The UK
Access
Management
Federation

FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Introduction

Supported by JISC and Becta, and operated by JANET(UK), the UK Access Management Federation provides a single solution to access online resources and services for education and research. To achieve this, organisations wishing to join the federation sign up to a set of rules and use access management technology compatible with the Shibboleth architecture.

In July 2008, JISC will withdraw funding for the existing Athens service provided to FE, HE and research organisations; Athens will then become a chargeable service. Organisations are encouraged to join the federation before this date to ensure the paperwork is in place for when they wish to participate.

Member organisations who wish to continue using Athens resources can continue to do so using the Shibboleth-Athens gateway, funded by JISC.

The benefits of the federation

Benefits of the service include:

- Centrally funded, with no annual subscription costs

- Facilitates single sign-on to all services available within the federation

- Allows end users to log-in once per browser session, permitting them to access all the services they are entitled to within the federation, and those currently available via Athens using the federation gateways

- No personal details need be released to third parties, helping compliance with data protection regulations

- Can be used as a mechanism for protecting internal and external services

- Standards-based software adopted internationally by both the education and commercial sectors.

Who is eligible to join?

All schools, colleges, universities and research organisations, as well as anyone providing resources to these sectors, are eligible to join the federation.

Why should my organisation join?

Joining the federation will enable staff and students at your organisation to:

- Access, or provide, online services or resources

- Access services and resources from any location via a web browser

- Protect access to resources and privacy of users.

Joining the federation

All organisations who wish to participate will need to join the federation by registering and agreeing to adhere to federation rules.
http://www.ukfederation.org/content/Documents/JoinFederation

Participation options for organisations

Organisations should make a decision on the deployment options available, taking into consideration their technical resources and IT strategy for identity management. The options for participation are:

Schools

The recommended approach is to participate via the Local Authority or Regional Broadband Consortium in England, Classroom 2000 in Northern Ireland, or Learning and Teaching Scotland.

In-house

Run and support identity management in-house.There are two options for following this route:

1. Deploy and operate the required technology using in-house resources

2. Implement the technology using a third party. This option is particularly useful for those organisations who do not have the internal resources or expertise to deploy an in-house solution but would like to maintain ultimate control of their user authentication in-house. There are a number of organisations who offer this service

Out-sourced

Organisational identity management provision handled by a third party, external to the organisation.

Training and events

JANET(UK) runs a series of briefing and training events on the federation. Details of these and other associated events can be found at:
http://www.ukfederation.org/content/Documents/EventList

Why use federated access management?

Legacy Access Management

1. When a user tries to access a resource he is required to release personal details (username, password etc.) to the service provider; this is often more information than the service provider actually needs to know.

2. The service provider needs to store and process this information.
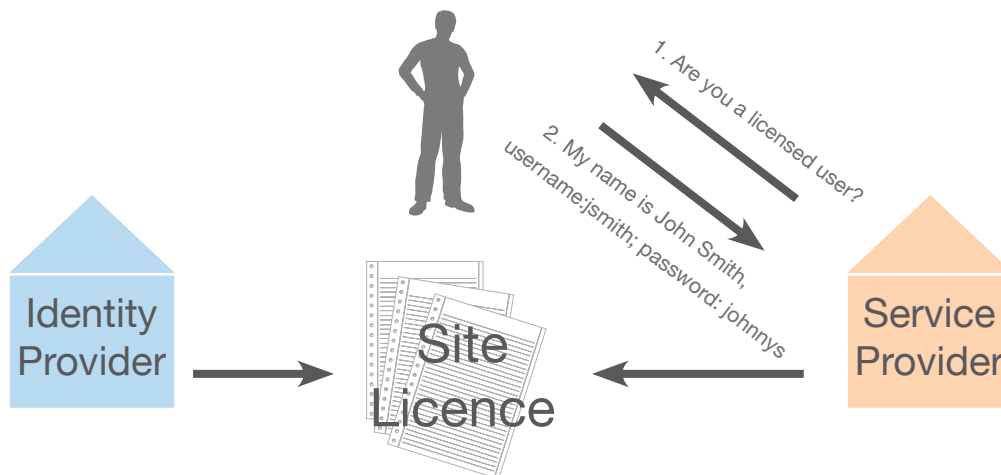
Federated Access Management

1. No personal details need to be released to the service provider as the user will authenticate to their home organisation which then confirms to the service provider that the user is authorised to access the resource. Authorisation can be arbitrarily fine-grained if restrictions apply to specific resources i.e. 'over 18 years' 'lecturer/teacher'.

2. The publisher learns only what it needs to control the user's access to their resources; this also avoids the need to manage user credentials.
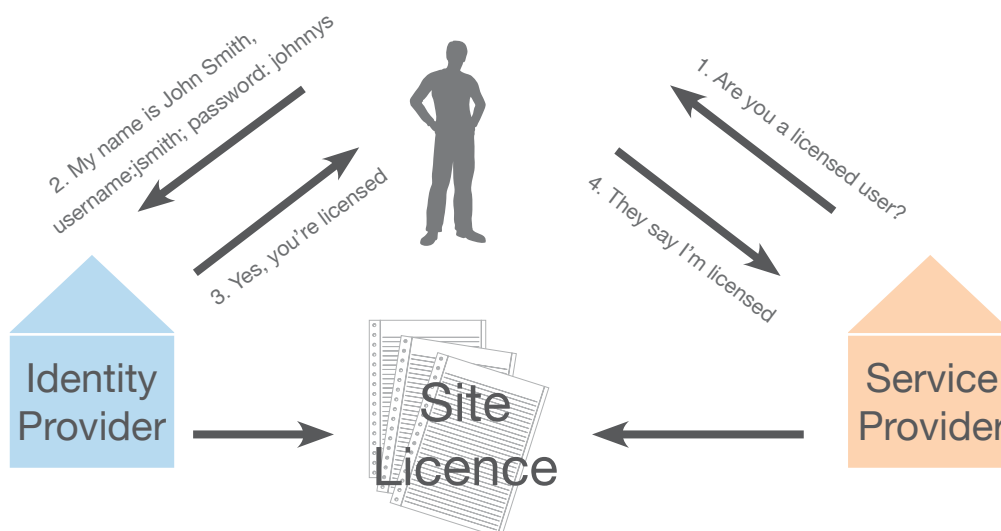
Frequently asked questions

1. How much will it cost?

    Membership of the federation is free. The recommended software, Shibboleth, is also free to download and use.

    The cost of deployment will depend on the participation option you choose (see 'Participation options for organisations'). Typical deployment to date has cost between £5,000 – £50,000, depending on the size of your organisation and the complexity of your identity management infrastructure.

2. What services can I access?

    An increasing number of organisations are joining the federation with a wide range of services already available (http://www.ukfederation.org.uk/content/Documents/AvailableServices). Resources currently protected by Athens can be accessed using the federation gateways.

3. How does Shibboleth integrate with my existing technology?

    Shibboleth can be run on the majority of widely deployed operating systems, e.g. Windows, Unix variants, Apple Mac.

4. How does Shibboleth integrate with my existing identity management (directory services)?

    Shibboleth integrates with most directory services that support LDAP, including Microsoft Active Directory Services.

5. Who else is participating?

    Membership of the UK federation continues to grow rapidly. For a current list of federation members, please see http://www.ukfederation.org.uk/content/Documents/MemberList

6. Why should I join?

    By joining the federation you will be able to take advantage of the following:

    *   No annual subscription charge (centrally funded by JISC and Becta)

    *   Reduces the number of credentials (e.g. username and password) that users have to remember, and the associated administrative overheads

    *   Helps to protect the privacy of the end user

    *   Standard approach to access management across UK education and research, and beyond

    *   Based on an international standard (SAML)

The next step

For further information and to join the federation, please contact:

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See: http://www.ukfederation.org.uk for further details

JANET(UK)

JANET(UK) manages the UK federation on behalf of the JISC and Becta. JANET, the United Kingdom's education and research network, is funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC).

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This document is also available electronically from: http://www.ukfederation.org.uk/