

18 January 2022

The Learning and Teaching Academic Year Group (LTAYG)¹, which is responsible for the University's ongoing response to COVID-19 in terms of learning, teaching and assessment, has endorsed (at its meeting on 3 November 2021) the following proposal for managing online assessment in the context of student debt-related VLE access holds and IT services access holds.

On recommendation from the Global Operations Executive (GOE), the proposal was approved in order to establish consistent, University-wide procedures, and thereby enable consistent messaging to students and equitable treatment of students across all modes and location.

The GOE approved this policy at its meeting on 18 January 2022 for implementation with immediate effect. This policy is located on the [Learning and Teaching Policy Bank](#).

Background

Students who have been prevented from taking University assessments (i.e. students who have had an IT Services Access Hold/VLE Access Hold applied), because of debt, should not be given access to Final Online Assessments (FOA) or be able to submit online coursework until the outstanding debt has been paid, or the Student Finance Office is satisfied that payment plans are in place, and their IT facilities and VLE access reinstated.

The Academic Operations Team, across all campuses, needs to establish institution-wide guidelines and common procedures to manage the student's experience/expectations.

Approved Procedures

The following proposed institution-wide procedures were approved by the GOE at its meeting on 18 January 2022, having been endorsed by the LTAYG on 3 November 2021:

1. IT Services Access Hold/VLE Access Holds must be applied no later than 2 weeks prior to the first day of the examination diet and new holds must only be applied when the examination period has ended. There needs to be clear communication between Finance and Academic Operations colleagues to ensure the dates are clear for each diet.
2. Students must have cleared the debt before they can access the FOA or online assessment.
3. Students are advised to settle their debt 8 days before the day of their first FOA or online assessment. This provides enough time for the campus specific finance systems to interface with Banner and for PS staff to reconcile the payment for the student and remove the hold.
4. The FOA paper will not be issued by alternative means by the University Examinations Team, and students will not be given access to online assessments using alternative means by Course Leaders.
5. This deadline information will be added to the FOA student guides and examination website so that students have prior sight of the information.

Consequences of Missing Assessments due to debt

- Failure to complete the FOA, or submit assessments, means that the student loses an assessment attempt (an "opportunity").
- IT Services Access Hold/VLE Access Hold due to debt will *not* be accepted as a valid Mitigating Circumstances (MC) for mitigating academic performance. This information is covered in the MC guide [<https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/students/doc/mc-studentguide.pdf>] and is available to students.
- For UK campuses, the removal of IT facilities may result in students missing assessment deadlines and breaching

¹ The LTAYG was renamed The Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee (LTAOC) in 2022/23

visa regulations. As a result, the University will be required to inform UKVI when a student is no longer in compliance with the conditions of their VISA. The UKVI in turn will require the student to leave the UK.

Rationale

- A list of students with IT Services Access Hold/VLE Access Holds will be available to the University Examinations Team two weeks before the start of each exam diet for reference, and this can be updated daily.
- When the student debt is cleared the Student Finance Team will remove the hold from the student's record and as a result the reinstated IT Services Access/VLE Access means the student will be able to log on to the Canvas site as normal and complete the assessment.
- The University Exam Team will not email the examination paper directly to the student on the day of the examination, with the danger of human error and the possibility that the exam will have already started.
- Using the recommended 8-day debt payment guideline will be important for the Semester 2 examination diet when the University transitions to timed examinations and reinstates the time-zone policy. It will not be possible to deal with debt payment on the day of the timed FOA and give access to Canvas.
- Examination dates (for main diets) are published 4 weeks in advance of the start of the examination diet and students are aware of this. This provides set deadlines to pay outstanding debt and for the Student Finance Office holds to be applied.

Amanda Lyness, Academic Operations Manager (UK)

Endorsed by the LTAYG, 3 November 2021

Approved by the GOE, 18 January 2022

Reviewed for accuracy 13 March 2023

New assessment terminology (FOA) replaced Take Home Open Book Examinations (THOBE) 09 February 2024

Reviewed for accuracy 09 February 2024