Principles and Practices for Assessing the Quality of (Post)-Graduate Education and Research Training

Preamble:
The assessment of quality in (post)-graduate education is critical to the success of master's and doctoral students and to the future of the global research enterprise both within and outside academia. All countries and regions stand to benefit from assessment efforts that seek to improve outcomes for students and countries. At the same time, the goals of quality assessment must be considered in relation to the diverse contexts in which students are trained. International discussions of quality assessment must therefore respect differences in the priorities and approaches of different countries, institutions, and disciplines, and the variety of educational, research and professional needs of their students. Acknowledging the differences in our national contexts, the delegates of the 2010 Strategic Leaders Global Summit have agreed to a set of common principles for assessing the quality of (post)-graduate education and research training.

1. **The primary objective of quality assessment is to ensure and improve the quality of (post)-graduate training and student learning and professional development.** Evaluation must go beyond the assessment of research quality to address topics such as:
   o Admission criteria and recruitment
   o Student Learning Outcomes, including transferable skills
   o Mentoring and supervising structures
   o Infrastructure for (post)-graduate student training
   o Quality of student experience
   o Measures of completion and attrition
   o Career placement both inside and outside academe

2. **Another key objective of quality assessment is to assure external stakeholders of the quality of (post)-graduate education.** Sharing the goals and outcomes of assessment with all relevant stakeholders, including the public, helps ensure that assessment efforts are understood and valued.

3. **While quality can be assessed in a variety of ways, evaluation should be based on clearly-defined objectives, criteria and processes, and the intended uses of the results should be made clear to all relevant stakeholders**. Different or multiple processes may be needed to meet different goals and audiences.

4. **The development of specific quality metrics for research degrees is a key priority.** Areas to be considered in review of research degrees include:
   o Monitoring progress through the degree
   o Quality of the dissertation/thesis
   o Exposure to interdisciplinary and global research experiences
   o Skills for generating and communicating research
   o Quality of the research training environment
   o Research impact

5. **Quality assessment is most effective when academic staff (faculty) play a role in designing or refining evaluation procedures.**

6. **Regular processes of internal and external review should be used to sustain and advance quality in (post)-graduate education.**

7. **Graduate education leaders have particular responsibilities for defining, measuring, benchmarking, and improving the professional and transferable skills of students.** To support this effort to improve program quality, it is important to closely follow workforce trends, develop better methods of tracking graduates' career trajectories, and ensure that students are trained to adapt to evolving career demands.

8. **The assessment of quality in international collaborations is integral to (post)-graduate research training in the 21st century.** The globalization of (post)-graduate education and research demands rigorous, coordinated efforts to measure the outcomes of international experiences for graduate students, and to identify desired outcomes not currently achieved.

9. **The success of future assessment efforts depends on the refinement of existing tools, qualitative and quantitative, and the development of new methodologies for measuring quality**. Key priorities in this area include the comparison of tools existing or under development, the exchange of best practices in their use, and the development of new technologies that support assessment and the sharing of data.

10. **National and regional groups of university leaders responsible for (post)-graduate education and research training provide an important mechanism for sharing best practices.**