

Managing Assigned Licenses for Deleted User Accounts

Why Some Deleted User Accounts Store License Assignment Information And Some Do Not

Why does the Microsoft 365 admin center display a license for a deleted user account (Figure 1).

The follow-up question is how they can remove the license and reassign it to another user.

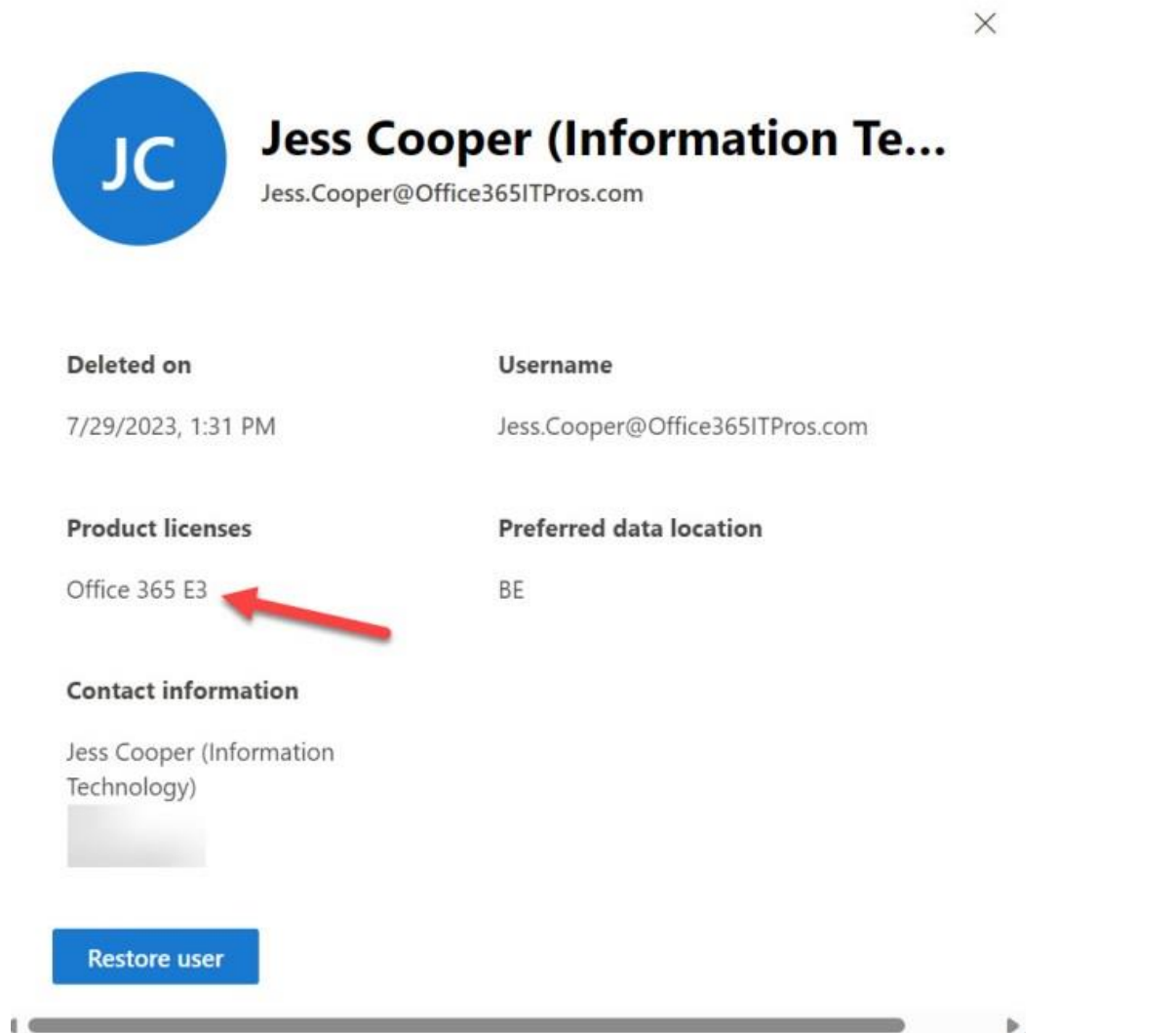


Figure 1: Deleted user account with license assignment information

The answer is that they don't need to do anything. When an administrator removes a user account, Entra ID moves the account into its deleted items container (aka the wastebasket). The deleted account remains there for 30 days, during which time an administrator can restore the account (see the big blue button in Figure 1). The ideal situation is for a restored account to come back with all its settings intact, including assigned licenses. Entra ID tracks the licenses that the deleted account once had so that it can reassign the licenses to the newly restored account.

Any licenses assigned to a deleted user account become available following the account's deletion. This includes accounts used for shared mailboxes where assigned licenses exist to enable features like archiving. No one wants to keep expensive licenses on ice pending account restores, so often the licenses end up being assigned to other accounts.

It Depends on How User Accounts Are Deleted

The interesting thing is that the presence of assigned licenses for deleted accounts depends on the method used to delete the account. When an administrator deletes an account through the Microsoft 365 admin center, the process removes license assignments before removing the account, which means that if you examine the properties of the deleted account afterward, no licenses are present (Figure 2).



Jane Sixsmith

Jane.Sixsmith@office365itpros.com

Deleted on

8/2/2023, 12:49 PM

Username

Jane.Sixsmith@office365itpros.com

Product licenses

Unlicensed

Preferred data location

US

Contact information

Jane Sixsmith

Restore user

Figure 2: Deleted user account with no license assignment information

However, if you use PowerShell or the Microsoft Entra admin center to remove an account, the deleted account object retains license information. The licenses are not assigned, but the license information is present in the properties of the deleted user object. This is why Figure 1 shows that a deleted account has a license.

The reason why the Microsoft 365 admin center removes licenses and other administrative interfaces do not is due to the **multi-phase process the Microsoft 365 admin center uses for account**

removal. The process includes steps such as giving another user access to the user's OneDrive for Business account (Figure 3) to allow for the recovery of any important information before the permanent removal of the user account.

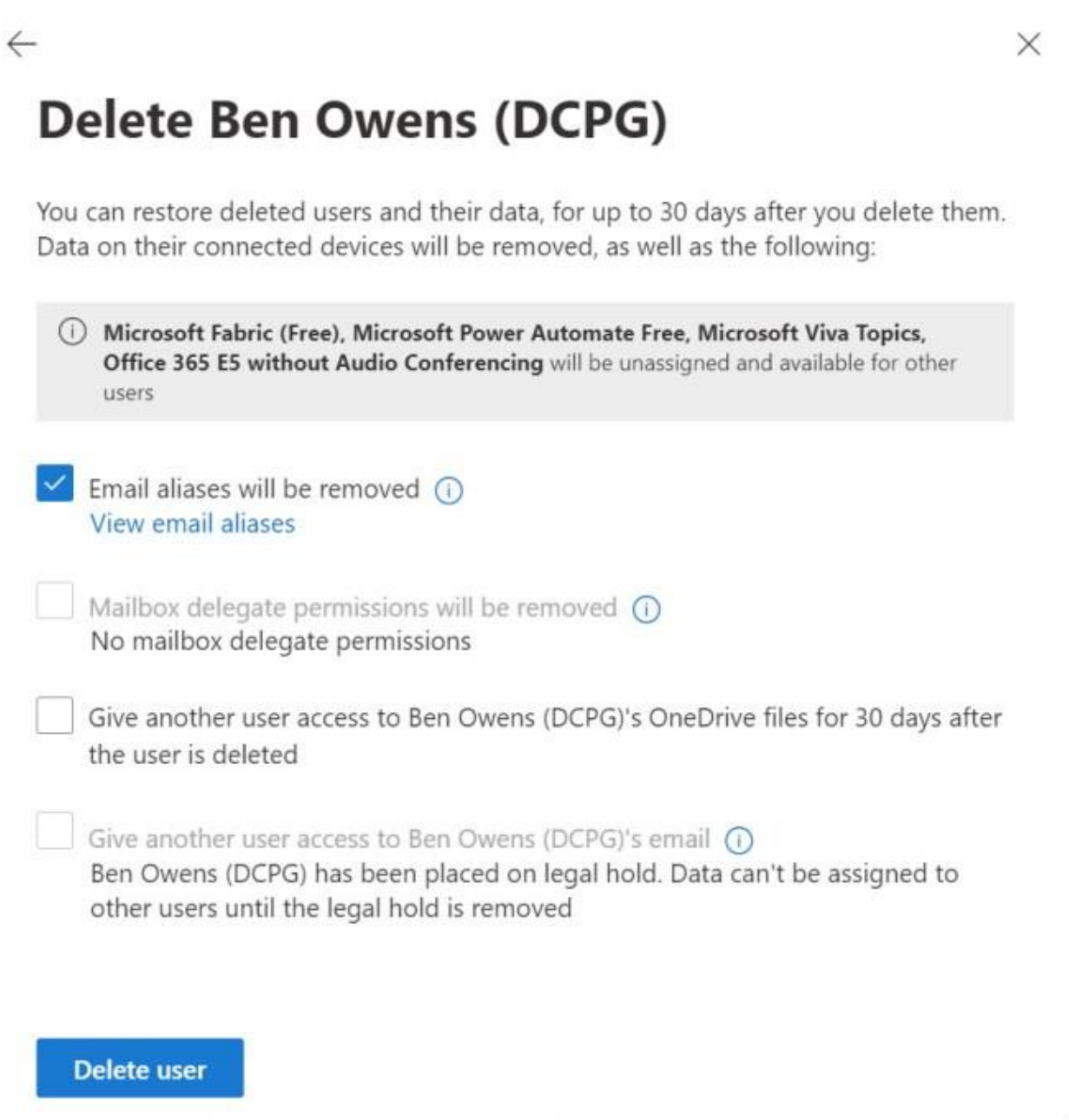


Figure 3: Steps in the Microsoft 365 admin center account deletion process

PowerShell and the Microsoft Entra admin center only concern themselves with the removal of the user account object, and that's why some deleted user accounts have license assignment information and others do not.

Care Needed When Restoring Deleted Accounts

The Microsoft 365 admin center user restore process warns administrators to:

- Assign licenses after restoring the account.
- Change the account password.

A user account has no access to Microsoft 365 services after it is restored until these steps are complete.

By comparison, if you restore a deleted account through the Microsoft Entra admin center or PowerShell, the license assignments noted in the account properties become active again. This can lead to an over-assignment condition where too many user accounts have licenses for specific products, like Office 365 E3. In this situation, administrators must buy additional licenses or remove licenses from other accounts (or delete other accounts).

To check if the properties of any deleted accounts include license assignments, you can run these Microsoft Graph PowerShell SDK commands to fetch details of deleted accounts and report if any license data exists:

```
Connect-MgGraph -Scope Directory.Read.All
[array]$DeletedUsers = Get-MgDirectoryDeletedItemAsUser -Property DeletedDateTime, Id, displayName,
userPrincipalName, assignedLicenses | Sort-Object DeletedDateTime -Descending
ForEach ($User in $DeletedUsers) {
  If ($User.assignedLicenses) {
    $Licenses = $User | Select-Object -ExpandProperty assignedLicenses
    [string]$Skus = $Licenses.SkuID -Join ", "
    Write-Host ("Deleted user {0} has license information noted in their account properties {1}" -f $User.displayName, $Skus
  )}
}
```

If you use PowerShell to script the recovery of user accounts, you should check for license assignments and validate that available licenses are available before recovering the account. This article explains **how to fetch subscription information using the Get-MgSubscribedSku cmdlet and the subscriptions API**, including the count of assigned and available licenses. It's easy to check if a license for a SKU is available before assigning it to a recovered account.

Alternatively, go ahead and recover the account and fix the licensing problem later through the Microsoft 365 admin center.

Processing Differences Exist

This discussion reveals a difference in behavior between the raw processing performed by Graph APIs and the wrapper around the APIs implemented in the Microsoft 365 admin center. Sometimes the differences bubble up to the surface and the reasons for the differences aren't immediately clear until you poke around to discover why things happen the way that they do. Isn't that often the case in IT?