

Britons lose out to rush of foreign medical students

[Sian Griffiths](#), George Greenwood and Shanti Das in

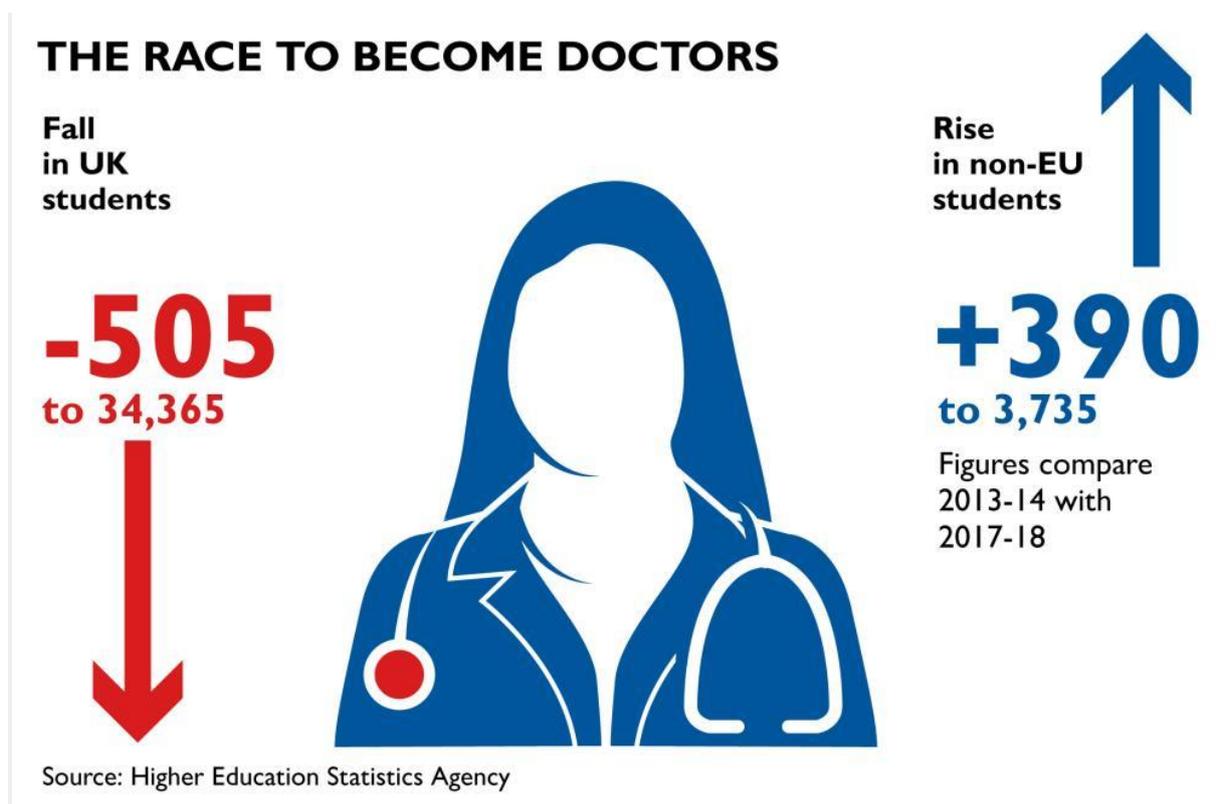
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Applicants fear being priced out by the higher fees paid by non-EU rivals

Britons wanting to become doctors are being turned away as medical schools admit growing numbers of overseas students who pay three times as much for their degrees.

The number of British first-degree students training to be doctors in the UK dropped by more than 500 from 2013-14 to 2017-18, while medical schools increased non-EU student numbers by 12%. While UK students pay £9,250 a year for their medical degree, non-EU students can pay up to £35,000 a year. The courses generally take five or six years.

Chris Smith, co-chairman of the medical students committee at the British Medical Association, said entry to medical school should be “based on ability, and not ability to pay”.



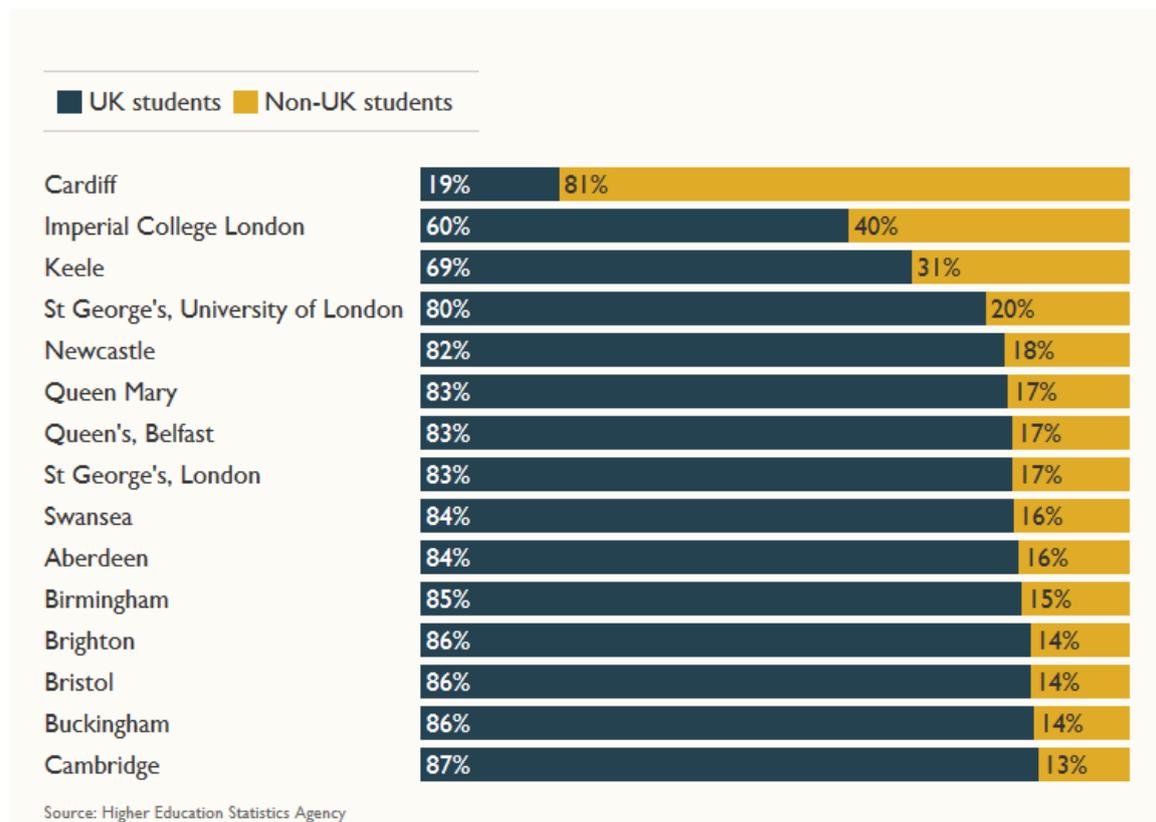
He said: “Gifted students from less wealthy backgrounds should not be priced out of studying medicine by high tuition fees, and by extension those paying more for their courses should never be given preferential treatment in the admissions process purely because of the financial benefit to the university.”

Alan Smithers, professor of education at Buckingham University, said it was “really unfair” on hard-working teenagers who achieved straight As at A-level, but could not find a place to study medicine in the UK.

“The NHS has an acute shortage of doctors. The schools do not seem to be fulfilling their role of providing the necessary UK doctors,” said Smithers. “The medical schools are clearly making more money from enrolling overseas students, but they should be thinking about what is in the interests of the British people.”

At St George’s, University of London, the total number of overseas first-degree students rose from 85 to 250 between 2013-14 and 2017-18, while UK students fell from 1,200 to 1,070, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Home and international students at medical schools



Exeter, Glasgow and UCL medical schools also increased their overseas undergraduate numbers between 2013-14 and 2017-18 while UK student numbers fell at Durham, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Plymouth.

Jessica Ologbon, 20, said she had felt “numb” when she was rejected by four medical schools after achieving 10 A*s at GCSE and four As at A-level.

The state-school student, from Ealing, west London, was turned down by Oxford, Imperial, UCL and Keele. Jessica, the first in her family to go to university, said: “When I got the fourth rejection email I thought I would cry but I was just numb. My teachers were shocked and my mum was really upset.” Though she does not think she lost out to an overseas

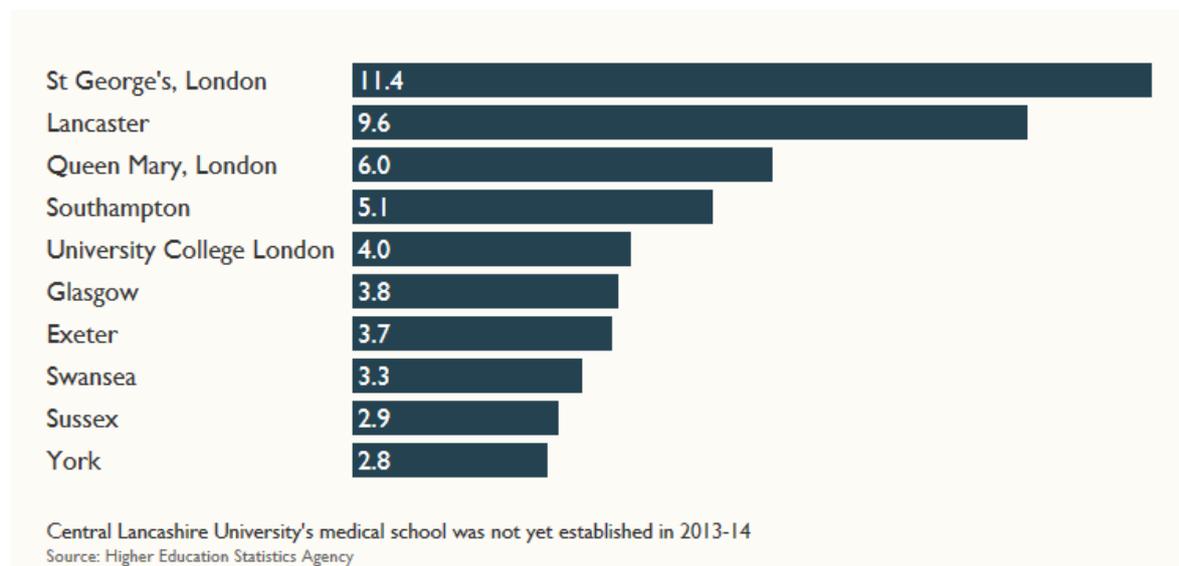
student, she said some universities might turn away British students because of the lower fees.

Jessica took a gap year and worked at a hospital before reapplying in 2017 and winning a place at King's College London, where she is in her second year.

Other aspiring students go to more extreme lengths to get a place. Harry Phillips, 22, from Oswestry, Shropshire, moved to Italy to study medicine after being rejected by nine British universities. He learnt Italian at the same time, and is now in his fourth year at Pavia University near Milan where his fees are less than €1,000 (£860) a year.

The rise in international medical students

Universities with the biggest growth in proportion of non-UK students from 2013-14 to 2017-18. Increase measured in percentage points



He said: “It’s about money, at the end of the day. You would feel that you were losing out to somebody else who was paying their way in with a chequebook, but the universities have to balance their books somehow.”

The Medical Schools Council said it was “completely inaccurate” to suggest British students were being penalised. Katie Petty-Saphon, chief executive, said the government determined the number of medical school places it funded each year. In England, the number is 7,500.

“Each school is permitted to recruit 7.5% of its permitted numbers — but no more — from overseas. If a school is allowed to recruit 200 students no more than 15 must be domiciled outside the EU,” she said. Medical schools looked not just for academic excellence, but also “resilience, empathy and the abil

Additional reporting: Clara Hilly to cope with uncertainty”, she added.