

Downtime Policy

Purpose

USEK is committed to ensuring reliable information technology services. In order to meet this objective, USEK systems may need to be taken offline to maintain or improve system performance, safeguard data, or to respond to emergency situations.

The goal of this policy is to explain those circumstances during which downtime may occur, anticipated duration of downtime events, and procedures for notifying affected users.

Planned Downtime

From time to time, it will be necessary to make systems unavailable for the purpose of performing upgrades, maintenance, or housekeeping tasks. The goal of these tasks is to ensure maximum system performance and prevent future system failures. The following activities fall within the definition of Planned Downtime:

- Application of patches to operating systems and other applications, in order to fix vulnerabilities and bugs, add functionality, or improve performance.
- Monitoring and checking of system logs.
- Security monitoring and auditing.
- Disk defragmentation, disk cleanup, and other general disk maintenance operations.
- Required upgrades to system physical memory or storage capacity.
- Installation or upgrade of applications or services.
- System performance tuning.
- Regular backup of system data for the purpose of disaster recovery.

In the event that any of these activities will require downtime to perform, every effort will be made to perform the procedure during off-hours, in order to minimize the impact on those who use the affected systems or services. The following time periods will be used to carry out Planned Downtime activities:

- After 5 pm

On occasion, it may be necessary to have Planned Downtime during regular business hours, namely if outside personnel are required to perform more elaborate procedures. If this is the case, then this Planned Downtime will be communicated to identify users of affected resources, using the Notification of Downtime mechanism described below.

Emergency Downtime

Unexpected circumstances may arise where systems or services will be interrupted without prior notice. Every effort will be made to avoid such circumstances. However, incidences may arise involving a compromise of system security, the potential for damage to equipment or data, or emergency repairs. If the affected system(s) cannot be brought back online within one hour duration, affected users will be contacted via the Notification of Downtime mechanism described below.

Notification of Downtime

Users will be notified of downtime according to the following procedure:

- The system administrator for the system in question is responsible for notifying all identified users of Planned Downtime, as well as any unplanned interruptions to system availability as they occur.
- The system administrator will first notify all affected users via e-mail. All users are responsible for checking their e-mails for downtime and system status notifications. In the event that the e-mail is unavailable due to Emergency Downtime, the system administrator will contact department heads by telephone to inform them of the situation.
- If general maintenance procedures will cause Planned Downtime during regular business hours, and the procedure will last less than half an hour, then the system administrator must notify system users 2 to 3 hours prior to the Planned Downtime.
- If Planned Downtime beyond general maintenance is scheduled that will last longer than one hour, then the system administrator must give one business day notice for every day of anticipated system unavailability. This step must be taken regardless of whether the downtime is scheduled to take place during off hours or regular business hours.
- In the event of Emergency Downtime, the system administrator will use his/her discretion in notifying end users of the situation. In emergency circumstances where time is of the essence, it may not be possible for the system administrator to engage in normal downtime notification activities. When emergency measures are completed, or if one hour has elapsed with no resolution, then the system administrator will contact all users with information on system status and/or information on additional expected downtime.

All downtime announcements will provide the following information:

- Systems and services that are affected, as well as suggested alternatives to them (if any).
- Start and end times of the Planned Downtime period, or estimated time of recovery in the event of Emergency Downtime.

- The reasons why the downtime is taking place.
- Any ongoing problems that are anticipated as a result of the downtime event.

Requests for Availability

If you foresee critical need of a system during a period of Planned Downtime, then contact the Service Desk on 1414 or at servicedesk@usek.edu.lb in advance to make an appeal. The utmost effort will be made to reschedule the downtime or to make alternative arrangements for required resources.