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Increasing university dropout rates highlight need for affordable alternative learning, says ABE

Recent [figures](#) showing that the percentage of students dropping out of degrees before the start of their second year has increased are a key indicator of the fact that young people need alternative study and career pathways that can lead to successful careers. This is according to global non-profit organisation the Association of Business Executives ([ABE](#)).

The figures, compiled by the Higher Education Statistics Agency, show that six per cent of first degree entrants aged under 21 who enrolled in 2013-14 did not continue their studies beyond their first year, marking a year-on-year increase of 0.3 percentage points and the first time this figure has increased in four years. At the same time, the dropout rate for students from disadvantaged backgrounds has risen even more rapidly, and now stands at 8.2 per cent.

Gareth Robinson, CEO of ABE, commented: “University proves to be a fantastic opportunity for academic development for many young people and it will remain a viable path to a successful career. However, these figures prove that, for a variety of reasons, university might not be a sustainable course of action for a growing number of aspirational young people.

“The dropout figure for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is even more telling, and demonstrates how there is an urgent need for alternatives for those who might be stretched financially or academically,’ he said.

Robinson continued: “There is a vibrant, growing market for vocational business qualifications that provide young people with essential skills to ensure not just success in the workplace in a wide variety of disciplines, but also the ability to set up their own companies and become entrepreneurs. Higher levels of these qualifications are equivalent to a full bachelors degree, and provide an affordable alternative option that can ensure social mobility regardless of a young person’s background.”

He concluded: “University dropout rates are certainly a concern and something that need to be tackled in the long term, but there is no need for young people to panic about their futures. Alternative options to the congested university process are there: vocational qualifications are becoming more valuable to a work-ready society and can prove to be just as valuable as a degree in terms of the business skills and entrepreneurial spirit they can cultivate.”

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About The Association of Business Executives (ABE)

ABE is a not-for-profit awarding body accredited by Ofqual. Established in 1973, it has an international footprint with key markets in the UK, Africa, the Caribbean, SE Asia and China. ABE develops business and management Diploma qualifications at QCF Levels 4-7. Its qualifications provide progression routes to Bachelors degree and Masters programmes worldwide.

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