In MSI (Windows Installer), the context refers to the level of access a process or component has within the Windows operating system. The key difference lies in whether the installation or action runs under the user's profile (User Context) or with elevated system privileges (System Context). Additionally, there are situations where actions might require Admin privileges, even if not directly running in System Context. [1, 2, 3, 4]

User Context:

- **Definition: Runs under the currently logged-in user's credentials and within their user profile.**
- **Access: Can access files and settings specific to the user profile, but typically doesn't have full system-wide access.**
- **Best for: User-specific applications, customizations, and tasks that don't require system-wide changes. [2, 3]**

System Context:

- **Definition: Runs with elevated privileges, often as the SYSTEM user, with full system-wide access.**
- **Access: Has access to all files and system resources, including those outside the user's profile.**
- **Best for: System-wide installations, critical system policies, and scenarios where full control is needed. [2]**

Admin Context (Implicit in some cases):

- **Definition: Although not a distinct context like User or System, many MSI installations that require system-wide changes (like installing a program that runs as a service) might require Admin privileges.**
- **Access: These installations require the user to have Admin privileges to run the MSI and perform the necessary system changes.**
- **Best for: Installations that modify system files, services, or other resources that require elevated permissions. [3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]**

In summary:

- **User Context: Limited access to the user's profile.**
- **System Context: Full system-wide access.**

- **Admin Context (Implied): Requires Admin privileges for system-wide changes. [2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 9]**

Understanding these contexts is crucial for correctly deploying software using MSI, ensuring the right level of access for the application and its components. [1, 2]