softcat

Microsoft Education Licensing Updates

Frequently asked questions

As we recently extended to July 2029, I assume we will not be impacted until then?

The licensing and storage changes apply at your first renewal or extension on or after 1st January 2028. If your next renewal or extension is in July 2029, the changes would take effect at that point, subject to confirmation of your agreement dates and terms.

If we all now have to purchase faculty licences at discount level A, is there any indication that Microsoft is adjusting level A pricing downwards?

Microsoft has announced a single pricing level for Online Services, with a price schedule update from 1st May 2027. Customer pricing changes apply at renewal or extension following implementation. The partner guidance states that MA3 and MA5 faculty list prices are not increasing; however, the impact on existing institutional discounts will depend on the applicable terms. A reduction in Level A pricing and future JISC agreement terms are not confirmed in the guidance.

Should the pooled allowance of staff not cover the organisation needs, is there the option to purchase additional storage separately?

Yes. Additional storage packs can be purchased to supplement your institution's pooled storage allowance. These can be purchased on a 1GB or 10TB basis.

Have they announced when pricing will be made available?

Estimated pricing is available in the partner guidance, with final pricing to be provided at SKU launch. MA2 is scheduled for general availability on 1 December 2026, followed by MA0 and the replacement MA3 and MA5 offers on 1 January 2028. Published estimates should not be treated as confirmed customer quotations. If you would like bespoke cost modeling, please reach out to your Softcat account team and we can work on that with you.

We have A3 staff and get students on 1:40. Does this now mean we need to also purchase student A3 licences ?

Student Use Benefit is scheduled to retire on 1st January 2028, with the changes applying at your institution's first renewal or extension on or after that date. Students will not necessarily require MA3 licences. The new portfolio includes paid MA2–MA7 student offers and MA0 at no additional cost for eligible students using Windows devices, subject to qualifying faculty licensing and entitlement limits.

Will EMS A5 and Defender for Office P2 licenses remain available for separate purchase?

Microsoft's Partner FAQ confirms that there are no broad changes to faculty standalone or add-on availability or pricing unless otherwise communicated. Targeted standalone products and add-ons will remain available.

Does any of this affect what is going to happen about access to onsite servers licensing wise?

OVS-ES and School 3 are scheduled to retire on 1 January 2028, with equivalent on-premises capabilities to be offered through CSP. The partner guidance does not confirm the server-access or Windows Server CAL rights associated with your institution's licences. These rights should be verified against the relevant products and agreement terms.

When will pricing for the new student costs for A3 etc be available?

Estimated student pricing is available in the partner guidance, with final pricing to be provided at SKU launch. The replacement MA3 offer is scheduled for general availability on 1 January 2028. Customer-specific UK pricing is not confirmed in the guidance. If you would like bespoke cost modeling, please reach out to your Softcat account team and we can work on that with you.

Will A1 disappear on our tenant before our OVS renewal in Feb 27, with A1 and agreements not being linked?

The partner guidance does not identify February 2027 as an Office 365 A1 removal date. It lists web-direct end of sale on 5 November 2026, partner-channel end of sale on 1 May 2027, and retirement on 1 January 2028. OVS-ES is also scheduled to retire on 1 January 2028. Your tenant's specific removal date is not confirmed in the guidance.

What's happening with Exchange Online (Plan 1) for students / (plan 2) for faculty and (plan 1) for alumni?

Exchange is included in the new MA2–MA7 suites. A paid Exchange Online for Alumni offer is scheduled to become available on 1 January 2028, replacing the free alumni offer. The partner guidance does not confirm the treatment of standalone Exchange Online Plan 1 for students or Plan 2 for faculty, or the price of the alumni offer.

The MA0 states that Office app licensing is for devices running Windows. Are there any impacts for Mac users on the various tiers going forward?

MA0 requires devices running Windows for educational purposes. The partner guidance does not extend this MA0 restriction to MA2–MA7, but it does not provide detailed Mac licensing or compatibility terms for those offers. Mac requirements should therefore be confirmed for the selected plan.

If we renew on a JISC agreement before January 2028 for 3 years, when will these changes affect us? At the 1st anniversary or at the end of the 3 year agreement?

The changes apply at your first renewal or extension on or after 1st January 2028, rather than automatically at an annual anniversary. If there is no renewal or extension before the end of your three-year agreement, the changes would apply at that point. The effective date should be confirmed against your agreement's start date and terms.

MS Defender For O365 is with which plan?

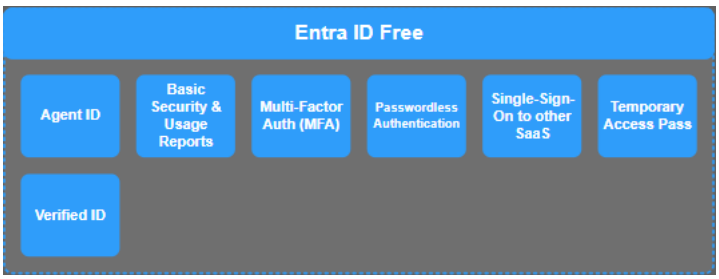
The updated portfolio adds Microsoft Defender for Office 365 Plan 1 to MA3 faculty licences. MA5 includes Microsoft Defender for Office 365 Plan 2, and MA7 builds on MA5. The MA3 Plan 1 addition is identified as faculty-only and should not be assumed to apply to MA3 student licences.

You mentioned that the A0 license is 1:20 for student accounts in the ratio to paid accounts. Does the ratio extend to the A2 and A3 licences?

The entitlement of up to 20 student licences per eligible paid faculty licence applies to MA0 only. MA0 is available at no additional cost for eligible students at institutions licensing MA2 or higher for faculty. MA2 and MA3 student licences are separate paid offers and are not included in this entitlement.

Will MA0 cover MFA?

Yes. The partner guidance confirms that MA0 includes multifactor authentication and Microsoft Entra ID Free. Please see the below image to show what is included in Entra ID free.



Does MA2 not include W11?

No. Windows 11 Education upgrade is not included in MA2. The partner guidance lists it as included in MA3, MA5 and MA7.

Will these slides be shared please?

Please contact your Softcat account manager to request a copy of the slides.

Is storage inclusive of mail, OneDrive and SharePoint sites as a collective total across the tenant?

The FAQ describes pooled tenant storage across Exchange Online, OneDrive and SharePoint, with Dataverse storage treated separately. The partner guidance confirms that storage remains pooled at tenant level and is based on the paid student and faculty licence mix. It does not provide a detailed breakdown of the services included in the pool.

We have staff on A1 with add on security licenses, is A0 only available for students, is there a FoC license for faculty?

MA0 is available only to eligible students, at no additional cost and subject to qualifying faculty licensing. The updated portfolio does not include a free faculty MA0 offer. MA2 is a paid faculty option scheduled for general availability on 1st December 2026 and is the closest new option once O365 A1 has been retired.

Storage is taking a massive hit from the current 1TB on A3 down to 75GB! This is for Faculty licenses.

The 75 GB allowance is each paid MA3 faculty licence's contribution to pooled tenant storage; it is not an individual user's OneDrive limit. The partner guidance shows this pooled contribution increasing from 50 GB to 75 GB, alongside removal of the 100 TB tenant base quota. Individual OneDrive and Exchange limits are not specified in this storage update.

Following on from this question, can we purchase additional storage?

Yes. Additional storage packs can be purchased to supplement your institution's pooled storage allowance. These can be purchased on a 1GB or 10TB basis.

How do these A tier offerings compare to a Campus Agreement?

The A-tier offers are product suites, whereas a Campus Agreement is a licensing agreement. The partner guidance sets out the updated MA0, MA2, MA3, MA5 and MA7 portfolio, with changes applying at the first renewal or extension on or after 1st January 2028. These changes are effective across all agreement types.

What was the thinking behind the retirement of the student benefit?

Microsoft has confirmed that Student Use Benefit will be replaced by separate student offers, including MA0 at no additional cost for eligible students and paid MA2–MA7 licences. The partner guidance does not provide a specific reason for retiring Student Use Benefit.

Unit cost for A2 faculty\student would be useful so we can forecast the main cost increase.

The partner guidance includes estimated Campus and CSP unit pricing for MA2 faculty and student licences, with and without Teams. MA2 is scheduled for general availability on 1st December 2026, with final pricing to be provided at SKU launch. These estimates do not establish a confirmed customer-specific UK unit cost for forecasting. If you would like bespoke cost modelling, please reach out to your Softcat account team and we can work on that with you.