

JISC
inspiring innovation

Access Unlimited Access Protected

Improving and extending service delivery through federated access management

Improving research excellence and collaboration

Institutions share many common objectives and there is limitless potential when they choose to work together. Federated access management fosters and facilitates collaboration: enhancing learning, reducing costs, and improving research excellence. Groups who specialise in particular fields can use federated access management to work more easily together over any distance, and share information without compromising work that needs to remain private and protected.

Collaboration makes economic sense too. Investment in resources – and best practice – can also be shared, delivering greater value to the community as a whole. Institutions can provide access reciprocally to knowledge, data, resources, special facilities and other services, with mutual benefits. You may even have resources you can sell, generating income and enabling access to others at a fraction of what it would cost them to grow that resource from the ground up.

When you provide services to other institutions, federated access relieves you of the burden of having to manage usernames and passwords for external visitors. Users are authenticated through their home institution, which means that you are free to concentrate on licences and subscriptions, and the selection, management and promotion of resources.

How you choose to work together depends on your own strategy and business priorities, but the benefits are significant, the possibilities more numerous than ever, access is easier and safer, and the communication channels are open.

At Newcastle we've been able to use our access management and single sign-on systems to provide a cohesive set of applications to support our research users.

CALIB RACEY
Middleware Team Leader, Newcastle University

Newcastle University: collaborating publicly, protecting privacy
Newcastle University has used federated access management to build one of the most varied ranges of services in the UK. One of its notable achievements is its extensive wiki and blog community, accessed through single sign-on with authentication carefully moderated by user attributes.

This is where the security of single sign-on becomes a decisive factor in building services, says Caleb Racey, middleware team leader at Newcastle. Research thrives on collaboration but it's also a very sensitive area of a person's work. Our researchers can build project wikis over which we give them full access control, which means they decide how much they share and with whom.

Sometimes single sign-on is not about sharing, but about secure ease of access to an individual's private space, authoring and authenticating one person only. Researchers can also create their own 'My Projects' blogs where they can post private information on their work, including information on patents and any external consultancy in which they are involved. Our lecturers build wikis for their students too, again with controlled access.

Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) are an enormous deal for universities, having a big impact on funding. We also provide a research information site service, says Caleb Racey. Researchers can sign on and record their research impact, including their top papers, esteem indicators, which boards they've sat on, PhD students and other RAE contributions. The service then automatically generates information for the RAE.

Federated access management enables joined-up research. It makes a very definite contribution to research excellence and collaboration without compromising work in progress.

Newcastle University

18 • JISC: Access Unlimited, Access Protected

JISC: Access Unlimited, Access Protected • 19

When you provide a wider range of services through federated access management technology, you make life far easier for your students, and you improve and grow their learning environment. You remove the barriers of distance, time and technology to bring invited users and collaborators safely and securely to information that will make a real difference to their work.

Accessible writing : 'Access Unlimited. Access Protected' is an interactive brochure that encourages senior decision-makers within educational institutions to share more of their digital resources with staff, students, researchers and the wider community. It is a complex subject, rooted and still predominantly residing in the language of IT communities and academic librarians. It needed to be demystified and conveyed with clarity and enthusiasm to a non-technical audience.