Policy on Withholding Awards due to Outstanding Debts: Implementation Procedures

Background

The University’s policy on outstanding debts requires that students in such a position are not eligible to graduate or to receive their award certificate in absentia until such time as they have paid all tuition fee and tuition fee related (e.g. consumable fees, writing-up fees) debts.

Award decisions and/or degree certificates can be withheld from graduating students who have an outstanding tuition fee or tuition fee related debt to the University.

A Graduation/Award Hold (GC Hold) will be applied to the record of all graduating students with a tuition fee or tuition fee related debt of £100 or above, by the Student Service Centre (SSC). This provides a consistent and equitable approach to debt collection in the context of graduating students and, if debts are settled in advance of the deadline for receipt of results, will ensure that students can graduate. In addition, official notification of ineligibility to graduate via the release of online results should reduce the number of students being informed at the ceremony itself that they are not eligible to receive their award certificate.

GC Hold (Graduation/Award Hold): Wording on Online Results Page

In consultation with the University’s legal advisors, the Academic Registrar has ascertained that the University could be in a difficult position, from a legal perspective, if notification of results referred to debt. In consequence, the wording of the GC Hold makes no reference to outstanding debt, but makes it clear that the award decision is being withheld and refers the students to the SSC to discuss their financial account. In this way, one of the main purposes of the hold - to ensure that notification of results cannot be used to indicate successful completion of course – can still be met.

| GC Hold: |
| "Award Decision Withheld" |
| The Examiners’ decision on award has been withheld. You are not currently eligible to receive an award or attend a graduation ceremony. Please consult the Student Service Centre to discuss your financial account. |

All graduating students to whom a GC Hold has been applied will receive their results online with the above decision. Once the debt has been resolved, details of the award decision will be available via the Online Results page and a formal academic transcript, can be requested.

Use of GC Hold in Practice

(Summary notes for SSC and the Student Records and Awards (SRA) team - Appendix 1)

The procedures for implementing a GC Hold are outlined below:

1. The use of a GC Hold is not discretionary; it will be applied by the SSC on behalf of the Finance Office to all graduating students with tuition fee or tuition fee related debt which totals £100 or above.

2. The SSC will add a GC Hold in SOAHOLD to the appropriate student records in SAS, using as a basis the centralised list of student debtors which will include cases of £100+ debts.

3. Boards of Examiners (referred to as ‘Progression Boards’) should continue to make academic award decisions only and should not recommend a GC Hold during the Board meeting, but should recommend an award decision which should be input on SAS in the form of the appropriate code and returned in

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1 Dubai Campus – reference should be made to the Registration & Finance Information given to students at the start of each academic year and advice from Dubai Campus staff should be sought.
code form on the Assessment Results Report (ARR). The deadline for notification of Award Decisions and return of ARRs for graduating students is contained in the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment Procedures document (document 1). The ARR will identify students who have a GC Hold applied to their record, but Academic Operations should enter the award code, as per guidelines provided and should not remove or inactivate the GC Hold.

4. Although Academic Operations do not need to take any specific action regarding the use of GC Holds, School Financial Controllers will be able to provide debt listings to relevant staff as required. Academic Operations staff are requested not to publicise the fact that a GC Hold applies only to tuition fee or tuition fee related debts of £100 or above, since students will still be required to settle debts below that sum in order to receive an award certificate at graduation (see point 10 below).

5. All instances of debts cleared will be notified by the SSC to SRA no later than the deadline for recommendations for graduation ². Case of debt resolution after the deadline (even if prior to a graduation ceremony) will result in either permission to retrospectively receive their certificate in absentia or deferral until the next conferment date or graduation ceremony.

6. Once debts are resolved, the SSC will remove the GC Hold and notify SRA.

**Administration of Debts**

7. The Finance Office will be responsible for the administration and collection of all debts (including those above and below the GC Hold threshold of £100), with the exception of resit fees, graduation costs (if applicable) and Student Union debts.

8. Registry and Academic Support (RAS) will be responsible for collecting resit fees and graduation costs, while the Students Union will undertake debt collection in relation to its own Hardship Fund.

9. The Finance Office will continue to contact students on a routine basis with details of outstanding debts.

10. In the case of graduating students with debts below the threshold of £100, the Finance Office will continue to pursue such debts in advance of graduation, with the exception of resit fees and graduation costs (the responsibility of RAS) and the Hardship Fund (the responsibility of the Students Union). Although a GC Hold will not be applied to debts below £100, students will still be required to settle such debts to be eligible to graduate. The SSC will inform SRA of all graduating student debts below £100 – if such debts are not resolved prior to graduation, students will be referred to SSC staff (who will be present at graduation ceremonies) on the day of graduation to pay their outstanding debts before the ceremony.

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² Cheques should be submitted to the Student Service Centre three weeks prior to the deadline; this allows the cheques/drafts the required three weeks to clear.
Student Administration Service (SAS) – GC Hold: Graduation/Award Hold

The following notes summarise, for the benefit of colleagues in the Student Service Centre (SSC), Student Records and Awards (SRA) and Finance colleagues at the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses, procedures related to inputting Code GC: Graduation/Award Hold onto SAS.

NOTE:
1. These guidelines are intended to supplement, and should be read in conjunction with, the Policy on Withholding Awards due to Outstanding Debts: Implementation Procedures.
2. Dubai Campus – reference should be made to the Registration & Finance Information given to students at the start of each academic year and advice from Dubai Campus staff should be sought.
3. Malaysia Campus – seek advice from Malaysia Campus

1. Student Service Centre and Finance Offices in Dubai and Malaysia: Adding a GC Hold

SRA will provide the SSC and colleagues in the Finance Offices at the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses with a list of all students (UG, PGT & PGR) who are eligible to graduate but who have a finance hold in SAS (FO, FM, DF, MF), so that they can identify which debtors should have a Code GC applied to them. Code GC should be applied to all debtors with an outstanding account for tuition related fees of £100 (or equivalent) or more.

SSC and Finance colleagues should follow sub-process P0067 – Add a Hold to a Person Record (SOAHOLD)

2. Student Service Centre and Finance Offices in Dubai and Malaysia: Removing a GC Hold

2.1 Once a student has settled all outstanding debts, the SSC or Finance colleagues are responsible for removing the GC Hold and notifying SRA no later than the deadline for recommendations for graduation.

2.2 Colleagues should follow sub-process P0067 – Remove a Hold from a Person Record (SOAHOLD)

2.3 Once all GC Holds have been removed, a list of students concerned should be passed to SRA for processing.

3. GC Hold: Notes for Student Records and Awards

This section provides information for SRA in relation to GC Holds: Graduation/Award Holds. Please note that these notes should be read in conjunction with the general procedures to be followed for releasing results online (see separate paper).

Release of Online Results for Students with GC Hold

3.1 All students’ results will be released online but for students who have a GC Hold on their record, the online page will automatically contain the ‘award decision withheld’ text in the examiners’ decision field.

3.2 The award decision and the GC Hold will appear against the student’s record on the Assessment Results Report (ARR).

3.3 Students will be able to view the recommendation for award once the GC Hold on their record has been inactivated by SSC or Finance colleagues.