PHOENIX

Utilising the OCRE Framework to facilitate a sustainable, secure, and cost-efficient platform for research

OCRE 2024 Microsoft

Research is all about spending time providing insights into vital topics.

But when many institutes are tangled up in unnecessary paperwork, budget constraints, and technical jargon, it can be difficult to focus on what matters most.

As research becomes increasingly data-driven and computationally intensive, cloud platforms like Microsoft Azure offer researchers scalable, secure, and cost-effective solutions.

This eBook explores how universities can leverage Azure effectively, with a particular focus on utilising the OCRE framework to streamline procurement, reduce costs, and accelerate research innovation.

> **I'm absolutely delighted that Phoenix has once again been named the main supplier for Azure on the OCRE Framework. This gives us the opportunity to make innovation with Azure easier for educational and research institutes across the UK.**
>
> **I'm genuinely excited about the opportunities this brings to support even more institutions on their journey to the cloud."**

Tom Connolly
Head of Education Sales
Phoenix Software

OCRE has evolved from the 2016 IaaS framework to the 2020 IaaS+ (OCRE 2020) and now the OCRE 2024 framework. It cuts through these challenges and opens up pathways for improved cloud procurement in the research industry.

Pairing research institutions with cloud providers that are well-suited for their unique needs, it removes roadblocks in cloud adoption, offering pre-negotiated contracts, lower costs, and instant access to the best tools.

OCRE is a competitive tender, and we're pleased that after showcasing our technical abilities and value, we are the number one supplier on the OCRE framework for Azure.

While OCRE can be used to procure a range of cloud solutions, Microsoft Azure is our speciality and has many use cases for the research industry. The central technical infrastructure requirements of modern research institutes are increasingly complex, and Azure provides the secure, scalable cloud infrastructure that researchers need.

This resource acts as your ultimate guide to OCRE and Azure for research institutes. Explore the benefits of IT procurement through OCRE, the Azure solutions available to you, and how to access your OCRE advantages.

Why use the OCRE Framework?

The Open Clouds for Research Environments (OCRE) framework provides universities and research institutions with an efficient way to access cloud services like Microsoft Azure.

The key advantages of OCRE include:

Simplified procurement
Pre-negotiated agreements reduce administrative overhead and streamline access to Azure

Cost efficiency
Discounted pricing and optimised billing options tailored for research funding cycles

Regulatory compliance
Ensures alignment with data protection regulations and university governance frameworks

Collaboration opportunities
Facilitates partnerships between institutions and cloud providers to support cross-border research initiatives

The current state of cloud use in research institutes

Research is collaborative and detailed. By providing access to secure data storage, virtual machines, and web hosting services, researchers can focus more on their important work.

The scale and complexity of data has grown massively, but not all research groups have access to fully integrated and expensive servers.

Cloud-based VM's and data storage solutions provide the power needed to store these large datasets, and OCRE provides the reasonable pricing and simple procurement routes to truly enable research institutes.

Tightening budgets

Research institutes have limited funding, and many cloud solutions are expensive. Using dedicated OCRE resellers helps ensure you get the most out of what you pay for while proving the value of these investments.

Compliance and security concerns

Research data can be sensitive and confidential. The cloud in itself is secure, but OCRE ensures full protection throughout the whole procurement process.interpreting, and processing text.

Data preparation

Securing cloud services via traditional routes can not only be costly but also complicated and time-consuming; research institutes don't have time for that.

OCRE does the hard part, not only finding the right cloud solution for your organisation but also taking care of the administration and processes side of procurement

Need for scalability and high performance

Researchers store a *lot* of information, and projects can expand rapidly. Research institutes struggle with data-capped solutions that they outgrow, but by using innovative solutions like Microsoft Azure, organisations can ensure that their cloud solution grows alongside them.

Cloud computing is becoming more and more necessary for research organisations, empowering them to tackle complex problems with large-scale data analysis. OCRE is the connective element that reduces friction when it comes to cloud procurement.

How OCRE empowers research institutes

The OCRE framework provides a simplified route for research organisations to access cloud services.

- **Pre-negotiated contracts** ensure cost-effective cloud solutions without lengthy procurement processes
- **Discounted Azure pricing** helps institutions maximise their budgets
- **Improved security and compliance** to meet strict data protection standards essential for researchers
- **Flexible scalability** that allows resources to expand or contract based on project needs
- **Support for data-intensive research.** Azure's advanced capabilities make it easier to analyse large datasets, perform complex simulations, and enhance collaboration across large teams

> **"My overall experience of the framework has been very good, and I've found all the parties to be helpful and informative. Phoenix and Microsoft dealt with everything quickly and efficiently and I'm looking forward to seeing the benefits in the online cost analysis."**
>
> **Mark Barrow**
> Infrastructure Manager
> London Metropolitan University

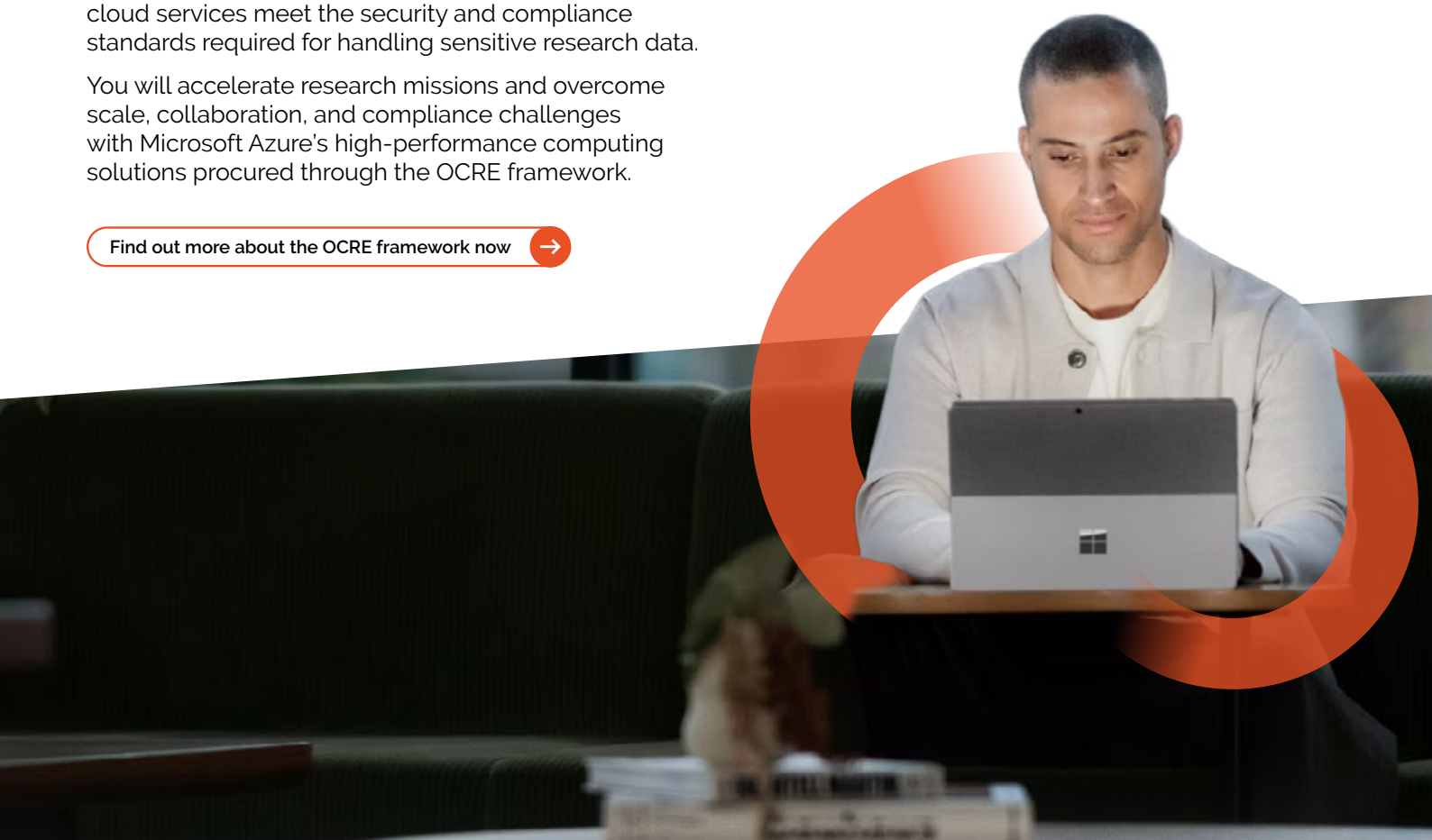
The OCRE framework was established to bridge the gap between cloud providers and the research community, ensuring institutions can access secure, scalable, and cost-effective cloud solutions.

By simplifying procurement and offering pre-negotiated contracts, OCRE removes administrative processes that slow down research progress.

One of OCRE's key benefits is its alignment with European data protection regulations, ensuring that cloud services meet the security and compliance standards required for handling sensitive research data.

You will accelerate research missions and overcome scale, collaboration, and compliance challenges with Microsoft Azure's high-performance computing solutions procured through the OCRE framework.

Find out more about the OCRE framework now →



Microsoft Azure through OCRE

Azure's high-performance computing, data, and analytics capabilities are highly beneficial for the research industry.

We make Azure adoption easier with OCRE. You'll benefit from:

- Significant discounts across Azure services
- Pre-made contracts designed for regulations and GDPR requirements
- Reduced network traffic costs
- Azure Active Directory (AD) to provide Single Sign On (SSO) and enable role-based access control (RBAC) of Azure services
- Azure Professional Direct Support discounts
- Microsoft Software Assurance and Student Use Benefits to further reduce Azure costs

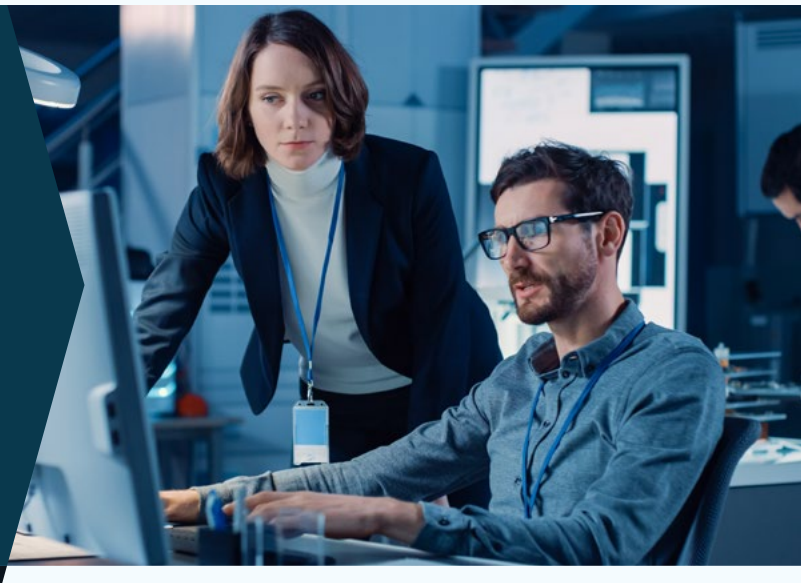
Azure's scalable infrastructure supports both small-scale experiments and large-scale research initiatives, providing secure and compliant environments to meet industry standards. Phoenix enables research institutes with a range of Azure solutions acquirable through OCRE.

Azure Virtual Machines (VM's)

Azure Virtual Machines (VM's) are scalable computing resources that provide you with more control over your computing environment than other typical solutions.

VM's provide the flexibility of virtualisation without the long and costly processes of maintaining the hardware that runs it. VM's do need a certain level of maintenance, such as configuring, patching, and installing the software that runs on it, but this is where partners like Phoenix come in to help.

You gain a lot of flexibility with VM's, ensuring you get more from less. With a variety of sizes and architectures, scalability, GPU availability, easy procurement, and more, VM's are a great choice for many research institutes.



Azure high-performance computing (HPC)

Azure HPC runs complex, compute-intensive workloads efficiently. Azure HPC is designed for scenarios that require significant processing power, such as scientific research, data modelling and visualisation, and simulation capabilities.

The versatility and 'big compute' features of HPC is what makes it a stand-out solution for research. HPC provides you with a modern computing solution with limitless scalability.

Azure Storage

Researchers store and retrieve significant amounts of data, so need somewhere to securely keep it all. The Azure Storage platform is Microsoft's cloud storage solution for modern data storage scenarios. Azure Storage offers highly available, massively scalable, durable, and secure storage for a variety of data objects in the cloud.

Covering a variety of services, including disks, blobs, and files, Azure Storage provides easy and quick access to all data while keeping it protected.

Azure AI

AI is revolutionising many sectors, and research is no different. Azure AI services provide both prebuilt AI models created for many use cases, and options to customise your own AI models for your unique needs.

Azure AI models have the capabilities to:

- Automate digitisation of handwritten notes
- Summarise data sets
- Automate categorisation
- Support data collection efforts using chatbots
- Accelerate discoveries by concluding data results quickly

Azure Machine Learning (ML)

Azure ML is a comprehensive cloud service designed for the machine learning project lifecycle. It integrates seamlessly with the Azure ecosystem, providing a robust platform for building, deploying, and managing machine learning models.

Azure ML's built-in data transformation tools simplify data preparation, enabling researchers to focus on insights rather than data management. Having a collaborative workspace allows teams to share data, code, and models securely, while its support for open-source frameworks like PyTorch and TensorFlow ensures flexibility.

Azure Internet of Things (IoT)

Enable highly secure and reliable communication between your Internet of Things (IoT) application and the devices it manages. Azure IoT Hub provides a cloud-hosted solution to connect virtually any device, ensuring full communication and streamlined processes.

Having all data, devices, and technological assets connected is essential for research. IoT enables you to keep things in order while working as efficiently as possible.

Microsoft Azure is built to empower organisations to scale, exceed expectations, and unlock limitless innovation.

Phoenix has deep expertise and quality of cloud transformation services, covering planning, migration, optimisation, operation, and management of cloud services on the Azure platform.

Why choose Phoenix?

Alongside a 30+ year history with Microsoft, we are the number one supplier for OCRE Azure, enabling us to provide the best solutions and outcomes for you.

As a Microsoft Azure Expert MSP and a recognised Solutions Partner for Microsoft Cloud, we leverage the latest Microsoft tools and technologies to deliver innovative solutions for our customers.

These accreditations position Phoenix as one of the UK's top Microsoft partners, trusted for supporting organisations in their digital transformation journey through OCRE.

2024 Microsoft Education Partner of the Year Finalist

Our dedicated Education Team, working alongside our Cloud Specialists, collaborate with research and education institutions across the UK. We guide them in exploring technical and licensing options, assessing their cloud requirements, and providing expert advice to design, build, and implement secure, efficient cloud infrastructure through the OCRE framework.

2023 Microsoft Modern Endpoint Management Partner of the Year

2023 Microsoft FastTrack Ready Partner of the Year Finalist

“Phoenix has made a phenomenal transition over the past few years from a licensing specialist to an Azure Expert Managed Service Partner, delivering remarkable outcomes.

Their focus on culture and putting inclusivity at the heart of what they do has really shone through in all the interactions with the Phoenix team. I’m really looking forward to seeing the partnership grow further in the months and years ahead.”

Orla McGrath, Global Partner Solutions Lead, Microsoft

2021 Microsoft UK Partner of the Year

2019 Microsoft Modern Workplace Transformation Partner of the Year

Through the OCRE framework, we'll provide you with the following concessions:

- 16% discount on all Azure PAYG metered SKU prices until 31st July 2030
- Data Egress waiver (capped at 15% total ACR – zones 1, 2, and 3)
- Phoenix 2% ACR until 31st July 2030 (applied to overage invoices)
- Windows Server 2012 ESU: 75% discount
- Still receive discounts on Reserved Instances and Hybrid Benefit
- SQL Server 2012 and 2014 ESU: 69% discount

Additional accreditations

Solution Partner for Microsoft Cloud

Solutions Partner for Business Applications

Solutions Partner for Data and AI (Azure)
- Infra and Database Migration

Solutions Partner for Digital and app innovation (Azure)

Solutions Partner for Data and AI (Azure)
- Infra and Database Migration

Solutions Partner for Infrastructure (Azure)
- Infra and Database Migration
- Azure Virtual Desktop

Solutions Partner for Security
- Cloud Security
- Identity and Access Management
- Information Protection and Governance

Solutions Partner for Modern Work
- Adoption and Change Management
- Calling for Microsoft Teams
- Meetings and Meeting Rooms for Microsoft Teams
- Teamwork Deployment
- Modernise Endpoint

Member of Microsoft Intelligent Security Association (MISA)

Microsoft Azure Expert MSP

Microsoft Specialisations

Adoption and change management

Azure Virtual Desktop

Calling for Microsoft Teams

Cloud Security

Identity and Access Management

Information Protection and Governance

Infra and Database Migration

Meetings and Meeting Rooms for Microsoft Teams

Modernise Endpoint

Teamwork Deployment

Threat Protection

How Phoenix supports researchers

These support options have been created by Phoenix as part of our ongoing commitment to providing value-added services to UK education institutions via the OCRE Framework.

By working closely with universities and research institutions, we aim to simplify cloud adoption, improve governance, and enhance collaboration in research communities.

1

Art of the Possible

- Demonstrate how Azure can support research initiatives (AI, machine learning, big data, HPC)
- Assess whether Azure is the right platform based on research needs and objectives
- Showcase use cases from other universities and provide proof-of-concept support

2

Governance and compliance

- Align research projects with institutional governance, risk, and compliance (GRC) policies
- Ensure adherence to data protection regulations (e.g., GDPR, UK Data Protection Act)
- Implement best practices for access control, data classification, and security frameworks

3

Best practice guidance

Security

- Secure research data with encryption, role-based access control (RBAC), and multi-factor authentication (MFA)
- Set up secure data-sharing mechanisms for collaboration across institutions

Risk management

- Identify potential risks in cloud adoption (e.g., data sovereignty, intellectual property protection)
- Establish security postures and incident response plans to protect research data

4

Azure scoping and cost management

- Design optimal cloud architectures tailored to research workloads
- Forecast and manage costs using Azure cost management tools
- Provide guidance on cost-saving measures such as reserved instances and grant-friendly pricing models

5

Sustainability

- Evaluate the environmental impact of running research workloads in Azure
- Align cloud strategies with institutional sustainability goals
- Optimise compute efficiency to reduce waste and improve resource utilisation

6

Training and enablement

- Hands-on workshops for setting up and managing Azure research environments
- Training on Azure portals, resource management, and cost optimisation
- Advanced sessions covering AI/ ML, HPC, and big data analytics

7

Ongoing support and optimisation

- Assist in setting up additional workloads as research evolves
- Provide best practices for tagging resources and managing cloud infrastructure
- Conduct periodic reviews to optimise cloud usage and spending

8

Flexible billing options

- Offer multiple billing models to align with research funding cycles:
  - Monthly in arrears
  - Pre-funded via grants
  - Other customised billing arrangements as required
- Provide detailed cost breakdowns and reports for funding applications

9

Research community collaboration

- Establish a network of researchers using Azure via Phoenix through OCRE
- Organise knowledge-sharing forums, webinars, and workshops
- Facilitate collaboration with Microsoft academic partnerships and research institutions
- Develop a shared repository of best practices and case studies

Talk to the number one OCRE supplier

We're here to support your organisation with everything OCRE and Azure. Find out more on our datasheet or get in touch today.

Download the datasheet **Contact an OCRE specialist**

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

Contact us

ocre@phoenixs.co.uk
01904 562200

PHOENIX