The transition from “not at first registered for any degree” to “registered for the degree of PhD” is a key decision point in the progress of graduate students. The Department’s recommendation is a formal decision taken by the Departmental Graduate Education Committee (DGEC), based on; assessment of a 1st year report, CamSIS reports provided by supervisors, and supervisor feedback provided directly to the DGEC. The student’s first year report is assessed by two academic advisors who write independent reports. Advisors should tick the “further discussion needed” box in the case of any doubts. This is then followed by a formal meeting between the advisors and the student and a report from the advisors on this meeting. Advisors should also provide feedback to the student.

It is critical that the 1st year checkpoint be used to make a rigorous assessment of a student’s suitability for a PhD. To achieve this it is important that assessment of first year reports be carried out in a timely manner, so that a decision can be reached before the end of the student’s first year.

It is to be hoped that problems would have been identified, discussed and brought to the attention of the DGEC in advance of this process. To this end a “red flag” E-mail is sent to all supervisors, 6 months into the student’s course, to identify – and deal with - potential problems at an early stage. Supervisors should discuss any such issues with students and ensure that their CamSIS reports are completed on time and reflect their concerns both in the text and in the scores awarded.

The DGEC will make one of three recommendations:-

**Registration:** The student’s performance is satisfactory and they should be registered for a PhD. Progress will continue to be monitored as usual.

**Deferment:** There are concerns, for example, about the student’s background knowledge, performance or the suitability of the project but these are not sufficient to suggest, at this stage, that the student is incapable of submitting an acceptable thesis within 4 years. The student will be expected to meet specified milestones and produce a revised report, usually within 3 months. The DGEC will monitor progress and review their recommendation, within 1 month of receipt of the revised report.

**Not to register for the degree of PhD:** There are sufficient grounds to indicate that the student is unlikely to complete an acceptable PhD thesis within the 4 year limit. The student may then be advised to submit a master’s thesis.

When a recommendation of “not to register for the degree of PhD” is a likely outcome the DGEC will convene a sub-committee, which shall include the Chair of the DGEC, one aunt or uncle, and one or two other members of the DGEC. The student and supervisor will be provided with copies of the advisors’ and supervisor’s reports. All parties will be given at least one week to consider the reports and make written submissions to the DGEC responding to any issues raised or voicing any other relevant factors, if desired. The DGEC sub-committee will consider the advisors’ and supervisor’s reports, any further representations and interview the student, the advisors and the supervisor individually. They may also choose to meet the supervisor and student together. After considering the reports, any further representations and the outcome of the above interviews the DGEC will reach a decision. In the event that the decision is “not to register for the degree of PhD” this will be referred to the Head of Department. Where the HoD is also the supervisor a senior academic staff member will take over this role. The HoD (or designated person) may ratify the decision or refer it to the DGEC for further discussion. A student may appeal against a decision not to be registered through the standard complaints process documented on the Student Registry website: (http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/studentregistry/current/newstud/comp_app/index.html). The Department will endeavour to make a decision before the end of the first year if a student is not deemed to be capable of a PhD. The decision must be swiftly communicated to the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Biology and thence to the Student Registry.

Wherever possible a student who is considered unsuitable for a PhD should be offered the possibility of submitting an MPhil thesis.

**NB:** for part-time PhD students the same procedure will apply but with appropriate modified time points.