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Executive Summary

Disability inclusion in Indonesia's higher education system

Policy, practice and student experiences



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For the full report, please visit: https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/higher-education-disability-inclusion-indonesia

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At a glance

3,102
students with disabilities across 2019 to 2024

+45.9%
Increase in recorded students with disabilities, 2019–2024

Among 157 surveyed HEIs:

59.5%
do not have dedicated admission pathways

75.2%
have no specific staff recruitment scheme

53.5%
have a Disability Service Unit (DSU)

79%
have yet to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

78.3%
lack structured mentoring or companion programmes

63.7%
have no disability-specific career development services

70.7%
have no dedicated disability inclusion budget

National data (MoHEST, 2019–2024)

Institutional survey (157 HEIs)

Additional insights were gathered through case studies across 12 HEIs and interviews with 100 staff, students with disabilities, and their peers who provide support:

- National disability data remains fragmented, limiting evidence-based policymaking.
- Persons with disabilities remain underrepresented in institutional decision-making and leadership.
- Promising institutional practices demonstrate opportunities to strengthen and scale disability inclusion.

Priorities for action

- **Standardised data and accountability.**
- **Institutional governance and participation.**
- **Inclusive teaching and accessibility.**
- **Sustainable funding and student transitions.**

Executive summary

Data on students with disabilities (SWD) in Indonesian higher education has improved in recent years, reflecting the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (MoHEST) efforts to strengthen the national data collection system. Nevertheless, variations in definitions, reporting practices, and data coverage continue to limit a comprehensive understanding of both the SWD population and the provisions made for them. This report synthesises findings from three complementary studies as part of this project that together offer the most comprehensive national assessment of disability inclusion in Indonesian higher education to date: a comparative analysis of national quantitative datasets (Study 1); a national survey of 157 institutions (Study 2); and qualitative case studies across 12 institutions (Study 3). The evidence consistently reveals a sector at a transitional juncture – growing in intent but fragmented in practice, and lacking the structural frameworks, funding, and accountability mechanisms needed to deliver inclusion at scale.

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Measuring inclusion: What the data tells us

A comparative analysis of two national datasets, namely MoHEST (2019 to 2024) and the 2024 Disability Student Services or *Layanan Mahasiswa Disabilitas* (LMD) registry. Key findings include:

1. Data reveals both encouraging growth and significant measurement inconsistencies. MoHEST records 3,102 students with disabilities over the study period, reflecting a 45.9 per cent increase across 2019 to 2024 and a steeper 58.1 per cent rise in the most recent two years (2022 to 2024). Gender distribution is broadly balanced at 54 per cent male/46 per cent female.
2. MoHEST data shows private universities serving 66 per cent of students with disabilities; LMD data shows public universities serving 82 per cent. Impairment categories also diverge sharply – speech impairment dominates MoHEST at 35 per cent and co-occurring in 99 per cent of all reported cases but is nearly absent from LMD, which reports physical disability (23 per cent) and hearing impairment (19 per cent) as leading categories. This signals serious inconsistency in reporting instruments and definitions across the sector.

Institutional capacity and practice: Findings from the national survey

The 50-item national survey – developed using the Disability Inclusion Institutional Framework (Evans & Zhu, 2022) and distributed through MoHEST, Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) and National Commission on Disabilities (KND) – yielded 157 cleaned responses (75 per cent private, 25 per cent public universities). Key findings include:

1. **Disability enrolment is growing but remains concentrated in structurally readier institutions.** Across the 157 responding institutions, 2,912 students with disabilities were recorded, with an average of 18 per institution. The majority (51.3 per cent) were enrolled at private universities and notably concentrated in the 84 institutions that already had a Disability Service Unit (DSU).
2. **Institutional governance for disability inclusion is fragmented and largely informal.** Only 53.5 per cent of higher education institutions (HEIs) have a DSU, and of those, 49 per cent operate without formal Standard Operating Procedures. A further 35.7 per cent of institutions have not incorporated disability inclusion into their strategic plans and 59.2 per cent of DSUs have never undergone a performance evaluation.
3. **Lack of student and staff voices in decision-making.** Even amongst institutions with DSUs, 32 report no involvement of people with disabilities and only ten institutions include individuals with disabilities in leadership roles.
4. **Admissions and staff recruitment remain structural barriers.** A majority of HEIs (59.5 per cent) offer no dedicated admissions pathway for students with disabilities, and 43.3 per cent conduct no disability-sensitive screening at entry. Regarding staff with disabilities, only 24.8 per cent of HEIs have a specific recruitment scheme, predominantly at public universities.
5. **Inclusive teaching and curriculum adaptation are largely absent.** Only 21 per cent of HEIs have implemented Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and just 14.6 per cent have made any formal curriculum modifications. Over half of HEIs provide no alternative learning formats at all. Some 76.4 per cent of institutions do not use any accessibility checkers in developing learning materials, and 61.1 per cent have not ensured that students with disabilities have access to course outlines and timetables. Only 16 institutions have adopted formal digital accessibility standards such as WCAG 2 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).



53.5%

of surveyed HEIs have a Disability Service Unit (DSU)

Only

10

institutions include persons with disabilities in leadership roles



59.5%

do not offer dedicated admission pathways

79%

have yet to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

6. **Support services are reactive, uncoordinated, and skewed towards visible provision.** Physical facilities (17.9 per cent of HEIs) and psychological or mental health services (15.4 per cent) are the most common offerings. Over 78.3 per cent of HEIs lack any structured mentoring or companion programme, 63.7 per cent provide no disability-specific career development services, and only 6.4 per cent offer a job fair explicitly targeting graduates with disabilities.
7. **Disability data collection is underpowered or non-existent.** While 84 institutions collect data on students with disabilities, only 33 track staff with disabilities and 47 collect no disability data at all. Most data is treated as an internal administrative record rather than a tool for public accountability or institutional learning.
8. **Funding for disability inclusion is precarious and structurally unsecured.** The majority of HEIs (70.7 per cent) have no dedicated budget allocation, with the gap more pronounced at private universities (72.8 per cent) than public ones (64.1 per cent). Spending is weighted towards infrastructure and facilities (36.3 per cent) and education (30.6 per cent).

Voices, experiences and change: Evidence from a case study

1. In-depth focus groups and interviews across 12 institutions – encompassing public, private and religious universities in Java, Sumatra and Bali – were analysed using NVivo® framework analysis aligned to the Disability Inclusion Institutional Framework – DIIF (Evans & Zhu, 2022).
2. The most frequently coded theme was disability inclusion training (66 instances), reflecting meaningful investment in developing staff and peer understanding. Leadership capacity (58 instances) was also prominent, with rectors and directors driving infrastructure and policy change alongside bottom-up student advocacy.
3. Enabling access emerged as both a strength (62 instances of enabling provision) and a continuing challenge (49 instances of inaccessible spaces), primarily due to funding constraints. Inclusive teaching and learning showed a similarly mixed picture – positive pedagogic adaptations (55 instances) were almost equally matched by reports of inaccessible practice (56 instances). Transition support (61 instances) – particularly disability-specific scholarships – was identified as a high-impact lever where school engagement significantly improved student access and retention.

Recommendations

Disability inclusion is an increasing priority within the British Council's education work in Indonesia and globally. As part of this commitment, the British Council has supported a range of initiatives to advance inclusive education and opportunities for people with disabilities, including research, skills development programmes, university partnerships, and UK alumni-led projects. This report forms part of that broader effort and reflects the British Council's belief that robust evidence is essential for informing policy and practice. By highlighting both progress and ongoing challenges, this report aims to support policymakers, higher education institutions, and practitioners in strengthening disability inclusive higher education. 22



The following recommendations are intended to support the transition from isolated initiatives toward a more systemic approach by:

- strengthening policy
- institutional practice
- accountability
- investment

across Indonesia's higher education sector

Stakeholder	Recommendations
Policymakers	**Develop and mandate a single, standardised national instrument for reporting disability data across all HEIs**, with annual public disclosure and periodic site-based validation – addressing the critical measurement inconsistency revealed. **Integrate disability inclusion indicators into accreditation and quality assurance frameworks**, creating structural incentives for sustained institutional commitment. **Establish dedicated, recurring national funding streams for disability inclusion** and allocate capital funding for physical infrastructure upgrades including lifts, guiding blocks, and accessible signage. **Mandate WCAG 2 accessibility standards** across national digital transformation agendas, covering learning management systems, admissions platforms, and institutional reporting tools. **Expand and better promote disability-specific scholarships** and strengthen the school-to-HEIs transition pipeline.
Policymakers and higher education institutions	**Establish dedicated admissions pathways** and staff recruitment schemes for students and staff with disabilities and communicate these commitments publicly. **Require disability-related data to be collected**, disaggregated (students and staff), and published as a tool for public accountability, not merely internal administration.
Higher education Institutions	**Strengthen DSU mandates to coordinate across academic, student affairs, HR, and procurement functions**, replacing the current fragmentation of services across unconnected units. **Ensure meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities in the design, governance, and evaluation of disability services**, in line with 'nothing about us, without us'. **Invest in Universal Design for Learning** training for all teaching staff and establish minimum accessibility standards for learning materials, course outlines, and timetable information. **Develop ongoing disability-inclusion training – informed by experts-by-experience – for all staff and students**, building on the strong existing engagement evidenced. **Foster confidence among students to share disability status** and support needs and provide assurance that disclosure is safe and will lead to appropriate support.

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