

# 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 department or unit that must continue at a sufficient level without interruption or restart within given timeframes (no more than 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 that is normally performed by your unit and 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:

1. Provide undergraduate instruction
2. Pay employees
3. Provide parking for vehicles
4. Convey outgoing mail
5. Ensure restroom access
6. 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 to Deferrable.

### **Levels of Criticality following disaster or an emergency:**

#### **Critical:**

- A function must be restored to a minimum level of service within 4 hours of an incident. This includes functions with a direct and immediate effect on the jurisdiction to preserve life, safety, and property  
(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.)

**Duration: < 4 hours**

#### **Essential:**

- Must continue at a normal or increased level. Pausing for more than 24 hours may cause significant consequences or serious harm. (Possible examples: provide back-up facilities or housing, maintain campus phone service, administer campus email system, at-risk research)

**Duration: < 24 hours**

#### **Priority:**

- Must continue, perhaps in a reduced mode. Stopping for more than one week may cause major disruptions. (Possible examples: manage payroll, conduct purchasing of campus goods or services)

**Duration: < 1 week**

#### **Important:**

- May be temporarily suspended, but must resume normal operations within 30 days. (Possible examples: research, administer course scheduling/room assignments, student advising, etc.)

**Duration: < 30 days**

#### **Deferrable:**

- May pause; resume when conditions permit. (Possible examples: routine building maintenance, training, marketing.)

**Duration: > 30 days**