



Students with unmanaged debt to the University Staff briefing note on 'RW' status and the student lifecycle on taught programmes (UG and PG).

This briefing note outlines how the University applies the current Results Withheld (RW) process to students with unmanaged debt on taught programmes and the steps that should be taken by students and staff because of this. A separate briefing will be prepared for Research Postgraduate students, based on the same principles.

What is RW status and when is it applied?

Results Withheld (RW) is a status code that is applied to a reasonably small number of students each academic year – usually less than 1% of the student population - who find themselves with significant unmanaged debt to the University. Typically, they are students who do not have an appropriate repayment plan in place, or who have a payment plan in place but insufficient funds to service their agreed recurring payments (for example, a bank has been unable to make a payment).

Details of the University's Student Fees and University Debt Policy can be downloaded from the MyNapier Money section on the website <https://my.napier.ac.uk/money/student-fees-and-university-debt-policy>. This is the policy that each student agrees to as part of the matriculation process when joining the University.

RW status is only ever placed on a student account once all reasonable attempts to contact the student have been exhausted. Several weeks progress from first contact to the sanctions being applied, with multiple interventions being made to avoid it being necessary.

The University's Finance team follow a standard protocol about when RW may be applied, and this varies depending on whether a student has a payment plan in place or not. This means that at present a student can move on - or move back off - RW status at different points within the academic year. If the timing of the RW point falls within a two-week period of a centrally timetabled exam RW status will not be placed on the account until after the exam date.

What does RW means in practice for students?

By applying the RW status the University is invoking a sanction which will impact on a student's ability to engage in their Learning, Teaching and Assessment. When an account is set to RW status the student no longer has systems access to Moodle, library or e-mail access.

Moving a student to RW is a last resort in the University's Debt Policy and is undertaken to ensure students engage with Finance regarding settling their debt. The step is also taken to ensure that students do not continue to accrue increasing levels of debt before this is addressed, which aligns with good credit control practice.

Most of the students who are moved to RW status are only on the code for a few days with limited, if any, impact on their studies. For others however the duration and therefore the potential impacts can be greater.

Once the RW status is put on an international student's account the debt issue if they are here on a student visa, must be resolved within 60 days or the student will be withdrawn in line with student visa regulations as they will have been unable to engage in their studies appropriately during this period..

What should staff do when RW is applied to a student?

Academic staff – such as programme leaders, module leaders and Personal Development Tutors – and professional service staff should actively encourage all students at RW to engage with the Finance team at the earliest opportunity, as this is the only way access to systems can be restored.

To support the application of these sanctions, academic and professional service colleagues should not seek workarounds for learning materials or alternative means of supporting students with their assessments until they move back off RW status. This would include not accepting coursework from a private email account, and not accepting end of term exam papers that are not uploaded through the Moodle Exam server.

If assessments have been submitted before the RW status is applied, they should be marked and managed in line with standard processes; although it may not be possible to provide feedback or results until after RW is lifted as the students will not have access to electronic systems.

Where appropriate for all summative assessments, marks should be submitted at the same time as other student marks for consideration and processing by a Programme Assessment Board. Students at RW status will not however receive their marks on publication date because they are at 'Results Withheld' status.

How should the impacts of RW on the student lifecycle be managed?

Depending on the duration and frequency of the application of the RW status, the sanctions may or may not have a material impact upon a student's lifecycle.

It should be noted that students may not use the application of RW as a valid reason to defer assessments, as is outlined in the [regulations](#). Nor will any student be given additional opportunities to attempt assessments due to the University's decision to apply the RW sanctions. Summative assessments missed due to RW status should normally be taken at the next available opportunity.

The advice to Programme Assessment Boards (Boards) is that they should monitor and make decisions on all students based only on their academic performance, without taking into account whether they are, or at some point in the trimester have been, at RW status.

After the Boards have met, consideration should be given to those students who may require an intervention by their PDT to discuss their academic performance and to explore how best to support and manage their lifecycle. This could include considering whether they wish to apply for retrospective Extenuating Circumstances.

In such instances the RW status would not itself be considered a valid reason for the ECs, but related reasons might be valid, for example: the causes of student debt such as redundancy; the impact of accommodation issues; and the impact of debt on wellbeing and mental health.

When a student is due to return from RW after a period of longer than two weeks, or has previously been withdrawn, Finance will notify the school so that there can be a discussion about whether it is in the student's academic interest to return at that time in the trimester, or whether a return at a later point would be more beneficial in supporting their studies. All cases will need consideration on their own merits and what is in the best interests of the student to benefit and succeed in their students. This decision will need managed between the Programme Leader, PDT, School Support Service / International Operations and if appropriate Visa and Immigration (to consider the visa implications of the academic decision).

How should student wellbeing and safeguarding be managed?

For some students being placed on RW is stressful and it is recognised that students at the status often have financial hardship which is having an impact upon their life.

The University has an ongoing requirement to deliver on its duty of care to all matriculated students. To this end, while a student is at RW they can be contacted by the University using the personal e-mail and phone numbers which are held on SITS and this is made clear to students on My Napier.

If anyone in the academic community is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a student who is at RW status, they should contact the university's safeguarding team who will reach out and seek to support the student.

[Wellbeing Support and Inclusion \(napier.ac.uk\)](https://www.napier.ac.uk/wellbeing-support-and-inclusion)

Students at RW may continue to engage with the Student Funding team and if necessary, the Student Safeguarding team, who could be able to help alleviate some issues of financial hardship if appropriate evidence can be provided.

<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/Student-Wellbeing-Inclusion/Pages/Student-Funding.aspx>

Can the RW processes be improved?

It is acknowledged that there would be merit in undertaking process review around the Results Withheld process to improve arrangements for students and staff and to make this element of the debt management process more efficient. This is currently under discussion, along with a review of other developments such as exploring how students could retain email access whilst blocked from other university systems and processes.