



TransformUS

Support Service Transformation Task Force

Guide to Completion of the Self-Assessment Form/Template

Overview of TransformUS

The University of Saskatchewan is undertaking a program prioritization initiative entitled TransformUS as part of the operating budget adjustment initiative. Strategic decisions regarding our academic programs and support services will better position us to realize our vision of becoming one of the most distinguished universities in Canada and the world.

Two task forces were formed and each will prepare a report for the president by November 30, 2013. The **Academic Program Transformation Task Force** will review all academic programs offered by the university. The **Support Service Transformation Task Force** will review the administrative support services provided by academic and administrative units.

Program Prioritization

Program prioritization is a resource reallocation process developed by Robert C. Dickeson, higher education consultant and president emeritus of the University of Northern Colorado. All academic programs and administrative services supported by the operating budget will be prioritized against stated criteria. Recommendations are then made to invest additional resources in, make no changes to, or reconfigure, reduce or eliminate programs and services on the basis of their relative priority.

Support Service Transformation Task Force

The Support Service Transformation Task Force will assess each support service undertaken at the university. A support service is defined as **any activity or collection of activities of the institution that consumes resources (dollars, people, space, equipment, time) that is not directly associated with an academic program.**

Distilling the non-academic work of the university into distinct support services is challenging as a vast range of services is delivered by colleges, central administrative units, senior administration and other units. More information about the task force and the process can be found at www.usask.ca/finances.

The following principles will guide the activities of the Support Service Transformation Task Force.

- **Transparent and autonomous:** The task force will conduct its business independently, and the criteria for evaluation will be publicized in advance. The final report of the task force will be available online.
- **Comprehensive:** The criteria will be broad in scope so as to encompass all aspects of a service.
- **Consistent:** The same criteria will be applied consistently to each service for ranking purposes.
- **Inclusive:** All services will be assessed and all units will have the opportunity to contribute in the analysis of their service(s) through the completion of a self-assessment template(s).
- **Evidence-based:** The assessments will be based on both quantitative and qualitative information. Each unit will be provided with data (on personnel, revenues, expenditures, etc.) and will allocate their resources to the services provided by the unit.



Purpose of the Support Service Self-Assessment Form (Template)

The Support Service Transformation Task Force has developed an assessment form or template that will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from support services, on the basis of six criteria. The criteria and their weightings are as follows:

Support Service Transformation Task Force Criteria	Weighting
Importance to the University of Saskatchewan: This criterion will focus on the overall importance of the support service to the success of the institution.	26%
Internal demand: This criterion will focus on factors related to the level of internal (inside the institution) need for the support service.	17%
External demand: This criterion will focus on factors related to the level of external (outside of the institution) need for the support service, as well as external mandates influencing the support service's efforts.	10%
Quality: This criterion will focus on the quality of the support service.	16%
Cost effectiveness: This criterion will focus on the resources consumed and the revenues generated by the support service relative to its output.	21%
Opportunity analysis: This criterion allows the support service to describe the additional contributions it could make with specified additional resources.	10%

Each support service will be reviewed and ranked by the task force. Support services will be categorized into quintiles based on budget, i.e. 20% into each of the following categories:

1. Candidate for enhanced resourcing
2. Maintain with current resourcing
3. Retain with reduced resourcing
4. Reconfigure for efficiency/effectiveness
5. Candidate for phase out, subject to further review

The final report of the task force will inform decisions regarding budget adjustments that will be instituted by the university's governing bodies.

Refining the Support Service List

The task force has invested considerable time and effort into refining the list of support services. A key focus has been arriving at a degree of consistency across the institution in terms of the nature and scope of each support service.

Colleges and administrative units are asked to complete self-assessment forms for each of the services provided, or will describe multiple services in one or more self-assessment forms as appropriate. For colleges and the Centre for Continuing and Distance Education, the task force has identified eleven services that are common to each of these units: communications, instructional support, finance, human resources, information technology, alumni and development, research support, recruitment and admissions, facilities and space planning, student support and advising, and college-level stores and shops. For administrative units, five services that are common have been identified: communications, finance, human resources, information technology, and facilities and space planning. Colleges and



administrative units also will complete a separate self-assessment form for the activities that directly support the work of the unit head. Due to their unique size and structure, the interdisciplinary graduate schools will describe their support services, including activities that directly support the work of the executive director, in one or two templates.

Completing the Support Service Self-Assessment Form (Template)

The Support Service Self-Assessment Form is the means by which units will provide information to the task force. To ensure that the information provided by units is focused, relevant and manageable for the task force, a limited amount of information can be provided.

The sections of the form are as follows:

Overview: This section should provide task force members with a sense of the nature of a support service and what it does.

Support service resources: Financial and other data (personnel, revenues, expenditures, etc.) will be provided centrally by the university and will be allocated by units to each support service. Three years of data will be provided (2011/12, 2011/10 and 2009/10).

- A worksheet will be provided to assist units in calculating the values needed to populate the data tables in the self-assessment form.
- Data categories are based on UNIFI accounts. Definitions for each category can be found on the Financial Services Division website at www.usask.ca/fsd/colleges_depts_research/unifi/unifi_account_codes.php. Other definitions, including that of full time equivalent, can be found on the Information Strategy and Analytics website at www.usask.ca/isa/information-management/terms-definitions.php.
- Any data-related questions should be directed to the TransformUS Data Support Team at transformus_data@usask.ca. This team can assist with gathering, understanding and interpreting data.
- The task force understands there are support services that have been restructured significantly in the last year, and that this will make interpretation of historical data challenging.
 - Use the space provided to explain major changes in resources. Detailed explanations or explanations of changes that are relatively minor are not necessary.
 - If it is not possible to provide accurate data for three fiscal years, indicate this in the template and include only as much data as can be provided with reasonable accuracy.
- Units may provide other quantitative data as long as it is verifiable, applicable to the particular support service and can be accommodated within the space limits.

Criteria: Each criterion includes one key question related to the criterion. Additional guiding questions are provided to assist you in formulating your response. Within each criterion, consider which guiding questions are most relevant to your support service and build your response around those points. ***Not all of the guiding questions need to be answered.***



Other comments: Use this section to provide any additional context or information to the task force, which may include advice on which quintile you would place the support service in and why. Provide any “big picture” observations you wish on past trends or the future of the service that will assist the task force in better understanding the service. Please avoid repeating information provided elsewhere in the template.

Advice for Filling out the Assessment Form

- Focus on recognizing patterns and trends in resourcing and service delivery, and on providing a frank account of the current reality.
- Write for an audience that is not familiar with the support service or your area of work. Avoid jargon, acronyms and other technical references as much as possible.
- Once complete, the template should provide a clear and medium-level overview of what the service does, what resources it consumes and what it accomplishes. You may want to obtain feedback on the completed self-assessment form from someone who is unfamiliar with the support service before you submit it.
- Avoid focusing on fine details. The task force is prioritizing 350-400 support services, which will require a “big picture” focus.
- Use point form in the narrative when possible.
- Explain any significant trends, variations or anomalies in the data. Minor variations or discrepancies are not significant and need not be explained.
- Recognize that the template was designed for a wide range of support services. Not all criteria will be completely relevant to a particular service, nor will all of the guide questions within each criterion. Do your best to respond to each criterion, but focus on those that are most relevant to your support service.
- Avoid repeating general information such as the IP3 areas of focus, the signature areas, etc.
- Please do not include appendices, attachments or references to websites.



Questions & Answers

When is the self-assessment form due?

Completed self-assessment forms are due by **August 16, 2013**.

Because of holidays, my unit is not able to complete the template. Can I get an extension?

All involved recognize that it is not ideal to be completing the templates over the summer months. Holidays are well deserved and much needed after a busy year on campus. However, we also recognize there is no time during the year when campus is truly quiet. Leaders within each unit should consider what items can be delayed over the summer to allow the templates to be completed by the deadline. TransformUS is, as Dickeson states, *“an extraordinary process requiring a suspension of ordinary behaviors”* and should be seen as such.

Further, leaders should consider how to maximize the value of the information provided, while minimizing the effort required to complete the template by drawing on existing information, providing data that is available or has been developed for other purposes, and/or can be compiled relatively easily by the most knowledgeable people in the unit.

May I revise my submission after the deadline?

The task force recognizes that many support services are undergoing change, and that all support services are provided in a constantly evolving environment. In exceptional circumstances, a unit may be permitted to submit a revised self-assessment form. This would be at the discretion of the co-chairs.

Does the unit head need to approve all self-assessment forms in his/her unit?

Yes, each self-assessment template must be approved by the unit leader prior to submission.

What if there is internal disagreement about how to assess my service?

The task force expects each unit to reach consensus before a self-assessment form is finalized and submitted. If that is deemed impossible by the unit, the difference in perspective should be explained in the template.

May I present my information to the Support Service Transformation Task Force?

No. With 350-400 support services to prioritize, individual presentations are not possible.

May I provide additional information to the task force?

If the task force deems it necessary, it will request clarification on the self-assessment form. With 350-400 support services to prioritize, it is not possible for the task force to consider any additional information provided by a unit unless it is at the request of the task force.



Who do I contact if I have questions when I am completing the self-assessment form?

Information sessions will be held in July and August to assist those tasked with completing the self-assessment form.

If you have questions, please contact one of the task force co-chairs, Bob Tyler or Kevin Schneider, or any other member of the task force. For assistance with data, please contact the data support team at transformus_data@usask.ca.