

Gap widens between rich and poor student applications to university

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Figures published by UCAS today show that Scottish applications to university are flatlining.

The report, analysing full-time undergraduate numbers, also shows that the gap in applications to university between students from rich and poor backgrounds is increasing, that the number of school leavers applying to sciences and engineering has dropped and that the numbers of non-EU (international) students applying to Scottish universities have increased more markedly than other groups.

The statistics also show that the percentage of 18 year old Scottish applicants living in disadvantaged areas in Scotland, decreased this year, from 17 per cent to 16.7 per cent of total applicants.

In stark contrast the application rate for the most advantaged areas in Scotland increased by 1.9 per cent – a widening gap between the most and least deprived areas.

In addition, the number of school leavers going into sciences and engineering has dropped by 780.

Lastly, EU applications have also increased by 40 while non-EU applications have increased by 2,500.

Commenting on the findings, Liz Smith Scottish Conservative Shadow Education Secretary said:

“Scotland’s future prosperity and the success of its young people depends on a thriving university sector therefore the trends within these latest statistics are important.

“Given the financial constraints under which universities are operating and the resulting pressure to increase the number of fee-paying students it is perhaps not surprising to see the growth in the number of international applicants.

“At the same time, it appears that the number of Scots domiciled students applying to university has started to flatline and it is particularly worrying to see a drop in the number of students applying for STEM courses

and a drop in the number of Scottish students applying to university from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“In both cases, the SNP tells us it is addressing these issues as a matter of priority but these statistics tell a different story. That is because the SNP has not had the necessary focus on these issues within its schools policy. That must change.”