

## Connecting People to Resources

### Federated Access Management: JISC Guide for Publishers and Service Providers

Briefing Paper

February 2006

This document is addressed to decision-makers and technical support staff in organisations (such as publishers and subscription agents) who supply resources and services to the UK's higher (HE) and further (FE) education institutions. It describes the new federated access management infrastructure being implemented within the UK, the reason for its introduction and the actions required of organisations to benefit from the new system.

## Introduction

In September 2006, JISC will launch its UK Access Management Federation for UK higher (HE) and further (FE) education institutions. Educational institutions throughout the UK will be invited to join the UK Federation and adopt new technology such as Shibboleth. This will provide institutions with a route to single sign-on to resources for users through the implementation of federated, devolved authentication.

- A number of suppliers have already implemented Shibboleth, or are committed to enabling products and services to operate with Shibboleth
- It separates authentication from authorisation. Authentication is controlled by the user's home institution; authorisation is based on user-attributes and controlled by the resource provider
- Users don't have to acquire and remember a separate identity for accessing protected services – they simply use their local institutional username and password. This should increase use of subscribed services
- It facilitates finely-controlled access to services or resources, allowing for subscriptions by department and group or courseware targeted at individual classes

## What is a Federation?

A federation is a group of institutions and organisations that sign-up to an agreed set of policies for exchanging information about users and resources to enable access and use of resources and services. The federation combined with identity management software within institutions and organisations can be referred to as federated access management.

## Why Change?

There are a number of advantages for publishers and users in adopting a federated access management system based on Shibboleth technology:

- It is based on international standards and can be implemented using freely available open-source software
- It is achieving wide support in HE in other countries (the USA, Switzerland and Finland already have national schemes in place, while the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Norway, Belgium, Denmark and Australia are actively investigating Shibboleth and related technologies)

## Benefits

The use of federated access management and the software available to support its implementation provides significant benefits to service providers:

- It fulfils customer need:** educational institutions are demanding a single sign-on solution across all resources, based on institutional authentication methods.
- It is standards based:** there is no tie-in to one provider for software and implementation support.
- There is international take-up:** meaning that Service Providers can build a skills-base on one technology that will support a wide range of customers.

## Choices for Publishers

In developing the Federation services, JISC has considered the requirements of both institutions and publishers in making the transition. Publishers with existing commitments to Athens will be able to offer services to institutions using Shibboleth for a limited time using the 'gateways'. JISC is currently guaranteeing funding for the gateways at least until July 2008.

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<b>1</b>	<b>Become a full member of the UK Access Management Federation, using community-supported tools</b>	
	<b>COSTS</b> Internal effort to implement software, join Federation and manage provider attributes	<b>BENEFITS</b> No ongoing subscription costs, compliance with international standards and institutional requirements
<b>2</b>	<b>Become a full member of the UK Access Management Federation, using tools with paid-for support</b>	
	<b>COSTS</b> Cost of support from supplier and internal effort in liaison with supplier and Federation	<b>BENEFITS</b> Full support in implementation, compliance with international standards and institutional requirements
<b>3</b>	<b>Decide not to join the Federation and continue with Athens or other access management solution</b>	
	<b>COSTS</b> Providers using Athens will continue to pay current subscription and licence costs to Eduserv	<b>BENEFITS</b> Athens providers will have access to the Federation through the 'gateway', funded by the JISC at least until July 2008

## JISC Support

JISC is committed to supporting institutions in this changing environment. As well as implementing the UK Federation, JISC is:

- Funding the provision of the Athens service until July 2008
- Funding a Middleware Assisted Take-Up Service (MATU) to provide support for institutions
- Providing case studies, reports, toolkits and advice from the work carried out in its 'early adopter' programmes
- Making the services hosted by MIMAS, EDINA and other JISC services Shibboleth compliant
- Funding the development of the Athens Gateways to support inter-working between Shibboleth and Athens sites and service providers. These allow institutions that adopt Shibboleth to access resources protected by Athens. Sites continuing to use Athens will also be able to access Shibboleth-protected resources

Service providers within the Federation will additionally offer Service Provider support against published, transparent tariffs.

## Timescales

Key milestones are:

- **July 2006:** renewal of Athens contract and launch of the Athens Gateways
- **August 2006:** first early adopters to join UK Federation
- **September 2006:** formal launch of the UK Federation
- New Nesli2 and other JISC contracts with suppliers will specify Shibboleth compliance
- **July 2008:** end of current JISC contract for Athens

## Further information and contacts

### Federation information

[www.jisc.ac.uk/federation.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/federation.html)

### JISC Core Middleware programmes

[www.jisc.ac.uk/programme\\_middleware.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_middleware.html)

### Athens

[www.athensams.net](http://www.athensams.net)

### MATU support service

[www.matu.ac.uk](http://www.matu.ac.uk)

### JISCmail lists:

join at [www.jiscmail.ac.uk](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk)

[JISC-Shibboleth-announce@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:JISC-Shibboleth-announce@jiscmail.ac.uk)

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