Introduction and Background
The Urban Education Program has reviewed its First Examination specifically with regard to assessment and has completed this report as per the request of the Provost’s Office. The Ph.D. Program in Urban Education reviews its curriculum including the First Examination assessment on a regular basis. As part of this activity, the Curriculum Committee, composed of three faculty elected by the faculty at large, three students elected by the students at large and the Executive Officer (as ex officio), has been reviewing all aspects of our curriculum including the First Examination. All major recommendations of the Curriculum Committee are reviewed and approved by the Program’s Executive Committee, which includes eight faculty elected by representative college faculty members, four students elected by the students at large and the Executive Officer. A review of all major changes is shared with all faculty and students at the Program’s Semester Meetings, the last being in December 2012.

First Examination
In Spring 2010 and Fall 2010, the Curriculum Committee visited its core course requirements which form the basis of the learning goal requirements for the First Examination. As a result of this activity, the core course requirements were revised in Fall 2010 for the first time since the inception of the Ph.D. Program in Urban Education in 2001. The new core courses were implemented starting with the Fall 2011 new student cohort.

The core requirements were changed from five courses plus a two semester colloquium to four courses and a one semester colloquium. The courses, Logics of Inquiry (U ED 70300) and the Structure of Social Knowledge (U ED 70100) were dropped from the core requirements. A new course, Introduction to Research in Urban Education (U ED 70600) was added. The major rationale for this change was a need to provide opportunities for students to enroll in their areas of specialization earlier. In addition, it requires students to be introduced to research methods earlier on in their doctoral studies. These changes were approved by the Graduate Council in December 2010 and took effect in September 2011.

The administration and assessment of student performance on the First Examination were changed in Fall 2010 in preparation for the new core requirements and were field-tested in January 2011. In terms of assessment, the major changes to the grading of the First Examination were as follows:

1. Grading will be based on a pass-fail system rather than a (1-5) system.
2. A rubric was replaced by a more holistic detailed commentary of the responses to the questions on the First Examination by graders.
3. Assessment of the First Examination will no longer be blind that is students will know their graders and graders will know the students taking the examination.
4. Faculty graders including the student program adviser are expected to discuss the results of the First Examination with the students they graded.

The above procedures were tested in January 2011 on the old core courses and the results were deemed satisfactory by the students and faculty members of the Curriculum Committee. The new First Examination Procedures were implemented for the new core courses in Summer 2012. It was at this time
that the first cohort (Fall 2011) of students would have taken the revised First Examination for the revised core requirements.

The Curriculum Committee designed new questions for the First Examination based on major topics presented in the core courses and that addressed the First Exam learning goals. A bank of seven questions were developed to reflect the new core course requirements in Spring 2012.

I. Statement of the learning goals for the First Examination assessment.

In order to take the First Examination, students must successfully enroll in and pass four core courses:

Core 1: Pedagogy and the Urban Classroom  
Core 2: The Historical Contexts of Urban Education  
Core 3: Introduction to Research in Urban Education  
Core 4: Educational Policy

Descriptions of the core courses are available in Appendix A.

Goals of the First Exam

First, students are expected to have developed a basic understanding of the key concepts presented in the core courses. Students can developed this understanding by active participation in the core courses and by completing all reading and written assignments. In addition, the Urban Education Program sponsors a number of activities (e.g., miniconferences/career days) designed to bring first-year students (those taking core courses) together with advanced students to discuss the program including taking and passing examinations.

Second, students are expected to be able to synthesize the concepts they are learning in the core courses and not just see them as individual entities without any relationship to one another. Students can develop this ability by sharing experiences with one another with respect to their core course activities. To assist them with this, all students must enroll in a colloquium that is taken at the same time they are taking their core courses. A part of this colloquium is to provide activities wherein students can share with one another concepts that they are learning in the core courses.

Third, students are expected to demonstrate how the knowledge they have acquired in the core courses has contributed to their understanding of education research and the role they will play as researchers. Assignments in the core courses, specifically in the Introduction to Research in Urban Education course, are designed to build their knowledge of education research.

II. A description of what data or other information you are drawing on to conduct your review (e.g., students’ exam results, students’ job placements).

Student performance data on the First Examination administered in Summer 2012 were collected. Pass/fail rates as well as samples of students essays (First Examinations) were reviewed by the Curriculum Committee in Fall 2012.
III. Your findings. Is the assessment (and preparation for it) effective?

The Curriculum Committee deemed that the First Examination learning goals based on the new core course requirements were being met by the Fall 2011 student cohort who passed the exam. Of the 19 students who took the First Examination in 2012, seventeen passed and two students failed. Of the two students who failed the 1st Exam, one has since retook it and passed.

IV. Proposed changes, if any, to the assessment, the learning goals for it, the curriculum/preparation leading up to it.

No changes were made to the learning goals for the First Examination as a result of the Curriculum Committee’s review in Fall 2012. However, a decision was made to review all the questions used for the First Exam with the intention of streamlining them. This task will commence in Spring 2013 and changes made in time for the next (Summer 2013) administration of the First Exam.

V. The next steps that will be taken. (There should be a follow-up on these in the report for the next cycle.)

In Fall 2013, the Curriculum Committee will review the results of the First Examination administered in Summer 2013. Any proposed changes to the assessment goals will be reviewed by the Executive Committee as soon as possible. Any changes to the administration of the First Examination will be implemented in time for the next administration of the First Examination.
Appendix A
Core Course Descriptions

Core 1: Pedagogy and the Urban Classroom

3 credits; 30 hours plus conferences

Course Description

This course examines the relationships through which knowledge is constructed and communicated in urban schools. It approaches pedagogy as a set of relationships among teachers and students mediated by culture, history, learning theories, assumptions about childhood and adulthood, and assumptions about knowledge and ignorance. Students will study pedagogical interactions in schools and the forms that knowledge assumes in the curriculum in discourse, activities, texts, materials, and technology. Students will also be asked to consider the ways that pedagogy is shaped by institutional culture and professional governance. Resources from cultural anthropology and comparative education will be studied to frame contemporary practice as particular versions of what is possible.

Core 2: The Historical Contexts of Urban Education

3 credits; 30 hours plus conferences

Course Description

This course explores the emergence and transformation of urban educational institutions--public and private, inclusive and selective, fee-paying and free, religious and secular--out of the dynamic interplay of individual, group, and larger scale intellectual, social, political, and economic factors. Students study the formation of social identities in the history of education, specifically race, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, and the relationship of identify formation to current issues in education. The history of the politics of education also is studied, especially as politics relates to defining educational mission, determining resources, including or excluding individuals and groups, providing equity of educational opportunity, and encouraging community participation in establishing and maintaining schools.

Core 3: Introduction to Research in Urban Education

3 credits; 30 hours plus conferences

Course Description

This course is designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to research methods in urban education. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be covered. Students will carry out small-scale projects within which they will begin to formulate research issues and questions, produce sample data collections, and consider alternative approaches to the analysis of these collections. By reading exemplary research studies in education and classic essays on the dilemmas of research methodology in the social and human sciences, students advance their understanding of how to design and justify complementary combinations of research methods for prospective studies.
Core 4: Educational Policy

3 credits; 30 hours plus conferences

Course Description

Students in this course study educational policies and subsequent implementation as the intended and unintended consequences of many processes: ideological, social, judicial, scientific, political, and economic. Within the context of each issue, potential policy alternatives are identified and actual policy and implementation decisions studied. Students learn to use relevant concepts and methodologies from the social and behavioral sciences to analyze issues critically, including appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods.