

Promoting safety at University Square

Dear resident

I hope you're enjoying the new term. I am writing to all residents to check if you've completed your fire safety awareness training. If you haven't yet please email: fire@essex.ac.uk. I also wanted to update you on the latest advice from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service so you know the measures in place to keep you safe.

Latest advice

Earlier this year as part of our regular reviews we proactively commissioned an independent fire-engineering consultant to review University Square, and shared the results with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. The consultant's report advised us that despite being certified at the time of completion as being compliant, the insulation and cladding being used on the outside of the accommodation blocks at University Square do not comply with UK building regulations, and require replacement.

In response Essex County Fire and Rescue Service reviewed University Square and confirmed in writing it was satisfied with the fire safety arrangements and that they meet the recommendations of the National Fire Chiefs Council. This confirms that the building is safe to occupy while we take steps to replace the insulation and cladding.

Our fire safety team is happy to discuss the situation and can arrange for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to come to the Southend Campus to speak to students if this is requested.

Unfortunately we cannot simply do the work ourselves as the building was constructed and is now owned by a private company which has leased it to the University. As a result we are in discussions on the best way to ensure any necessary works will meet the latest building regulations and Government guidelines.

Safety measures in place

The safety of our students is our priority and we have extensive safety measures in place at University Square which have been reviewed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. These include the highest standard of fire alarm system, fully-trained security staff on-site 24-hours a day who will immediately respond to any alarm activation, and procedures for full simultaneous evacuation if an alarm is activated.

We've gone beyond Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's advice and introduced additional measures to provide further reassurance. This includes increasing our on-site patrol staff overnight, increased patrols throughout the day, additional checks on personal electrical equipment (PAT Testing) and an extra fire drill during the year. We are also following the latest advice from the UK Government's Building Safety Programme for managing buildings with cladding.

Responding to your questions

If you have any further questions please free to email me at: directorofestates@essex.ac.uk.

Regards

Chris Oldham,

Director of Estates and Campus Services