The United States is viewed as the world’s leader in quality graduate education as evidenced by the fact that students traveling abroad for graduate education and who are free to choose among many educational providers, continue to seek US graduate programs (first time enrollments of international students has increased 9.8% annually in the recent decade)[[1]](#footnote-1). SDSU also continues to be a destination for students seeking quality graduate programs. International students receiving a doctoral degree increased 15% between 2010 and 2014 (41% vs 56%). Ensuring the rigor of our curriculum and the effectiveness of our instruction is vital to the nation’s and SDSU’s future success in attracting students. The Assessment Academy is designed to promote and strengthen our traditional efforts to ensure quality academic programs.

Additionally, data are now emerging indicating that graduate students matriculating into the workforce are not meeting employer’s expectations or needs. While content-related skills are strong, transferable skills (i.e. ‘soft skills’) are lacking. Only 74% of doctoral graduates and 51% of master’s graduates from science and engineering programs work in science and engineering occupations[[2]](#footnote-2) (National Science Foundation , 2014), indicating the acute need to ensure our graduates will excel in all work environments. Those graduate programs whose graduates are well-rounded employees and who can apply their skills of the traditional discipline will be most successful.

The Assessment Academy seeks to build rigorous programs by providing mechanisms, other than assignment of grades, to determine the level of student learning. We recommend 4 to 8 student learning outcomes (SLO), specific metrics for each SLO and details as to how the metric will be quantified.

The SLOs for each program assessment plan should contain each of the following:

* program content
  + knowledge and skills required to be current in the academic discipline
  + should be included in formal evaluation processes of option A (thesis) and doctoral students (dissertation) [[3]](#footnote-3)
* communication skills
  + for technical or lay audiences and/or
  + oral or written formats and/or
  + to small or large groups
  + should be part of option A (thesis) and doctoral students (dissertation) annual evaluationFY16
* ***Pilot for 2016 SDSU Assessment Academy:*** at least one SLO for Transferable Skills
  + “outside of program content and communication skills”
  + some suggestions are provided below

Possible Areas for SLOs of Transferable Skills:

* Teaching/Training[[4]](#footnote-4)
* Mentoring2
* Argument Deconstruction[[5]](#footnote-5) (using the Elements of Thought);
* Diversity Awareness[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Ethics – Moral Decision Making/ Moral Reasoning2
* Leadership – Management2
* Awareness of Public Policy- Regulatory Affairs2 (legal aspects of content area)
* Entrepreneurship4 (e.g. patenting, licensing, intellectual property, marketing, sales)
* Intellectual Traits[[7]](#footnote-7)
* Wellness[[8]](#footnote-8) (e.g. work-life balance, financial preparedness, stress management, time management)
* Career Preparedness8 (e.g. networking, career explorations, interviewing, writing cover letters and resumes, myIDP)
* A clearly defined ‘second’ skill
  + a skill which may augment the disciplinary knowledge but is acquired with such breadth that expertise is marketable outside of the discipline
* other?

1. Alum, J., & Okahana, H. (2015). *Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2004 to 2014.* Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. National Science Foundation . (2014). *Science and Engineering Indicators: 2014.* National Science Board Office: NSB-14-01. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Includes a.) a formal written annual evaluation ( this is proposed in policy under current consideration); b.) comprehensive exams (if doctoral); and c.) final oral exams or dissertation defense. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Allum, Jeffery. (2013) Outcomes for PSM Alumni: 2012/13. Washington DC; Council of Graduate Schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [Critical Thinking Logic Model](http://www.criticalthinking.org/ctmodel/logic-model1.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. NESE data indicates SDSU performs poorly on diversity awareness/cultural sensitivity-related issues [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Critical Thinking Valuable Intellectual Traits](http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/valuable-intellectual-traits/528) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [Graduate School Professional Development Program](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate/core/index.cfm) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)