

Moscow Universities See Record Admissions Competition Amid Wartime Quotas and Budget Cuts

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The Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. **Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency**

High school graduates will face higher competition for tuition-free university spots in Moscow this academic year, state media [reported](#) Thursday, as paid seats are being eliminated while military quotas expand.

According to data compiled by the state-run TASS news agency, competition for so-called “budget spots” rose by double digits across major institutions including Moscow State University, the Higher School of Economics and the Russian State University for the Humanities.

Up to 257 applications per spot were recorded for International Relations at the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, while the average spot at the university had 34 applications.

MSU saw total applications for budget spots jump 46% to more than 91,000.

HSE saw an average of 44 applicants per budget spot this admissions cycle, up from 32 last year.

Average competition at the Russian State University for the Humanities grew 22% to 167 applications per spot.

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The surge comes amid increasing tuition fees and the wartime requirement for Russian universities to reserve at least 10% of their tuition-free spots for soldiers who fought in Ukraine and their children.

The number of students admitted into Russian universities under the quota has [nearly doubled](#) since the invasion of Ukraine, and reached a [record](#) 41,000 this year.

At the same time, the government began regulating the number of fee-paying university places, eliminating 47,000 of them nationwide.

The Kremlin has pushed to reduce university enrollment in favor of vocational training, with public high schools redirecting teenagers into trade colleges to address industrial labor shortages.

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