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What is a (SAML) federation?

A federation is a group of identity and service providers using the SAML 2.0 protocol for secure single sign-on. The UK federation, managed by JISC, has specific rules and resources for eligible organisations to join and participate.

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Federations and SAML 2.0 Protocol

A federation is a collective of identity providers (IdPs) and service providers (SPs) working within an agreed framework. Many federations globally utilise the SAML 2.0 protocol. In federated single sign-on setups, users authenticate via an IdP, and SPs receive the identity details asserted by these providers. Various technologies facilitate the exchange of XML messages through a series of requests and responses, as outlined in the federation's policy documents. One such federation is managed by JISC as the UK federation.

The UK Federation

The UK federation has several key documents governing its operation:

- Membership Rules
- Use of Personal Data
- Technical Recommendations
- Operator Procedures
- Metadata Registration Practise Statements, detailing requirements
- Eligibility Policy

Eligible organisations can join the UK federation [by applying](#). Federations depend on members implementing and adhering to the federation's rules. To support users, there are [numerous resources and a help desk](#) available.