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2 **SAMLv2: HTTP POST “SimpleSign”**  
3 **Binding**

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11 **Abstract:**

12 This specification defines a SAML HTTP protocol binding, specifically using the HTTP POST  
13 method, and not using XML Digital Signature for SAML message ~~and/or SAML-assertion~~ data  
14 origination authentication. Rather, a “sign the BLOB” technique is employed wherein a conveyed  
15 SAML message, ~~along with any content (e.g. SAML-assertions)~~ is treated as a simple octet string  
16 if it is signed. Conveyed SAML assertions may be individually signed using XMLdsig. Security is  
17 optional in this binding.

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19 This is an individually-authored working draft published to the Security Services Technical  
20 Committee (SSTC/SAML), and has no official standing.  
21 Committee members should submit comments to the [security-services@lists.oasis-open.org](mailto:security-services@lists.oasis-open.org) list.  
22 Non-committee members who wish to comment may do so on the [SAML-dev@lists.oasis-](mailto:SAML-dev@lists.oasis-open.org)  
23 [open.org](mailto:SAML-dev@lists.oasis-open.org) mailing list (one must be a list subscriber to post. To subscribe, send mail to  
24 <mailto:saml-dev-subscribe@lists.oasis-open.org> ).

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# 1 Introduction

This specification defines a SAML HTTP protocol binding, specifically using the HTTP POST method, ~~and~~ which specifically does not use XML Digital Signature [XMLSig] for SAML message data origination authentication. Rather, ~~a~~ “sign the ~~blob~~BLOB” technique is employed wherein a conveyed SAML message, along with any content (e.g. SAML assertion(s)), is treated as a simple octet string if it is signed. Additionally, it is out of the scope of this specification whether or not conveyed SAML assertions are authenticated via XML Digital Signature. Security is optional in this binding.

The next subsection gives a general overview of SAML Protocol Binding concepts, followed by notation and namespace declarations. The binding itself is defined in Section 2.

## 1.1 Protocol Binding Concepts

Mappings of SAML request-response message exchanges onto standard messaging or communication protocols are called SAML *protocol bindings* (or just *bindings*). An instance of mapping SAML request-response message exchanges into a specific communication protocol <FOO> is termed a <FOO> *binding for SAML* or a *SAML <FOO> binding*.

For example, a SAML SOAP binding describes how SAML request and response message exchanges are mapped into SOAP message exchanges.

The intent of this specification is to specify ~~a the given selected set of~~ bindings in sufficient detail to ensure that independently implemented SAML-conforming software can interoperate when using standard messaging or communication protocols.

Unless otherwise specified, ~~this~~ binding should be understood to support the transmission of any SAML protocol message derived from the **samlp:RequestAbstractType** and **samlp:StatusResponseType** types. Further, when ~~this~~ binding refers to “SAML requests and responses”, it should be understood to mean any protocol messages derived from those types.

For other terms and concepts that are specific to SAML, refer to the SAML glossary [SAMLGloss].

## 1.2 Notation

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this specification are to be interpreted as described in IETF RFC 2119 [RFC2119].

Listings of productions or other normative code appear like this.

Example code listings appear like this.

**Note:** Notes like this are sometimes used to highlight non-normative commentary.

Conventional XML namespace prefixes are used throughout this specification to stand for their respective namespaces as follows, whether or not a namespace declaration is present in the example:

Prefix	XML Namespace	Comments
saml:	urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion	This is the SAML V2.0 assertion namespace [SAMLCore].
samlp:	urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:protocol	This is the SAML V2.0 protocol namespace [SAMLCore].

Prefix	XML Namespace	Comments
SOAP-ENV:	http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope	This namespace is defined in SOAP V1.1 .

76 This specification uses the following typographical conventions in text: `<ns:Element>`, `XMLAttribute`,  
77 **Datatype**, `OtherKeyword`. In some cases, angle brackets are used to indicate non-terminals, rather than  
78 XML elements; the intent will be clear from the context.

---

## 79 2 HTTP POST Binding - ~~NoXMLdsigSimpleSign~~

80 The HTTP POST binding, defined in [SAML20Bind], defines a mechanism by which SAML protocol  
81 messages may be transmitted within the base64-encoded content of an HTML form control. When using  
82 that binding, SAML protocol messages and/or SAML assertions are signed using [XMLSig], which is an  
83 XML-aware, XML-based, invasive digital signature paradigm necessitating canonicalization of the  
84 signature target.

85 This document specifies an alternative HTTP POST-based binding where the conveyed SAML protocol  
86 messages – including their content, i.e. any conveyed SAML assertions – are signed as simple  
87 “BLOBs” (“Binary Large Objects”, aka binary octet strings).

88 Note that this binding defines the conveyance of an individual SAML request or response message via  
89 HTTP POST. Thus

90 This binding MAY be composed with the HTTP Redirect binding (see Section 3.4 of [SAML20Bind]) and/or  
91 the HTTP Artifact binding (see Section 3.6 of [SAML20Bind]) to transmit request and response messages  
92 in a single overall SAML protocol exchange, the definition of which is termed a “SAML Profile”  
93 [SAMLProf], using two different bindings.

### 94 2.0.1 Required Information

95 **Identification:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:bindings:HTTP-POST-~~noxmlsigSimpleSign~~

96 **Contact information:** [security-services-comment@lists.oasis-open.org](mailto:security-services-comment@lists.oasis-open.org)

97 **Description:** Given below.

98 **Updates:** None. Rather, it provides an alternative to the HTTP POST Binding defined in [SAML20Bind]

### 99 2.0.2 Overview

100 The HTTP POST-SimpleSign binding is intended for cases in which the SAML requester and/or responder  
101 need to communicate using an HTTP user agent (as defined in HTTP 1.1 [RFC2616]) as an intermediary,  
102 and when data origination authentication and integrity protection of the SAML message is not required, or  
103 when a lighter-weight signature mechanism (as compared to 15) is appropriate. This may be necessary,  
104 for example, if the communicating parties do not share a direct path of communication. It may also be  
105 needed if the responder requires an interaction with the user agent in order to fulfill the request, such as  
106 when the user agent must authenticate to it.

107 Note that some HTTP user agents may have the capacity to play a more active role in the protocol  
108 exchange and may support other bindings that use HTTP, such as the SOAP and Reverse SOAP  
109 bindings. This binding does not require such capabilities—it assumes nothing apart from the capabilities  
110 of a common web browser.

### 111 2.0.3 RelayState

112 RelayState data MAY be included with a SAML protocol message transmitted with this binding. The value  
113 MUST NOT exceed 80 bytes in length and SHOULD be integrity protected by the entity creating the  
114 message independent of any other protections that may or may not exist during message transmission.  
115 Signing is not realistic given the space limitation, but because the value is exposed to third-party  
116 tampering, the entity SHOULD ensure that the value has not been tampered with by using a checksum, a  
117 pseudo-random value, or similar means.

118 If a SAML request message is accompanied by RelayState data, then the SAML responder MUST return

119 its SAML protocol response using a binding that also supports a RelayState mechanism, and it MUST  
120 place the exact data it received with the request into the corresponding RelayState parameter in the  
121 response.

122 If no such value is included with a SAML request message, or if the SAML response message is being  
123 generated without a corresponding request, then the SAML responder MAY include RelayState data to be  
124 interpreted by the recipient based on the use of a profile or prior agreement between the parties.

## 125 | 2.0.4 Message Encoding and Conveyance

126 This section describes how to encode a SAML messages, and thus any SAML assertion(s) they may  
127 contain, into HTML FORM “control(s)” [HTML401] (Section 17), thus enabling the SAML messages to be  
128 transmitted/conveyed via the HTTP POST method.

129 A SAML protocol message is form-encoded by:

- 130 1. Applying the base-64 encoding rules to the XML representation of the message. The resulting  
131 base64-encoded value MAY be line-wrapped at a reasonable length in accordance with common  
132 practice.
- 133 2. Encoding the result from the prior step into a “form data set”, -in the same fashion as is specified for  
134 “successful controls” in [HTML401] (Section 17.13.3), as a form “control value”. The HTML  
135 document also MUST adhere to the XHTML specification, [XHTML].
  - 136 a. If the message is a SAML request, then the form “control name” used to convey the SAML  
137 message itself MUST be `SAMLRequest`.
  - 138 b. If the message is a SAML response, then the form “control name” used to convey the SAML  
139 message itself MUST be `SAMLResponse`.
  - 140 c. Any additional form controls or presentation, other than those noted below for including a  
141 signature, MAY be included but MUST NOT be required in order for the recipient to nominally  
142 process the SAML message itself.

143 SAML messages MUST NOT be signed using [XMLSig]

144 **NOTE:** If a SAML message is so signed before being processed as defined herein, the  
145 SAML message's XML digital signature MUST be removed as described in [SAML20Bind]  
146 section 3.4.4.1 step 1.

147 However, any SAML assertions contained within the message MAY be signed via  
148 [XMLSig], and if so, any such signatures MUST remain intact.

149 Rather, if a SAML message is to be signed – which this binding leaves as a decision of the implementor  
150 and/or deployer – it MUST be signed using the technique given below in section 2.0.5. The resultant  
151 signature value is conveyed in a form control value named MsgSigSignature, and the signature  
152 algorithm is conveyed in a form control value named SigAlg. These form control values are included in  
153 the form data set constructed in step 2 above.

154 If the message is signed, the `Destination` XML attribute in the root SAML element of the SAML  
155 protocol message MUST contain the URL to which the sender has instructed the user agent to deliver the  
156 message. The recipient MUST then verify that the value matches the location at which the message has  
157 been received. Also, the signer's certificate or other keying information MAY be included in a form control  
158 named `KeyInfo`. This form control, if present, MUST contain a base-64 encoded `<ds:KeyInfo>`  
159 element ([XMLSig]: base-64 encoding is done as in step 1, above). This form control MUST NOT be  
160 included in the signed form data set constructed in step 2 above.

161 If a “RelayState” value is to accompany the SAML protocol message, it MUST be in a form control named  
162 `RelayState`, and included in the form data set constructed in step 2 above, and also included in any  
163 signed content if the message is signed.

164 The `action` attribute of the form MUST be the recipient's HTTP endpoint for the protocol or profile using  
165 this binding to which the SAML message is to be delivered. The `method` attribute MUST be "**POST**". The  
166 **enctype** attribute specifies the form content type and MUST be `application/x-www-form-`  
167 `urlencoded`.

168 All of the above form attributes and form controls, to which values are assigned per the above discussion,  
169 comprise the form data set. The form data set is then encoded into an HTTP response `message-body`  
170 as a `<FORM>` element. The HTTP response message is then sent to the user agent.

171 Any technique supported by the user agent MAY be used to cause the submission of the form (to cause it  
172 to be conveyed to the SAML message recipient), and any form content necessary to support this MAY be  
173 included, such as submit controls and client-side scripting commands. However, the recipient MUST be  
174 able to process the message without regard for the mechanism by which the form submission is initiated.

175 Note that any form control values included MUST be transformed so as to be safe to include in the  
176 XHTML document. This includes transforming characters such as quotes into HTML entities, etc.

## 177 2.0.5 Signature

178 To construct a signature of a SAML message conveyed by this binding:

179 1. The signature algorithm used MUST be identified by a URI, specified according to [XMLSig] or  
180 whatever specification governs the algorithm. The following signature algorithms (see [XMLSig])  
181 and their URI representations MUST be supported with this encoding mechanism:

- 182 • DSAwithSHA1 – <http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmlsig#dsa-sha1>
- 183 • RSAwithSHA1 – <http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmlsig#rsa-sha1>

184 2. A string consisting of the concatenation of the `RelayState` (if present), `SigAlg`, and  
185 `SAMLRequest` (or `SAMLResponse`) values (as appropriate), as defined in section 2.0.4 above, is  
186 constructed in one of the following ways (each individually ordered as shown):

```
187 SAMLRequest=value&RelayState=value&SigAlg=value
```

```
188 SAMLResponse=value&RelayState=value&SigAlg=value
```

- 189 3. The resultant octet string is fed into the signature algorithm.
- 190 4. The value yielded by the signature algorithm is base64 encoded (see [RFC2045]), and used as the  
191 value for the `MsgSigSignature` form control as discussed in section 2.0.4, above.

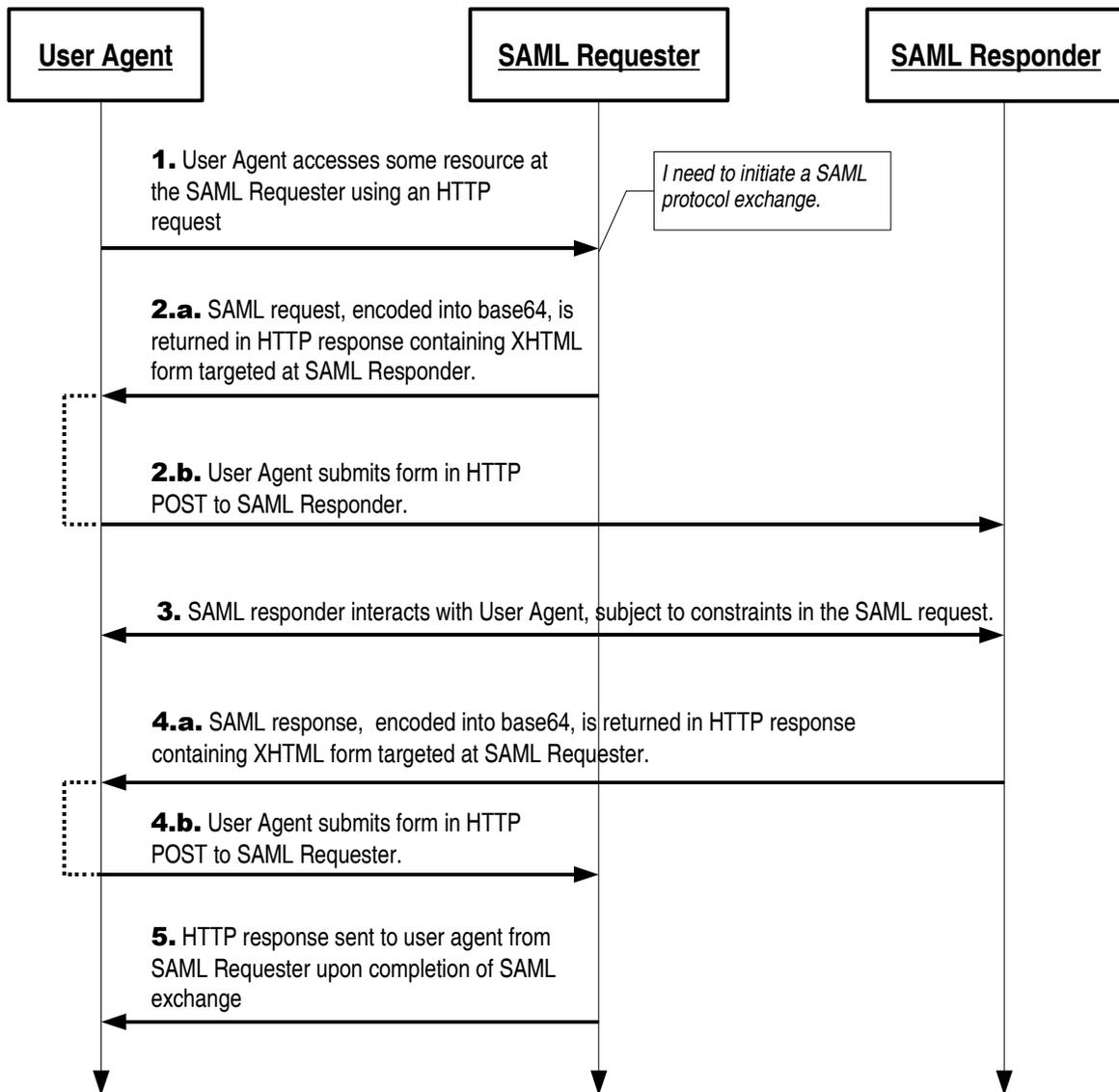
## 192 2.0.6 Signature Verification

193 To verify a received signed SAML message conveyed by this binding, the receiver MUST extract the form  
194 control values for the `RelayState` (if present), `SigAlg`, `KeyInfo` (if present), and `SAMLRequest` (or  
195 `SAMLResponse`) values (as appropriate) from the received HTTP message. Then the receiver  
196 reconstructs the string as described in section 2.0.5 step 2, above. The signature value conveyed in the  
197 `MsgSigSignature` control value is then checked against this string per the signature algorithm given by  
198 the `SigAlg` control value, and using (as appropriate, see[XMLSig]) the keying material obtained via the  
199 `<ds:KeyInfo>` conveyed in the `KeyInfo` control value (if present). Error handling and generated  
200 messages as a result of the signature not verifying are implementation-dependent.

## 201 2.0.7 Message Exchange

202 The system model used for SAML conversations via this binding is a request-response model, ~~but~~  
203 However, sethe a SAML request messages areis sent to the user agent invia an HTTP response

204 | message, and subsequently delivered to the message-recipientSAML responder in via an HTTP request  
205 | message issued by the user agent. ~~The Any~~ HTTP interactions before, between, and after these se foregoing  
206 | exchanges take place is unspecified. Both the SAML requester and responder are assumed to be HTTP  
207 | responders. See the following diagram illustrating the messages exchanged. Note that although the  
208 | diagram illustrates both the SAML request and the SAML response being conveyed via the HTTP POST-  
209 | SimpleSign binding, one or the other of the SAML request or the SAML response could be conveyed via a  
210 | different SAML HTTP-based binding.



- 211 1. Initially, the user agent makes an arbitrary HTTP request to a system entity. In the course of  
 212 processing the request, the system entity decides to initiate a SAML protocol exchange.
- 213 2. (a) The system entity acting as a SAML requester responds to an HTTP request from the user  
 214 agent by returning a SAML request. The request is returned in an XHTML document containing the  
 215 form and content defined in Section 2.0.4, above. (b) The user agent delivers the SAML request by  
 216 issuing an HTTP POST request to the SAML responder.
- 217 3. In general, the SAML responder MAY respond to the SAML request by immediately returning a  
 218 SAML response or it MAY return arbitrary content to facilitate subsequent interaction with the user  
 219 agent necessary to fulfill the request. Specific protocols and profiles may include mechanisms to  
 220 indicate the requester's level of willingness to permit this kind of interaction (for example, the  
 221 `IsPassive` attribute in `<samlp:AuthnRequest>` [SAMLCore]).
- 222 4. Eventually the responder SHOULD (a) return a SAML response to the user agent to be (b) returned  
 223 to the SAML requester. The SAML response is returned in the same fashion as described for the  
 224 SAML request in step 2, if this or a similar binding is employed for this step. Otherwise, details may  
 225 vary.

226 5. Upon receiving the SAML response, the SAML requester returns an arbitrary HTTP response to the  
227 user agent.

### 228 2.0.7.1 HTTP and Caching Considerations

229 HTTP proxies and the user agent intermediary should not cache SAML protocol messages. To ensure  
230 this, the following rules SHOULD be followed.

231 When returning SAML protocol messages using HTTP 1.1, HTTP responders SHOULD:

- 232 • Include a `Cache-Control` header field set to "no-cache, no-store".
- 233 • Include a `Pragma` header field set to "no-cache".

234 There are no other restrictions on the use of HTTP headers.

### 235 2.0.7.2 Security Considerations

236 The presence of the user agent intermediary means that the requester and responder cannot rely on the  
237 transport layer for endpoint-to-endpoint (i.e. SAML Requester to/from SAML Responder) authentication,  
238 integrity or confidentiality protection. Instead, this binding defines a means for signing the conveyed SAML  
239 messages and optional `RelayState` in order to provide endpoint-to-endpoint integrity protection and data  
240 origin authentication.

241 This binding SHOULD NOT be used if the content of the request or response should not be exposed to  
242 the user agent intermediary. Otherwise, confidentiality of both SAML requests and SAML responses is  
243 OPTIONAL and depends on the environment of use. If confidentiality is necessary, SSL 3.0 [SSL3] or TLS  
244 1.0 [RFC2246] SHOULD be used to protect the message in transit between the user agent and the SAML  
245 requester and responder.

246 In general, this binding relies on message-level authentication and integrity protection via signing and  
247 does not support confidentiality of messages from the user agent intermediary.

248 **NOTE:** cryptographically-based security is entirely OPTIONAL in this binding. If no  
249 security mechanisms are employed, then there is essentially no runtime assurance as to  
250 the identity of any of the communicating entities, ~~including the subject (aka user).~~

### 251 2.0.8 Error Reporting

252 A SAML responder that refuses to perform a message exchange with the SAML requester SHOULD  
253 return a response message with a second-level `<samlp:StatusCode>` value of  
254 `urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:status:RequestDenied`.

255 HTTP interactions during the message exchange MUST NOT use HTTP error status codes to indicate  
256 failures in SAML processing, since the user agent is not a full party to the SAML protocol exchange.

257 For more information about SAML status codes, see the SAML assertions and protocols specification  
258 [SAMLCore].

### 259 2.0.9 Metadata Considerations

260 ~~@@TODO: any fixups needed here?~~

261 Support for the HTTP POST-~~SimpleSign~~ binding SHOULD be reflected by indicating URL endpoints at  
262 which requests and responses for a particular protocol or profile should be sent. Either a single endpoint  
263 or distinct request and response endpoints MAY be supplied [SAMLMeta]. ~~The identification URI given in~~  
264 ~~section 2.0.1 is used as the value for the Binding attribute of any endpoint elements.~~





```
384     </div>
385     <noscript>
386     <div>
387     <input type="submit" value="Continue"/>
388     </div>
389     </noscript>
390 </form>
391 </body>
392 </html>
```

---

## 3 References

393

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- 411 **[SAMLGloss]** J. Hodges et al. *Glossary for the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language*  
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413 See <http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/>.
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415 *(SAML) V2.0*. OASIS SSTC, March 2005. Document ID saml-metadata-2.0-os.  
416 See <http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/>.
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418 ~~*(SAML) V2.0*. OASIS SSTC, March 2005. Document ID saml-profiles-2.0-os.~~  
419 ~~See <http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/>.~~
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434 **Appendix B. Acknowledgments**

435 @@TODO: update as appropriate

436 The editors acknowledge the contributions of the OASIS Security Services Technical Committee, whose  
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- 438     • TBD

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- 441     • TBD

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