Assessment Plan for Ph.D, students in the Field of Plant Breeding

1. Learning outcomes
When students complete the Ph.D., they should be able to:
1. Conduct original, publishable research in plant breeding/genetics
2. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge about plant breeding/genetics and at least one other area of study (i.e., their chosen minor field(s))
3. Write and speak effectively to professional and lay audiences about their research and current issues in the discipline

2. Assessment

Direct measurements

a) Written annual report, submitted by the student’s major professor to the Director of Graduate Studies, following each student’s annual meeting with their special committee.
b) Written summary of student performance on the qualifying (“A”) exam, submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies
c) Written summary of student performance during the thesis defense (“B” exam), including the student seminar, submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies

Each written report will assess, on a four-point scale (outstanding, very good, acceptable, unacceptable), progress towards each of the learning outcomes.

Indirect measurements

Just prior to graduation, each student will be asked:
a) How well do you feel you accomplished each of the field’s learning goals [on a four point scale: extremely well, very well, adequately well, not well enough]
b) What aspects of your studies at Cornell helped with your learning, and why were they helpful?
c) What could the field do differently that would help you learn more effectively, and why?

In addition, the professional positions held by each student will be tracked for ten years after graduation.

3. Action for improvement
The field will have an annual meeting each summer where the Director of Graduate Studies will present a summary of the previous year’s written reports, exit interviews, and career tracking. Based on the data, members of the field will identify at least one aspect of the program that needs improvement, and develop a plan to improve that aspect over the coming year.

The Director of Graduate Studies will take minutes of the annual meeting, to document for the grad school and accrediting agencies the results of the annual assessment as well as concrete plans for improving student learning in the future.