

Region is falling behind in young getting into uni

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THE North East is falling behind the rest of the country in getting young people to university, new figures show.

The cost of higher education - with fees of up to £9,000 a year - is putting off many school leavers from going to university, educationalists said.

It is also thought that the growing popularity of apprenticeships in the North East, with people given the chance to earn while they learn,

means fewer choosing to go to university.

According to figures released by university admissions service Ucas, the number of university applicants from the North East has gone up by less than 1% from last year, whereas other regions across the UK are up 4% on the same point last year.

Andrew Jordan, principal at Dyke House Sports and Technology College in Hartlepool, said a lot of his students are seriously thinking about not going to university because of the financial implications.

"There is a big risk involved with

trying to spend that much money on a university education," he said. "There are other options that perhaps present themselves as more attractive, such as apprenticeships. Students are able to earn money while they are trained for the world of work.

"I'm sure this option is exaggerated in the North East because of the region's buoyant engineering and manufacturing economy.

"Although we're trying our best to get our students to university, it is important to recognise there is a raft of different pathways that people can go on rather than just university."

Some 659,030 people submitted applications by the end of June. In the North East that figure grew from 19,760 at this point in 2013, to 19,840 this year - an increase of just 80 applications.

In London, the number of applicants grew from 85,700 in 2013 to 90,110 this year; a marked increase of 5%.

The final deadline for candidates applying through Ucas was June 30.

After that, unfilled places are allocated through a post-results process known as clearing.

The latest Ucas statistics show a rise in applications in England, Wales and Scotland of 3%, 2% and 3% respectively. In Northern Ireland the numbers have remained static.

Applications from other EU students rose 5%, while those from non-EU overseas students were up 6%.

The figures also show that, in general, more women have applied than men.

Les Walton, chair of Northern Education Trust, said the reluctance of many young people to go to university is not necessarily a negative.

"It could be to do with the fact we have been very successful on offering apprenticeships in this region," he said. "That is not a bad thing and the fact school leavers are taking up worthwhile apprenticeships as opposed to going to university should not be deemed as a negative."



► Les Walton, chair of Northern Education Trust

THE FIGURES

Region	2013	2014	rise
North East	19,760	19,840	(0%)
Yorkshire and Humber	40,720	41,970	(+3%)
North West	60,410	62,420	(+3%)
East Midlands	33,930	34,810	(+3%)
West Midlands	46,840	48,560	(+4%)
East of England	45,070	46,100	(+2%)
London	85,700	90,110	(+5%)
South East	69,230	71,600	(+3%)
South West	40,130	41,530	(+3%)