

[Deprived Scots pupils less likely to get to university than rUK counterparts](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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The number of Scottish pupils from deprived areas winning a place at university is significantly behind the equivalent statistic for England.

Today, youngsters south of the border received exam results, and figures from UCAS have revealed that 16.5 per cent who secured a place at university are from the least wealthy areas.

In comparison, the same number for Scotland is just 11.9 per cent.

And for those from the second poorest backgrounds – deemed to be in the 20-40 per cent bracket – 22 per cent secured university places on results day.

However, the same figure for Scotland was just 17.8 per cent.

It's the latest set of statistics showing the SNP government is doing less than its Westminster counterparts in getting those from most deprived backgrounds into higher education.

It also calls into question the nationalists' policy of universal free tuition, which is now shown to be unsuccessful in closing the attainment gap.

In today's *Scotsman*, former senior SNP minister Kenny MacAskill even acknowledged that Scotland would have to move towards some kind of tuition fees approach, and that the Scottish Government's way has "hit support for the poorest".

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"These figures show clearly that it's much easier for a pupil from a deprived background in England to get to university than it is in Scotland.

"The SNP has had more than a decade to address this, but it has failed.

"This SNP government now owes generations of disadvantaged youngsters an explanation – why are their contemporaries south of the border significantly more likely to get to university?"

“This also blows a hole in the SNP’s policy of universal free tuition.

“It blatantly is not working, is harming universities financially and – as Kenny MacAskill has now admitted – is reducing opportunity for those who need it the most.

“We need a radical rethink from the Scottish Government, or more children from the poorest backgrounds will be placed at a stark disadvantage to those just a few hundred miles away.”