sense of belonging reported by disabled students is unsurprising in light of wider barriers to participation: only 45% of disabled students say that extracurricular activities linked to their institution are accessible to them.

For disabled students to develop a collective voice, access to spaces where they can connect with one another is essential. However, 33% of disabled students report that they lack other disabled students to talk to, limiting opportunities for peer support, shared understanding, and collective advocacy.

6.5.1. "Extracurricular activities related to the institution are accessible to me" (For instance sports, societies, socials)

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>34</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	41%	46%	45%	>65%
Disagree	26%	21%	24%	
Neither	32%	21%	15%	
I don't know	N/A	12%	17%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

**"Work with the SU to overhaul accessibility for extracurricular activities (clubs and societies, sports, theatre, trips etc). The gym recently underwent refurbishment and as part of that they removed the \*only\* accessible piece of gym equipment."**

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

	2023	2024 <sup>35</sup>	2025	2033 goal
Yes	56%	53%	49%	>75%
No	36%	30%	33%	
Not applicable	8%			

<sup>34</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

<sup>35</sup> 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?"



*Advice from a disabled student*

***"Set up a disabled student network similar to the existing PGR network."***

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"It would've also been nice to have online events or online socials to help disabled students make connections or friends."***

## 6.6. Advocacy and Student Union

Student voice remains one of the areas in the National Student Survey where the gap between disabled and non-disabled students is most pronounced. Many disabled students continue to feel under-represented by their student unions, although the data suggests some improvement over time.

### 6.6.1. "I feel represented by my Student Union"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>36</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	25%	26%	37%	>55%
Disagree	33%	32%	30%	
Neither	43%	43%	33%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

<sup>36</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

***"I haven't heard anything to do with ADHD from the wider university community or student union. I discovered the ADHD society only this year."***

See also [section 6 \(Student voice\)](#) 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
No	56%	64%	68%	>90%
Yes	19%	16%	14%	
I don't know	23%	18%	15%	
Prefer not to say	2%	3%	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. "Those staff members who work to make the institution accessible have enough resources to do so"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	47%	
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	36%	<10%
Neither	17%	
I don't know	22%	

Advice from a disabled student

***"Provide more resources to the disability team to create more frequent appointments and longer durations for these."***

## 1.2. The Process of Applying for Disability Support

Of declared students

	2023	2024	2025
Declared to Disability Services	90%	91%	88%
Had at least one adjustment agreed	87%	89%	87%
Received some support from Disability Services	N/A	88%	86%
Offered to speak to a Disability Advisor	79%	80%	75%
Spoke to a Disability Advisor	78%	76%	69%
Invited to agree on support plan	80%	79%	69%
Had a support plan agreed	75%	77%	66%

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"Getting this help requires email after email between the departments who seem to communicate very poorly with each other".***

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

"Not applicable, no other staff members needed to know" excluded  
 Of students with at least one adjustment agreed

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	37%	42%	41%	>70%
No	34%	29%	28%	
I don't know	28%	29%	31%	

1.2.2. 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	2024	2025 <sup>37</sup>	2033 goal
Yes	41%	51%	44%	>80%
Yes, several times			22%	
Yes, once			22%	
No	59%	49%	56%	

<sup>37</sup> Two different "Yes" response options were offered in 2025.

1.2.3. "There a staff member at the institution who is willing to advocate for me and speak to other staff to help ensure that my needs are met"

"Not applicable" excluded

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	66%	>95%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	17%	
Neither	17%	

Advice from a disabled student

***"That repeated exposure — of disclosing vulnerabilities and trying to convince others my difficulties are real — is exhausting, humiliating and, at times, traumatic. Having an advocate or consistent point of contact to do this on my behalf would make a huge difference."***

Advice from a disabled student

***"Neurodiverse and disabled individuals should not be the ones bearing the responsibility for educating everyone else in this sector."***

See also [section 3](#) and [section 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	2024	2025 <sup>38</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	34%	37%	49%	>75%
Disagree	36%	33%	33%	
Neither	30%	30%	18%	

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	2025	2033 goal
Agree	38%	37%	>75%
Disagree	29%	26%	
Neither	22%	22%	
I don't know	11%	15%	

<sup>38</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

## 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"

Of students who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2024	2025 <sup>39</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	42%	52%	<70%
Disagree	24%	27%	
Neither	19%	8%	
I don't know	15%	12%	

See also Q4.5.2. 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 implement reasonable adjustments"

<sup>39</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

Of those who have had at least one adjustment agreed

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	39%	>70%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	22%	
Neither	17%	
I don't know	23%	

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"Train all staff, disability services or not, in the basic legal rights and responsibilities of their position and how to meet these."***

2.3.2. “I feel like the majority of staff members outside of Disability Services understand what ableism is and how to avoid it”<sup>40</sup>

“Not applicable” excluded

	2024	2025	2033 goal
Agree	35%	52%	>65%
Disagree	26%	29%	
Neither	39%	19%	

<sup>40</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

*Advice from a disabled student*

***"A majority of staff I talk to about my disability outside of disability services have the attitude of that's just life/ other people have it worse/ everyone struggles with that issue at first."***

### 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	2024	2025
Yes	22%	25%	25%
No	78%	75%	75%

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I do not know how to escalate an issue when I am not satisfied with the first answer I have been given."***

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	2024	2025	2033 goal
In the majority of cases or always	8%	9%	9%	
Never	73%	80%	74%	<40%

*Advice from a disabled student*

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***"I have experienced serious abuse and discrimination by both supervisors and the institution at higher levels – there have never been any consequences for the staff members who treated me this way."***

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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	16%	25%	24%	>60%
No	84%	75%	76%	

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"The blatant disregard for the Equality Act 2010 and the institution's Public Sector Equality Duty is not merely an oversight – it is institutional discrimination. Where is the accountability? Where is the leadership upholding inclusion as more than a performative statement?"***

## 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	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	39%	38%	36%	>80%
No	61%	62%	64%	

5.1.2. "I feel the institution has made sufficient and appropriate changes as a result of this evaluation"

Of those that have been asked about accessibility

	2025	2033 goal
Strongly or somewhat Agree	43%	>50%
Strongly or somewhat Disagree	20%	
Neither	18%	
I don't know	21%	

Advice from a disabled student

**"Include particular sections on module feedback forms regarding accessibility."**

*Insight from a disabled student*

***"I feel valued as a disabled student and often have workshops to give my feedback."***

## 6. Student Voice

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

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023	2024	2025 <sup>41</sup>	2033 goal
Agree	32%	38%	49%	>75%
Disagree	32%	27%	32%	
Neither	36%	36%	19%	

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

	2023	2024	2025	2033 goal
Yes	39%	44%	37%	>75%
No	11%	9%	11%	
I don't know	50%	46%	52%	

<sup>41</sup> Changed in 2025 from a 3-point to a 5-point Likert scale. See Appendix 1.

# University Comparison

Recognising that institutions operate in different contexts and face different challenges, the University Comparison presents a snapshot of results for institutions with sufficient numbers of respondents.

Thanks to the support of student activists and the institutions that disseminated the survey, we were able to include three additional universities in this year's comparison. Our long-term ambition is to include every UK higher education provider, enabling institutions to understand their disabled students' experiences in context and supporting prospective students to make more informed choices.

This comparison is not intended as a ranking or league table, but as a contextual snapshot to support learning, reflection, and improvement.

The tables show how each institution's results compare with the UK average and with the 2033 goals, using the following colour coding:

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

As we move closer to 2033, our aim is to see these tables turn green, so that disabled students have equitable opportunities regardless of which institution they attend.

This comparison reflects a snapshot of results from the Annual Disabled Student Survey. Institutions that are Access Insights Members can receive a full, institution-

specific report. Access Insights Members are marked with a star (★) in the tables, indicating their commitment to understanding current experiences and improving outcomes for disabled students.

## Sample Sizes

The institution-specific results presented below are based on samples of disabled students at each institution (see sample sizes below) and may not fully represent the experiences of all disabled students at that provider. Larger numbers of respondents increase the reliability and representativeness of institutional results.

All institutions with 45 or more respondents are included in the university comparison. Where data is available for multiple years, only the most recent results are shown.

To support meaningful comparison between institutions, each institutional sample has been weighted to match the gender distribution of the UK-wide sample.

### Sample sizes

Institution	Sample size (n)
University of East Anglia	n=188
University of Plymouth	n=111
University of Manchester	n=102
Cambridge University	n=88
University of Bath	n=84
University College London	n=80
University of Exeter	n=79
University of Gloucestershire	n=79
Canterbury Christ Church University	n=70
University of Kent	n=57
Bath Spa University ★	n=56
University of Leicester	n=56
University of Lancashire	n=51

London South Bank University ☆	n=48
Oxford University	n=48
Royal Holloway	n=46
Heriot-Watt University	n=46

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

Note that this survey question changed from a 3 point to a 5 point Likert scale in 2025. 5 point Likert scales are associated with fewer respondents choosing "neither agree nor disagree" (see Appendix 1).

	2023	2024	2025
2033 goal	75% agree	75% agree	75% agree
University of Kent			65% agree (25% disagree)
Bath Spa University ☆			64% agree (28% disagree)
London South Bank University ☆			60% agree (29% disagree)
University of Bath			57% agree (30% disagree)
University of Plymouth			52% agree (40% disagree)
2025 UK wide			52% agree (37% disagree)
University of Leicester	48% agree (29% disagree)		
Heriot-Watt University	47% agree (40% disagree)		
University of Lancashire			46% agree (44% disagree)
University of Exeter	44% agree (36% disagree)		
University of Manchester	43% agree (44% disagree)		
Canterbury Christ	39% agree		

Church University	(41% disagree)		
University of Gloucestershire			39% agree (49% disagree)
University of East Anglia		38% agree (32% disagree)	
2024 UK wide		37% agree (36% disagree)	
2023 UK wide	37% agree (47% disagree)		
Oxford University		34% agree (52% disagree)	
University College London	32% agree (59% disagree)		
Royal Holloway	31% agree (46% disagree)		
Cambridge University		27% agree (55% disagree)	

## Proportion of disabled students who had at least half of their lectures recorded in the last year

	2023	2024	2025
University of Exeter	94%		
University of Bath			93%
University of Kent			92%
University of Leicester	83%		
<b>2033 goal</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>
Oxford University		74%	
University of Manchester	70%		
Cambridge University		68%	
University of East Anglia		65%	
<b>2024 UK wide</b>		63%	
Canterbury Christ Church University	62%		
<b>2023 UK wide</b>	62%		
<b>2025 UK wide</b>			61%
University of Plymouth			59%
London South Bank University ☆			55%
Bath Spa University ☆			50%
University of Lancashire			45%
Royal Holloway	43%		
University College London	43%		
University of Gloucestershire			42%
Heriot-Watt University	34%		

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

	2023	2024	2025
<b>2033 goal</b>	<b>5% yes</b>	<b>5% yes</b>	<b>5% yes</b>
University of Bath			9% yes
University of Leicester	9% yes		
University of Kent			11% yes
London South Bank University ☆			13% yes
University of East Anglia		15% yes	
Heriot-Watt University	15% yes		
University of Exeter	15% yes		
University of Gloucestershire			17% yes
University of Plymouth			18% yes
Oxford University		18% yes	
Royal Holloway	20% yes		
<b>2025 UK wide</b>			20% yes
Bath Spa University ☆			22% yes
University College London	22% yes		
<b>2023 UK wide</b>	24% yes		
<b>2024 UK wide</b>		25% yes	
University of Lancashire			26% yes
Canterbury Christ Church University	26% yes		
University of Manchester	30% yes		
Cambridge University		37% yes	

## Proportion of disabled students who have had all their agreed adjustments provided

	2023	2024	2025
<b>2033 goal</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>
London South Bank University ☆			63%
University of Kent			60%
University of Leicester	55%		
University of Bath			51%
Oxford University		51%	
Royal Holloway	51%		
University of Gloucestershire			49%
Bath Spa University ☆			48%
University of Manchester	47%		
University of Plymouth			45%
<b>2025 UK wide</b>			44%
University of East Anglia		43%	
Canterbury Christ Church University	40%		
<b>2024 UK wide</b>		39%	
<b>2023 UK wide</b>	38%		
University of Lancashire			37%
Heriot-Watt University	37%		
University of Exeter	37%		
Cambridge University		35%	
University College London	28%		

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

Note that this survey question changed from a 3 point to a 5 point Likert scale in 2025. 5 point Likert scales are associated with fewer respondents choosing "neither agree nor disagree" (see Appendix 1).

	2023	2024	2025
University of Bath			83% agree (14% disagree)
Bath Spa University ☆			82% agree (9% disagree)
University of Kent			82% agree (11% disagree)
London South Bank University ☆			80% agree (9% disagree)
University of Leicester	75% agree (11% disagree)		
<b>2033 goal</b>	<b>75% agree</b>	<b>75% agree</b>	<b>75% agree</b>
University of Plymouth			73% agree (12% disagree)
University of Lancashire			72% agree (18% disagree)
University of East Anglia		72% agree (9% disagree)	
Oxford University		70% agree (17% disagree)	
<b>2025 UK wide</b>			69% agree (15% disagree)
Royal Holloway	67% agree (13% disagree)		
Cambridge University		67% agree	

		(17% disagree)	
<b>2024 UK wide</b>		67% agree (13% disagree)	
Heriot-Watt University	62% agree (14% disagree)		
University of Gloucestershire			61% agree (25% disagree)
<b>2023 UK wide</b>	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 feel part of a community at their institution

Note that this survey question changed from a 3 point to a 5 point Likert scale in 2025. 5 point Likert scales are associated with fewer respondents choosing "neither agree nor disagree" (see Appendix 1).

	2023	2024	2025
<b>2033 goal</b>	<b>65% agree</b>	<b>65% agree</b>	<b>65% agree</b>
Cambridge University		63% agree (23% disagree)	
Oxford University		62% agree (14% disagree)	
University of Bath			62% agree (28% disagree)
London South Bank University ☆			60% agree (29% disagree)
University of Kent			53% agree (28% disagree)
Bath Spa University ☆			52% agree (20% disagree)
University of East Anglia		50% agree (23% disagree)	
<b>2024 UK wide</b>		50% agree (25% disagree)	
<b>2025 UK wide</b>			50% agree (32% disagree)
University of Plymouth			44% agree (30% disagree)
University of Manchester	43% agree (38% disagree)		
<b>2023 UK wide</b>	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)		
University of Lancashire			37% agree (34% disagree)
University of Gloucestershire			36% agree (41% disagree)
Heriot-Watt University	35% agree (47% disagree)		

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# Appendix 1: Methodology, Representativeness and Demographics

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## Methodology and Representativeness

### Survey Scope and Dissemination

The Annual Disabled Student Survey is the largest survey of disabled students' experiences of university accessibility conducted to date. In 2025, the survey received 1,162 responses from students across 110 UK higher education providers.

The survey is disseminated widely using a range of methods designed to reduce sampling bias, including the use of inclusive language and imagery, anonymous participation, multiple dissemination routes, and a clear explanation of how disability is defined. The consistency of respondent demographics across the last three survey cycles provides additional confidence in the robustness of the findings.

### Representativeness and Sampling Bias

While our methods make the ADSS more representative than many surveys of disabled students, it is important to recognise that no survey of this kind can fully reflect the entire disabled student population. Students who respond to disabled student surveys are likely to differ in systematic ways from those who do not.

Respondents are more likely to be:

- Aware of and identify with disability, as participation requires recognising one's condition as a disability
- Women, reflecting broader survey response patterns
- Engaged with Disability Services, which are a key dissemination route
- Connected to disabled student communities, where the survey is shared peer-to-peer

As a result, some forms of sampling bias are inevitable and shape the dataset in predictable ways.

## Implications of Sampling Bias

These patterns result in certain groups being over- or under-represented within the sample:

- A higher proportion of respondents have declared a disability. Undeclared students make up only 2% of the weighted sample in 2024, while we estimate that they represent approximately one third of the disabled student population overall.
- A higher proportion of respondents are engaged with formal support systems. In 2025, 87% of respondents had an adjustment agreed, and over half were in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), compared with an estimated sector-wide rate closer to 30%.
- Full-time, in-person students are over-represented, while part-time and distance learners are likely under-represented due to weaker institutional connectivity.
- Conditions less strongly associated with a disabled identity, particularly some mental health conditions, are likely under-represented.

These limitations are common to disability-focused surveys and do not undermine the value of the findings, provided they are taken into account when interpreting the results.

## Improving Interpretability of the Data

To increase the meaningfulness and comparability of the data, we apply a number of established methodological techniques. Two are particularly relevant to this report: Likert scale design and weighting.

### Likert scales

Many survey questions use Likert scales, which ask respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a given statement. In 2025, and in response to student feedback, several questions were moved from a three-point Likert scale to a five-point Likert scale. This change allows respondents to express more nuanced views and supports more reliable analysis of attitudes.

For ease of reading, response options remain presented as three categories in most tables in this report. It is important to note that respondents are typically less likely to select "neither agree nor disagree" when using a five-point scale. As a result, both "agree" and "disagree" responses may appear higher in 2025 than in previous years. This does not necessarily reflect a shift in student attitudes, but in some cases reflects a change in question design.

Response options on a 3 point Likert scale	Response options on a 5 point Likert scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Agree</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strongly Agree</li><li>Somewhat Agree</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Neither Agree nor Disagree</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Neither Agree nor Disagree</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Disagree</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Somewhat Disagree</li><li>Strongly Disagree</li></ul>

## Weighting

### Gender weighting

Analysis of the 2023 survey data demonstrated that gender has a significant impact on disabled students' experiences. For example, in raw 2023 data, the proportion of students reporting that they had all the support they needed varied substantially by gender.

To improve representativeness and comparability across years and institutions, results are weighted by gender. As the precise gender distribution of the disabled student population is not known, the UK-wide sample and institutional samples are weighted to the following distribution<sup>42</sup>:

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

### University weighting

Data is typically weighted by institution to ensure that responses from a small number of universities do not disproportionately influence national results. In 2025, no individual institution accounted for more than 10% of respondents. As a result, institutional weighting was not applied in this year's analysis.

<sup>42</sup> To estimate the gender distribution of the disabled student population, we drew on two external data sources: the gender balance among disabled UCAS applicants in 2023, and disabled respondents to the 2024 HEPI Student Academic Experience Survey. UCAS does not publish figures for non-binary applicants. To estimate the proportion of disabled students identifying as non-binary or other, we therefore used a midpoint between our sample and the HEPI sample.

In the absence of definitive population-level data, our priority was to adopt a consistent and plausible gender distribution that supports meaningful comparison across years and institutional samples, rather than to claim precise representation of the disabled student population.

## Demographics

### Domicile status

"Prefer not to say" excluded

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
EU students	5%	3%	3%
Non-EU international students	10%	8%	5%
Home Students	86%	89%	92%

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

### Ethnicity

"Prefer not to say" excluded

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
Black	5%	9%	8%
Asian (including Arab)	10%	11%	9%
Other racially marginalised group	6%	6%	7%

No racially marginalised group	79%	74%	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	84%

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 in 2022 according to [UCAS](#).

## Gender

“Prefer not to say”, “Uncertain” and “Questioning” excluded  
 These are the original statistics before weighting

	2023 UK wide	2024 UK wide	2025 UK wide
Woman	66%	67%	70%
Man	17%	20%	19%
Non-binary or other	17%	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](#). 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 Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
Queer/LGBTQIA+	52%	47%	42%
Trans	15%	12%	11%

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 in our sample. These are two large groups in our sample explaining why we may have a particularly high number of LGBT+ respondents.

## Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

"Prefer not to say" excluded

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
From a low socioeconomic background	29%	28%	26%
Home student born outside of the UK	6%	10% <sup>43</sup>	11%
Child of immigrants	8%	10%	7%
Carer	8%	8%	9%

<sup>43</sup> Response option changed in 2024. Previous response read: "Immigrated to the UK at some point before university (home student)"

Mature student	31%	34%	37%
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## Level of study

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
Undergraduate	70%	69%	68%
Taught postgraduate	14%	15%	17%
Research postgraduate	16%	16%	13%

Research postgraduates are overrepresented in our sample compared to [HESA](#)'s disabled student enrolment figures where they make up only 4% of disabled students. The relative overrepresentation in our sample could be in part 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	2024	2025
Blind or partially sighted (if you have normal vision when wearing glasses, this does not count as a disability)	3%	2%	2%
Deaf or hard of hearing	6%	5%	5%

Sensory disability (excluding vision or hearing loss) e.g. Sensory Processing Disorder, Irlen syndrome, Vestibular Disorders	N/A	13%	9%
Specific learning difference (SpLD) e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia	49% (included ADHD)	56% (included ADHD)	31%
Autism	40%	39%	43%
ADHD	N/A	N/A	34%
Communication or language difference (excluding autism) e.g. Stammer, Aphasia	2%	2%	3%
Long term mental health condition (e.g. Depression, Eating Disorder, Schizophrenia)	54%	48%	46%
Long term health condition (excluding mental illness) e.g. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME, Heart Disease, Cancer, Diabetes, Asthma, Chronic Sleep Disorder, Chronic Pain	35%	33%	36%
Mobility disability	19%	16%	18%
Neurological condition (e.g. Epilepsy, Migraines, Cerebral Palsy, Tourettes, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Stroke, Cognitive Impairment)	10%	17%	15%
Learning disability (e.g. Down's Syndrome)	1%	1%	1%
Other physical impairment or difference (not a chronic illness,	2%	2%	3%

neurological, or mobility disability) e.g. Visible Difference, Dwarfism			
Other	1%	1%	3%

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. Note that this year we separated ADHD from SpLDs in the response options.

#### Number of disability types each respondent identifies with

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
1	35%	35%	35%
2	32%	29%	27%
3	18%	18%	16%
4 or more	16%	19%	22%

Allowing students to choose multiple disability groups leads 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 Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted

Have at least one diagnosis	94%	95%	94%
Lack at least one diagnosis	39%	37%	34%

Many disabled students struggle to identify as such before their first diagnosis. Students are therefore unlikely to fill in our survey if they do not have at least one 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. The proportion of the disabled student population that lacks at least one diagnosis for their condition may be sinking as the [NHS backlog](#) has slowly started shrinking.

### Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) status

"Not applicable" excluded

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
Are in receipt of DSA	48%	50%	56%
Going through the DSA application process	10%	8%	7%
Were rejected for DSA	3%	2%	3%
Have not applied for DSA	39%	39%	34%

56% of respondents in 2025 are in receipt of DSA and another 7% 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%<sup>44</sup>.

### Flexible modes of study

	2023 UK wide Weighted	2024 UK wide Weighted	2025 UK wide Weighted
Part time students	14%	14%	17%
Remote students	6%	7%	8%

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](#) (22%).

### Higher education providers

	2023	2024	2025
Number of higher education providers	85	107	110
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%	University of Plymouth 10% University of Bath 7% University of Gloucestershire 6% = 23%

<sup>44</sup> SLC and HESA have provided differing figures: [Holmes \(2022\) estimates that 29% of declared students received DSA in 2021.](#)

Respondents from the universities with at least 20 respondents each	73% (18 universities)	72% (12 universities)	73% (20 universities)
Russell group students	45%	18%	19%

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# Appendix 2: How to Get Involved

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## For Disabled Students

The Annual Disabled Student Survey exists to ensure disabled students' experiences shape how higher education works in practice. If you are a disabled student, you can:

- **Sign up to be notified** when the next [Disabled Student Survey](#) opens
- **Share the survey** within your disabled student network
- **Get involved** with **Disabled Students UK** to contribute insight and help inform future work

Your participation helps ensure that disabled students' voices are represented collectively and taken seriously across the sector.

## For Universities and Student Unions

Institutions and student unions play a critical role in ensuring disabled students are able to participate in the survey. If you work in a higher education provider or student union, you can:

- **Support dissemination** of the Annual Disabled Student Survey through institutional channels
- **Engage with the findings** to inform policy, planning, and system design

- **Join [Access Insights Membership](#)** to access institution-specific analysis and tailored support
- **Join the Disabled Student Representative** Empowerment Project

## Access Insights Membership

Access Insights Membership enables institutions to receive detailed, institution-specific insights drawn from the survey, supporting targeted action to improve disabled students' experiences. Membership involves a financial contribution that supports the delivery and sustainability of the survey and related research. Participation in Access Insights Membership does not influence survey design, analysis, or findings, which remain independent and led by disabled students.

Membership supports institutions to:

- better understand patterns in disabled students' experiences
- prioritise interventions that are more likely to be effective and cost-efficient
- reduce reliance on reactive, ad hoc adjustments
- support staff to act with greater confidence and consistency

This can improve both student experience and staff workload, by reducing repeated access failures and crisis management.

Further information about membership tiers and what they include can be found [on our website](#).

## The Disabled Student Representative Empowerment Project

For disabled student representatives and student unions DSUK also runs the [Representative Empowerment Project](#). The project supports disabled student representatives to engage more effectively with institutional decision-making, building on the findings of the Annual Disabled Student Survey. The project focuses on building confidence, skills, and sustainable structures for student voice. Email [REP@disabledstudents.co.uk](mailto:REP@disabledstudents.co.uk) to get involved.