2.13 Joint Degrees. If the school offers joint degree programs, the required curriculum for the professional public health degree shall be equivalent to that required for a separate public health degree.

a. Identification of joint degree programs offered by the school. The instructional matrix in Criterion 2.1 may be referenced for this purpose.

Indiana University classifies degree programs of the nature described in this section as “dual degrees” given that a student enrolled in said programs are completing requirements for both degrees simultaneously and attending to the full requirements of each of the degrees. The school offers a dual MPH with four other degree programs on the IU Bloomington campus. Students may pursue the MPH in conjunction with the Juris Doctorate (JD) degree in the Maurer School of Law or the Master of Arts (MA) degree in the School of Global and International Studies with majors in African Studies, Russian and East European Studies, or Caribbean and Latin American Studies. A fifth dual MPH program is currently being reviewed via the campus-level curricular processes at IU Bloomington, that being a dual MPH and MA in European Studies. Approval for this dual degree program is anticipated early in the 2014-2015 academic year and this program will become available during the 2015-2016 academic year.

The four approved dual degree programs are included in the instructional matrix provided in CEPH Data Template 2.1.1. Descriptions of the curricular requirements, policies, and procedures related to the dual degrees are available in the Dual Degree Information section of the MPH program’s website.

b. A list and description of how each joint degree program differs from the standard degree program. The school must explain the rationale for any credit sharing or substitution as well as the process for validating that the joint degree program is equivalent.

The MPH degree component of all dual degree programs is equivalent to the standard MPH. Students must complete all degree requirements (43 credits) for the MPH with no variation from the standard MPH requirements.

While the structure and requirements for the MPH are consistent between standard and dual programs, it is typical that students in the dual program tend to pursue electives that are more closely aligned with the nature of the associated non-MPH major. For example, students pursuing the MPH with MA in African Studies often choose electives that are focused on public health in Africa or students pursuing the MPH with JD in law often choose electives focused on policy and legal aspects of public health. Electives to fulfill dual credits for both the MA or the JD and the MPH are selected by the student and the academic advisors for both degrees.

An MPH that is part of a dual degree program is administered using the same policies and procedures as the standard MPH, with all degree requirements being validated by the school’s process for certifying completion of degree requirements.

c. Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met and an analysis of the school’s strengths, weaknesses and plans relating to this criterion.

This criterion is met.
Strengths
The school offers dual degrees with strategic partners on the IU Bloomington campus that are equivalent in requirements to those required for a stand-alone MPH degree. The joint degrees are structured in such a way that the full 43 credits for the MPH are required and that policies and procedures related to the MPH are not compromised.

Of particular importance to faculty has been the development of dual degree programs that capitalize upon global health issues, thus our initial dual degrees have been established with the leading U.S. Department of Education funded Title VI area studies units on the campus. Quite often students pursuing the MA degrees in these areas are international students who have intentions of returning to their home country and these dual degree programs were initiated based upon the extent to which these students often identified public health issues as being among those upon which they planned to work once returning to their home county.

The dual JD-MPH is reflective of growing attention to the need to prepare policy makers and those working in legal and policy-related settings to address public health issues. These dual degrees collectively represent efforts of the faculty to build upon the multidisciplinary strengths, particularly in law and in the humanities, of the Bloomington campus.

Weaknesses
As structured, the joint degree programs may be less desirable to students who expect some benefit in the transferability of credits across the two degrees being pursued. While students are able to use credits from the MPH toward the completion of their other degree, such reciprocity does not exist with credits from the JD or MA being counted toward the MPH unless the course is specific to public health from the other degree’s disciplinary perspective, and then these JD or MA courses can only be used to fulfill electives for the MPH. While faculty understand that the joint degree programs may be less attractive to students as a result of this policy, our efforts have been focused on ensuring the integrity of the MPH degree.

Future Plans
The School of Global and International Studies on the IUB campus represents a new academic unit that has expressed significant interest in working with the school of public health to build campus capacity in the area of global health. As that school continues its development, public health faculty will work closely with colleagues in that unit toward this outcome.

Faculty plan to continue building joint degree programs with other academic units on campus. Over time, faculty would also like to better understand how joint degree programs can be structured so that they are more attractive to students from other units, while still maintaining the integrity of the MPH. Additionally, the school has seen an increase in students pursuing the MPH degree while simultaneously being enrolled in a doctoral program on campus. We plan to explore the potential for formalizing concurrent PhD and MPH joint degree programs both inside and outside our school within the coming years.