Deactivation vs. Deletion of User Accounts SOP

Purpose

To define a standardized process for temporarily deactivating or permanently deleting user accounts in Microsoft 365 Business. This ensures security, data continuity, and regulatory compliance for all Microsoft 365 users, including employees, contractors, interns, and approved external partners. This procedure applies to all users managed under the Microsoft 365 tenant as well as related license, data, and access management activities.

1. Deactivation

Used when access needs to be temporarily restricted. Cases include employees on leave, employees under investigation, or temporary contractors between assignments.

1. Block user sign-in within Microsoft 365 Admin Center.
2. Remove assigned licenses if user will be inactive for an extended period of time (typically exceeding 30 days).
3. Revoke active sessions
4. Document the action in the internal ticketing system with the requester name, justification, and date of expected reactivation (if known).

Do not delete the account unless the status is confirmed as permanent. All data within Office 365 remains intact, including mailbox, OneDrive, and Teams.

1. Deletion

Used when an account is no longer needed permanently, which includes resignations, end of contracts, and terminations. Before doing this, confirm HR notification and approval, ensure data is backed up or transferred (check emails, OneDrive, Teams, etc.). Notify HR of upcoming deletion. Reassign licenses or resources if needed.

1. Delete user within Microsoft 365 Admin Center.
2. Decide whether to transfer OneDrive files and/or assign incoming emails to another user.
3. Confirm deletion and record in internal ticketing system with HR approval reference, license release confirmation, and data transfer details.

Note that account and data are retained in Microsoft 365 for 30 days post-deletion and restoration is possible during this period.

This SOP should be reviewed semi-annually or upon changes in Microsoft 365 policy or IT security guidelines.