

[SNP changes cost pupils hundreds of thousands of qualifications](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- SNP changes cost pupils hundreds of thousands of qualifications

20 Sep 2018



Changes made to the curriculum have cost Scottish pupils hundreds of thousands of qualifications, Nicola Sturgeon was told today.

Experts said in Holyrood this week that, since 2013, the number of subjects youngsters are able to take has dwindled significantly.

That coincided with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, and means pupils missed out on taking 622,000 courses, according to Dundee University's Professor Jim Scott, a former headteacher.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson challenged the First Minister on the issue today, demanding to know why her SNP government hadn't acted, despite being told of the problem previously.

However, Ms Sturgeon merely argued that critics were "talking schools down", and dismissed the formal evidence given to the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee.

Just 11 per cent of schools in Scotland offer s4 pupils eight subjects to take.

Indeed, more than half offer just six, a clear restriction of choice.

Of the problem, Prof Scott told MSPs: "I actually struggle to say that in a public forum. It's almost unbelievable."

And the limitations makes it even harder for pupils in poorer areas.

Stirling University's Dr Marina Shapira told the same committee: "The reduction <in subject choice> is larger in schools in higher areas of deprivation and the reduction is larger in schools where there are more children on free school meals."

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"The impact of the SNP government's education policy has been more than 600,000 pupils missing out on courses they would have taken otherwise.

"That's a shocking restriction, and does huge harm to their education and

career prospects, especially for those in poorer areas.

“And this is a symptom of a wider malaise – caused by the chaotic introduction of Curriculum for Excellence.

“Under this SNP government we have seen reduced subject choice, teachers left in the dark, the Higher pass rate falling, and attainment in National exams down by a third compared to old Standard Grades.

“But the nationalists show absolutely no sign of listening to the evidence of the experts, teachers or parents.

“The solution is a complete overhaul of the Curriculum for Excellence, and that’s something the SNP has to embark on before any other children miss out.”

[Fee-paying foreign students offered double the number of clearing courses](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Fee-paying foreign students offered double the number of clearing courses

19 Sep 2018



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."

[Plans to cut defence spending in independent Scotland 'irresponsible and short-sighted'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- [Plans to cut defence spending in independent Scotland 'irresponsible and short-sighted'](#)

17 Sep 2018



Plans to cut defence spending as part of a revised blueprint for an independent Scotland are "irresponsible and short-sighted", a Scottish Conservative MP and former naval officer has said.

In a report published today, former Nationalist defence spokesman Bruce Crawford has said that Scotland could save more than £2bn a year by creating a slimmed-down defence force.

He has said that the Scottish military after independence should be one third

smaller than it is at present, with no fast jets, big surface ships, tanks or nuclear weapons.

Scottish Conservative MP for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine Andrew Bowie, who served in the Royal Navy, has condemned the assessment.

He said: "This plan is a very worrying demonstration of what an independent Scotland's defence posture could look like.

"NATO members and allies across Europe are beginning to increase spending on defence given the re-emergence of the Russian threat, cyber security and the continuing state of flux in the Middle East.

"To propose a plan so substantially short of the 2 percent of GDP minimum demanded by the alliance is frankly irresponsible and short sighted.

"The fact is that, at present, Scotland is served by being a part of the United Kingdom which is internationally recognized as having some of the best equipped and most adaptable armed forces in the world.

"The UK is also a member of the five eyes intelligence network and has strong bilateral alliances with France, the USA and others.

"The people of Scotland chose decisively in 2014 to remain part of the UK – and to continue to be defended by the British armed forces.

"That is something the SNP simply don't get."

[Dog control notices rise by almost 300%](#)

17 Sep 2018



A "concerning" increase in the use of dog control notices (DCN) has been identified by the Scottish Conservatives.

The latest figures, outlined in a written answer from the Scottish Government, show that DCNs have increased by 247 since 2011-12, a rise of 270 percent.

The increase could potentially be even more as Glasgow is not included in the numbers.

The local authority with the highest usage of dog control notices last year is Fife with 59, a staggering 500 percent increase since 2011, while the

lowest are Inverclyde and Edinburgh with none at all.

A DCN can be issued to owners of dogs that have been shown to be 'out of control' and require the owner to modify and manage the dog's behaviour in order to control it in the interest of public safety.

The DCN places a statutory duty on dog owners to keep their dogs under control and may contain a number of measures that the owner is required to implement within a stated timeframe.

Commenting on the figures Scottish Conservative MSP, Maurice Golden said:

"This continuous increase in the usage of dog control notices is concerning as it indicates more incidents of 'out of control' dogs have taken place and people have been put at risk.

"Owning a dog is a real joy but also comes with responsibilities. All dog owners must ensure that their dogs are trained, socialised and supervised so that they are not a risk to humans or animals.

"The steep rise in the usage of the control notices suggests that this is a worsening problem and this poses a greater risk to the public and other animals.

"The dramatic regional variations in dog control notices may also suggest that they are being enforced differently which, in itself, raises questions.

"Ultimately dog owners must take responsibility for their own dogs, take the time to train and socialise them appropriately and then everyone will enjoy having a dog as part of the family.

"Local authorities must use the powers they have to intervene meaningfully to ensure that no one is at risk from a dangerous dog."

[SNP secret subsidies to Ferguson Marine Engineering must be explained](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- [SNP secret subsidies to Ferguson Marine Engineering must be explained](#)

14 Sep 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are calling for the SNP to make a statement to Holyrood to clarify why it loaned Ferguson Marine Engineering £45m of

taxpayers money, without any parliamentary scrutiny.

Documents published under freedom of information legislation have shown that Ferguson Marine Engineering received two loans from the SNP totalling £45m; an initial loan of £15m in September 2017 and a subsequent loan of £30m in June this year.

The initial loan was kept secret due to 'commercial confidentiality' and has only just come to light.

Concerns have now been raised about why the two loans were needed when the firm has also received almost £100m from publicly funded Calmac to build two new ferries.

The Scottish Conservatives have therefore requested that the SNP makes a statement to the Scottish Parliament clarifying all the details.

The SNP has already come under fire for delays to the project, while the company itself is understood to be dissatisfied with ministers' handling of delays and budget difficulties.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative transport spokesman said:

"This SNP Government has a record of secrecy, cover ups, and behind closed-doors deals.

"There are now mounting question marks over its handling of this vital ferries contract, and the suspicion is that the SNP is once again trying to hide the facts from emerging.

"When huge sums of public money are at stake, the public has a right to know what is going.

"The Minister needs to come to the chamber next week and do just that."