MIGRATION PLAYBOOK · END OF SUPPORT

How to plan your move off Office 365 A1 before it retires

Office 365 A1, the Student Use Benefit and free Exchange Online for Alumni retire on 1 January 2028, and the free 100 TB storage base goes at your first renewal on or after that date. This playbook turns that into a plan: find your real deadline, count who is on what, size your storage, choose each group's next licence and move or export data before anything is removed.

Updated 4 Nov 2026 5 phases 13 detailed steps 8 official sources

START HERE

How do you plan your move off Office 365 A1 before it retires?

SHORT ANSWER

This plans how a school or university moves its students, staff and alumni off Office 365 A1 and the free alumni and student benefits before they end. You find the date your agreement renews, count everyone on the retiring licences, measure how much storage you use against what your paid licences will give, decide which licence (or exit) each group gets, then move or export mail and files before any A1 licence is removed.

- **Recommended route:** Group-by-group transition at your first renewal after 1 January 2028
- **Order:** Data protection comes before licence changes, because removing a licence starts a 30-day clock on Exchange Online data.
- **5 phases:** Find the deadline and count, Size the storage, Choose destinations, Protect the data and Switch licences.
- **You're done when:** No users hold Office 365 A1 or Student Use Benefit licences.

KEY DATES

5 Nov 2026	Office 365 A1 no longer sold through the web direct channel.	Passed
1 May 2027	A1 no longer sold through CSP and Volume Licensing. Enrolments that began before this date keep A1 to the end of that term.	Upcoming
1 Jan 2028	A1, the Student Use Benefit and free Exchange Online for Alumni retire. A0 and the paid alumni offer become available.	Upcoming
First renewal on or after 1 Jan 2028	A1 users must move to a replacement licence and the 100 TB storage base is removed. This is your real deadline.	Upcoming

Students and families are told well in advance.

RECOMMENDED ROUTE

Group-by-group transition at your first renewal after 1 January 2028

Microsoft applies the changes at each institution's renewal, so planning by group around that date avoids losing mail or going over the storage pool.

▼ **Other options and when to use them**

- **Move everyone to paid student and staff licences**
  : Students need email, Teams and SharePoint, and the budget allows it.
- **Move students to another platform**
  : The school already uses, or is moving to, another email and file service for students.

TOOLS FOR THIS PLAN

Are you ready?
22-question readiness check

Plan your dates
Dated countdown you can add to your calendar

New to the jargon?
Plain-English migration glossary

ORDER TO MIGRATE IN, AND WHY

Data protection comes before licence changes, because removing a licence starts a 30-day clock on Exchange Online data.

1 **Renewal date confirmed**
It is your real deadline, not 1 January 2028.

2 **Users counted by licence**

Each group needs its own destination.

3 **Storage measured against the new pool**

Over 100% for 30 days makes OneDrive and SharePoint read-only.

4 **Destination chosen per group**

A0, a paid licence, the alumni offer or an exit.

5 **Data moved or exported**

Before any licence that includes Exchange is removed.

6 **Licences switched in waves**

New licence on first, A1 off second.

SETTINGS CHECKLIST: DECIDE THESE BEFORE YOU COPY

Built-in and third-party tools treat these differently. Tick each one off once you have decided.

Download this checklist (Excel)

☐ **Renewal and enrolment dates**

When your agreement next renews or is extended on or after 1 January 2028.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	Microsoft: enrolments that began before 1 May 2027 may keep their A1 footprint for that term; at renewal on or after 1 January 2028, affected users must move to a replacement licence.

Tip: Ask your partner or Microsoft account team to confirm the date in writing.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

☐ **Students on A0**

Whether you are eligible and whether students can live without school email, Teams and SharePoint.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	A0 is for institutions with all faculty on a paid A2 licence or higher, and for students who use Windows devices for learning. It includes Office desktop and web apps, Minecraft Education, Microsoft Entra ID Free and Learning Zone experiences on eligible devices; Exchange Online, SharePoint Online and Teams are not included.

Tip: Confirm with your partner exactly what A0 students keep, including OneDrive, before you plan around it.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

- [ ] **Storage**

How you stay under the pool after the 100 TB base goes.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	The pool becomes license-based only: for example 8 GB per A3 student and 75 GB per A3 faculty licence. Options are upgrades, 10 TB storage packs, clean-up or Microsoft 365 Archive.

Tip: Measure now in Reports > Storage; it is the only figure Microsoft enforces.

Microsoft Learn: Pooled storage management

- [ ] **Alumni**

Paid alumni offer, forwarding, or a clean exit.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	Free Exchange Online for Alumni retires on 1 January 2028. A new paid offer is available from that date through CSP and EES.

Tip: Alumni with unlicensed OneDrive accounts still count against the pool.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

THE PLAN, PHASE BY PHASE

1 Find the deadline and count — Now

Confirm your renewal date with your partner.

Count users on A1, Student

Use Benefit and alumni licences.

Watch out: Early renewal to avoid the changes is not permitted.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Plan around the renewal you already have.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

2 Size the storage

This term

Read the pooled storage figure in Reports > Storage.

Work out the pool your future licences give.

Plan clean-up of inactive and unlicensed accounts.

Watch out: At 100% for 30 days, OneDrive and SharePoint go read-only.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Clean up, archive, buy storage packs or upgrade licences.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

3 Choose destinations

Before budget is set

Pick A0, a paid licence, the alumni offer or exit for each group.

Get approval and budget from leadership.

Watch out: A0 has no Exchange, SharePoint or Teams.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Keep paid licences for students who need them, or move them to another platform.

Show the detailed steps (1) →

4 Protect the data

Before any licence is removed

Tell students and alumni what

will change.

Let leavers download their mail and files.

Export what the school must keep.

> **Watch out:** Exchange data is deleted 30 days after the licence is removed.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Export or move mail first.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

5 Switch licences

At renewal

Assign the new licence, then remove A1, in waves.

Check storage and mail flow after each wave.

Watch out: Licence changes take up to 48 hours to show in the storage report.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Leave time between waves.

Turn this phase into dated tasks with the cutover planner

Show the detailed steps (2) →

You are finished when

- No users hold Office 365 A1 or Student Use Benefit licences.
- Pooled storage is under the new entitlement.
- Alumni are on the paid offer or have exited.
- Every user who lost a mailbox was told and could export it.

CLICK BY CLICK

What does each step involve?

Open a part when you reach it in the plan. Each step says where to go, what to do and what you should see.

About this migration

What it covers, limits at a glance

For most schools this is a licensing change that turns into a migration. Students moved to the free A0 licence lose their mailbox, Teams and SharePoint access, and the tenant's storage pool shrinks to what paid licences provide. Both need planning well before renewal. For the announcement itself, see our news brief on the A1 retirement.

Nothing changes for an agreement during its current term. Microsoft says existing licences stay valid to the end of the term but cannot be renewed or expanded after retirement, and that early renewals intended to avoid the changes are not permitted.

RETIRES	LAST SALE	YOUR REAL DEADLINE
1 January 2028: A1, Student Use Benefit, free alumni email	**Web direct ended 5 Nov 2026; partners**	**First renewal or extension on or after 1 January 2028**

and Volume Licensing 1 May 2027

STORAGE
100 TB base removed; pool comes only from paid licences

FREE STUDENT OPTION
A0: Office apps and Minecraft Education; no Exchange, SharePoint or Teams

ALUMNI
New paid Exchange Online for Alumni offer from 1 January 2028

1 What do you need before you plan your move off Office 365 A1 before it retires?

Need	Details	Where to get it
Global Administrator or Global Reader	To read licences and users.	Microsoft 365 admin center
SharePoint Administrator (at least)	Microsoft requires it to see the pooled storage report.	Microsoft 365 admin center > Roles
Microsoft Graph PowerShell	To count users by licence.	Install Microsoft Graph PowerShell
Your agreement details	Enrolment start date, renewal date, and how you buy (CSP, EES or other).	Your partner or Microsoft account team
A communications owner	Students, families and alumni need notice before changes.	School leadership

2 Find your real deadline

1 step

1 January 2028 is when the offers retire, but the changes apply to you at your first renewal, extension or new agreement on or after that date.

Date	What happens	Source
5 November 2026	Office 365 A1 no longer sold through the web direct channel	Microsoft Education FAQ
1 May 2027	A1 no longer sold through partners (CSP and Volume Licensing). Enrolments that began before this date can keep their A1 footprint for that term.	Microsoft Education FAQ
1 January 2028	A1, Student Use Benefit and free Exchange Online for Alumni retire. A0 and the paid alumni offer become available.	Microsoft Education FAQ
First renewal or extension on or after 1 January 2028	Affected users must move to a replacement licence, and the 100 TB storage base is removed.	Microsoft Education FAQ

1

Confirm your renewal date

Where: Email to your Microsoft partner or account team

Ask for your enrolment start date, renewal or extension date, and how each education licence is bought. Ask them to confirm which date the A1 and storage changes apply to you, because Microsoft's portfolio page and FAQ word the enrolment cut-off slightly differently.

✓ **You should see:** A written renewal date. Use it as your project deadline.

3 Count who is on the retiring licences

3 steps −

1

List education licences and counts

Where: PowerShell 7 on your admin PC, with Microsoft Graph PowerShell

Connect and list every licence with how many are used. Office 365 A1 shows as `STANDARDWOFFPACK_STUDENT` (students) and `STANDARDWOFFPACK_FACULTY` (faculty) in Microsoft's education SKU reference. Student Use Benefit licences include `STUUSEBNFT` in the part number.

```
Connect-MgGraph -Scopes "Organization.Read.All","User.Read.All"
Get-MgSubscribedSku | Select-Object SkuPartNumber, SkuId, ConsumedUnits, @{n="Enabled";e=
{$_.PrepaidUnits.Enabled}} | Sort-Object SkuPartNumber
```

✓ **You should see:** A table of licences, including the A1 and Student Use Benefit SKUs and how many are assigned.

2

Export the users on each retiring licence

Where: Same PowerShell session

Export every user who holds an A1 or Student Use Benefit licence, with their department and job title, so you can sort them into groups (current students, staff, leavers, alumni). Record the result in the licence mapping template.

```
$retiring = Get-MgSubscribedSku | Where-Object { $_.SkuPartNumber -like "STANDARDWOFFPACK_*" -or
$_.SkuPartNumber -like "*STUUSEBNFT*" }
foreach ($s in $retiring) {
  Get-MgUser -All -Filter "assignedLicenses/any(x:x/skuId eq $($s.SkuId))" -ConsistencyLevel
eventual -CountVariable c -Property UserPrincipalName,Department,JobTitle |
    Select-Object UserPrincipalName, Department, JobTitle, @{n="Sku";e={$s.SkuPartNumber}} |
    Export-Csv "a1-users-$($s.SkuPartNumber).csv" -NoTypeInformation
}
```

✓ **You should see:** One CSV per retiring licence, ready to group by student, staff, leaver and alumni.

3

Find alumni and inactive accounts

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Reports > Storage > Storage usage by inactive users, or the SharePoint admin center unlicensed users report

Alumni and leavers are often the largest group and the easiest to clean up. Microsoft notes the inactive users report retires on 1 October 2026 and points to the advanced report with the owner last login date instead. For unlicensed OneDrive accounts, use **Reports** > **User reports** > **Unlicensed users** in the SharePoint admin center.

✓ **You should see:** A list of inactive and unlicensed accounts you can clean up or export.

4 Measure storage against the new pool

3 steps

Education storage is one pool across OneDrive, SharePoint and Exchange Online. After your renewal the 100 TB base goes and the pool comes only from paid licences.

Licence	Adds per student	Adds per faculty
A0 (students)	None	Not applicable
A2	4 GB	50 GB
A3	8 GB	75 GB
A5 or A7	12 GB	150 GB

1

Read your current usage

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Reports > Storage

Open the Overview page and note pooled usage and entitlement. Microsoft says only this page's totals are used for enforcement, and it updates once every 24 hours. User, shared and group mailboxes count; archive mailboxes do not.

✓ **You should see:** Current pooled usage in TB.

2

Work out the pool after renewal

Where: A spreadsheet, using your licence counts

Multiply your planned future licences by the figures in the table above and add any storage packs. Compare with today's usage. If usage is higher, plan clean-up, Microsoft 365 Archive, storage packs (sold in 10 TB lots) or licence upgrades, which are the options Microsoft lists.

✓ **You should see:** A projected pool figure and the gap, if any.

3

Clean up before renewal

Where: Microsoft Entra admin center > Users > All users > Bulk operations > Bulk delete, and SharePoint admin center

Delete inactive accounts you no longer need (after their data is handled, below), remove unlicensed OneDrive accounts you do not have to keep, and set group expiration so old groups and their storage are deleted. Microsoft notes that moving a student to the alumni licence does not delete their OneDrive, and unlicensed OneDrive accounts still count against the pool.

✓ **You should see:** Usage trends down towards the projected pool.

Over the limit means read-only. At 100% of the pool, the tenant has 30 days before OneDrive and SharePoint sites become read-only. Exchange keeps working.

5 Choose each group's next licence

1 step

Group	Options	What to check
Staff on A1	A paid faculty licence (A2 or higher)	A0 for students needs every faculty member on a paid A2 or higher licence.
Students who need email, Teams or SharePoint	A paid student licence (for example A3)	Each adds storage to the pool.
Students who only need Office apps on Windows	Microsoft 365 Education A0, if eligible	Includes Office desktop and web apps, Minecraft Education and Microsoft Entra ID Free. No Exchange, SharePoint or Teams. Up to 20 A0 licences per eligible paid faculty licence.
Students on the Student Use Benefit	A paid student licence or A0	The benefit retires on 1 January 2028 across all purchasing programs.
Alumni	Paid Exchange Online for Alumni, or exit	Paid offer available from 1 January 2028 through CSP and EES.
Leavers and inactive accounts	Export, then delete	Frees storage and licences.

1

Agree a destination for every group

Where: Planning meeting with leadership, using the licence mapping template

Fill in a destination for each group you counted, using the table above, and get the budget approved. Confirm eligibility and exact entitlements with your partner, because Microsoft does not name one replacement for A1.

✓ **You should see:** A signed-off destination and owner for every group.

6 Protect mail and files before licences change

3 steps

Microsoft holds Exchange Online data for 30 days after a licence is removed, then deletes it. OneDrive files are not deleted when a licence is removed, only when the user is deleted.

Change	What happens to mail	What happens to OneDrive
Licence with Exchange removed, no replacement	Held 30 days, then deleted (retention labels still apply)	Kept; the account becomes unlicensed and still counts against the pool
User deleted	Recoverable for 30 days	Kept 30 days by default, then 93 days in the site collection recycle bin
New licence with Exchange assigned before A1 is removed	Unaffected	Unaffected

1

Tell students and alumni early

Where: Your usual student and alumni channels, using the communication plan template

Explain what changes, when, and what they must do to keep their mail and files. Give leavers a date to download their OneDrive files and export their mail. The communication plan template helps you schedule each message.

✓ **You should see:** Every affected group has notice well ahead of the change.

2

Export what the school must keep

Where: Microsoft Purview portal > eDiscovery > Cases

For records the school must retain, create a search, select **Export**, choose PST for messages, and download within 14 days, after which Microsoft deletes the package. For a few mailboxes, export a mailbox to PST.

✓ **You should see:** Exports stored where your records policy says.

3

Move students to another platform, if chosen

Where: The destination platform's migration tool

If students are moving to another service, move their mail and files before A1 is removed. See Microsoft 365 to Google Workspace, or plan the move in waves with the wave plan template.

✓ **You should see:** Mail and files are in the new platform before licences change.

7 Switch licences in waves

2 steps

1

Assign the new licence first

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Billing > Licenses, or group-based licensing in the Microsoft Entra admin center

Assign the replacement licence to a wave of users, then remove A1 or the Student Use Benefit. Doing it in this order means users never sit without an Exchange licence, so the 30-day deletion clock never starts.

✓ **You should see:** Users in the wave hold the new licence and no A1 licence.

2

Check after each wave

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Reports > Storage, and a test sign-in

Allow up to 48 hours for licence changes to show in the storage report, check mail flow and sign-in for a sample of users, then start the next wave.

✓ **You should see:** Storage stays under the pool and users keep working.

WORTH KNOWING

What can go wrong, and how do you avoid it?

The detail behind the plan: options compared, and what experienced engineers check first. Tap any item.

Compare all the ways to do this

3 options

Paid licences for everyone who needs services

LOW EFFORT

Best for: Schools where students rely on email, Teams and SharePoint

- \+ No loss of services
- \+ Adds storage to the pool
- – Licence budget needed

A0 for eligible students, paid for the rest

MEDIUM EFFORT

Best for: Eligible schools where many students only need Office apps on Windows

- \+ Free student licences
- \+ Office desktop and web apps kept
- – No school email, Teams or SharePoint for A0 students
- – Mail and files must be moved first

Move students to another platform

HIGH EFFORT

Best for: Schools already using another email and file service for students

- \+ One platform for students
- – A full migration project

Read more →

OUR ADVICE

Most schools will mix these: paid licences for staff and students who need school email and Teams, A0 where it fits, and a clean exit for leavers and alumni who do not take the paid alumni offer.

Your renewal date is the deadline

SAVES TIME

Microsoft applies the changes at the first renewal or extension on or after 1 January 2028, and does not permit early renewals intended to avoid them.

WHAT TO DO

Get the date from your partner in writing and plan backwards from it.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

A0 removes email, Teams and SharePoint

USER IMPACT

Microsoft says Exchange Online, SharePoint Online and Teams are not included in A0.

WHAT TO DO

Move to A0 only students who do not need school email or Teams, and handle their mail and files first.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

A0 has eligibility conditions

COST LEVER

A0 needs every faculty member on a paid A2 or higher licence, and is for students using Windows devices for learning.

WHAT TO DO

Check faculty licensing and student devices before counting on A0.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

The storage pool can shrink sharply

COST LEVER

The 100 TB base goes and only paid licences add storage. A0 adds none.

WHAT TO DO

Measure now in Reports > Storage and plan clean-up or storage packs before renewal.

Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education FAQ

Read-only after 30 days over the limit

USER IMPACT

At 100% of the pool, OneDrive and SharePoint become read-only after 30 days. Exchange keeps working.

WHAT TO DO

Watch the 80% and 90% notifications and act before 100%.

Microsoft Learn: Pooled storage management

Removing a licence starts a 30-day clock on mail

COMPLIANCE

Exchange Online data is held for 30 days after the licence is removed, then deleted.

WHAT TO DO

Assign the new licence before removing A1, and export or move mail for anyone losing a mailbox.

Microsoft Learn: Assign or unassign licenses

Alumni OneDrives keep counting

COST LEVER

Moving a student to the alumni licence does not delete their OneDrive, and unlicensed OneDrive accounts count against the pool.

WHAT TO DO

Give alumni a date to download files, then remove their OneDrive accounts.

Microsoft Learn: Pooled storage management

Education is exempt from unlicensed OneDrive billing

COST LEVER

Microsoft's read-only, archive and billing rules for unlicensed OneDrive accounts do not apply to EDU customers, so those accounts stay until you remove them.

WHAT TO DO

Do not wait for automatic clean-up; plan it yourself.

Microsoft Learn: Manage unlicensed OneDrive user accounts

FINISH SAFELY

How do you check it worked, or roll back?

Full validation checklist

5 checks

Run these before you declare the migration complete. Record the results in the data validation report.

Check	How to check	What good looks like
No retiring licences left	Rerun `Get-MgSubscribedSku`.	A1 and Student Use Benefit SKUs show zero consumed units.
Storage under the pool	Microsoft 365 admin center > Reports > Storage.	Usage below entitlement, with no warning banner.
Mail still flows for licensed users	Send and receive a test message for a sample from each wave.	Messages arrive.
Leavers had their chance	Check the communication log and export records.	Every group was told before its change, and required exports are stored.
Alumni settled	Check alumni accounts are on the paid offer or removed.	No alumni on the retired free offer.

Rollback plan

If it goes wrong —

ROLL BACK IF

- Users lose mail they needed
- Storage goes over the pool after a wave
- Students cannot sign in to the apps they need

POINT OF NO RETURN

Thirty days after an Exchange licence is removed, the mailbox data is deleted. Deleted users are recoverable for 30 days.

1

Reassign a licence with Exchange

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Users > Active users

Within 30 days, assign a licence that includes Exchange to recover the mailbox.

✓ **You should see:** The mailbox is back.

2

Restore deleted users

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Users > Deleted users

Restore accounts deleted in error within 30 days.

✓ **You should see:** User, mailbox and OneDrive restored.

3

Pause the next wave

Where: Your wave plan

Stop and fix storage or licence issues before moving more users.

✓ **You should see:** No further users affected.

Agree the triggers and who decides before the go / no-go meeting. Use the rollback plan template.

Common problems and fixes

4 errors −

`Students lost email after the licence change`

Cause: A1 was removed before a licence with Exchange was assigned, or they moved to A0.

Fix: Assign a licence with Exchange within 30 days to recover the mailbox.

`OneDrive and SharePoint sites are read-only`

Cause: Pooled storage has been over 100% for 30 days.

Fix: Reduce usage or add storage, then wait for the report to update.

`Storage report has not changed after clean-up`

Cause: Usage updates once every 24 hours; licence changes take up to 48 hours.

Fix: Wait, then check Reports > Storage again.

`Partner cannot renew A1`

Cause: A1 cannot be renewed or expanded after retirement.

Fix: Choose a replacement licence for each group.

Search the full error library →

FAQ

Frequently asked questions

When does Office 365 A1 retire?

On 1 January 2028. For your institution, the change applies at the first renewal or extension on or after that date.

Is there a free replacement for A1?

Microsoft 365 Education A0 is free for eligible institutions, but it does not include Exchange Online, SharePoint Online or Teams.

What happens to the 100 TB storage?

The base allocation is removed at your first renewal on or after 1 January 2028. The pool then comes only from paid licences.

What happens to alumni email?

Free Exchange Online for Alumni retires on 1 January 2028. A paid alumni offer is available from that date through CSP and EES.

Can we renew early to keep A1?

No. Microsoft says early renewals or commits intended to avoid the changes are not encouraged or permitted.

Will students lose their files?

OneDrive files are not deleted when a licence is removed, only when the user is deleted. Mail is deleted 30 days after the Exchange licence goes.

SOURCES

Official sources

8 official pages this guide is based on

Vendors change limits and features, so confirm details on the source before you rely on them. Last checked 4 Nov 2026.

- Microsoft Learn: Microsoft 365 Education frequently asked questions
- Microsoft Education Blog: Evolving Microsoft 365 Education
- Microsoft Learn: Pooled storage management for education
- Microsoft Learn: Education SKU reference
- Microsoft Learn: Assign or unassign licenses
- Microsoft Learn: Delete a user from your organization

- Microsoft Learn: Manage unlicensed OneDrive user accounts
- Microsoft Learn: Export search results in eDiscovery