



**REGULATIONS FOR THE AWARD OF RESEARCH DEGREES  
BY GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY**

**(Master of Philosophy, Professional Masters, Doctor of  
Philosophy and Professional Doctorate)**

**Version 1.2**

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<b>Related documents</b>	Regulations and Procedures for PhD by Previous Published Works. RDC forms Research Student Attendance and Engagement Policy Supporting Families Policy (Research Students)

<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date issued</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Update information</b>
V 1.0	October 2018	Governance	First publication of this version. The regulations were first approved by Senate on May 1993 including amendments approved by Senate on 11 October 1996, 12 June 1998, 15 October 1999, March 2000 and July 2003, June 2005, May 2006, June 2009, March 2010, June 2013, June 2015 and 9 October 2015.
V 1.1	December 2023	Chair of Research Degrees Committee	The amendment requires that the final, revised version of the candidate's thesis/portfolio is received by academic registry before any candidate can receive the award letter form Academic Registry (7.66)
V1.2	June 2024	Governance and Legal Services	Revised section 10 to update appeal process, retitled <i>Appeal of an Examination or Withdrawal Decision</i>

# REGULATIONS FOR THE AWARD OF RESEARCH DEGREES BY GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY including Master of Philosophy, Professional Masters, Doctor of Philosophy and Professional Doctorate<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Principles

- 1.1 Glasgow Caledonian University shall award the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Professional Masters (ProfM), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorate (ProfD) to registered candidates who successfully complete suitable, approved projects.
- 1.2 Programmes may be proposed in any field of study subject to the requirement that the proposed project is capable of leading to scholarly activity/advanced professional practice judged appropriate through assessment by suitable examiners. The written thesis/portfolio may be supplemented by suitable material in other than written form. All proposed research degree programmes shall be considered for registration on their academic merits without reference to the concerns or interests of any external stakeholder.
- 1.3 The MPhil or ProfM shall be awarded to a candidate who having investigated and evaluated critically an approved project can demonstrate:
  - 1.3.1 An independent and original contribution to knowledge and;
  - 1.3.2 A level of understanding of the chosen field of study and methods of investigation appropriate to the award of MPhil or ProfM.
- 1.4 This will normally be through the presentation and defence of a thesis by viva-voce examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 1.5 The PhD or ProfD shall be awarded to a candidate who having investigated and evaluated critically an approved project can demonstrate
  - 1.5.1 An independent and original contribution to knowledge;
  - 1.5.2 A level of understanding of the chosen field of study and methods of investigation appropriate to the award of PhD or ProfD
- 1.6 This will normally be through the presentation and defence of a thesis by viva-voce examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 1.7 The University encourages co-operation with external industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of advanced study leading to the award of a research degree. Such co-operation is intended:
  - 1.7.1 to encourage outward-looking and relevant scholarly activity/advanced professional practice which extends the candidate's experience and scope of the work
  - 1.7.2 to provide a wider range of expertise to assist in the development of the project.
  - 1.7.3 to be beneficial to all stakeholders
  - 1.7.4 where appropriate, to enable the candidate to become a member of a research community/community of professional practice.
- 1.8 Co-operation with one or more bodies external to the University may be formalised, in which case these external bodies shall be referred to as *Collaborating Establishments* for the purposes of these

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<sup>1</sup> Regulations and Procedures for the award of Doctor of Philosophy by Previous Published Works are published separately:  
<https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/10370/>

regulations. Formal collaboration shall normally involve the candidate's use of facilities and other resources, including supervision, which are provided jointly by the University and the Collaborating Establishment.

- 1.9 In such cases a formal letter from the Collaborating Establishment confirming the agreed arrangements should be submitted with the application, except where collaboration is an integral part of the project (as for instance with NERC/SERC CASE awards). The name(s) of the Collaborating Establishment(s) shall appear on the candidate's thesis/portfolio and degree certificate. Where a candidate has indicated informal contact with an establishment, for the purposes of the research degree regulations, these shall be referred to as *Co-operating Establishments*. No formal letter of agreement shall be required in these cases.
- 1.10 These requirements are solely for the purposes of registration of a research degree and do not replace the existing University regulations governing collaboration with external bodies which the candidate and supervisory team should ensure that they comply with these regulations (see *Quality Assurance And Enhancement Handbook - 9. Managing Provision Delivered In Partnership*).
- 1.11 Registration will only take place following approval, by the appropriate School Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board (RPAB) acting on behalf of the University, of the following:
- 1.11.1 the suitability of the candidate to undertake the proposed programme;
  - 1.11.2 the suitability of the proposed project;
  - 1.11.3 the supervision arrangements and facilities for the study.
- 1.12 Since this approval requires appropriate academic judgement to be brought to bear on the viability of each programme of study, the School Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board must be composed of persons who are, or have been engaged within the last 3 years, in appropriate scholarly activity/advanced professional practice, and persons who have experience of successful research degrees supervision.

## **2 Registration of the research programme of study**

- 2.1 A person may apply to register, by completing the appropriate form, for the degree of:
- 2.1.1 Master of Philosophy or
  - 2.1.2 Master of Philosophy/Doctor of Philosophy (Pre-confirmation) or
  - 2.1.3 Professional Doctorate Stage 2
- 2.2 In approving an application for registration, the RPAB shall satisfy itself that:
- 2.2.1 the candidate is suitably qualified
  - 2.2.2 the candidate is embarking on a viable programme of study
  - 2.2.3 supervision is adequate and will be sustained
  - 2.2.4 the University is able to provide or approve appropriate facilities for the conduct of a programme of advanced study
- 2.3 An applicant for registration for a research degree shall normally hold a first or upper second class honours degree from a university in the UK or a qualification which is regarded by the Research Progression and Awards Board (RPAB) as equivalent to such an honours degree
- 2.4 An applicant holding qualifications other than those in paragraph 2.3 shall be considered on their individual merits, particularly in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. In considering an applicant in this category, the RPAB shall look for evidence of the candidate's skills

and knowledge in relation to the proposed programme of work. Professional experience, professional achievements, prior publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment shall be taken into consideration. The RPAB would expect applicants for the ProfD degree to have a minimum of 5 years experience at a level of their profession the RPAB considers appropriate. An applicant wishing to be considered under this regulation shall include in the application for registration the names of two suitable persons whom the University may consult concerning the candidate's academic attainment and fitness for advanced study.

- 2.5 Direct registration for the degrees of PhD or Prof.D may be permitted to an applicant who holds a Master's degree awarded by a UK university or an overseas Master's degree recognised by the University, provided that the Master's degree is in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study and that the Master's degree included training in appropriate methods of investigation and the execution of a suitable project. Direct registration for the degrees of PhD or Prof.D may be permitted a candidate who, although lacking a Master's degree, has a good honours degree (or equivalent) in an appropriate discipline and has had appropriate research or professional experience at postgraduate level which has resulted in published work, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment.
- 2.6 An applicant, whose work forms part of a larger group project, may register for a research degree. In such cases each individually registered project shall in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award being sought. The application shall indicate clearly the individual contribution of the applicant and how it relates to the group project.
- 2.7 The RPAB may approve an application from a person proposing to work outside the UK, provided that:
  - 2.7.1 there is satisfactory evidence as to the facilities available for the project both in the University and abroad; and
  - 2.7.2 the arrangements proposed for supervision enable frequent and substantial contact between the candidate and the supervisor(s) based in the UK. ProfD candidates should refer to their programme specific regulations.
- 2.8 Registration of the project for a research degree should be completed within one month following matriculation for both full-time and part-time candidates.
- 2.9 ProfD candidates should register their proposal within one month following confirmation of progression to stage 2 of their programme.
- 2.10 Where a candidate has previously undertaken research as a registered candidate for a research degree, the RPAB may approve a specified registration period which takes account of all, or part, of the time already spent by the candidate on this research.
- 2.11 Any prior research work undertaken, as described in paragraph 2.9, may contribute to the overall body of work submitted for a research degree by the candidate, provided the RPAB is satisfied that the prior research meets the regulations of the University, and that:
  - 2.11.1 the work has been undertaken by the candidate;
  - 2.11.2 there is no conflict of interest with any external stakeholder; and
  - 2.11.3 the candidate has sole claim on the intellectual property inherent in the prior research work
- 2.12 The ProfD will be awarded on the completion of 540 credits of which a minimum of 420 must be at level 12 and the remainder at level 11, in line with SCQF requirements and standards

- 2.13 In the case of candidates for the ProfD, relevant prior learning (RPL) can be used either:
- 2.13.1 as part of the qualifications required for entry to the ProfD programme, or
  - 2.13.2 to be credit rated as part of the ProfD framework
  - 2.13.3 to count for up to 50% of the credit for the overall award (it is not possible to gain a ProfD award through RPL alone).
- 2.14 Candidates must undertake appropriate personal development planning in consultation with their supervisory team. This process of training and development should be recorded as detailed in the **Personal Development Plan**.
- 2.15 If the process of PDP and training in paragraph 2.13 includes an approved programme of studies leading to another award, and the candidate is registered for that programme and fulfils all the requirements, they may be recommended for that award in addition to their research degree.
- 2.16 Where appropriate, candidates must ensure that they comply with any programme, discipline or profession specific regulations required to gain the appropriate qualification.
- 2.17 A candidate for a PhD or Prof.D, may undertake an integrated programme of work which, as well as the investigative element, shall include a programme of postgraduate study on which his/her performance shall be formally assessed.
- 2.17.1 Such a course of study shall not occupy more than one third of the total period of registration and shall complement the project.
- 2.17.2 This regulation shall not apply to the MPhil.
- 2.18 Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board must ensure that the candidate has sufficient command of the English language to complete the programme of work and to prepare and defend a thesis/portfolio in English.
- 2.19 Regulation 2.18 will apply except where permission has been given by the Research Degrees Committee for the thesis/portfolio and the oral examination to be in another language.
- 2.19.1 Permission to present a thesis/portfolio in a language other than English shall normally only be given if the subject matter of the thesis/portfolio involves language and related studies.
- 2.20 A candidate may register on a full-time or a part-time basis. A full-time candidate shall normally devote on average at least 35 hours per week to the study; a part-time candidate on average at least 12 hours per week but under 21 hours per week.
- 2.21 Research Degrees Progression and Awards Boards may permit a candidate to register for another course of study concurrently with research degree registration provided that:
- 2.21.1 the research degree registration or the other course of study is on a part-time basis and;
  - 2.21.2 the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board is satisfied that such dual registration will not detract from the project.
- 2.22 Where a candidate or the University wishes the thesis/portfolio to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work, application for approval shall normally be made to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board at the time of registration.

2.23 In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis/portfolio to remain confidential after submission shall be made immediately to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board.

2.24 The approved embargo period of confidentiality shall not exceed two years from the date of the oral examination in normal circumstances.

### 3 The Registration Period

3.1 The minimum and maximum periods of registration shall be as follows:

3.2	<b>MPhil/Prof.M</b>	Minimum	Maximum
	full-time	1 year 6 months	3 years part-time
	part-time	2 years 6 months	4 years

3.3	<b>PhD</b>		
	full-time	2 years 9 months	4 years part-time
	part-time	3 years 9 months	6 years

3.4	<b>Prof. D.</b>		
	full-time	2 years 9 months	4 years part-time
	part-time	3 years 9 months	6 years

3.5 Where a candidate changes from full-time to part-time study or vice versa, the minimum and maximum registration periods shall be calculated as if he/she were a part-time candidate.

3.5.1 Notification of such a change shall be made on the RDC6 form.

3.6 A candidate seeking a change to a registered programme of study shall apply in writing to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board for approval using the appropriate RDC form (RDC3s, RDC3e, RDC4 RDC6, RDC7).

3.7 At least once a year the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board must establish whether the candidate is still actively engaged on the programme of study.

3.7.1 This annual reporting process should include a report from the candidate and the supervisory team on the candidate's progress.

3.7.2 As a result of obtaining this report, the Board shall take appropriate action which may include the withdrawal of the candidate's registration.

3.7.3 Where a candidate is engaging but has failed to show satisfactory academic performance at any stage of their programme after the RDC2, they will be asked to undertake a formal examination of their progress (RDC14 process).

3.8 Where the candidate is prevented from making progress with the programme of study, an application for suspension of registration should be made to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board using the RDC3 form.

3.8.1 This application should be made not more than 2 weeks after progress has been affected.

- 3.8.2 Where the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board accepts the need for suspension of registration, the period of suspension must not be for more than 1 year.
  - 3.83 Where a candidate has had multiple periods of suspension of less than 1 year, they should not form a cumulative period of more than 1 year.
  - 3.8.4 The award of periods of suspension beyond the 1 year limit shall be at the discretion of the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board, and must be in exceptional circumstances. In such cases the circumstances must be clearly documented, and there must be clearly documented evidence that there is a reasonable expectation that the project will be completed.
- 3.9 Candidates must submit the thesis/portfolio to the Registry before the expiry of the maximum period of registration.
- 3.10 Research Degrees Progression and Awards Boards may extend a period of registration in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.9.1 A candidate seeking such an extension shall apply on the appropriate RDC3 form.
  - 3.9.2 The maximum extension to the registration period which can be granted is 1 year.
  - 3.9.3 In all cases the circumstances must be clearly documented, and there must be clearly documented evidence that there is a reasonable expectation that the thesis/portfolio will be submitted within the period of extension of registration.
- 3.11 Where a candidate has discontinued their programme of study, withdrawal of registration must be notified to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board on the RDC7 form.
- 3.12 This notification should occur as soon as possible and no later than 6 months following the discontinuation of studies.
- 3.13 A candidate shall pay such fees as may be determined from time to time by the University.
- 4 Confirmation of registration for doctoral candidates**
- 4.1 All candidates registered for PhD must undertake a Confirmation Review to show that they have made satisfactory progress and to clearly demonstrate their ability to pursue study to doctoral level (RDC2 process).
- 4.1.1 The confirmation review must be completed within the first 12 months of registration for full time candidates and within the first 18 months of registration for part time candidates.
  - 4.1.2 Failure to complete the confirmation review within these timescales will result in a withdrawal of registration.
- 4.2 Candidates registered for the degree of MPhil may apply to transfer their registration to that of PhD by undertaking the confirmation review process satisfactorily.
- 4.2.1 In such cases, MPhil candidates should notify their intention to undertake confirmation review to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board within 9 months of their initial registration date for full-time candidates and within 1 year and 2 months for part-time candidates.
- 4.3 A candidate who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may apply to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board to transfer the registration to that for MPhil. This should be done in consultation with the Director of Studies.



- 4.3.1 This request may be made at any point prior to the submission of the thesis/portfolio, provided the candidate has exceeded the minimum time for registration of the MPhil degree.

## **5 Supervision**

- 5.1 A research degree candidate shall have at least two and not more than three supervisors.
- 5.2 A supervision team must have two supervisors one of whom must be an experienced supervisor i.e. someone who has supervised one candidate to successful completion and who has also attended the University's supervisor training programme. In the case of registration for PhD/Prof.D, the supervisory experience must be at doctoral level. Where a supervisory team contains an inexperienced supervisor and it is their first doctoral supervision, the inexperienced supervisor should be mentored throughout the duration of the supervision.
- 5.3 One supervisor shall be Director of Studies (first supervisor) with responsibility to supervise the candidate on a regular and frequent basis. The Director of Studies can be either the experienced or inexperienced supervisor. Supervisors can be external to the University but the Director of Studies shall normally be from GCU. At least one member of the supervisory team must be a current member of staff at GCU.
- 5.4 In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.
- 5.5 A candidate registered for a research degree, at any university, will be ineligible to supervise a research degree candidate. The only exception is a candidate undertaking a PhD by Previous Works. As their research is already in published form, the candidate is not considered to have a conflict of interest with the student.
- 5.6 A proposal for a change in supervision arrangements shall be made to the Research Degrees Progression and Awards Board on the appropriate form.
- 5.7 Supervisors will normally be allocated no more than 6 full-time students as Director of Studies and up to 10 doctoral students in total, (where part-time students will be weighted as needing 2/3 the resource time in supervision per year to that of full-time students since part-time PhD timeframes are 1.5 times longer than full-time PhD timeframes).

## **6 The Candidate's Responsibilities in the Examination Process**

- 6.1 The candidate shall ensure that the thesis/portfolio is submitted before the expiry of the registration period.
- 6.2 The submission of the thesis/portfolio for examination shall be at the sole discretion of the candidate.
- 6.3 The candidate shall satisfy any conditions of eligibility for examination required by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 6.4 The candidate shall take no part in the arrangement of the examination and shall have no formal contact with the external examiner(s) between the appointment of the examiners and the oral examination.
- 6.5 The candidate shall confirm, through the submission of a declaration form, that the thesis/portfolio has not been submitted for a comparable academic award. The candidate shall not be precluded from

incorporating in the thesis/portfolio, covering a wider field, work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award, provided that it is indicated, on the declaration form and also in the thesis/portfolio, which work has been so incorporated.

- 6.6 The candidate shall ensure that the thesis/portfolio format is in accordance with the requirements of the University's regulations (see section 7.8-7.15). Theses/portfolios may be submitted for examination either in a permanently bound form or in a temporarily bound form which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed. The thesis/portfolio shall be presented in a permanent binding of the approved type (see section 7) before the degree may be awarded. A thesis/portfolio submitted in a temporarily bound form shall be in its final form in all respects save the binding. In such cases the candidate shall confirm that the contents of the permanently bound thesis/portfolio are identical with the version submitted for examination, except where amendments have been made to meet the requirements of the examiners.

## **7 Examination**

- 7.1 Examination of the MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate (Research Project) degrees shall have two stages:
- 7.1.1 Stage 1. Submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis/portfolio
  - 7.1.2 Stage 2. Defence of the thesis and work by viva-voce examination or in exceptional cases an approved alternative form of examination (see paragraph 7.32).
- 7.2 Assessment of the Professional Doctorate degree may include assessed coursework.
- 7.3 A candidate for the Professional Doctorate whose programme of work includes formally assessed coursework will not be permitted to proceed to examination process until the examiners of the coursework are satisfied with the candidate's performance.
- 7.4 It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies in consultation with the supervisory team and candidate to submit the form "*Application for approval of examination arrangements for the degree of .....*" (RDC5) to the Academic Registry for approval. No examination may take place until the details have been reviewed and approved by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 7.4.1 In exceptional circumstances, the Research Degrees Committee may act directly to appoint examiners and arrange the viva-voce examination of a candidate.
- 7.5 Academic Registry shall administer the examination process on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee.
- 7.6 For the examination process the candidate must submit 2 copies of the thesis in temporary binding with the required supporting documentation (RDC8 – Candidate's declaration form).
- 7.7 The candidate's Director of Studies must indicate on the RDC5 whether or not they consider the thesis ready for submission.

### **Examination Process – The Thesis/Portfolio**

*This section should be read in conjunction with the "Guidelines for Thesis Preparation"*

- 7.8 Except with the specific permission of the Research Degrees Committee, the thesis/portfolio shall be presented in English (see paragraph 2.19)

- 7.9 An abstract (comprising no more than 1 page of A4 with formatting consistent with the rest of the thesis) must be bound into the thesis/portfolio. This must provide a synopsis of the thesis/portfolio covering the nature and scope of the work undertaken and indicating the contribution made to knowledge of the subject area.
- 7.10 The thesis/portfolio must include a statement of the candidate's objectives and shall acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted (including an appropriate bibliography) and any assistance received.
- 7.11 Where the programme of study is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis/portfolio must indicate clearly the individual contribution made by the candidate and the extent of the collaboration.
- 7.12 The candidate shall be free to publish material in advance of the presentation of the thesis/portfolio and reference must be made in the thesis/portfolio to any such work. Copies of published material should be bound into the thesis/portfolio or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis/portfolio.
- 7.13 The body text of the thesis/portfolio should normally not exceed the following length (excluding the bibliography and/or any ancillary data):
- 7.13.1 PhD: 40,000 - 80,000 words  
MPhil: maximum of 40,000 words  
Prof D: 60,000 words, comprising a 55,000 word thesis and 5000 word self reflective report
- 7.13.2 Where the thesis/portfolio is accompanied by material in other than written form or the programme of study involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, the written thesis/portfolio should be within a range appropriate to the requirements of the presentation
- 7.14 The Senior Registry Officer (RPG) shall communicate to the candidate whether there are any conditions which must be satisfied before the candidate may be considered eligible for examination.

#### **Special Arrangements for Examinations**

- 7.15 Students with a disability are recognised by the Graduate School as those students who have been assessed by the Disability Service and assigned a RAP (Recommended Adjustments Pages). The RAP is distributed by the Disability Co-ordinator in the Graduate School to the student's supervisory team and a confidential record is kept by the Graduate School. When the Graduate School is notified, the conditions of the RAP are automatically applied to the Viva Examination and Guidelines for the Conduct of the Exam are forwarded to the Chair and, when requested, to the supervisory team. Students with a seen or unseen disability, recorded by the Disability Service and defined in the Equality Act (2010)<sup>2</sup>: may make a request directly to the Graduate School, or through their supervisory team or Viva Chair, for special arrangements to be made to assist in accessing the physical, technological and environmental support necessary.

#### **Examination Stage 1**

- 7.16 The Senior Registry Officer (RPG) shall arrange for the delivery of the thesis to all internal and external examiner/s.
- 7.17 The Senior Registry Officer (RPG) shall ensure that each examiner receives the *Stage 1 preliminary report form* (RDC9) with the thesis in both written and electronic (Word .docx) forms. This

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

preliminary report MUST be returned not less than 5 days prior to the date of the Stage 2 viva-voce examination.

- 7.18 The Research Degrees Examination Officers in Academic Registry shall ensure that each examiner receives a copy of the University's Regulations for the Award of Research Degrees.
- 7.19 Each examiner shall review and conduct a preliminary assessment of the thesis (Stage 1). The examiner should then submit an independent preliminary report (RDC9) on the thesis to the Research Degrees Examination Officers in Academic Registry before any form of Stage 2 examination is undertaken.
- 7.20 In completing the preliminary report, each examiner shall consider whether the thesis/portfolio provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree (as set out in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4) and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any Stage 2 examination.
- 7.21 The Senior Registry Officer (RPG) shall, in collaboration with the Director of Studies, ensure that the Stage 1 preliminary report form is returned. In the event of non-compliance with the schedule above, the Research Degrees Committee has the right to postpone the Stage 2 viva-voce examination until the Stage 1 preliminary reports from all examiners are returned.
- 7.22 Where the examiners are of the opinion at Stage 1 that the thesis/portfolio is so unsatisfactory that no useful purpose would be served by conducting any Stage 2 examination, they may recommend to the Research Degrees Committee that the candidate should undertake further work to bring the thesis/portfolio up to a standard satisfactory for Stage 2 examination.
- 7.23 In such a case, the candidate is not permitted to proceed to Examination Stage 2.
- 7.24 Where the examiners are of the opinion that the thesis could be revised in order to allow Examination Stage 2 to take place they should give the candidate written feedback to assist them in the revision of the thesis.
- 7.25 Where the RDC9 Preliminary reports contain significantly diverging opinions, the examiners shall be requested to enter into correspondence to determine whether a consensus opinion can be reached.
- 7.26 In the case where the examiners can form a consensus then the thesis may proceed to Examination Stage 2.
- 7.27 In the event that the examiners cannot form a consensus opinion then the Chair of the RDC shall approach a 3rd examiner, chosen in consultation with the currently appointed examiners and the supervisory team, for a 3rd preliminary report (RDC9) in order to achieve a majority opinion.
- 7.28 In the event that the majority opinion recommends proceeding to Examination Stage 2, the viva-voce examination should be conducted by the 2 examiners forming the majority opinion.
- Examination Stage 2**
- 7.29 The Senior Registry Officer (RPG) shall formally notify the candidate, all supervisors and the examiners of the date of the Stage 2 viva-voce examination.
- 7.30 In Stage 2 the candidate shall be examined on the programme of work and on the wider field of study wherein the programme lies.

- 7.31 Where for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause the Research Degrees Committee is satisfied that a candidate would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo a viva-voce examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved.
- 7.32 In such cases, the circumstances under which an alternative examination is allowed must be clearly documented and provided to the Research Degrees Committee for approval.
- 7.33 Such approval will not be given on the grounds that the candidate's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.
- 7.34 The viva-voce examination in Stage 2 must be held at the appropriate University campus unless an alternative arrangement has been approved by the Chair of RDC.
- 7.35 In exceptional circumstances, the Research Degrees Committee may allow the viva-voce examination to be held via video-conferencing or other suitable means.
- 7.36 In such cases, prior approval of the alternative form of examination must be obtained from the RDC, and the circumstances under which an alternative examination is requested must be clearly documented in the application.
- 7.37 A Chair shall be appointed to ensure that the viva-voce examination at Stage 2 follows the appropriate, academically rigorous process and that all paperwork is completed appropriately.
- 7.38 The Chair should be the Head of Department of the candidate's School/Dean GCU London or a nominee of their choosing with appropriate experience.
- 7.39 Where a nominee is proposed they must be an experienced research degrees supervisor, have previously examined a research degree and have completed the Graduate School training for chairs of research degree examinations.
- 7.40 In all cases the Chair must be an experienced research degrees supervisor.
- 7.41 Any post-approval changes to the Chair of the Stage 2 examination must be approved by the RDC prior to the examination.
- 7.42 The candidate may request that one of the following people attend the viva-voce examination as an observer: the Director of Studies, a supervisor or an adviser (e.g. in cases where students have additional support needs as notified to the University – see 7.15).
- 7.43 In such cases, the observer may participate in the discussion only when invited by the Chair, but must withdraw prior to the deliberations on the outcome of the examination.
- 7.44 The Research Degrees Committee shall make a final decision based upon the reports and recommendation(s) of the examiners in respect of the thesis and viva-voce examination.
- 7.45 The power to confer the degree shall rest with the Senate of the University.
- 7.46 The degree of MPhil, PhD or Professional Doctorate may be awarded posthumously on the basis of a thesis/portfolio completed by a candidate which is ready for submission for examination.
- 7.46.1 In such cases the Research Degrees Committee shall seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the Stage 2 viva-voce examination taken place.

- 7.47 The Research Degrees Committee shall ensure that all examinations are conducted, and the recommendations of the examiners are presented, wholly in accordance with the University's regulations.
- 7.48 In any circumstances where the Research Degrees Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, or the University's regulations, it may declare the examination null and void and require a new examination process be undertaken.
- 7.49 Following the Stage 2 examination, where there is agreement, the examiners should submit their joint report and recommendation (RDC10 – *Recommendation of the examiners on a candidate for the degree of PhD/ProfD*) to the Senior Registry Officer (RPG).
- 7.50 The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners must together provide sufficient detail regarding the scope and quality of the work to justify the agreed recommendation.
- 7.51 Where the examiners cannot agree, they should submit their own individual report and recommendation forms (RDC10) for consideration by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 7.52 The Chair may provide appropriate guidance and explanation of the University's regulations and procedures to the examiners during their deliberations
- 7.53 The following recommendations are allowed following completion of the examination process:
- 7.53.1 the candidate be awarded the degree;
  - 7.53.2 the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis/portfolio (see paragraph 7.54);
  - 7.53.3 the candidate be permitted to re-submit an amended thesis and be re-examined, with or without an oral examination as deemed appropriate (see section 9);
  - 7.53.4 the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined (see paragraph 7.64);
  - 7.53.5 in the case of an examination for the degree of PhD, the candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis for the degree of MPhil, and be re-examined, with or without an viva-voce examination as deemed appropriate.
- 7.54 The examination panel may indicate their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate informally, however they must explain that the final decision on any award rests solely with the Research Degrees Committee (on behalf of Senate) of the University.
- 7.55 Where the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has achieved the required standard for the award of a research degree, but consider that the thesis/portfolio requires minor amendments and corrections, the examiners may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis/portfolio to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s) (see sub-paragraph 7.52.3).
- 7.56 In the case of minor amendments being required the examiners must indicate in writing to the candidate what amendments and corrections are required. These amendments and corrections should be typewritten by the examiners.
- 7.57 This information should be provided to the Senior Registry Officer (RPG) for forwarding to the candidate.
- 7.58 Where the examiners fail to agree upon a recommendation following examination and submit separate recommendations, the Research Degrees Committee may:

- 7.58.1 accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - 7.58.2 accept the recommendation of the external examiner(s);
  - 7.58.3 require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- 7.59 Where an additional external examiner is appointed under sub-paragraph 7.57.3, they must prepare an independent preliminary report (RDC9) on the thesis/portfolio and conduct a further oral examination where justified.
- 7.60 The additional examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners.
- 7.61 On receipt of the report and recommendation from the additional examiner the Research Degrees Committee shall make the appropriate recommendation for award as set out in paragraph 7.43.
- 7.62 In the case of 7.54 the examiners must provide the Research Degrees Committee with written guidance for the candidate concerning the deficiencies of the thesis/portfolio.
- 7.63 No recommendation can be made without holding a Stage 2 viva- voce examination.
- 7.64 Where the recommendation is that the degree should not be awarded and no re-examination permitted (see sub-paragraph 7.53.4), the examiners must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis/portfolio and the reason/s for this recommendation, to be forwarded to the candidate and the Research Degrees Committee, by the Senior Registry Officer (RPG).
- 7.65 Following the completion of the examination process the candidate must send the final, revised version of the thesis/portfolio comprising one paper copy and an electronic copy (in .docx and .pdf formats) to Academic Registry.
- 7.66 An award letter from Academic Registry will not be issued to the candidate until the final, revised version of the thesis/portfolio, and all relevant documentation, is received by the Academic Registry.
- 7.67 Academic Registry shall forward the final, revised thesis to the Library, who will undertake the following:
- 7.67.1 arrange for the final thesis/portfolio to be archived in British Library, and
  - 7.67.2 archive the thesis/portfolio in the library of the University and in the library of any Collaborating Establishment.
- 7.68 Where the Research Degrees Committee has agreed that the work is of a confidential nature such as to preclude the thesis/portfolio being made freely available, the final thesis/portfolio shall be retained by the University and will be made freely available only after the agreed period of embargo has passed (see paragraph 2.22).
- 7.69 On the expiration of the period of embargo, the Academic Registry shall forward the final thesis/portfolio to the library for archiving as described in section 7.66.
- 7.70 The candidate is responsible, for ensuring that the full content of the final thesis/portfolio can enter the public domain without compromising ethical principles, research integrity and that the thesis/portfolio meets the requirements of all data protection legislation in statute at the time of final submission. Guidance, where required, should be sought from appropriate research leaders in the School and University prior to submission. No provision can be made for removal or redaction of sections of the thesis after final submission.

7.71 Copies of the thesis/portfolio submitted for examination shall remain the property of the University but the copyright in the thesis/portfolio shall be vested in the candidate.

## **8 Examiners**

8.1 A candidate shall be examined by two examiners (except where paragraph 8.13 applies).

8.2 One examiner must be an independent, appropriate, external expert in the subject area. The suitability of the examiner must be demonstrated through their curriculum vitae submitted as part of the approval process for the examination (RDC5).

8.3 An external examiner must be independent both of the University and of any Collaborating Establishment

8.4 The external examiner must verify that they have no conflict of interest in acting as an external examiner for this thesis/candidate.

8.5 An external examiner must not have acted previously as a supervisor or adviser to the candidate.

8.6 An external examiner must not be a supervisor of another research degree candidate, or an external examiner on a taught course in the same cognate area at the University.

8.7 Former members of staff of the University cannot be act as external examiners until three years after the termination of their employment with the University.

8.8 An external examiner cannot hold an emeritus or honorary position with the University.

8.9 An external examiner must not have been appointed as an external examiner for another research degree candidate in the University within 2 years prior to the proposed date of the Stage 2 vivavoce examination.

8.10 The second examiner shall be an internal examiner, which is defined as an appropriate member of staff within the University, or an appropriate member of staff from a Collaborating Establishment.

8.11 No member of the supervisory team or an adviser to a candidate's programme of study may act as examiner.

8.12 Where the candidate is a member of staff of the University on a permanent contract or a fixed-term contract of more than 12 months duration, then a second external examiner must be appointed in place of the internal examiner.

8.13 In the case above (8.12) the examination panel shall comprise of two external examiners.

8.14 A candidate who holds a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months duration is not required to appoint a second external examiner.

8.15 At least one examiner must have experience of examining research degrees at the level commensurate with the examination being undertaken. The Research Degrees Committee must ensure that the examining panel has the relevant experience in both the subject area and in examining research degrees at the appropriate level.

8.16 Candidates registered for a research degree at any university or equivalent must not act as research degree examiners.

8.17 The University shall determine and pay the fees and expenses of the external examiner(s).



## **9 Examination Process – Re-Examination**

- 9.1 A revised thesis/portfolio may be resubmitted and re-examined only once, subject to the following requirements:
- 9.1.1 this is the agreed recommendation of the examiners
  - 9.1.2 the arrangements for the re-examination have been approved by the Research Degrees Committee
  - 9.1.3 the examiners have provided written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission to the Research Degrees Examination Officers in Academic Registry for forwarding to the candidate (paragraph 9.11 & 9.12).
- 9.2 The candidate shall submit the revised thesis/portfolio for re-examination within 12 months (fulltime)/18 months (part-time) of the date of the completion of the first examination.
- 9.3 In exceptional circumstances, the Research Degrees Committee may approve an extension of this period. In such cases, the circumstances under which any extension is approved must be clearly documented.
- 9.4 The form of any re-examination will be determined as follows:
- 9.4.1 The candidate's performance in Stage 2 of the first examination (see paragraph 7.3) was satisfactory, but the thesis/portfolio was deemed unsatisfactory. The examiners may certify that the revised thesis/portfolio is satisfactory through a second Stage 1 examination only.
  - 9.4.2 The candidate's performance in Stage 2 of the first examination was unsatisfactory and the thesis/portfolio was also deemed unsatisfactory, the re-examination must include both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the examination process.
  - 9.4.3 The candidate's thesis/portfolio was deemed so unsatisfactory that no Stage 2 examination was conducted, the re-examination must include both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the examination process.
  - 9.4.4 The candidate's thesis/portfolio was deemed satisfactory but the performance in Stage 2 of the first examination was not satisfactory, the candidate must be re-examined in Stage 2 of the examination process only, subject to the time limits prescribed in paragraph 9.2, without any re-submission of the thesis/portfolio being required.
- 9.4.5 The thesis/portfolio was satisfactory but the candidate's performance in relation to other specific requirements for the award of the degree was not satisfactory; the examiners may propose a form of re-examination appropriate to test the candidate's abilities; however, such reexamination may take place only with the approval of the Research Degrees Committee.
- 9.5 Any re-examination of the thesis/portfolio should follow the process as described in 9.4. The examiners should submit the preliminary reports and/or recommendations as appropriate to the form of the reexamination. Where a recommendation is submitted, the examiners should be in agreement as described in paragraph 9.6. These preliminary reports and/or recommendations must together provide sufficient detail regarding the resubmission and/or re-examination to justify the recommendation for award.
- 9.6 Following completion of the re-examination process the following recommendations are possible:
- 9.6.1 That the candidate be awarded the degree;
  - 9.6.2 That the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis/portfolio (see paragraph 9.7);

- 9.6.3 That the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re- examined (see paragraphs 9.11);
  - 9.6.4 In the case of an examination for the award of PhD, the candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/portfolio for the degree of MPhil and be re-examined, with or without a Stage 2 examination.
- 9.7 Where the examiners are satisfied that the revised thesis/portfolio has achieved the required standard for the award of a research degree, but consider that the thesis/portfolio requires minor amendments and corrections, the examiners may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis/portfolio to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s) (see sub-paragraph 9.6.2).
- 9.8 Where the examiners fail to agree upon a recommendation following re- examination they should confer with the Chair of the examination in an attempt to achieve a consensus decision, and failing that they must submit separate recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee.
- 9.9 In the case of 9.8 above, the Research Degrees Committee must:
- 9.9.1 accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - 9.9.2 accept the recommendation of the external examiner;
  - 9.9.3 require the appointment of an additional external examiner;
  - 9.10 In the case of 9.9.3 above the additional external shall provide a written report upon the thesis/portfolio which the Research Degrees Committee must use to reach one of the decisions described in paragraph 9.6.
- 9.11 Where the recommendation is that the degree be not awarded and that no re- examination be permitted (see sub-paragraph 9.6.3), the examiners must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis/portfolio and the reason/s for this recommendation, to be forwarded to the candidate by the Research Degrees Examination Officers in Academic Registry.

## **10 Appeal of an Examination or Withdrawal Decision**

***Students are strongly advised to contact the GCU Students' Association Advice Centre for advice and support in preparing an appeal <https://www.gcustudents.co.uk/advice>***

- 10.1 A candidate may appeal an examination decision, following either the first examination or re-examination, RDC2 or RDC14 examination process. A candidate may also appeal a withdrawal decision made for other reasons.
- 10.2 The appeal or request for review may be made on the following grounds:
- 10.2.1 That there were circumstances affecting the performance of the candidate which they were not aware of at the time of the viva-voce examination.
  - 10.2.2 That there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of a nature grave enough to cause uncertainty in the result of the examination process.
  - 10.2.3 That there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners.
  - 10.2.4 The decision of the examiners was unduly harsh in respect of the options available to them under the University regulations.

- 10.2.5 There are extenuating circumstances not taken into account upon the decision to withdraw the candidate.
- 10.3 Other than the circumstances given above, a candidate may not otherwise challenge the academic judgement of the examiners
- 10.4 A decision will be made at initial review of any case on whether the case should be dealt with as a complaint or under the RDC procedures. This will be made by the Department of Governance and Legal Services with appropriate consultation.
- 10.5 The candidate must give written notice that they wish to request a review of the examination decision/appeal a withdrawal decision to the Department of Governance and Legal Services (within 14 days (2 calendar weeks) of the date of written notification of the result of the examination or withdrawal notification (to [PGRSAppeal@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:PGRSAppeal@gcu.ac.uk)).
- 10.6 Following the written notice, the candidate has a further 16 days to submit their case for review including all supporting documentation (sent to [PGRSAppeal@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:PGRSAppeal@gcu.ac.uk)). An appeal or request for review will not normally be considered if they are submitted outwith the 30 days period unless the candidate can provide good reasons why the delay has occurred. The candidate should notify the Department of Governance and Legal Services if they expect they will be unable to provide all evidence within the 30 day period.
- 10.7 The request for a review will be considered initially by the Department of Governance and Legal Services in consultation with the Chair and Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee, to determine whether a prima facie case for a review exists.
- 10.8 If it is considered that the request is clearly frivolous, vexatious or outside the permitted grounds and that there is therefore no prima facie case to consider, the appeal will be rejected and the candidate notified by the Department of Governance and Legal Services.
- 10.9 Where it is considered that a prima facie case for a review exists, the Department of Governance and Legal Services shall, in consultation with the Chair and Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee, gather all evidence considered appropriate. This may include seeking written or oral testimony from the examiners, from other persons present at the oral examination, from supervisors or other members of the academic staff, any appropriate members of support staff or further evidence or statements by way of clarification from the candidate.
- 10.12 A Research Degree Review Panel shall be constituted by the Research Degrees Committee and be chaired by the current Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, or the Chair's nominee from the current membership of the RDC and include a full-time officer of the Students' Association. Appellants have the right to object to the involvement of a representative of the Students' Association and, in such circumstances, the representative of the Students' Association would not attend or take any other part in the proceedings.
- 10.13 The membership of the Research Degree Review Panel should include sufficient experience of supervising and examining research degrees, and must be independent of the candidate, the work of the thesis/portfolio and any examination process under review.
- 10.14 If the Appeal Panel decides that a candidate has valid grounds for a review/appeal, it shall be empowered by the Research Degrees Committee to make a decision which the Panel feels is appropriate to ensure an academically rigorous outcome which is fair and equitable to the candidate. This may or may not include the following options:

- 10.14.1 Invite the examiners to reconsider their decision.
- 10.14.2 The appointment of new examiners.
- 10.15 If, after consideration of all evidence, the Panel decide there are no valid grounds to uphold the appeal, the candidate will be informed of the outcome by the Department of Governance and Legal Services.
- 10.16 Candidates may appeal from the decision of the RDC Appeals Panel to the PVC Research.
- 10.17 An appeal may be made on the following grounds:
- i. evidence has become available which was not available, or could not reasonably have been made available, at the time of the original decision;
  - ii. the decision was unreasonable in the light of the evidence submitted by the student;
  - iii. there was a procedural irregularity which was prejudicial to the student.
- 10.18 The appeal must be lodged with the Department of Governance and Legal Services within 20 days of issue of the written decision at [PGRSAppeal@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:PGRSAppeal@gcu.ac.uk).  
The appeal will be considered by a Panel comprising the PVC Research and will (normally) comprise of an Associate Dean Research from another School and a member of the Professoriate.
- 10.19 The aim shall be to conclude the review process within 40 days but it is acknowledged that complex case may take longer and the Department of Governance and Legal Services of any circumstances that may prolong the process will keep the candidate informed.