A.A. 2018-2019 **Reading Comprehension TEXT 7**

**Down with 'studentification': how cities fought for their right not to party**

*From Bristol to Nottingham, university towns across the country are facing up to the negative impacts of large student populations*

It’s 1.30am on a Sunday in Redland, [Bristol](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/bristol), and a student party is in full swing. A front door opens and a young woman comes out dressed as a frog. But this isn’t your average slice of uni mayhem: immediately, the student hired to act as doorman darts forward with a finger to his lips. In the street, departing guests whisper while they wait for their Ubers.

Their unusually considerate approach to late-night noise is based on fear of a large fine and disciplinary action from their university, which recently started cracking down, largely in response to the work of one local man. Andrew Waller started his campaigning website [the Noise Pages](https://www.thenoisepages.com/) in March this year after a rash of professionally organised student parties shattered the peace in this tight-knit neighbourhood.

“When I went to remonstrate with the students, they were very in-my-face,” he says. “They knew they were breaking the university’s rules, and they were happy to tell me they didn’t care. They actually turned the music up.”

With the police refusing to step in, and the university and council initially slow to act, Waller was “tipped over into activism”, he says. The Noise Pages now collates residents’ complaints about everything from loud midnight conversations to window-rattling dusk-till-dawn blowouts.

The term [“studentification”](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/348510/studentification.pdf) – coined by [the academic Darren Smith in 2002](https://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/geography/staff/darren-smith/) – refers to the [impact student bodies have on the cities](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/sep/23/town-v-gown-is-the-student-boom-wrecking-communities) around them. For all the vibrancy a large influx brings to a local culture and economy, the indirect consequences can be profound: family homes make way for buy-to-let HMOs (houses of multiple occupancy), bars and fast-food outlets replace primary schools, and “street blight” takes hold as properties lie unkempt and deserted outside of term-time.

Waller’s Chandos neighbourhood, bounded by Chandos Road and Waverley Road – aka “Raverley Road” – has the densest concentration of HMOs in Bristol, and is home to some 800 students. “They will frequently tell me: ‘This is a student area – you shouldn’t be surprised that we’re noisy,’” he says. “Sometimes they’ll go a step further and say: ‘Well, if noise bothers you, why don’t you move?’”

The district of Lenton in Nottingham, which falls slap bang between the city’s two universities, is familiar with these issues. Some of its streets have [as many as 90% student households](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/student-ghettos-bad-for-city/175237.article); at a party last October, [200 revellers succeeded in collapsing a garden wall](https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/nottingham-news/wall-collapses-student-house-party-633768).

“Student central, I think they call it,” says councillor Sarah Piper. “One local primary school did a survey of its children, and 25% were woken up at least once a night every single week of the university term. A lot of them feel really anxious about the night-time noise.” She agrees the high density of HMOs is a key factor. “People say that when HMOs comprised up to 25% of the community it worked really well. [Students](https://www.theguardian.com/education/students) babysat for local families and became very good friends with them. Once it goes over 25%, that’s the tipping point.”

With the number of full-time students in the UK [having doubled since 1992](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/articles/howhasthestudentpopulationchanged/2016-09-20), uni towns across the country are facing up to the [“hollowing-out” effects of HMO densification](http://www.thenationalstudent.com/Student/2018-01-13/students_are_being_blamed_for_pushing_locals_out_of_university_towns_but_it_s_not_their_fault.html). Councils including Oxford, Birmingham and Leeds [have acted to restrict HMOs](https://www.citymetric.com/fabric/british-cities-are-moving-reduce-impact-studentification-3659), as have [Nottingham](https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-applications/do-i-need-planning-permission/article-4-directions-and-restrictions-on-permitted-development/) and [Bristol](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/additional-planning-restrictions-article-4), both of which are planning more purpose-built student accommodation.

Waller, meanwhile, thinks “ghettoisation” in purpose-built accommodation would just store up problems for the future. “I would actually prefer to have students in the community,” he says, “just with a better set of rules.”

Short of structural reform, what’s the best way to make students into better neighbours? One route is through deterrents. Nottingham’s two universities handed out 1,037 punishments last year for antisocial behaviour alone, while Bristol recently raised its maximum fines for such behaviour to £250 and [launched an awareness course](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/rowdy-bristol-university-students-get-50-lesson-in-being-better-neighbours-tcvzbhc9r) that uses victim statements to teach offenders about the impact of their late-night antics.

Another method is to foster community cohesion. Nottingham University runs a [Hello Neighbour campaign](https://sway.office.com/7hu2sp4UwK2hikYt?ref=email) to encourage students to knock on surrounding doors, while Bristol University’s [guide to community living](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/privately-rented/living-in-privately-rented-accommodation/living/) urges them, somewhat plaintively, to “say hello to your neighbours with cake!” – even offering free cake mix, along with an [“introductory greeting template”](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/accommodation/documents/Hello%20-%20students.pdf) to push through letterboxes.

Whether these pleas for unity are getting across is another question. In Bristol, Waller’s website has caused consternation among students who feel they are being targeted simply for having fun. “It’s always hard to tell with these people, isn’t it?” said one student who did not wish to be named. “At first you think they have a point, and then they complain another 1,500 times and you’re thinking, are you making this up?”

Newcastle University now [funds a police patrol on weekends](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/latest/2018/05/operationoak/) and big nights such as Halloween, while every first-year student attends a compulsory talk about being a good “ambassador”. Then there’s the [Best Neighbour on Campus award](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/archive/2018/03/bnocmarch/), which recognises considerate households, and [voluntary litter-picks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evROX4ajRN8&feature=youtu.be). An end-of-term project called Leave Newcastle Happy raised £125,000 for the British Heart Foundation last year.

Marc Lintern, Newcastle University’s director of student experience, says the sight of undergrads giving something back has helped break down residents’ mistrust: “Part of it is about tidying up, and part of it is about the residents getting to know the students so they don’t see them as alien creatures.”

If universities are anxious to set a good example for students, they could do worse than soften their own sometimes remote and inaccessible images within cities – perhaps by opening their facilities to the public. [San Jose University in the US did just that, co-funding the renovation](https://info.higheredfacilitiesforum.com/blog/how-universities-can-strengthen-town-gown-relations) of a library in which students and the community could read side-by-side.

In fact, the US is the leader in the increasingly professionalised field of town-gown relations. Its International Town and Gown Association, established in 2008, now has a UK arm, which last week held its biennial conference at Queen’s University Belfast. Vice-chancellors, police officers, student union representatives, city officials and academics were present to compare notes on HMOs, household recycling and student safety.

Conference coordinator, Poppy Humphrey, who works as off-campus student affairs officer for [Manchester Student Homes](https://www.manchesterstudenthomes.com/Pages/Community) – which handles community liaison for both University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan – says that coming together is crucial for workers in a comparatively new area: “It was important to hear that what we experience in Manchester, our colleagues in other towns and cities do as well.” She says the biggest challenge she and her peers face is the transient nature of the student body: “You’re not dealing with a static group of people – it’s a new cohort each time. But it also means that each year we can develop and grow and try new ideas.”

***First and second-language students are asked to answer the true/false statements***

**Now read the following statements and write TRUE or FALSE after each of them.**

1. The advantages of [“studentification”](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/348510/studentification.pdf) for UK cities outweigh the disadvantages.

1. According to the text, the only way to make UK students into better neighbours is through deterrents.

***Third-language students are asked to answer the following questions.***

**Now answer the following in your own words.**

1. How are some UK councils tackling the problem of intense [“studentification”](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/348510/studentification.pdf)?
2. What ways are suggested to make UK students into better neighbours?