Connecting to SURFconext in combination with information security

What is SURFconext?

Tilburg University is implementing more and more ‘cloud solutions’ from various providers/suppliers. Having a separate link for each service would not be convenient, so SURF[[1]](#footnote-1) has developed a solution that enables the same connection to be used for a large number of different cloud solutions: SURFconext. Via SURFconext users can log in with one user name and password to multiple cloud services used by the university.

SURFconext is privacy friendly because it only exchanges users' data (attributes) with the cloud solution that are really needed.

There are no costs associated with linking a new cloud solution via SURFconext because Tilburg University is connected to SURFnet.

Want to know more?

More information on SURFconext can be found on the website: [https://www.surf.nl/en/surfconext-](https://www.surf.nl/surfconext-overal-veilige-toegang-met-1-set-credentials) [global-access-with-1-set-of-credentials.](https://www.surf.nl/surfconext-overal-veilige-toegang-met-1-set-credentials)

Would you like to know which of your attributes Tilburg University will exchange with various services? Go to [https://engine.surfconext.nl/authentication/sp/debug.](https://engine.surfconext.nl/authentication/sp/debug)

What steps are required to connect to a service on SURFconext?

The various steps (the activities required and by whom) are set out below.

1. Preliminary research, market consultation, Schedule of Requirements

**Who: the information manager**

User management and access to a cloud solution are vital when selecting a new information service. This will need to be developed as part of the preliminary research, market consultation or drawing up the Schedule of Requirements.

The Information Security Department of LIS will advise on the security requirements that an information service needs to meet. We have a strong preference for connecting to the service through SURFconext. More and more institutions are including a requirement in their invitations to tender that SURFconext must be able to be used to connect to the future service.

The website<https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Get+Conexted>sets out the advantages of a SURFconext connection for the institution (IP=Identity Provider), the supplier (SP=Service Provider) and the end-user.

Is the service already connected with SURFconext?

SURF maintains an overview of the services connected to SURFconext: see <https://www.surf.nl/en/which-services-can-you-use-with-surfconext>.

Does the supplier not have a SURFconext connection yet? In that case the advice is to ask the supplier whether it could connect up. The supplier will need to organize matters with SURFconext first. The website <https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Get+Conexted>provides detailed documentation for suppliers (Service Providers).

Does the service have a connection agreement with SURF?

A supplier offering a SURFconext connection may not have signed a contract (connection agreement) with SURF yet. It will first need to enter into a connection agreement with SURF. The model contract can be found here: [https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Contractual+part.](https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Contractual+part)

1. The tender procedure has been completed and implementation is starting

**Who: the information manager in collaboration with the data representative/system owner/process owner**

A supplier has been selected and the new service is being implemented.

It is important to realize what SURFconext does and does not do. As set out on this page [(https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Afspraken+-+contracten+-+trustframework)](https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Afspraken+-+contracten+-+trustframework), along with a technical infrastructure SURFconext provides a trust framework in which all SURFconext participants (institutions or service providers) meet the same requirements, so that they can trust one another. This is the added value of a federation: joint agreements on how the participants should handle the information that is exchanged through the federation (i.e. SURFconext).

Is the supplier a ‘data processor’?

If the supplier is a ‘data processor’, the trust framework will not be sufficient and the institution will also need to enter into a data processing agreement with the supplier. That agreement must lay down what user data (attributes) must be exchanged to enable the service to be used. If a user wishes to log in to a service through SURFconext, he or she will be redirected to his or her organization’s login page for local authentication. The Service Provider may wish to know who the user is in order to personalize the service (Welcome, Jan Jansen) or to perform authorizations (e.g. different services for students and staff). The information that the Service Provider needs to do this is referred to as ‘attributes’. The organization communicates these attributes to the Service Provider through SURFconext. Each attribute has a particular value that provides information about the user, e.g. a name or email address.

Please note: no more attributes may be exchanged than are needed for the purpose (purpose limitation), so be critical about this (a ‘critical friend’)!

The website<https://wiki.surfnet.nl/display/surfconextdev/Attributes+in+SURFconext>provides an overview of the data (attributes) that can be exchanged through SURFconext.

1. The implementation phase: actually making the connection

**Who: the project manager in collaboration with the data representative/system owner/process owner**

Users are about to start using the service. In this phase the institution’s contact person (ICP) will need to configure the actual exchange using the SURFconext dashboard. A request to this effect can be sent to [surfconext@uvt.nl.](mailto:surfconext@uvt.nl) N.B. Only the data (attributes) set out in the data processing agreement that has been signed are exchanged using the dashboard.

1. SURF (Samenwerkende Universitaire RekenFaciliteiten) is a cooperative association of Dutch educational and research institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)