

Example ArcGIS Governance Policies

The example policies below highlight some of the most common areas for which ArcGIS governance is needed. They have been abstracted to highlight key considerations, and for the most part U-M specific references have been removed. You are welcome to use them as a blueprint for developing your own ArcGIS governance policies, however, please keep in mind it is not meant as a comprehensive list.

And, while ArcGIS Admin "best practice" recommendations may suggest particular policy stances, the overriding factor in developing your own policies should be ensuring compliance with your institution's overall governance policies, principles, standards, and guidelines, and the needs of your users. Across higher-ed institutions there will be a variety of ways in which individual areas are addressed successfully, in alignment with local needs and constraints.

During your initial development phase of ArcGIS governance, one should set reasonable timelines and consider staging changes that may result in resource reductions. It is important to provide sufficient time for user-education, and to allow users to prepare for changes.

It is also helpful if you strive to align your ArcGIS governance policies with the governance policies for similar institutional systems on your campus (e.g., Google, Microsoft, Box, Dropbox, Adobe, Learning Management Systems like Canvas.) Setting common user expectations across institutional systems will help foster user education, understanding, and compliance.

The examples below focus on academic use of ArcGIS. You will need to develop similar governance policies for your administrative use of ArcGIS. In part because of the licensing differences for academic versus administrative use in the Esri Education Institution Agreement.

Guiding Principles

- Honor institutional governance as it applies to ArcGIS
- Align with similar institutional systems (e.g., same off-boarding deadlines)
- Provide access to all faculty, staff, students, and affiliates
- Provide limited access to alumni (i.e., host public content for a defined period)
- Foster reasonable use (i.e., be mindful of resource constraints)
- Offer exceptions to policies, when it makes sense, and document and review
- Right-size institutional licensing of Esri products to ensure sustainability
- Periodically review and update ArcGIS governance policies, evolve to accommodate changes in user and institutional needs, and Esri licensing
- Preserve flexibility by acknowledging unanticipated policy changes may occur on short notice, resulting from unexpected changes in institutional resourcing or Esri licensing

Requirements

- Implementation of the "Best Practices" (Credit budgeting, SAML accounts and SSO, GIS for anyone via User Type and Role, New member defaults, monitoring use, etc.)
 - [ArcGIS Governance Best Practices for Education Customers](#) (Sept 2025)
 - [Five-part Blog Series](#) (April - July 2025)
- Automate administrative tasks whenever possible
 - Effort required should be constant, regardless of the number of users at your institution
- Leverage administrative tools:
 - ArcGIS Online user interface
 - Administrative reports / new admin Dashboard
 - Other Esri tools (e.g., Security advisor)
 - Programmatic solutions (e.g., ArcGIS API for Python, ArcGIS REST API)
 - Third-party tools (GeoJobe AdminTools - free / AdminTools Pro - cost)

Example Policies

1.0 Access

Access to ArcGIS is governed by a user's eligibility or role at the institution.

Eligible user roles are: student, faculty, staff, and affiliate. If a user has at least one of those roles, they are granted access.

At login-time, ArcGIS determines whether or not a user can access the system via its SAML integration with the institution's authoritative data source, an institutional Identity Provider (IdP.) If a user is able to successfully authenticate using the institutional Single-Sign-On (SSO) service, and they have an eligible role, then the user will be granted access. Otherwise, the user will be denied access.

2.0 Accounts

2.1 SAML Accounts

Regular users – students, faculty, staff, and affiliates – are provided access to ArcGIS resources through their institutional SAML (or enterprise) account via the institution's Single-Sign-On (SSO) infrastructure.

2.1.0.1 Affiliate Accounts

External individuals collaborating on institutional-related work, which requires access to our ArcGIS organization, can be granted an affiliate account, which is a SAML account.

Affiliate accounts leverage the institution's existing and established procedures, policies, and mechanisms for providing external personnel with access to institutional IT resources. Responsibility for verifying and periodically reviewing account status is placed on those directly involved in, and responsible for, a collaboration. (For reference, see [Overview of the Sponsor System.](#))

2.1.1 On-boarding (when users first login)

When an eligible user first logs in, their SAML account will automatically be provisioned with access and privileges covered by the Esri Education Institution Agreement. This provisioning is done through New member defaults and scripting. The configuration is balanced to maximize user access to capabilities while minimizing administrative effort.

2.1.1.1 New member defaults

All new accounts are automatically assigned the following via New member defaults on first login:

- User Type: Professional Plus
- Member Role: Publisher (new)
 - A custom role with all Publisher privileges, plus: AI assistants, Take ArcGIS pro license offline, Notebooks, Reassign/Receive content, Imagery, Notebooks, Pipelines, etc.
- Esri Access: Enabled
- Credit allocation: 1000 credits

2.1.1.2 Additional provisioning for new members

Every five minutes a script checks for newly created accounts, those with a role of "Publisher (new)", and changes their role to another custom role "Publisher (U-M)".

The "Publisher (U-M)" custom role adds administrative privileges – incompatible with New Member defaults – for: Reassign group ownership, Create groups with update capabilities, Link to organization-specific groups, etc.

2.1.2 On-going

Periodically engage with users during their tenure at the institution, sharing regular encouragement and reminders about good data stewardship and reasonable-use practices for ArcGIS. (See 4.0 Data Stewardship and 5.0 Communications.)

2.1.3 Preparing to leave the institution

Prior to leaving the university (e.g., graduating, retiring), and having their access terminated and account deleted, users should proactively dispose of their content and owned groups (see 4.0 Data Stewardship):

- Change ownership to someone else in the ArcGIS Online organization
- Migrate to another ArcGIS Online organization

- Backup external to the ArcGIS Online organization
- Delete what is no longer needed.

2.1.3 Off-boarding (when users become ineligible)

Once a day the eligibility of SAML accounts are reviewed programmatically against an authoritative institutional data source, and any changes in an account's status are addressed.

2.1.3.0.1 Student

A student user who graduates will lose their student directory role (and gain an alumni directory role) after the Last Day of Exams. If they have no other eligible role, then the student's account becomes ineligible, and they lose access to ArcGIS at that time.

2.1.3.0.2 Faculty

A faculty member who retires will lose their faculty directory role (and gain an emeritus directory role) at the end of the month in which they retire. If they have no other eligible role, then the faculty member's account becomes ineligible, and they lose access to ArcGIS at that time.

2.1.3.0.3 Staff

A staff member who retires will lose their staff directory role (and gain a retiree directory role) on the day following their last day of employment. If they have no other eligible role, then the staff member's account becomes ineligible, and they lose access to ArcGIS at that time.

2.1.3.0.4 Affiliate

An affiliate who reaches the end of their sponsorship will lose their affiliate directory role on the day following their last day of sponsorship. If they have no other eligible role, then the affiliate member's account becomes ineligible, and they lose access to ArcGIS at that time.

2.1.3.1 Off-boarding workflows

When a user loses their eligibility (or becomes ineligible) they can no longer access ArcGIS (e.g., graduates, retires), then they are "off-boarded".

The following workflows and timelines are subject to change to accommodate unexpected changes in Esri licensing and/or institutional resourcing.

2.1.3.1.1 Alumni accounts

Student accounts which become ineligible:

- On becoming ineligible:
 - Account is disabled
 - Account is tagged with current date to record when user became ineligible
 - Non-publicly-shared content is archived by unsharing it (if shared with org or groups, and sharing settings are captured in item's tags)
 - Owned Groups are archived by removing members, items unshared from group, and group is hidden (group settings are captured in group's tags)

- Provides a 1-year grace period for someone to notice something non-public has gone missing, and work with ArcGIS Online administrators to recover it, if applicable.
- After 1-year
 - Non-publicly-shared content is deleted
 - Owned Groups are deleted
- After 2-years
 - Publicly shared content is archived by unsharing it (sharing settings are captured in item's tags)
 - Provides a 1-year grace period for someone to notice something has gone missing, and work with ArcGIS Online administrators to recover it, if applicable.
- After 3-years
 - Remaining content is deleted
 - Account is deleted

2.1.3.1.2 Non-alumni accounts

Faculty, staff, or affiliate accounts which become ineligible:

- On becoming ineligible:
 - Account is disabled
 - Account is tagged with current date to record when user become ineligible
 - Content is archived by unsharing it (if shared publicly, with org, or groups, and sharing settings are captured in item's tags)
 - Owned Groups are archived by removing members, items unshared from group, and group is hidden (group settings are captured in group's tags)
 - Provides a 1-year grace period for someone to notice something has gone missing, and work with ArcGIS Online administrators to recover it, if applicable.
- After 1-year:
 - Content is deleted
 - Owned groups are deleted
 - Account is deleted

During the off-boarding stage, anyone can contact the ArcGIS administrators about content or a group that has gone missing. Administrators will make a best-effort to work with the owner of the content or group to restore it by transferring ownership to an active user in the organization, assisting with migration of the content and/or group elsewhere outside of the organization, or another appropriate solution.

If the owner of the content or group does not respond to requests within 30-days, then the institutional policies for handling data without a responsive owner will be followed.

2.1.4 Re-boarding (when ineligible users become re-eligible)

When a user returns who previously had a SAML account in our organization, but had left (i.e., became ineligible), then their account – if not yet deleted – will be restored:

- Content is unarchived (item is reshared according to archive tags, which are removed)
- Owned groups are unarchived (a report on membership and content is provided, and it is up to the user to reconstitute their groups, and archive tags are removed)
- Account is unarchived (re-enabled and archive tags removed)

If a user was separated from the institution long enough that their previous SAML account was deleted, then they will start the same as a first-time user.

2.2 Administrator Accounts

2.2.1 Individual ArcGIS Administrator Accounts

Each individual ArcGIS administrator should be provided with an arcgis (non-SAML) account for performing administrative tasks.

Administrators should use their regular institutional SAML account for non-administrative tasks.

Review Administrator accounts once a semester, and when someone leaves/joins the ArcGIS Administration team, and verify the correct set of individuals have access.

2.2.2 Shared ArcGIS Administrator Account

A single arcgis (non-SAML) account shared with all ArcGIS administrators, which is used as a proxy for the administrator group. The account's email address should be set to a group email address for all ArcGIS administrators.

Specify this account under Administrative contacts in ArcGIS Online Settings.

Do not use this account for performing administrative tasks.

Review membership in the email group once a semester to verify the correct set of individuals have access.

When someone leaves the ArcGIS Administration team, update the password for this account.

2.3 Service Accounts

Provide arcgis (non-SAML) accounts to individuals or groups for which SAML accounts will not work; however, these should represent exceptional, uncommon circumstances, as administrators will need to handle each case manually, so it is not a scalable solution.

For each service account, keep a record of who is responsible (and is approved to request changes), what it is being used for, and why it is needed. Review service accounts once a semester.

2.3.1 Programmatic access

For use cases where a SAML account and using OAuth2 is not possible.

2.3.2 Shared ownership of content

For use cases where shared ownership of content is critical, and a single individual with a SAML account is not a feasible option, nor would a Shared Update group's capabilities satisfy the collaboration's needs.

It is the responsibility of the collaborators to coordinate sharing and maintaining the credentials in a safe, secure manner, after they are provided by the ArcGIS administrators, in alignment with institutional governance policies (e.g., change account password whenever someone leaves the collaboration)

3.0 Monitoring and Managing Resources

Administrators will monitor the users and usage of ArcGIS, and related institutional resources, on a regular basis to ensure sustainability.

- Programmatic monitoring
 - [Usage Dashboard](#) (Build your own: [GIS for Everyone](#))
 - [Data Store Dashboard](#)
 - [Credit Dashboard](#)
 - [Item Dashboard](#)
 - [Empowered Data Stewardship – Enable users to monitor their Feature Storage use](#)
- Administrative reports
 - [Supercharge your ArcGIS organization management with reports](#)
- New ArcGIS Online Dashboard (Feb 2026 Update)
- GeoJobe
 - AdminTools (free)
 - AdminTools Pro (cost)

3.1 Forecasting and planning

Prior to six months before license renewal, forecast usage for next license year. As needed, plan to right-size the institution's ArcGIS environment, keeping in mind institutional resource constraints and Esri licensing terms.

3.2 Continuous monitoring

On an ongoing, daily basis, proactively identify unexpected patterns of use, and, if necessary, take steps to address ArcGIS or institutional resource constraints impacting the user experience.

3.3 Compliance monitoring

For limited resources (e.g., credits, feature data store) define limits and workflows to ensure reasonable use.

3.3.1 Credits

Users are initially assigned a default credit allocation of 1000 credits.

User credit allocations that are below the default are reset to the default during the first week of a semester.

3.3.1.1 Credits Exceeded

If a user consumes all of their credits, both they and ArcGIS Administrators will receive an automatic notification from ArcGIS.

ArcGIS administrators should pro-actively contact the user within a week to discuss options, such as alternative workflows or solutions (e.g., purchasing additional credits which can be assigned to a specific user), or to document and provide an exception to the standard credit policy (see below.)

3.3.1.2 Exceptions

If a user has a realistic need for a higher credit allocation than the default, then provide an exception:

- Record user
- Document new credit allocation value, and if it is a one-time or ongoing need. If the latter, the period at which to revisit and re-up the allocation, and by how much.
- Document termination date for exception
- Review exceptions once a semester

3.3.2 Feature Data Store

Users are initially assigned a soft quota of 5GB and a hard quota of 10GB for Feature Storage, which is monitored and enforced on a daily basis programmatically.

[Currently Esri does not provide per-user control over feature storage credit consumption; however, a built-in solution is tentatively slated for October 2026.]

3.3.2.1 Feature Storage Quota Exceeded

3.3.1.1.1 Soft Quota

When a user consumes more than the soft quota for Feature Storage, they are sent a notification email.

They have 30-days to get below the soft quota or discuss an exception with the ArcGIS Administrators.

If they are not below the soft quota prior to the 30-day window expiring, then their account will be disabled. After another 30-days, if they fail to work with ArcGIS Administrators to resolve the situation, their content is deleted.

3.3.1.1.2 Hard Quota

When a user consumes more than the hard quota for Feature Storage, they are sent a notification email, and their account is disabled.

They have 30-days to contact ArcGIS Administrators to discuss alternatives or an exception to the quota.

If they have not contacted ArcGIS Administrators and come up with a solution prior to the 30-day window expiring, their content is deleted.

3.3.2.2 Exceptions

If a user has a realistic need for higher Feature Storage soft and hard quotas than the defaults, then provide an exception:

- Record user
- Document new soft and hard quota values
- Document termination date for exception
- Review exceptions once a semester

3.3.3 Non-Feature Storage [as a resource]

Users are encouraged to practice good data stewardship as well for non-Feature Storage content, removing items that are no longer in use, avoiding unnecessary duplication of data, using the right format for the right job, etc.

Currently there are no limits on the use of non-Feature Storage by users, however, as it is a shared resource, we reserve the right to implement limits without prior notice, if needed.

3.4 Privacy and security monitoring

- [ArcGIS Security and Privacy Adviser Tool](#)
 - Review output once a semester
 - e.g., Publicly shared editable feature layers
 - Confirm with owner that it is needed, and document it; otherwise, assist them with alternative configurations for their data

4.0 Data Stewardship

Users should endeavor to continuously manage their use of ArcGIS Online storage following good data stewardship practices.

ArcGIS Administrators should regularly encourage and remind users of their obligation to practice good data stewardship (see 5.0 Communications.)

4.1 Scope

ArcGIS Online storage is for active research and teaching activities only, related to university-activities or self-education .

- Content that is not currently being used should be deleted, or archived externally and removed from ArcGIS Online, using approved tools and services ([Data Storage Finder](#))
- ArcGIS Online is not an approved storage location for the authoritative copies of research data, and should not be used for such (see [Research Data Stewardship Policy](#).)
- Using ArcGIS Online to host copies of authoritative data is permitted (e.g., using an ArcGIS Hub site to provide convenient access to data.)

4.2 Responsibilities

Users are responsible for following all institutional data stewardship policies that are applicable to their data.

- [Institutional Data Stewardship Policy](#)
- [Research Data Stewardship Policy](#)
- [Who Holds Copyright at or in Affiliation with the University of Michigan](#)

4.3 Tasks

In addition to practicing good data stewardship on an ongoing basis, users should also proactively dispose of their ArcGIS Online content prior to leaving the institution.

- Change ownership to someone else inside our organization
 - Users can change item ownership on their own
 - Administrator assisted ownership changes, when current owner is unreachable
 - How do you get approval to change ownership, if the owner is unreachable?
 - ...
- Migrate content to another ArcGIS Online organization
 - Users are able to do this on their own, however, they may not know how to do it
 - Administrator assisted content migration; may require coordination and cooperation of Administrators from destination organization
 - ...
- Backup content external to ArcGIS Online organization
 - Choose an appropriate format for needs (e.g., OfflineContentManager, File Geodatabase, JSON, zip archive)
 - Administrator assistance may be necessary to determine best backup strategy for a given situation, and to provide assistance with programmatic solutions
 - ...

- Delete content that is no longer needed.
 - User can delete content at any time
 - Recycle bin provides 14-day window for recovery of mistakenly deleted items
 - ...

5.0 Communications

ArcGIS Administrators will follow institutional governance when communicating with users.

5.1 Channels

- Email
 - ArcGIS Administrators will follow institutional governance on sending bulk emails to users, e.g.,
 - Write and format the message in a way that supports accessibility and avoids looking like phishing
 - Information in the email message must be time-critical
 - Only send to the subset of users to which an email message applies (e.g., communicate a change in the default credit allocation only to those users who have consumed credits or own feature storage content.)
 - Be clear, brief, and to the point; if you wish to convey more information, consider referring recipients to a web page for the detail
 - Include contact information (email or phone) to which follow-up inquiries may be directed
- Information banner
 - Display critical messages during appropriate time periods at top/bottom of ArcGIS Online pages (e.g., what graduating students need to do before they leave, displayed during the last four-weeks of a semester.)
- Access note (For organization members)
 - Display critical messages during appropriate time periods on login, and require a user to acknowledge before allowing them to proceed; can choose between accept/decline- and OK-style acknowledgements.
- Website
 - Host detailed information on topics, which can be referred to in emails, information banner messaging, etc.
 - Provide boilerplate information, which instructors can incorporate into course content and share directly with students to help educate them on their responsibilities when using ArcGIS

5.2 Topics

- Account lifecycle and data governance
 - Provide boiler plate for instructors to include in course materials about what happens when a student graduates, and fostering proactive data stewardship prior to a student leaving

- Bulk email 6-weeks prior to end of semester about what happens when users become ineligible and lose access, and encouraging proactive data stewardship for those that own content
- Activate Information banner message 4-weeks prior to end of semester about when users become ineligible and lose access, and encouraging proactive data stewardship for those that own content. (Disable banner after Last Day of Exams for the semester so that it doesn't become a static, ignored artifact.)
- Software and Services lifecycle
 - What happens when product X (e.g., Classic Esri StoryMaps) is slated to be retired?
 - Bulk email to users who have used X, or own content impacted by X's retirement, when Esri initially announces retirement, and offering local support options, if needed
 - Subsequent bulk emails once a semester with latest retirement status for product X, and offering local support options, if needed, until product is actually retired.
- Governance policies
 - Once a semester, during the first eight-weeks, send an email to all active ArcGIS users with an executive summary of ArcGIS governance policies, including a link to additional information on website
 - When governance policies need to be updated, consider the timing and scope of the change, and:
 - Select one or more appropriate options from bulk email, information banner, notification message, etc. to communicate policy changes
 - Send multiple messages over time, and perhaps over multiple channels to communicate policy changes, as appropriate.

6.0 Partnered Collaborations

Ongoing Partnered Collaborations are not compatible with administering a large, higher-ed ArcGIS Online organization:

- Violates institutional governance on providing access to external users to institutional IT resources.
- Limitation on how many an organization can participate in is usually prohibitive.
- Typically would require ArcGIS Administrator oversight in areas where administrators have no direct involvement, complicating their management.

Instead, use affiliate accounts to support collaborations that require organizational access for external participants. It is an already approved path for providing access to institutional IT resources, such as ArcGIS, to people external to an institution.

6.1 Partnered Collaborations for content transfer

ArcGIS Administrations may enable Partnered Collaborations on a short-term, case-by-case basis, to facilitate content migration to another ArcGIS Online organization.

Be sure to keep in mind, however, the scaling limitations of Administrator effort involved in handling Partnered Collaborations.

7.0 My Esri

- Provide My Esri access and privileges only as needed
 - Typically provided only to ArcGIS Administrators
- Document who has a My Esri account, their privileges, and why
- Review My Esri access, accounts, and privileges once a semester

8.0 ArcGIS Enterprise

- Internal workflow for requesting licensing, justification, dissemination, support channels, etc.
- Document who, why, what, when...

9.0 ArcGIS Hub Premium

- Usually needs additional governance policies
 - Most of the same things as for Online (access, accounts, quotas, etc.)
 - Social logins
- What do Best Practices imply for governance?
 - "GIS for Anyone" - anyone from employee org can create Hub content

10.0 ArcGIS Installers

- Host ArcGIS software installers via an appropriate institutional file repository (e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox)
- When appropriate, customize installers to use our ArcGIS Online organization as the Portal and License Manager.
 - [Current list of products for which customized installers are made]
- Within two-weeks of release of a new version, endeavor to add it to local repository, and update GIS Software website and institutional GIS software directory

11.0 Other

- ADA
- Course-related groups; LMS integrations (e.g., Canvas)
- SAML groups

- Content migration
- ArcGIS Solutions deployment
- ...