

Dear student,

I hope that this email finds you safe and well. I hope you are enjoying the summer and that, whatever you are doing, you are able to make time for a break and to recharge your batteries.

I am writing today regarding preparations for the new academic year and Covid-19. I would like to begin with a few words on Afghanistan.

I am sure you have been following the situation in Afghanistan over the past few weeks, which is now moving at great speed. My thoughts are with those of you who are affected, whether directly or indirectly, by these events. The UK Government is committed to providing protection for vulnerable people fleeing Afghanistan. For the latest information, see the [Home Office guidance page on gov.uk](#) and follow the [Home Office on Twitter](#).

Preparing for the new academic year

Whether you are a new or returning student, I am looking forward to welcoming you onto our campuses in September. We have been working hard over the summer to ensure we have everything in place to provide you with the best teaching and learning experience. For new students, our Welcome Week will involve a range of in-person and mixed-mode activities. We have already launched our [‘Get Ahead’ programme of transition support](#), which offers new students a package of support as they prepare for university study. We have also been part of a wider Russell Group initiative to launch [Jumpstart University](#), which provides a range of free online materials from OpenLearn for students entering university. Aspects of these initiatives could help our returning students too, so I would encourage you all to take a look at them. In addition, we are preparing to launch later in the first semester LinkedIn Learning for all Queen Mary students – more details to follow.

As for our physical learning environment, we have been further upgrading our AV in our teaching spaces across all our campuses and are preparing to open new teaching rooms and PC labs in September within our iconic Queens’ Building on the Mile End campus. We are also [upgrading the study spaces](#) on the ground floor of our Mile End library as well as work on our other campuses to support all our students.

Vaccinations

It is really important that everyone gets fully vaccinated – it is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from serious infection and is the only way to fight back against the pandemic. We know:

- Vaccinated people are far less likely to get Covid with symptoms;
- They are even more unlikely to become seriously unwell with the virus;
- And they are less likely to pass the virus to others.

Being fully vaccinated means that you do not need to self-isolate if you are identified as a close contact of a positive case. This will allow you to continue to enjoy all the face-to-face social and educational activities on offer. And you will also be able to obtain an [NHS COVID pass](#), which will allow you to travel abroad, and may also enable you to get into some local and national public events.

We will be hosting a vaccination centre on our Mile End campus at the beginning of the first semester, which will enable any student who has not been fully vaccinated to get a jab as soon as possible. Please don't wait though, it is so important that you get vaccinated!

If you have not been vaccinated, [visit the NHS website](#) for information on how to book an appointment, and [visit the Tower Hamlets council website](#) for more information about drop-in centres and vaccination events in Tower Hamlets. And if you have had one jab, please make sure you get your second.

Covid safety on our campuses

I understand that some of you may have concerns about Covid safety on our campuses. I want to reassure you that we are continuing to focus on keeping our campuses Covid safe. While most Covid restrictions were lifted by the UK Government on 19 July, we continue to keep certain controls in place. We are also continuing to follow all guidance from the Government.

We encourage everyone to wear face coverings when moving around inside buildings if they become crowded. There is no need to wear face coverings when outside or moving around inside buildings if they are not crowded, and no need to wear them when you are sitting down. We continue to recommend regular asymptomatic testing for all students and staff. We also continue to support NHS Test and Trace and are working closely with our local Public Health teams. We are maintaining a high standard of cleaning across our campuses and continue to ensure all our buildings and rooms have adequate ventilation.

It is of course possible that case numbers may rise either locally or across the UK to an extent that we are required by local or national government to reintroduce some restrictions. We have a comprehensive plan in place and can at any point increase any of our controls should the need arise. We could, for example, change our policy on face coverings, or reintroduce social distancing. If we had to implement a change in social distancing policy, due to government instructions, it may lead to a temporary change in your timetable, and to the balance of on-campus and online education. If this happens, we will communicate the changes to you as quickly as we can. In an extreme scenario where the Government chooses to impose another lockdown, which they have highlighted will be unlikely, we can of course temporarily switch to purely online education. We can implement these plans quickly, should the need arise. Hopefully, however, none of these measures will be needed!

I will write again when there is more news to share.

Best wishes,

Colin

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