

IUPUI GAC Reviewer Form

Documents Reviewed: "Proposal for a Ph.D. in Urban Education"

Summary of Proposal:

1. Are the goals clear and achievable?

The goals of the program are, indeed, well articulated and clear. There are still some issues to be worked out before launching the programs, such as the hire of a core faculty member in this area and a coordinator of the program, but these can be accomplished. Other issues abound – such as space and funding for the program. But that has been the case for virtually every graduate program launched at IUPUI in the past ten years. The concern here, on my part, is that there is little sense of much thought having gone into space and funding outside “we know we need to find them.” I would encourage the leaders of this program to conduct as soon as possible the “study” of other programs in regard to funding as promised in the document. Otherwise, this will simply be one more program trying to get a piece of the Block Grant pie without considering other funding options.

2. Is the program academically sound?

The program does appear to be academically sound, with enough research in the major area of focus while allowing for strong minors and electives. I believe more work could have gone into potential minors and elective courses in this proposal. On numerous occasions Liberal Arts was mentioned, but outside a concentration in Urban Sociology (and a mention of Philanthropy), very little research into the rich offerings of Liberal Arts in this area is apparent. With a long-standing concentration on urban history in the History Department and a new Applied Anthropology M.A. (which will focus on urban issues), much more could have been done here.

One area that strikes me as weak is the “qualifying exam,” which is simply an oral defense of a dossier consisting of a statement of professional activities, an overview of urban education, an existing exemplary paper, a reflective assessment of an inquiry experience, and a memo about a presentation. This is a remarkably weak activity for a Ph.D. and I would recommend in the strongest possible way that this be rethought to consist of a true examination of the state of the field. The fact that the proposal claims that this activity can be accomplished during the final semester, while the student is taking other courses, is strong indication that it is not academically viable at the doctoral level. A PhD exam should not simply be an exercise in assessment; it should be an active statement of the state of the field with a strong thesis and evidence, backed up orally under questioning by the committee.

3. Are faculty resources available to offer this certificate without undercutting other key missions of the unit?

This is difficult to determine, at which point I must assume the School knows its limitations. The fact that many of the courses already exist and are being taught to M.A. students indicates that most (all but eight) are available on some sort of level. The proposal acknowledges the need for at least one new faculty member, which indicates the School knows its faculty strengths and weaknesses for the proposed program.

4. Is there overlap, either real or potential, with any other unit that could harm the program or be exploited to help the program?

I thought the proposal did a good job showing how the program does not overlap with other programs, not only at IUPUI or IUB, but the entire state. The program is not unique in the field, but it would be unique in Indiana, and therefore is unlikely to cause or suffer harm from overlap.

5. My recommendation, comments/concerns regarding this proposal...

My concerns about the program, as stated above, are related to space/funding and the qualifying exam. Only the second issue is worth repeating. Unless the exam is revised to reflect a real qualifying examination and not an assessment/"defense" of previous papers, reflections, or summary thoughts, I could not support its passage. After all of the talk about how this PhD in Education would be research based and different from an EdD, the qualifying exam looks research-less and "EdD-ish." However, if this part of the program is revised to follow the sort of aggressive thinking that goes into traditional PhD qualifying exams, then I would certainly support the proposal.