2.14 Distance Education or Executive Degree Programs. If the school offers degree programs using formats or methods other than students attending regular on-site course sessions spread over a standard term, these programs must a) be consistent with the mission of the school and within the school’s established areas of expertise; b) be guided by clearly articulated student learning outcomes that are rigorously evaluated; c) be subject to the same quality control processes that other degree programs in the school and university are; and d) provide planned and evaluated learning experiences that take into consideration and are responsive to the characteristics and needs of adult learners. If the school offers distance education or executive degree programs, it must provide needed support for these programs, including administrative, travel, communication and student services. The school must have an ongoing program to evaluate the academic effectiveness of the format, to assess learning methods and to systematically use this information to stimulate program improvements. The school must have processes in place through which it establishes the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or degree is the same student who participated in and completes the course or degree and receives the academic credit.

a. Identification of all degree programs that are offered in a format other than regular, on-site course sessions spread over a standard term, including those offered in full or in part through distance education in which the instructor and student are separated in time or place or both. The instructional matrix in Criterion 2.1.a may be referenced for this purpose.

The school does not offer any public health designated degrees in a distance education or executive degree format at the current time, although future plans include the development of such degree programs. However, given that the school has a history of providing online education and currently offers two degrees in such a format, despite the fact that we don’t offer public health online degrees, we retain a certain level of expertise and capacity to move forward in this direction. For that reason, information about the other online degree programs is included below.

The school offers two distance education degree programs, the Master of Science (MS) in Recreation with a major in Recreational Therapy and a second major in Parks and Public Lands Management. These degrees are offered through the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Studies. Courses for these degrees may be taken completely through distance education, in part through distance education, or completely on campus. These degree programs are included within the instructional matrix provided in CEPH Data Template 2.1.

b. Description of the distance education or executive degree programs, including an explanation of the model or methods used, the school’s rationale for offering these programs, the manner in which it provides necessary administrative and student support services, the manner in which it monitors the academic rigor of the programs and their equivalence (or comparability) to other degree programs offered by the school, and the manner in which it evaluates the educational outcomes, as well as the format and methods.

The M.S. with a major in recreational therapy prepares students to assume positions as recreational therapists. Students are trained to use a variety of techniques, including arts and crafts, animals, sports, games, dance and movement, drama, music, and community outings.
Students learn to treat and maintain the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of their clients. Students are trained to use the APIE method: assess individuals' needs, plan and implement specific interventions to meet those needs, and document and evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. All students graduating from the major are eligible to sit for the National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) examination.

The rationale for offering this program is to train students to assume positions as master clinicians who work directly in client care services as well as administrative positions supervising departments or service lines.

The M.S. with a major in Parks and Public Lands is embedded in Indiana University's award-winning Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands to enhance student ‘deep learning’ from involved professionals. With a portfolio that includes more than 80 online courses and related learning events, and 10 years of leading the National Park Service’s online training program, the Eppley Institute is the nation’s leader in continuing professional development for park and public lands professionals. The integration of the M.S. and the Eppley Institute provides an excellent opportunity for students to participate in an innovative learning environment. The M.S. emphasizing parks and public lands management is an executive-style graduate degree focused on working professionals seeking new qualifications and new skills. Students will learn from faculty with professional experience managing organizations and agencies in the fields of parks, recreation, and protected areas.

Students earning degrees through online learning are offered administrative and student support services equivalent to those taking courses on campus. Students may access administrative and support staff through phone and email. Most administration and support services are conducted online or via phone or email, so students at a distance are rarely at a disadvantage.

Academic rigor of online courses is monitored in a manner equivalent to face-to-face courses offered on campus. Peer review by faculty colleagues, student evaluations, and annual review of each faculty member by the department chair are the methods currently in use. Within the next year, these courses will also be evaluated through a quality assurance peer review program through the IU Online initiative, Quality Matters.

The M.S. in Recreational Therapy and the M.S. in Parks and Public Lands Management are offered through the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism. This department’s degree programs are accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions. Courses are carefully evaluated to assure that they address competencies defined by their respective professional fields.

Educational outcomes are evaluated through a capstone or internship experience. The majority of students in this program (99%) participate in an internship. A requirement of the internship is a reflection on students’ ability to apply the concepts and techniques of recreational therapy in a structured and supervised setting. Students provide recreational therapy services to clients under the supervision of a nationally certified recreational therapist. This supervisor also provides an evaluation of students’ abilities to translate educational preparation into effective practice.
c. Description of the processes that the school uses to verify that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or degree is the same student who participates in and completes the course or degree and receives the academic credit.

Online courses are offered using Oncourse, the Indiana University learning management system. Oncourse is completely integrated with all IU central systems. Oncourse requires a secure login and password unique to each student registered for the course. Each course is only accessible to students registered for the course or instructors added to the course by the lead instructor. Oncourse also provides site statistics including time spent on the course and the IP address of computers used to access the course. The online courses require frequent writing assignments which are evaluated for consistency in content and style and that only a course participant could reasonably complete.

d. Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met and an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and plans for the future.

This criterion is technically not applicable to our school.