

How to Identify Critical Functions

What is a Critical Function?

A critical function is a service or a collection of services normally performed by a unit that must continue at a sufficient level without interruption or restart within given timeframes (within the first 30 days) after a disruption to the service.

If a given critical function isn't available at a sufficient level within the resumption timeframe, the campus community risks direct and immediate adverse effect(s) in terms of: loss of life, personal injury, loss of property, and/or the University's ability to maintain direction, control of, or accountability for instruction, research or service essential to its mission.

A function is critical if it:

- Preserves life, prevents injury, or protects property
- Provides indispensable support for provision of other critical functions
- Is required by law or regulatory authority
- It must be continued under all circumstances/Cannot suffer a significant interruption
- Directs or controls instruction or research—be sparing about tagging a function as directing or controlling these services.
- It provides vital support to another department, unit, or organization (with critical functions)

Four Principles of Critical Functions

- All university functions are necessary: some are critical.
- A critical function is a unit activity or service, not a unit name, not an object.
- A critical function is comprised of several—perhaps many—processes and almost never is comprised of a single process.
- A critical function is a high-value activity or an activity set that is normally performed by your unit & must be available at a sufficient level within 30 days or less if a negative event affects the campus.

Tips for Determining Critical Functions/Services

Determining critical functions can be a challenge. Over inclusion can result in a burdensome, costly plan, while under inclusion may render a plan ineffective.

When determining a unit's critical functions:

- **Identify them in terms of function and services, not processes.*** Examples of functions:
 - Provide undergraduate instruction
 - Pay employees
 - Provide parking for vehicles
 - Convey outgoing mail
 - Ensure restroom access
 - Provide meals for residents of university housing

* Processes are the steps needed to accomplish a function. For example, "food buying", "food storage", "cooking", "serving", and "clean-up" are processes, but the function they accomplish is "providing meals for residents of university housing."

- **Consider a function as critical if it has a direct and immediate effect on the campus community in terms of loss of life, personal injury, loss of property.**
- **Consider a function as critical if it has a direct and immediate effect on the University's ability to maintain direction and control of instruction, research, and/or mission-critical services at sufficient levels if not continued or restarted in the shortest amount of time possible and within no more than 30 days.**
- **As a rule of thumb, consider a function "critical" if it is absolutely essential for teaching or research.** More specifically, a critical function is likely one that must be re-started during the first 30 days post-disaster in order to enable instruction or research to re-start or continue.
- **Consider indirect relationships.** Many functions have only an indirect relationship to instruction or research. Nevertheless, these functions may be critical if their cessation would have a significant negative impact on the campus's ability to carry out instruction or research.
- **Set the bar high when determining what is critical.** For example, visualize department team members performing a function while working in a large tent with a few computers on extension cords, and question whether they really need to be doing this function.

Determining recovery priorities for the University

Categorize each critical function along a continuum from: Critical 1-Highly Critical to Deferrable.

Levels of Criticality following disaster:

- **Critical 1:** must be continued at normal or increased service load. Cannot pause. Necessary to life, health, security. (Possible examples: police services, provide food/meals to University residents, provide student medical care, maintain campus emergency web presence, conduct hazardous waste materials response, etc.)
- **Critical 2:** must be continued if at all possible, perhaps in reduced mode. Pausing completely will have grave consequences. (Possible examples: provide instruction, maintain campus phone service, administer campus email system, at-risk research, conduct purchasing of campus goods)
- **Critical 3:** may pause if forced to do so, but must resume in 30 days or sooner. (Possible examples: research, manage payroll, administer course scheduling/room assignments, student advising, etc.)
- **Deferrable:** may pause; resume when conditions permit. (Possible examples: routine building maintenance, training, marketing, delivery of student programming)