

Starting Your Higher Education Journey

Students living with Mucopolysaccharidoses (MPS) can succeed in higher education with the right support, preparation, and self-advocacy. This guide is designed to help you understand your rights, explore available support, and confidently navigate university life.

Featured Resource



UK Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Financial support to help cover extra costs related to studying with a disability, including equipment, support workers, and travel.

[→ LEARN MORE ABOUT DSA](#)

1. Know Your Rights (By Country)

Disability rights in higher education vary by country. While policies are not always consistently enforced, many regions have laws that support access to accommodations, inclusive education, and non-discrimination.

Understanding your rights is the first step in accessing the support you need.

Asia

Unlike some Western countries, many Asian countries have less enforced disability policies in higher education. However, progress is being made across the region.

India

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)

Japan

Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities

Philippines

Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities

Thailand

Persons with Disabilities Education Act

Singapore

Enabling Masterplan & Inclusion Policy

Malaysia

Persons with Disabilities Act (2008)

Indonesia

Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities

Hong Kong

Disability Discrimination Ordinance (1996)

China

Law on the Protection on Disabled Person (1990 amended 2008)
Regulations on Education of Person with Disability (1994, revised 2017)



Western Countries

Unlike some Western countries, many Asian countries have less enforced disability policies in higher education. However, progress is being made across the region.

United States

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

United Kingdom

Equality Act 2010, Disabled Discrimination Act 1995

Switzerland

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, SR 151.3)

What This Means for You

These laws often include rights to reasonable accommodations, non-discrimination in education, and access to services, though implementation varies by institution.



2. Disability Support in Universities

Not all universities have well-established disability support services. However, many institutions now offer support offices or coordinators to help students access accommodations and succeed in their studies.

Before You Apply or Enroll

- ☐ Check the university website for disability services
- ☐ Contact Student Affairs or Accessibility Office
- ☐ Ask about available support before applying

Support services vary widely between universities. Always confirm what is available before making your decision.

Ask These Questions

1. Are academic accommodations available?
2. Is accessible housing offered?
3. Is assistive technology provided?
4. Are personal support services available?

Examples of University Support Services

University of Tokyo

Center for Barrier-Free Education

National University of Singapore

Student Accessibility Unit

University of the Philippines

Office of Student Disability Services

Indian Institutes of Technology

Equal Opportunity Cells

UK Universities

Disabled Students' Allowance

Hong Kong Universities

Student Accessibility/
Disability Units

3. Common Accommodations

Universities may offer a range of accommodations to support students with MPS, depending on individual needs and available services. Because support can vary by institution, it's important to ask what options are available to you.



Academic Accommodations

- Extra time for exams
- Lecture recording or note-taking support
- Priority class registration
- Flexible deadlines or attendance
- Hybrid or online course options



Housing Accommodations

- Ground floor or elevator-accessible dorms
- Air-conditioned rooms (for respiratory needs)
- Access for personal care assistants (if permitted)



Assistive Technology

- Voice-to-text software
- Screen readers
- Digital planners for schedules and medications
- Check if your university provides free software licenses*



Physical Access

- Wheelchair-accessible campuses
- Shuttle or transport services
- Accessible toilets and labs

Not all accommodations are available at every institution. Self-advocacy may be needed to access the support you require.

4. Self-Advocacy: Speaking Up for Your Needs

In some cultures, students may feel hesitant to speak up due to stigma or respect for authority. However, self-advocacy is essential to ensure your needs are understood and supported throughout your education.

How to Self-Advocate

Be Clear About Your Needs

Explain your diagnosis and the accommodations you require in a clear, respectful way.

Bring Supporting Documents

Provide medical records or letters from doctors or previous educators where possible.

Practice the Conversation

Prepare what you want to say—role-playing can help build confidence.

Ask for Support

Reach out to a parent, counselor, or NGO if you need help communicating your needs.

How to Start the Conversation

"I have a medical condition that affects my mobility and energy levels. I would like to discuss possible accommodations to support my learning."



5. Preparing for University Life with MPS

Preparing in advance can help you feel more confident and supported as you transition into university life. Planning ahead allows you to manage your health, access support, and adapt to new environments more easily.

Before You Enroll

- ☐ Get updated medical documents (translate if needed)
- ☐ Visit the campus to assess accessibility
- ☐ Create a personal health plan (medication + emergency care)
- ☐ Prepare how to explain your condition (in local language and English)

Build Life Skills

- ☐ Manage medications independently
- ☐ Practice time management with rest breaks
- ☐ Communicate your health needs clearly
- ☐ Plan for fatigue and transportation on campus

6. Finding Support Networks

Building a support network can make a significant difference in your university experience. Connecting with organizations, campus groups, and other students can help you access resources, share experiences, and feel supported throughout your journey.

NGOs & Patient Organisations

National and international organizations can provide guidance, advocacy, and connections to support your education journey.

- [Asia-Pacific Alliance of Rare Disease Organizations \(APARDO\)](#)
- [Taiwan Foundation for Rare Disorders](#)
- [MPS Societies \(India, Japan, Philippines, Taiwan, etc.\)](#)
- [Rare Disease International – Asia Chapter](#)
- [IMPSN](#)

Campus Support & Student Groups

National and international organizations can provide guidance, advocacy, and connections to support your education journey.

- Disability or accessibility support offices
- Student unions or student services
- Disability advocacy or inclusion groups
- International student offices

Many universities also have student-led groups focused on disability or rare diseases.

7. Overcoming Challenges

While navigating higher education with MPS can present challenges, there are strategies and supports that can help you overcome them and succeed.

Challenges	What You Can Do
Lack of awareness among faculty	Educate staff and provide written information
Inaccessible campuses or classrooms	Request alternatives or accessible arrangements
Social stigma or misunderstanding	Seek support from allies and advocacy groups
Limited disability services	Connect with NGOs or external support networks

Helpful Strategies

- ☐ Document all requests and responses
- ☐ Keep copies of medical and support documents
- ☐ Understand your rights under national laws
- ☐ Involve NGOs or legal advocates when needed



8. Resources for Asian Students

While navigating higher education with MPS can present challenges, there are strategies and supports that can help you overcome them and succeed.

Resource	Description
ASEAN Enabling Masterplan	Regional policy framework for disability inclusion
UNESCAP Initiatives	Programs supporting inclusive education in Asia-Pacific
National MPS Societies	Country-specific support and advocacy
Disability Rights Organisations	Legal advice and support letters

You Belong in Higher Education

“You belong in higher education — your condition may shape your journey, but it does not limit your destination.”

With careful planning, clear communication, and the right support, students with MPS in Asia can thrive in university life and beyond.

Pursuing higher education with MPS in Asia is both possible and empowering. While systemic gaps exist, awareness is growing, and more institutions are striving to become inclusive. With careful planning, advocacy, and the right support, students with MPS can thrive academically and personally.

Access to Work (UK)

A guide for seeking employment, workplace accommodations, and remote work options.

[HTTPS://WWW.GOV.UK/ACCESS-TO-WORK](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)