

Dear student,

I am writing to you with an update about the unauthorised encampment on our Mile End campus.

Since the encampment was set up there have been several rallies with the encampment inviting a significant number of external people including activists, which have required police involvement. There have been known instances of unlawful and potentially unlawful behaviour. We have witnessed a steadily escalating risk to our communities within and outside of campus as a result of the actions of members of the encampment and of external groups who have been invited or are drawn to our Mile End campus to join in the rallies.

The first rally, on 15 May, resulted in criminal damage to our property due to the actions of the encampment and the external people that were invited. As a result of this incident, the University requested the encampment to disperse with immediate effect. This request was ignored.

A second incident, on 21 May, involved potentially unlawful behaviour towards members of the encampment. Our security team attended the incident, intervened and, in line with our procedures, also called the police. We have shared all evidence available to us with the police to support their consideration of this incident. Unfortunately, members of the encampment refuse to engage with the police, which they need to do in order for a full investigation to take place.

The most recent rally last Friday (31 May) demonstrated that the risks to our communities continue to escalate. A number of unauthorised people entered the Queens' Building, and an external speaker was invited onto our campus by the encampment. When external speakers are invited onto campus there is a process that should be followed, which is in place to ensure we can uphold free speech within the law, whilst protecting our communities against hate speech and incitement. The encampment did not follow this process. Given the health and safety risks of their actions, and the wilful subversion of the processes we have in place to protect our campus communities, we have continued to request the encampment to disperse with immediate effect.

In any instance of unlawful and potentially unlawful behaviour, we have, and will continue to, involve the police. In relation to our internal policies, as stated in my last email to you, where the behaviour of any staff member or student breaches any of our University policies we will investigate and act appropriately in line with these policies.

There is no doubt that the unacceptable actions of the encampment, which includes encouraging external activists, continues to present a serious risk to the health and safety of our University community, including to the members of the encampment themselves. We have continually requested that they disperse and regrettably they refuse to comply with the University's request.

Unfortunately, under these circumstances, we have had no choice but to cancel this year's Festival of Communities, an annual flagship local community event, which was to be held in Stepney Green Park on Saturday 8 June. With the steadily escalating risk to our communities within and outside campus, due to the actions of the encampment and of the external groups who are drawn to it, there is now a real possibility that the Festival of Communities could become the target of a similar rally. In this scenario, we could not guarantee the health and

safety of our staff and students, and the many members of the local community, young and old, with whom we deliver this event or who attend. I realise the huge amount of work our staff, students and local residents put in to delivering this event. And I know how much the community in Tower Hamlets and the surrounding boroughs look forward to the occasion. However, due to the current circumstances and the increasingly unacceptable behaviours we are witnessing in and around the encampment, we simply cannot put our staff, students, or members of our local community at risk.

We will continue to liaise with the police in terms of all unlawful behaviour, and investigate all breaches of our University policies.

The continuing events in the Middle East are extremely distressing for all of us and particularly for those who have personal links to the region. Within our communities, there will be people with very different viewpoints and experiences, and although this can create tensions, most of our community continue to treat each other with respect, and respect different beliefs and points of view, particularly at difficult times such as these.

For the vast majority of the time, I see our proud University community coming together to support each other, so that everyone can enjoy their university experience and I would like to thank those of you that are ensuring that this can happen, and that everyone feels safe and welcome on campus.

If you are affected and need help, please do not hesitate to reach out via your School/Institute or [our wellbeing hub](#).

Colin

Professor Colin Bailey CBE, FEng, BEng, PhD, CEng, FICE, FStructE, MIFireE
President and Principal | Queen Mary University of London | Mile End Road | London | E1 4NS

