

B-Schools Push Plans to Attract More Differently-abled Students

Go the extra mile to address needs of students with disabilities, bring in diversity in new batches

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New Delhi | Bengaluru: Leading business schools, including the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) at Ahmedabad, Kozhikode and Indore, besides XLRI and SPJIMR, are prepping their campuses and planning various initiatives to attract more differently abled students to bring in more diversity in new batches.

Though efforts to this end have been ongoing for some time, the pool of such persons with disabilities or PwD candidates is still limited with few such candidates applying for MBA courses, officials said.

Besides having the right infrastructure in place – from lifts with Braille, ramps, reserved rooms, automotive wheelchairs, specialised software – schools are going the extra mile to address the needs of students whose disabilities include visual/hearing impairments, locomotor and intellectual disabilities.

From this year onwards, IIM Kozhikode has created a special committee for Equal Opportunities & Inclusion for Differently Abled Students (EOIDAS) headed by a faculty-chairperson with 'lived experience.'

The EOIDAS will chalk out a special requirement report for each student joining the institute. "This committee will mention the academic and non-academic special adjustments to be made for

Extending Helping Hand

Students' disabilities include visual/hearing impairments, locomotor and intellectual disorder

Challenge: Only a small pool of PwD students applies at B-schools currently

Future: Institutes hopeful of getting in more in coming years



How?

- Building and upgrading infrastructure
- Considering alternate evaluation processes
- Planning diversity points and supernumerary seats

Why?
To bring in more diversity in the classrooms

every differently-abled student," said IIM Kozhikode director Debashis Chatterjee.

Based on the report, course instructors will also be informed about the unique needs for such students, including adoption of an alternative evaluation process. IIM Kozhikode is from now on replacing the PwD reference with differently abled students, he said.

The number of differently-abled students in the current (2023-25) batch is 20, up from 17 last year at IIM Kozhikode. The institute also

has provision for accommodation for caretakers at the campus beside other facilities.

XLRI Jamshedpur currently has no PwD students in its batch, but is taking initiatives to attract such candidates in coming years. "There is a small pool of such students overall, but we want to encourage more of them to apply. We are considering initiatives such as diversity points, even a supernumerary quota to get more PwD students onboard," said admissions chair Rahul Shukla.

XLRI, like many other B-schools, already, has necessary infrastructure including ramps in all buildings, lifts and designated ground-floor rooms in place.

A significant number of differently-abled students have joined

the PGP Class of 2023-2025 at IIM Ahmedabad, said its director Bharat Bhasker. The institute has set up an Equal Opportunity Office. "This office will collaborate with such students to understand their special needs and provide facilities including Apple iPads, automotive wheelchairs, specialised software and high-resolution cameras for laptops," said Bhasker.

SPJIMR has introduced ramps, hydraulic lifts, and additional lifts in some parts of the campus. It is in the process of covering the entire campus with these provisions for PwDs.

"We have also introduced Braille in our lifts, it is a tactile code enabling blind and visually impaired people to read and write by touch," said Jayesh Devlekar, infrastructure & administration, SPJIMR.

In the past years SPJIMR has had PwD candidates, but none for this year. IIM Indore too has set up a separate department for providing necessary support to PwD candidates right from induction to classroom.

The institute has installed special software for visually impaired students by recording and storing sessions for later review. Additionally, course material is provided in various accessible formats, seating arrangements are tailored to specific needs, and other accommodations are made as per student requests, according to its director, Himanshu Rai.