Microsoft SQL Server: status for DBAs

Where Microsoft SQL Server stands for Exponential 6.0.x - not supported, known to be possible with additional work - what exists that such work could build on (the driver interface, the .dba format, pluggable schema…

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This page is for database administrators in organizations standardized on Microsoft SQL Server who are asked whether an Exponential site can run on it. The short answer: **not in Exponential 6.0.x**. SQL Server is known to be possible with additional work at this time; there is no driver, no schema handler and no installer entry for it, and nothing here is a promise of a release that has one. This page summarizes what exists, what is missing and what to do meanwhile. The full statement and work list are in Database support.

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The statement

> Microsoft SQL Server is known to be possible with additional work at this time.

Do not plan a production site on SQL Server with Exponential 6.0.x. Do not install a third-party driver found online on a production site without a full test: no SQL Server driver has been run on Exponential 6 by the project.

What exists to build on

- **A small driver interface.** Every database is reached through `eZDBInterface` (`lib/ezdb/classes/ezdbinterface.php`); five drivers already implement it for a file database, three SQL servers and a document store (The database layer in one page).
- **An engine-neutral schema.** `share/db_schema.dba` and `share/db_data.dba` are turned into each engine's DDL by a schema handler (The .dba schema format).
- **Pluggable schema handlers and aliases.** `settings/dbschema.ini` (`SchemaPaths[]`, `SchemaHandlerClasses[]`) and `site.ini [DatabaseSettings] ImplementationAlias[]` can be extended from an extension, the way `ezoracle` does it.
- **PHP drivers.** Microsoft publishes `sqlsrv` and `pdo_sqlsrv` for PHP on Linux and Windows;

check Microsoft's support matrix for PHP versions. Not tested with Exponential.

- **Tools that read SQL Server** (not ways to run a site): the database manager of the `sevenx_dse` extension ships an MS SQL driver for browsing tables.

The xrowmssql extension

se7enxweb/xrowmssql is a SQL Server extension written for the 4.x line and SQL Server 2005/2008, copied from `xrow/xrowmssql` in October 2013. It has a driver (`eZMSSQLDB`), a schema handler (`eZMssqlSchema`), settings and install notes. It has not been run on Exponential 6. To work there it needs at least: a PHP 8 constructor, the `sqlsrv` back end on Linux (the old `mssql_*` functions are gone since PHP 7), real offset and limit (`OFFSET ... FETCH`, SQL Server 2012 and later), `SCOPE_IDENTITY()` instead of `@@identity`, and `NVARCHAR(MAX)` instead of `ntext`. Its `extension.xml` says GPL v2 while its `LICENSE` file is GPL v3; check both before reusing code.

What is missing

Piece	What it involves
A driver	`eZDBInterface` on `sqlsrv`: connect, query, offset and limit, transactions, `lastSerialID()`, escaping, string helpers, `md5()` via `HASHBYTES`
The `BIT_OR` aggregate	SQL Server has none; the content engine folds language masks with it
`UPDATE ... JOIN`	Written `UPDATE t SET ... FROM t JOIN ...` on SQL Server
A schema handler	`.dba` to SQL Server DDL and back, for the installer and the upgrade check
SQL and update files	`kernel/sql/<engine>/`, `update/database/<engine>/`
Installer entries	the wizard, `settings/setup.ini [database_extensions]`, `exp:install --db`
Session statements, case and collation	ignore MySQL-only SET; choose a UTF-8 collation (2019 and later) or `NVARCHAR`
Extensions	review every extension with SQL of its own
Tests and CI	a CI job with a SQL Server container

How large this work is has not been measured, and no estimate is given.

What to do meanwhile

- Run the site on one of the six supported engines. PostgreSQL is the recommended server (Choosing an engine).
- If your organization requires reporting from SQL Server, replicate or export data from the supported engine into SQL Server with your usual integration tools; the site itself keeps its own database.
- Treat any claim of SQL Server support you meet as unverified until it names a released, tested driver.

Contributing the work

Anyone who wants to take it on is welcome: start from xrowmssql for the SQL Server specifics and from `ezoracle` as the model of a current driver shipped outside the kernel, and open an issue on the software tracker to coordinate.

Related pages

- Database support: Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft SQL Server status (for hosting companies)
- Supported engines and versions
- Free documentation: this page is free to copy, translate and improve under the GNU FDL 1.3.

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