After completing the first year’s core classes and before the end of fall term of the second year, students must complete a comprehensive examination. The examination consists of a paper in which students demonstrate a mastery of, and the ability to apply, foundational concepts and skills gained through course content in the first year—Ed 630 Principles and Practices of Learning, Ed 640 Organizational Leadership Theory and Research in Education, and Ed 650 Educational Policy and Politics. Students must successfully pass the Core Comprehensive Examination before continuing beyond the fall term of the second year of the doctoral program.

Core Comprehensive Examination Paper

*Purpose.* The purpose of the core paper is for students to demonstrate their ability to extend and deepen their understanding of a significant educational problem or issue through the analysis and synthesis of concepts and frameworks from the core curriculum that they have studied. The paper builds upon the doctoral core curriculum and addresses specific implications associated with three core curriculum areas: (1) principles and practices of learning, (2) organizational leadership, and (3) educational policy and politics. These three areas of the curriculum inform and provide perspectives on the central problem or issue. Thus, the paper is about the central problem or issues, as seen through the three areas, which offer lenses to understand the problem or issue and which lead to new ways of thinking and/or action.

The paper is not meant to simply chronicle the content of the core curriculum. The intent is to provide the student with an opportunity to: (a) demonstrate the ability to apply foundational concepts and skills gained through the doctoral core to the critical examination of a significant educational problem or issue, and (b) based upon that investigation and analysis, synthesize what has been learned about the problem or issue, concluding with specific recommendations for further research, practice, and/or policy development or implementation.

*Elements of the Core Comprehensive Examination Paper.* The paper will contain the following elements, although not necessarily in this order:

- Identification of the problem or issue, including relevant definitions
- Discussion of the problem’s or issue’s educational significance and its context (e.g., brief discussion of historical, social, and/or cultural contexts)
- Analysis of each core area relative to the problem or issue, demonstrating a broad understanding of each core area in terms of the problem or issue; the analysis is not merely a repetition of what scholars have said, but uses appropriate concepts, frameworks and theories from each core area to investigate the problem or issue, to compare and contrast perspectives, and to question assumptions of those concepts, frameworks, and theories and/or of the issue itself
- Conclusions that synthesize and discuss the proceeding analysis and application into a new, more complex understanding of the problem or issue or a reframing of it; and recommended actions in professional or community settings related to leadership practice, teaching, policy, and/or research.

Approved by DPC May 15, 2012
The paper is to be 30 double spaced pages (7500 words) plus reference list and an abstract of 150 words. The paper is expected to follow current American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, and to be written with clear and concise language, free of grammatical and typographical errors, and to a wide readership of educators as it may be later disseminated to inform the broader professional community about this particular problem or issue of educational significance.

The core examination paper will be assessed by a faculty committee using a common rubric. However, given that specialty areas within the doctoral program may have differing resources and capacities, specialty areas have the option of using one of the following two alternative methods for students to demonstrate their mastery of, and ability to apply, foundational concepts and skills gained through course content in the first year of the doctoral program. The same comprehensive core examination option should apply to all students in a given specialty area within the same cohort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative #1</th>
<th>Alternative #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 member committee (student’s advisor and at least one member who has taught in the core)</td>
<td>2 member committee (student’s advisor and a faculty member from specialty area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal paper with public defense complete any time after third term of the first year and before the end of the first term of the second year.</td>
<td>Formal paper written at the end of the third term of the first year within a time frame specified by the specialty faculty, e.g., 10 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment is on written document and public defense</td>
<td>Assessment is on written document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approved by DPC May 15, 2012