Move up and unlock:

why you should upgrade your
Microsoft licensing from A3 to A5

Microsoft

Microsoft 365 (M365) keeps your team connected and equipped with the tools they need, but are you getting the most out of it?

When it comes to security and scalability, A3 only takes you so far. Upgrading to A5 unlocks advanced protection, smarter insights, and greater efficiency.

Microsoft A3 is the standard M365 enterprise plan, offering all the M365 apps, Windows, and cloud storage.
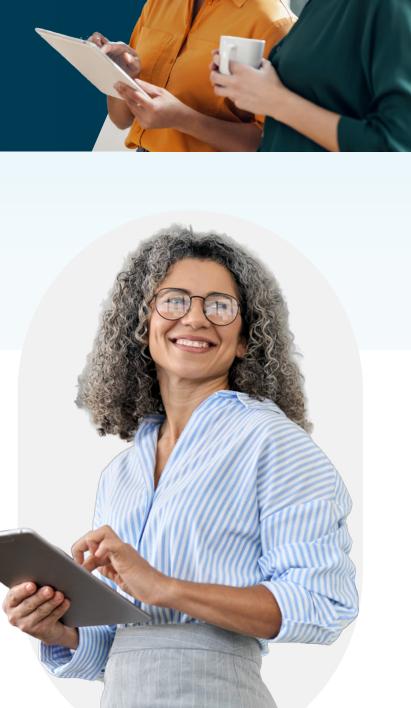
A5 is a step up. Providing all the features in A3 plus enhanced security, more intuitive analytics, and compliance protection, A5 is a game-changer.

While the initial cost of an A5 licence is slightly more, the ROI you gain from upgrading means that many organisations save money from upgrading.

So, what are the key differences, why should you upgrade, and how do you do it?

Read about:

- Key differences between A3 and A5

- Move up and unlock several benefits

- How to upgrade

- Get support from our specialists

Key differences between A3 and A5

Microsoft 365 A3 and A5 are education-specific, enterprise-level Microsoft licensing options that include Office 365 (O365), Windows 10 and 11, and Enterprise Mobility and Security (EM&S) services. All of the core capabilities are the same, but A5 has advanced security and compliance features.

The core capabilities include:

· O365 A3 - Including M365 Apps, One Drive, SharePoint etc
· EM&S A3 - Including Intune P1 and Entra ID P1
· Windows 11
· Remote help
· Defender for Endpoint P1
· Minecraft for education

Additional features included in A5

Now let us look at the additional features included in A5, which cover enhanced security, improved compliance tools, superior analytics and insights, and additional communication and collaboration tools.

Security:
· Defender for Endpoint P2
· Defender for O365 P1 & P2
· Entra ID P2
· Defender for Identity
· Defender for Cloud Apps

Compliance:
· Information Protect and Governance
· Insider Risk Management
· eDiscovery and Audit

Communication:
· Audio Conferencing
· Teams Phone

Reporting:
· Power BI Pro

Providing highly advanced security and analytics capabilities, covering more than 27 areas of specialisation, A5 not only replaces but is an improvement on many external solutions.

For institutes that need proactive security, intelligent threat detection, and advanced compliance tools, moving to A5 is a smart investment that not only protects you from cyber threats but also optimises IT spending by consolidating everything into one platform.

This integrated approach means fewer compatibility issues, simplified management, and a more resilient environment. Upgrading isn't just about getting more features but about strengthening your organisation from the ground up.

Move up and unlock several benefits

Moving to A5 isn't just an upgrade but a whole new way of working smarter and staying safer. A5 empowers your institute to do more with less risk and greater confidence.

Stronger security and threat protection

Education institutes are prime targets for cyber threats because of the data you hold. Upgrading to A5 provides in-built, strong security features to prevent cyber attacks, unauthorised access, and data breaches.

Scalability and growth

Education sector organisations need to keep up with evolving threats, compliance regulations, and digital transformation. A5 provides a more scalable and resilient IT environment.

Streamlined licensing costs

By consolidating multiple tools and services into a single comprehensive suite, M365 A5 can potentially reduce overall costs and simplify licensing management.

Analytics

Enables creation and sharing of interactive data visualisations and reports through Power BI Pro.

More secure and efficient communication

Collaboration departments, students, teachers, parents, and the local community essential. A5 enhances communication capabilities while ensuring that conversations, files, and data remain protected, supporting a secure and compliant work environment.

Better compliance and data governance

With strict regulations and governance requirements, schools, colleges, universities, and research institutes must ensure compliance with data protection laws. A5 provides more advanced compliance tools to help manage and safeguard sensitive information, reducing legal and financial risks.

Sentinel offer

Microsoft 365 A5 customers receive a data grant of up to 5 MB per user per day for data ingestion into Microsoft Sentinel.

This grant covers various data sources, including Microsoft Entra ID (formerly Azure AD) sign-in and audit logs, Microsoft Defender for Cloud Apps logs, Microsoft Purview Information Protection logs and Microsoft 365 advanced hunting.

Ramp offer benefits

In August 2024, Microsoft made changes to the Storage Allowance which heavily impacted educational institutions.

Currently, all education tenants receive 100TB of free pooled storage across OneDrive, SharePoint, and Exchange. Additional storage will be allocated based on the number of paid users with 50GB per A3 user and 100GB per A5 user.

Framework Benefits – JISC

Education customers can also join the JISC framework which provides further discounts to the A5 products. These discounts are designed to help educational institutions to adopt comprehensive A5 coverage and security solutions.

The JISC framework is available to customers which have a minimum of 100 Education Qualified Users (EQU). And under this framework there is various discounts across the A5 Security and Full A5 suites to suit different educational institutions and their needs.

Student use benefit and how it differs from Faculty M365 A5

When educational institutions purchase an M365 A3 or A5 licence, they are then entitled to the M365 Student Use Benefit licence of the version they have purchased.

Each institution is entitled to a ratio of 1:40 student use benefit licences. What this means is, for every A3 or A5 licence they purchase they will then receive 40 M365 student use benefit licences free of charge.

For example, if an institution purchased 100 M365 A3 licences, they would receive the below:

100 M365 A3 Faculty Licence x 40 = 4000 Student Use Benefit Licences

However, as the student use benefit licences are free, the features aren't fully reflective of the paid for licences.

The most noticeable difference for customers is that Defender for Endpoint Plan 1 or Plan 2 are not included. However, there is a special Defender for Endpoint Per Device SKU which allows for estate wide protection for all shared devices.

FastTrack

The Microsoft 365 FastTrack Programme is a no-cost service designed to help institutes transition to Microsoft 365, focusing on rapid deployment and adoption.

For those upgrading from A3 to A5, FastTrack ensures effective use of advanced features. As the leading FastTrack Ready Partner in the UK, Phoenix offers expert guidance and was recognised as a finalist for the 2023 Global Microsoft FastTrack Ready Partner Award.

What you gain from FastTrack...

- Expert guidance: remote support from our FastTrack Specialists for A5 workloads
- Tailored deployment: customised Deployment Roadmap for A5 features like Defender, Purview, and Entra
- Immersion experiences: Phoenix offers sessions (e.g., Compliance, Security) to explore A5 capabilities
- Phoenix services days: subject to eligibility, Phoenix may provide Services Days for in-scope workloads to support on the deployment and configuration

Find out more about FastTrack →

How to **upgrade**

Moving from Microsoft 365 A3 to A5 strengthens security, streamlines operations, and helps you do more with less. Best of all? The transition is straightforward and tailored to your needs.

1

Assess your needs

Take a step back and ask:

- Are you fully protected against modern cyber threats?
- Are you juggling multiple security and compliance tools?
- Could smarter insights and automation improve efficiency?

If you answered yes to any of these, it's time to move up to A5.

2

Plan your upgrade

Every institute is different. Whether you need a full rollout or a phased approach, A5 gives you the flexibility to upgrade at your own pace.

Work with your IT and security teams to decide who benefits most from enhanced security, compliance, and analytics.

3

Make the move

Upgrading is quick and hassle-free:

- Purchase licences
- Assign A5 licences to users via the Microsoft 365 admin centre
- Configure security and compliance settings to unlock full protection from day one

4

Optimise and scale

The move to A5 is just the beginning. Fine-tune your policies, automate security measures, and monitor performance to get the most from your investment.

Regular updates ensure you stay ahead of threats and compliance changes.

5

Get expert support

As an initial point of entry into your A5 security plane, Phoenix offer a Microsoft Cloud Security Strategic planning session.

This session aims to provide a shared understanding behind your current security strategy and identify where assessments, design sessions and ultimately the implementation of A5 security solutions are required in order to meet the security objectives of your institute and maximise A5 investment.
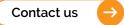
As part of this session, all aspects of the Microsoft cloud security landscape will be investigated at a high level alongside business and technical requirements in order to define exactly where efforts should be prioritised and focussed.

Following the session, Phoenix will provide an initial roadmap and technical plan on a page detailing a logical order where the implementation of A5 security solutions are concerned.

A Statement of Work will also be generated referencing the proposed project for the implementation of A5 security solutions and the efforts necessary to ensure its success.

Need help? Our specialists provide guidance, best practices, and ongoing support to ensure your institute maximises the investment in Microsoft 365 A5.

Ready to unlock the full potential of Microsoft 365? The future starts with A5.

Contact us →

PHOENIX

Why Phoenix for your Microsoft licensing?

Phoenix is a highly skilled, accredited, and respected world-leading Microsoft partner that helps educational institutes in the UK to transform.

Our Microsoft Licensing Team is one of the biggest in channel, made up of sector specific licensing specialists and industry experts that provide our customers with a tailored experience. We hold the most Microsoft Enterprise Agreements in the UK, making us the most accredited partner to support your organisation.

Watch our case study now and see how we're supporting organisations across the UK to simplify Microsoft licensing to improve productivity, lower costs, and drive transformation.

Watch now →

We hold 11 Microsoft Specialisations, are a **Microsoft Azure Expert MSP**, the number one **Microsoft FastTrack** partner in the UK, the number one **Microsoft Copilot** Partner in the UK, Education finalist 2024, and hold numerous UK and global Microsoft Partner of the Year awards – meaning we're in the best position to help you plan and deliver your next modernisation project.

Our expert Microsoft licensing guidance and tailored solutions will help you navigate the complexities, optimise costs, and drive innovation with confidence.

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Azure

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Microsoft

Microsoft Partner
Azure Expert MSP
Microsoft

Microsoft Solutions Partner
Data & AI
Azure

Talk to us.

Our specialists are here and ready to help your organisation with everything A5. Get in touch with us today.

Contact us

Alternatively, use the contact details below and one of our specialists will be in touch to discuss your requirements.

Contact us

hello@phoenixs.co.uk
01904 562200

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