Guidelines for completing the RDC1 stage: Registration of the Research Programme of Study

## Purpose of the RDC1 stage: Registration of the research programme of study

The RDC1 milestone ensures that all research students have the arrangements for their proposed research programme of study registered promptly within one month of their start date. Particularly, the RDC1 stage confirms that there is an appropriate research project, supervisory team, consideration of any ethical issues, a risk assessment and a personal development plan in place.

## What is required from the student and supervisor?

The student and supervisory team are expected to complete the following:

* + the [RDC1 form](https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/document/36397)
	+ a one-page summary of the proposed research project (within the RDC1 form)
	+ a brief single page CV for each supervisor
	+ a [personal development plan (PDP)](https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/document/36367)
	+ a [risk assessment](https://www.gcu.ac.uk/staff/riskmanagement/) for the project

and submit the above to the Programme Coordinator (Research Degrees) for consideration and approval by the School Research Progression and Awards Board (RPAB). If the student is located in a Research Unit outwith a School, the RDC1 submission should be given to the Programme Coordinator of the School which has been assigned to the research student for the review of their progression.

The responsibility for the final completion and submission of the form plus ancillary documents rests with the Director of Studies. The one-page summary of the proposed research project should be drafted up jointly between the student and the Director of Studies.

## When should the RDC1 be submitted?

All research students, whether full-time or part-time, must submit their RDC1 registration of the research programme of study within **one month** of their start date. For example, if the student starts on one of the three cohort intake dates: 1 October, 1 February or 1 May, they should submit their RDC1, 1 November, 1 March or 1 June respectively. Professional Doctorate candidates should submit their RDC1 within one month following confirmation of progression to stage 2 of their programme. **Late submissions** should be accompanied by a letter explaining the reason for the delay in submission.

## The approval process

A flow chart of the RDC1 process is given in Appendix 1: Process for the RDC1 - Registration of the Research Programme of Study.

## Review by the School

The RDC1 submission is first reviewed at School level by the Postgraduate Research Tutor (by research discipline portfolio) or their nominated reviewer who is an experienced supervisor and researcher in the School. He/she will be reviewing five key areas: the research project, the supervision, consideration of any ethical issues, the risk assessment and the personal development plan, according to the criteria given in the RDC1 form. The Postgraduate Research Tutor or the nominated reviewer may contact the student or the Director of Studies to discuss or clarify points about the RDC1 submission.

Once the reviewer is happy with the submission, it is signed by the reviewer, Postgraduate Research Tutor (if different from the reviewer), and the Associate Dean of Research (to indicate that the necessary resources will be provided) and sent to the School Programme Coordinator, who is normally the secretary of the School Research Progression and Awards Board. Where the signature required is from a person at a distance, an email stating they support the RDC1 being submitted will be satisfactory. A copy of this email should be attached to the RDC1 submission.

## Consideration and formal approval by the School Research Progression and Awards Board (RPAB)

The School Programme Coordinator checks that each section has been completed correctly from an administrative perspective and that the regulations have been complied with. The Programme Coordinator may liaise with the Postgraduate Research Tutor (PGRT) and/or the Director of Studies until the RDC1 submission is completed correctly. It is then considered for approval at the next meeting of the RPAB. The RPAB normally meets six times per year. Membership of the RPAB includes all the School’s PGRTs. The dates of the School RPABs can be obtained from the Secretaries to the School RPABs. The current list of School Programme Coordinators (secretaries to RPABs) and PGRTs can be found at <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/graduateschool/aboutus/contacts/>

Once approved, the secretary informs the student, the Director of Studies and the other supervisors with a formal letter of registration of the research programme of study. The student should keep a copy of this letter as part of their records.

## Subsequent changes to the Registration of the Research Programme of Study

Ongoing changes to the proposed research project and title are fully expected. Your evolving research ideas should be written up for the next milestone RDC2: Confirmation of the Research Project. Any subsequent changes to the supervision, part-time/full-time status, suspension and extension of PhD study time or withdrawal should be applied for through the appropriate RDC form available on the Graduate School webpages on the Research Student Journey:

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/graduateschool/postgraduatestudy/phdstudyatgcu/theresearchstudentjourney/>

## Completing the one-page summary of the proposed research project, Section 2.9

The summary of the proposed research project should be a maximum of one page, 500 words. It should be a combined effort of both the research student and the supervisory team.

Include the four headings (1. The research topic area, 2. Aim of the research project, 3. Outline of the research design and methods and 4. Intended contribution to knowledge and impact) and under each heading answer the relevant questions given in the RDC1 form. This summary is very similar to the research project summary which may have been given on the Glasgow Caledonian University portfolio of PhD opportunities website as part of the application process.

Please feel free to utilise the summary from the website and adapt it to include the further details requested and any amendments as the project ideas have evolved in discussion between the student and the supervisory team. At the RDC1 stage, the research project summary is assessed for its feasibility as a research degree thesis topic, i.e. the topic is of the quality standard for the research degree (MPhil, PhD, ProfD Stage 2) and can be achieved in the timeframe of the research degree programme.

1. **Completing a Risk Assessment**

The University requires a risk assessment to be performed for all projects (research, commercial etc.). These risk registers identify risks that impact upon and are managed by the project teams. Clearly risk assessment can be performed on several levels. It is possible to assess risks related to the use of specific chemicals within a biological experiment, but it is also possible to assess risk to the University’s reputation or of harm to the researcher performing work, or to participants in research work. For Research Students there is a need to assess risk at all levels. For the RDC1 we are interested in the risks your project poses at a University level and also at a project delivery level, but not for specific laboratory procedures. This latter element will be required before you can start specific laboratory work, but is not required within the RDC1 submission. As you progress through your work you may be required to assess risk within your ethical approval applications for studies involving humans.

The University has a formal risk assessment form for GCU research and projects that has been developed to allow project risks to be considered and mitigation put in place to reduce risk to acceptable levels.

Forms and further information are available from the University web site at:

<http://www.gcu.ac.uk/staff/riskmanagement/>

The appropriate form to use is the ‘GCU Research and Project Risk Register Template’.

1. **Completing the risk assessment form**

An [example of a completed risk assessment form](https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/document/37399) suitable for submission as part of the [RDC1 process](https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/document/36398) is provided. Within this form there are examples of the types of risk that you might have to consider for your project. Whilst not all of the risks that are listed will be relevant to your work, these exemplars provide a starting point for completion of the risk register. Note that it is not necessary to complete hundreds of risk points. For the RDC1 you should include the most important risks in relation to your proposed project and its successful delivery. Typically, this would be in the range of 5 to 10 risks.

Note that you could imagine some pretty unlikely risks, e.g. the University burning down. It is simply not worth including these on the risk assessment as this will not make a useful contribution to your understanding of the important risks in relation to your successful delivery of your project. The GCU Research and Project Risk Register Template also provides some useful Notes to Aid Completion and a Generic Example Risk Register for a typical GCU Research project. Note in completing the GCU Research project risk register template, research students do not need to complete the ‘project value’, nor obtain any signatures from staff. The signatures obtained for the RDC1 form suffice to cover the approval of the student’s risk register. You should keep a copy of your risk register for your records and review and update the risk register at key milestones throughout your research project.

**Appendix 1: Process for the RDC1 – Registration of the Research Programme of Study**

DOS and student complete RDC1 and send to Programme Coordinator

PC logs documentation and sends to PGRT/nominated reviewer for review

Refer back to DOS if necessary

PGRT/nominated reviewer approves RDC1.

PC logs it and sends to secretary of RPAB

RPAB considers it. Expert views sought if necessary.

Registration Approved

RPAB notifies student and supervisory team.

Supervisor(s)/Director of Studies (DoS)

Programme Coordinator (PC)

Postgraduate Research Tutor (PGRT)

Research Progression and Awards Board (RPAB)