



Statement on QMUL from Tower Hamlets Trades Council and allies

As local community members, trade unionists and anti-racism campaigners, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the action of the management of Queen Mary's University of London (QMUL) in penalising members of the University and College Union (UCU) for going on strike.

Seeking to stop 26 days of pay for UCU members who have taken 6 days of lawful, democratically mandated strike action is a fundamental attack on the right to strike. Management's argument that days lost through strike action can be "made up" shows a complete misunderstanding of the principles of trade unionism, some of which were forged in our borough and we will fight to defend. Nobody wants to go on strike. It's a last resort. But the purpose is to pressurise employers and management by demonstrating the importance of the work we do.

This is also a provocative act, at a time when negotiations are on-going, at a national level, between university employers and the UCU to resolve long-standing issues about the future of higher education. Again, this is something we feel particularly keenly in Tower Hamlets, where working class students have long been denied full access to higher education, in a system that has historically privileged the better off and disadvantaged people of colour. These questions are a part of the current UCU dispute, something QMUL management appears to ignore.

We want an education system that offers equal opportunity to all, but this is being seriously eroded by the current commercialisation of universities, of which QMUL is typical. Resorting to macho-management techniques is another sign of this, but one we will resist because it is not only a threat to UCU members at QMUL, but to all trade unionists, everywhere.

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Dr Kambiz Boomla (Retired senior lecturer, QMUL)

Maggie Falshaw (retired Tower Hamlets NHS worker and QMUL alumni)

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