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These days where you choose to study for your degree is almost as important as what you choose.

Britain's top 20 student cities

communications to the flesh-

pots of Edinburgh and Glas-

gow are good by both bus and

EEUFAST

Population: 279,000

Av. weekly rent: £25

Entertainments: ★★★

Belfast: Full-time students:

university's 10,972 students

plans for a new campus in

the city are currently being

THE magnificent view from

the Divis Mountain, looking

down over green-domed civic

buildings to Belfast Lough, is

one which will surprise any

student accustomed to images

dents' lives. These can range

from the inconvenience

caused by police roadblocks to

the necessity of knowing

which areas of the city should

be avoided. If students stick to

the right areas, however, they

find that Belfast's inhabitants

Another result of the vio-

lence is that student life tends

to be concentrated around

Queen's campus in the peace-

ful south of the city. Student

bars are well used and tend to

friendly and

mess of bombs and bullets.

are based in Belfast, though

9,642. Distance from city

University of Ulster:

Only about 700 of the

Queen's University

centre: one mile.

considered.

welcoming.

Availability: ★★★

ne look at their glossy prospectuses shows that universities today are well aware that prospective students look almost as carefully at their future surroundings as at their chosen courses. Those set in rolling countryside or a lively city flaunt their advantages.

The lecture room and library are only part of the story of higher education, and no students are going to achieve peak performance if they are tied for three years to a place they do not like or cannot afford.

These pages offer a brief guide to the main student centres. All have at least two universities. Each city is rated on a five-point scale for

MABERDEEN

Population: 201,000

Av. weekly rent: £40

Entertainment: ★★★

• University of Aberdeen:

Full-time students: 8,099.

Distance from city centre:

5,027. Main campuses in

city centre; others two miles

University: Full-time students:

SCOTLAND'S third largest

city may suffer from foul

weather, but the prosperity

bequeathed by the 1980s oil

boom means that Aberdeen is

The influx of moneyed oil

workers gave "the granite

city" an enviable selection of

pubs, clubs and restaurants,

stock of private accommoda-

tion. The situation has im-

proved in recent years, but

accommodation is still scarce

and prices correspondingly

cused on the student unions,

especially the older universi-

ty's excellent facilities, to

which all students have ac-

cess. Nonetheless the city has

a vibrant social scene, and the

Exhibition Centre is the most

northerly stop on the tour

circuit for many touring

and the locals friendly. For

students who find Aberdeen's

conventional and even staid

atmosphere a little bland,

The city's streets are safe

bands.

Social life tends to be fo-

but also put pressure on the

Availability: **

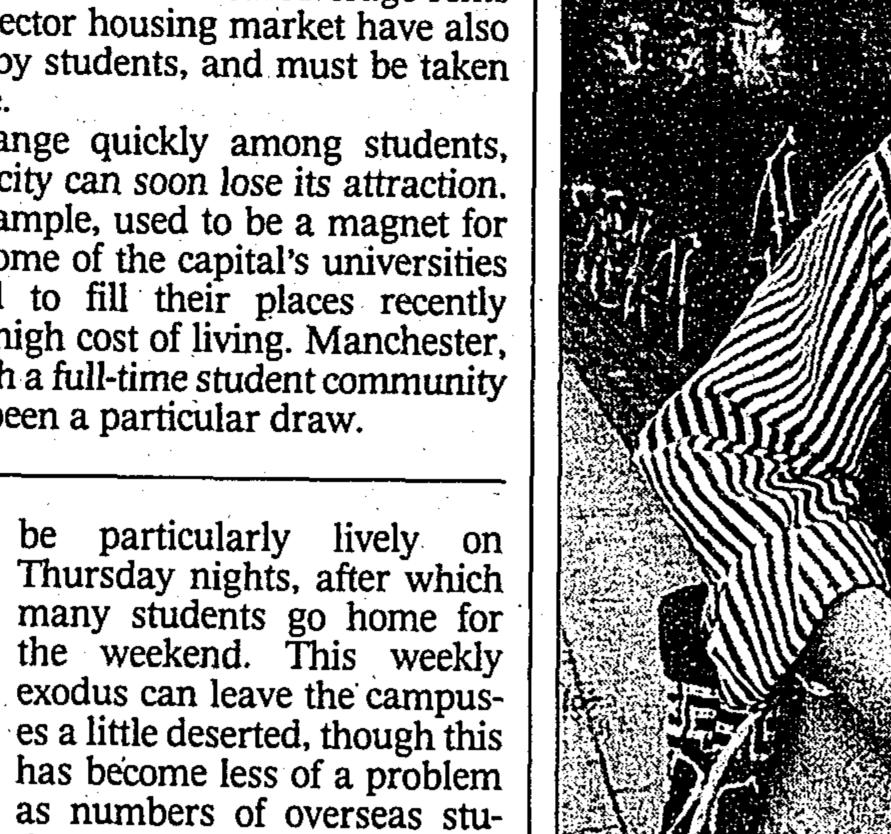
• Robert Gordon

anything but bleak.

one mile.

the availability of accommodation and the standard of entertainment. The ratings, which are inevitably subjective, come from current students in the cities concerned. Average rents in the private sector housing market have also been supplied by students, and must be taken as approximate.

Fashions change quickly among students, and a popular city can soon lose its attraction. London, for example, used to be a magnet for students, but some of the capital's universities have struggled to fill their places recently because of the high cost of living. Manchester, by contrast, with a full-time student community of 30,000, has been a particular draw.



Though social life may be concentrated in the campus area, Belfast does not lack pubs and clubs. Those in the city centre tend to be the most non-aligned. Music ranges from big-name concerts at Queen's union and King's Hall to impromptu folk music sessions which spring up in the city's pubs.

dents have increased.

Population: 938,000 Av. weekly rent: £30 Availability: ★★★★★ Entertainment: ★★★

Aston University: of Belfast as a battle-scarred Modern campus. Full-time students: 4,148. Distance The effects of the troubles from city centre: ten-minute cannot but intrude into stu-

Birmingham University: Redbrick campus. Full-time students: 12,304. Distance from city centre: two miles south, in the leafy suburb of Edgbaston.

University of Central England in Birmingham: nine sites. Full-time students: 9,383. Main site at Perry Bar, 234 miles north of city centre.

TO THE casual observer, Britain's second city may appear to be an unlovely sprawl of tarmac and conERISTOL of events held outside the university is limited: Cam-

Population: 372,000

Availability: **

Average weekly rent: £40

Entertainment: ***

University of Bristol:

Pleasant Victorian

students: 10,942. Five

city centre.

Full-time students: 9,750.

campus spread throughout

University of the West of

modern campuses, of which

only Redland is close (two

miles) to the city centre.

large as to be daunting.

England at Bristol: Full-time

PRETTY, pricey and perenni-

ally popular among Sloanes,

Bristol is described by stu-

dents as being exactly the right

size for a university city, large

enough to be lively, but not so

The city, which perches on

hills overlooking the Severn

Estuary, is generally welcom-

ing to students and offers a

good deal of student-orientat-

ed entertainment. Clubs range

from the UWE-run Tube to the

handbag-dancing Ritzy, and

almost all have student nights.

While many students from the

former polytechnic (colloquial-

ly known as UWoe) and locals

come to gigs in the older

university's union, pubs in the

town tend to be slightly

city — everything from high

street standards to designer

boutiques like Red or Dead -

reflects its inhabitants' spend-

ing power. Part-time work is

not too hard to come by,

though temping agencies are

swamped in the summer

CAMBRIDGE

Population: 91,000

Availability: **

Av. weekly rent: £45

Entertainment: ***

Anglia Polytechnic

7,759. Modern campus

city centre. Other

Brentwood.

University: Full-time students:

about ten minutes' walk from

campuses in Chelmsford and

Cambridge University:

Full-time students: 14,449.

Ancient buildings which

more or less form the city

THE gulf between old and

new universities is nowhere

wider than in Cambridge: for

students at Anglia, finding

accommodation in the city is a

major headache; for those at

Cambridge it is rarely even an

issue. Nonetheless, the two

universities' students do mix,

and those at Anglia enjoy

access to a wide range of

This is lucky, for the range

discos, gigs and so forth.

The range of shops in the

segregated.

months.

Edinburgh offers graceful, grey-stone architecture and good pubs and bars, but an above-average cost of living

crete, albeit one which has been cleaned up over recent years. But beneath the grime, Birmingham has a lot to offer its 25,000 students, and the further 20,000 living in nearby Coventry and Wolver-

hampton. While not as lively or prosperous as some other cities of its size, Birmingham is nonetheless well-equipped with cintheatres, clubs, live music venues, restaurants and adequate shopping. What it lacks is a clearly defined city centre and, crucially, the exorbitant prices which accompany such facilities in, say, London or Manchester.

The distance between the universities' sites means that each is surrounded by its own student areas, and that students from different institutions are more likely to meet each other at city-centre pubs and nightclubs than at other student unions. Tension between "posh" students and locals is a problem in some areas, and women can find the city centre's maze of subways unnerving.

Population: 138,000 Av. weekly rent: £40 Availability: *** Entertainment: ***

University of Brighton: Full-time students: 8,268. One site in Eastbourne and three in Brighton. • University of Sussex:

Full-time students: 6,318.

Attractive modern campus eight miles from city centre. WITH more than 50 nightclubs and a pub for every night of the year, Brighton affords endless possibilities for entertainment to students

who can stand the pace, and

the cost, of life in one of

England's most diverse towns. With Brighton's diversity comes tolerance towards all ethnic and cultural minorities, including students. In a town where students make up such a high proportion of the population, it makes good business sense for clubs and pubs to welcome them with open arms, and generous concessions (£1 per pint is not uncommon). The variety of

nightlife in the town centre

means that Brighton's student

unions are less well used than those at other universities. The overwhelming majority Brighton students come from Greater London, contributing to the town's reputation as "London by the sea": the similarity to the capital city manifests itself not only in Brighton's variety and vitality, but also in high prices and a somewhat slavish trendiness.

bridge has a small town's range of nightclubs and two gigging venues, which have played host to the likes of Suede over the past few years, but little else. In a town so dominated by students, town and gown relations are generally good: both sides can unite behind the common cause of

hating tourists. The atmosphere in a small city of such beauty can feel cloistered or even stifling, especially to those from larger and livelier places, but London is easily reached. Parttime work is officially forbidden by many colleges.

CARDIFF

Population: 277,000 Av. weekly rent: £35 Availability: *** Entertainment: ***

University of Glamorgan: Full-time students: 8,082. The university campus is in a rural location about ten miles north of Cardiff, though many students live in and around the city. University of Wales, College of Cardiff: Full-time students 10,940. Modern and grandiose Victorian

University of Wales, College of Medicine: Fulltime students: 1,494. Based at the University Hospital of Wales, about two miles from the city centre.

buildings all round city

WELSH pride in their capital city can border on nationalism. There is much to be proud of in Cardiff, a smallish but prosperous and sometimes attractive city, which seems a million miles away from the dejected relics of South Wales's mining industry to the north.

The university's buildings are dotted around the city's civic centre, a dignified and open area dominated by gleaming white Portland stone. Cardiff has all the cultural and commercial facilities one would expect in a small capital city, and sports facilities are particularly

excellent. Those unlikely to score a try at Cardiff Arms Park will at least be able to attend big rock concerts there: U2 and Michael Jackson are among the famous names who have performed there recently. The city's good public transport system gives students access to the beautiful Brecon Beacons, an ideal location for walking

or mountaineering. Cardiff's student union building is one of the best in the UK, with its own nightclub, restaurants and a massive mock-Tudor bar. The university even has its own employment agency, Unistaff, which finds students work within the university.

COVENTRY

Population: 306,000 Av. weekly rent: £30 Availability: ★★★★ Entertainment: ★★

Coventry University: Full-time students: 10,514. Purpose-built campus in city centre. University of Warwick:

Full-time students: 8,047. Modernist landscaped campus about five miles from city centre.

RAZED by the Luftwaffe during the war, Coventry has risen from the ruins like a concrete phoenix. The city lacks any noticeable beauty, but makes up for its dowdy looks with good communications and a low cost of living.

The paths of students from the two universities very rarely cross. Students at Warwick tend to stay on campus, and prefer the less grim ambiences of Kenilworth and Leamington Spa to Coventry when looking for accommodation off-campus.

The former polytechnic's students, on the other hand, revel in their city-centre location and make copious use of the city's pubs, clubs and sports facilities, as well as their own sports centre and students union. The city has good shopping centres and the locals are, for the most part, welcoming to students. Those hoping to relax with a can of beer amidst Coventry's prefab splendour should beware: public drinking has been illegal in the city centre since 1988.

EDINBURGH

Population: 422,000 Av. weekly rent: £35 Availability: ★★ Entertainment: ***

University of Edinburgh: Full-time students: 13,855. Mixture of old and new buildings scattered round city centre, with three main concentrations.

Heriot-Watt University: Full-time students: 7,853. Green-belt campus about 7½ miles from city centre. Napier University: Full-

time students: 5,519. Mainly modern buildings, most about 212 miles west of city

EDINBURGH, one of the most elegant cities in the UK, though one where the pace of life is less frenzied than in London. The hills on which the city is built add to the grace of its tall, grey-stone buildings, but also encourage bitterly cold winds.

Though students at Heriot-Watt tend to stay on their parkland campus, all three universities have access to each others' student union facilities. Few students will be able to resist the lure of the enviable range of pubs and bars in the compact city centre. Calvinistic tendencies among the authorities mean that these are not opening as late as used to be the case, but for those trying to live on a grant in a city with an aboveaverage cost of living, such restrictions may be no bad

The range of nightclubs is wide, though not as good as in Glasgow. Students tend to eschew the big glitzy clubs and concentrate on the rapidly changing range of clubs, such as Pure, which appear in the city's smaller venues.

Students make up a good proportion of Edinburgh's population and are generally welcomed in the cosmopolitan capital. Areas such as Marchmont and, for the better off, New Town (Britain's oldest and most beautiful housing estate) are the most popular areas for living.

GLASGOW

Population: 654,000 Average weekly rent: £40 Availability: ★★★ Entertainment: ****

University of Glasgow: Fulltime students: 13,569. Compact campus in West End District of Glasgow, about three miles from city centre. Glasgow Caledonian University: Full-time students:

7,882. Modern campus near city centre. University of Strathclyde: Full-time students: 9,607. Main campus in city centre. Another campus to the west. ONE of Britain's largest and liveliest cities, Glasgow is probably Scotland's cultural capital, even if Edinburgh is the civic centre. Scotland's opera, ballet and national

orchestra are based in the city, which also boasts a profusion of art galleries and theatres. It is not just the climate which can be described, like the local rock band, as Wet Wet Wet. Glaswegians are famously fond of their pubs, though the city's reputation as "home of the head butt, land of the lagered-up" is something

of an exaggeration. Generally

students find the locals very

The city's club scene rivals those of London and Manchester, with an excellent range of clubs, which are upto-date without being as pretentious as some of their southern counterparts. Live music fans will also find a complete range of venues in the city, from the cavernous SECC, to the popular Barrowlands and the improbably named King Tut's Wah-Wah Hut. Many bands also

perform at Glasgow University's Queen Margaret Union. The three universities are within easy reach of each other and many students live in the attractive West End of the city, though the area's desirability has led to an increase in prices over recent

BERTHULL

Population: 253,000 Av. weekly rent: £30 Availability: *** Entertainment: ★★

University of Hull: Fulltime students: 7,224. Modern campus about three miles north of city centre.

University of Humberside: Full-time students: 8,605. Several sites within six miles of city

THOUGH chic shopping centres now crowd the harbours in Philip Larkin's adopted city, Hull's heritage as a commercial port extends into the present day. The ever-growing number of students at the city's two universities find Hull a reasonably lively city with a lower than average cost

of living. The city centre, where students can experience mild hostility from locals, has no shortage of pubs. Several clubs hold student nights, and the older university's student union is becoming an increasingly regular stop on the itinerary of bands such as the

Stereo MCs. Communications by road and rail are adequate, consid-

ering the city's isolated location. The city has its own telephone network and 10p feels every bit a capital, al- | buys an unlimited local call.

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