

SSL Certificates at QMU

To protect sensitive information such as your username and password, personal data, and other activities, QMU protects some websites with *SSL certificates*. Certificates are used to encrypt information you send to and receive from a web site, making it difficult for third parties to intercept and/or decode.

To ensure that you are protected web browsers have ways of letting you know that the site you are visiting is secure. This usually takes the form of a padlock icon either in the address bar (most modern browsers) or in one of the lower corners of the screen (older browsers). Some browsers also use different colours in the address bar to let you know you are using a secure site.

You can also tell if you are being sent to a secure site by looking at the address for example <https://park.qmu.ac.uk/> is a secure site while <http://park.qmu.ac.uk/> is not. Note that the secure site starts with https:// while the standard site starts with http://.

If, as many people do, you type “park.qmu.ac.uk” into your address bar you would be automatically taken to the standard site, not the secure one. It’s important to bear this in mind if you are typing addresses in instead of following links.

Some sites are only available in a secure version while others are only available in standard versions. Typing http:// or https:// in these cases may lead to an error message. Frequently the standard site will be configured to forward you through to the secure site anyway, but not always so it’s important to look for the padlock before submitting information or entering a password on a site.

These instructions are a general guide to certificates, not all sites use them but when they are offered it’s a good idea to use them. When QMU sites use certificates we aim to configure the servers so that you are automatically forwarded through to them but if you are using a site within QMU that you think is not secured but should be or if you’re not sure whether or not a site is secure please contact the IS Helpdesk who can investigate and advise you further.

Finally, please note that QMU uses an educational certificate that may not be trusted by your web browser. Internet Explorer has been tested and should work fine. But Firefox and other browsers may not. Java may also have problems. Instructions are available from IS for some of these browsers and applications and more instructions should become available over time. Please look for these instructions at the same place you found this document or contact the IS Helpdesk who will be happy to advise you whether or not instructions are available for your Operating System or application.