Assessment of student learning
The overarching goal for the recent past and immediate future of School of Advanced Studies (SAS) assessment practices is to create a standards-focused construct of doctoral quality that coheres to both internal (goals, institutional mission, etc.) and external (publication, professional, industry, etc.) criteria for excellence. As part of this effort, SAS has worked for the last several years developing ongoing assessment measures to evaluate the overall health and success of the school’s programs.

This effort has led to measures focused on the student experience within the doctoral program, student reporting against University learning goals, and the development of a comprehensive research assessment system that encompasses both general research knowledge and the development and conducting of student dissertations. These various measures represent our continuing efforts at developing an effectual means of assessing the student experience with regard to doctoral program goals and the Scholar, Practitioner, Leader Model® that has emerged as a behavioral, cognitive and affective representation of these goals for our practitioner doctorate programs.

DM/IST program learning outcomes
To describe the common, interdisciplinary domains of doctoral learning at University of Phoenix, SAS developed a set of process competencies that guide the curriculum development of common courses and the outcomes anticipated for all doctoral learners. These process competencies articulate the activities in which doctoral learners participate as they dialectically engage in the study and practice of leadership. Furthermore, this set of processes also describes both cognitive and affective dimensions of consciousness, a focus that promotes the development of informed, compassionate and ultimately responsible leadership behavior.

The five process competencies for all doctoral programs are:

• Integrate critical and creative processes to demonstrate lifelong leadership development.
• Apply research to decision-making processes within the context of diverse systems.
• Actualize theory and practice to cultivate personal, group and organizational learning.
• Increase awareness of how one communicates as a Scholar/Practitioner/Leader across boundaries.
• Model ethical, inclusive and compassionate behavior that engenders the evolution of adaptive, high-performing cultures.

SAS has also developed learning outcomes specific to the DM/IST program. Upon completion of all program requirements, learners will be able to:

• Conduct research as a foundation for executive action.
• Demonstrate innovation and creativity in developing new IT models to explain, forecast, support and improve the strategic, tactical and operational performance of organizations.
• Integrate and align IT initiatives with organizational strategy.
• Lead the IT decision-making process toward positive outcomes.
• Provide leadership to improve the overall performance of the organization in its industry, community and global environment.

University learning goals
In addition to program-specific learning outcomes, University of Phoenix has a set of institution-wide learning goals. These University learning goals encapsulate the knowledge, skills and values the institution aims to help students develop through their educational experiences, regardless of the program of study they are enrolled in. The University learning goals cover the following areas:

• Professional competence and values
• Critical thinking and problem-solving
Student learning assessments

A. Dissertation assessment
SAS is committed to supporting and assessing students across the life span of dissertation development and now assesses that development at three points within a program:

1. Concept paper – This assignment serves as an early demonstration of students’ ability to articulate a research study.

2. Quality review methods – At proposal stage, this assessment requires students to conduct a review of the alignment of methods, design and question in the dissertation study.

3. Quality review final – At final dissertation stage, students are required to conduct a review of alignment and quality of results to proposed method/design and the implementation of the design.

B. Alumni survey
In 2009, SAS administered an academic questionnaire to alumni. The internally developed, web-based questionnaire was designed to measure the perceptions and satisfaction of SAS alumni. The survey specifically asked alumni to evaluate their learning experiences in relation to the University’s global learning goals and SAS’s process competencies.