

Fee-paying foreign students offered double the number of clearing courses

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English and non-EU students are able to apply for double the number of university clearing courses than Scottish youngsters, new analysis has revealed.

With clearing officially closing tomorrow, aspiring students who live here can access 596 courses.

However, that figure more than doubles to 1251 for English fee-paying students, and 1267 for those foreign students from outside the EU who will also pay to study.

The glaring disparity is a result of the SNP's policy on free tuition, which is forcing universities to place a cap on the number of home-grown students they can accept for financial reasons.

The Scottish Conservatives have said the situation is harming the prospects of young people right across the country, and will cause damage to the economy further down the line.

The party's analysis also revealed there are four times the number of clearing courses available in Wales (2212) than here for Scots.

And even the north of England presents more options currently for Scottish students, with 796 available courses.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"These statistics are quite incredible, and the situation is entirely of the SNP government's making.

"Its policies on who does and doesn't pay tuition fees is forcing universities to sideline Scottish youngsters.

"Quite how that's a government working in the interests of its people is a mystery.

"The capping of places is harming our own children's educational prospects, and doing nothing to close the attainment gap between rich and poor.

“In the medium-to-long term, it will also damage the economy, because we know people from other countries are less likely to stay on and work here than native students.”