The SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile describes the issuing and processing of holder-of-key SAML assertions. Specifically, we show how a SAML issuer binds X.509 data to a <ds:KeyInfo> element and how a relying party confirms that a <ds:KeyInfo> element
matches given X.509 data. The binding material used by the SAML issuer and the matching data used by the relying party are obtained from an X.509 certificate.

**Status**

This document was last revised or approved by the SSTC on the above date. The level of approval is also listed above. Check the current location noted above for possible later revisions of this document. This document is updated periodically on no particular schedule.

TC members should send comments on this specification to the TC's email list. Others should send comments to the TC by using the “Send A Comment” button on the TC’s web page at [http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security).

For information on whether any patents have been disclosed that may be essential to implementing this specification, and any offers of patent licensing terms, please refer to the IPR section of the TC web page ([http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/ipr.php](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/ipr.php)).

The non-normative errata page for this specification is located at [http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security).
Copyright © OASIS Open 2008–2009. All Rights Reserved.

All capitalized terms in the following text have the meanings assigned to them in the OASIS Intellectual Property Rights Policy (the “OASIS IPR Policy”). The full Policy may be found at the OASIS website.

This document and translations of it may be copied and furnished to others, and derivative works that comment on or otherwise explain it or assist in its implementation may be prepared, copied, published, and distributed, in whole or in part, without restriction of any kind, provided that the above copyright notice and this section are included on all such copies and derivative works. However, this document itself may not be modified in any way, including by removing the copyright notice or references to OASIS, except as needed for the purpose of developing any document or deliverable produced by an OASIS Technical Committee (in which case the rules applicable to copyrights, as set forth in the OASIS IPR Policy, must be followed) or as required to translate it into languages other than English.

The limited permissions granted above are perpetual and will not be revoked by OASIS or its successors or assigns.

This document and the information contained herein is provided on an "AS IS" basis and OASIS DISCLAIMS ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY WARRANTY THAT THE USE OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN WILL NOT INFRINGE ANY OWNERSHIP RIGHTS OR ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

OASIS requests that any OASIS Party or any other party that believes it has patent claims that would necessarily be infringed by implementations of this OASIS Committee Specification or OASIS Standard, to notify OASIS TC Administrator and provide an indication of its willingness to grant patent licenses to such patent claims in a manner consistent with the IPR Mode of the OASIS Technical Committee that produced this specification.

OASIS invites any party to contact the OASIS TC Administrator if it is aware of a claim of ownership of any patent claims that would necessarily be infringed by implementations of this specification by a patent holder that is not willing to provide a license to such patent claims in a manner consistent with the IPR Mode of the OASIS Technical Committee that produced this specification. OASIS may include such claims on its website, but disclaims any obligation to do so.

OASIS takes no position regarding the validity or scope of any intellectual property or other rights that might be claimed to pertain to the implementation or use of the technology described in this document or the extent to which any license under such rights might or might not be available; neither does it represent that it has made any effort to identify any such rights. Information on OASIS' procedures with respect to rights in any document or deliverable produced by an OASIS Technical Committee can be found on the OASIS website. Copies of claims of rights made available for publication and any assurances of licenses to be made available, or the result of an attempt made to obtain a general license or permission for the use of such proprietary rights by implementers or users of this OASIS Committee Specification or OASIS Standard, can be obtained from the OASIS TC Administrator. OASIS makes no representation that any information or list of intellectual property rights will at any time be complete, or that any claims in such list are, in fact, Essential Claims.

The name "OASIS" is a trademark of OASIS, the owner and developer of this specification, and should be used only to refer to the organization and its official outputs. OASIS welcomes reference to, and implementation and use of, specifications, while reserving the right to enforce its marks against misleading uses. Please see http://www.oasis-open.org/who/trademark.php for above guidance.
**Table of Contents**

1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 5
  1.1 Notation .......................................................................................................................... 5
  1.2 Terminology ..................................................................................................................... 5
  1.3 Normative References ...................................................................................................... 6
  1.4 Non-normative References ............................................................................................. 6

2 SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile ........................................................................ 7
  2.1 Required Information ........................................................................................................ 7
  2.2 Profile Description ........................................................................................................... 7
  2.3 X.509 Certificate Usage .................................................................................................... 7
  2.4 Issuing Holder-of-Key Assertions ....................................................................................... 8
    2.4.1 KeyInfo Usage .......................................................................................................... 8
    2.4.2 Example .................................................................................................................... 9
  2.5 Processing Holder-of-Key Assertions ................................................................................. 10
  2.6 Security and Privacy Considerations ................................................................................ 11
    2.6.1 ASN.1 Encoding ...................................................................................................... 11
    2.6.2 X.509 Serial Number .............................................................................................. 12

3 Conformance .......................................................................................................................... 13
  3.0.1 SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile .............................................................. 13

Appendix A. Acknowledgments ................................................................................................. 14

Appendix B. Revision History .................................................................................................. 15
1 Introduction

The SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile describes the issuing and processing of a holder-of-key SAML assertion, that is, an assertion containing a `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element whose Method attribute is set to urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:cm:holder-of-key. Specifically, we describe the structural characteristics of a `<ds:KeyInfo>` element with bound X.509 data and show how a relying party confirms that such a `<ds:KeyInfo>` element matches given X.509 data. The binding material used by the SAML issuer and the matching data used by the relying party are obtained from an X.509 certificate.

This profile involves a SAML issuer and a SAML relying party, each with an X.509 certificate in its possession. The SAML issuer uses its certificate to produce a holder-of-key SAML assertion. The relying party consumes the assertion, confirming the asserting entity by comparing the X.509 data in the assertion with the X.509 data in its possession.

1.1 Notation

This specification uses normative text. The keywords "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this specification are to be interpreted as described in [RFC2119]:

…they MUST only be used where it is actually required for interoperability or to limit behavior which has potential for causing harm (e.g., limiting retransmissions)…

These keywords are thus capitalized when used to unambiguously specify requirements over protocol and application features and behavior that affect the interoperability and security of implementations. When these words are not capitalized, they are meant in their natural-language sense.

Listings of XML schemas appear like this.

Example code listings appear like this.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>XML Namespace</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>saml:</td>
<td>urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion</td>
<td>This is the SAML V2.0 assertion namespace defined in the SAML V2.0 core specification [SAML2Core].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ds:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmldsig#">http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmldsig#</a></td>
<td>This is the XML Signature namespace [XMLSign].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xs:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema">http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema</a></td>
<td>This is the XML Schema namespace [Schema1].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xsi:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance">http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance</a></td>
<td>This is the XML Schema namespace for schema-related markup that appears in XML instances [Schema1].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This specification uses the following typographical conventions in text: `<SAMLElement>`, `<ns:ForeignElement>`, Attribute, Datatype, OtherCode.

1.2 Terminology

In this specification, a SAML issuer is a producer of holder-of-key assertions. Similarly, a relying party is a consumer of holder-of-key assertions.
A presenter transmits a holder-of-key assertion to the relying party. An attesting entity is a presenter who is able to satisfy the subject confirmation requirements of the holder-of-key assertion.

Usually the attesting entity is the subject of the assertion (hence the terms "subject confirmation" and "confirming the subject"). In general, however, the attesting entity may not be the subject, in which case the previous phrases are misnomers. Thus the terms "attestation" and "confirming the attesting entity" are more technically correct than "subject confirmation" and "confirming the subject," respectively. We will use the term "attesting entity" exclusively in this document.

1.3 Normative References


1.4 Non-normative References


2 SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile

2.1 Required Information

Identification: urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:profiles:holder-of-key

Contact information: security-services-comment@lists.oasis-open.org

SAML Confirmation Method Identifiers: The SAML V2.0 holder-of-key confirmation method identifier (urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:cm:holder-of-key) is associated with every <saml:SubjectConfirmation> element issued under this profile.

Description: Given below.

Updates: Supplements the holder-of-key confirmation method described in section 3.1 of [SAML2Prof].

2.2 Profile Description

This specification profiles a type of assertion called a holder-of-key assertion. By definition, a holder-of-key SAML assertion contains a <saml:SubjectConfirmation> element whose Method attribute is set to urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:cm:holder-of-key. This specification describes how the SAML issuer binds selected X.509 data from an X.509 certificate to the <saml:SubjectConfirmation> element of a holder-of-key assertion. The complementary process involves a relying party who confirms that the X.509 data bound to the assertion matches the data in a given X.509 certificate.

Suppose a SAML response issued by a SAML issuer contains one or more holder-of-key assertions (otherwise this specification is not applicable). At the time the assertion is issued, the issuer possesses an X.509 certificate known to be associated with the attesting entity (who may or may not be present when the assertion is issued). The SAML issuer binds some (or all) of the X.509 data in the certificate to the holder-of-key assertion.

Subsequently, the attesting entity presents the holder-of-key assertion and an X.509 certificate to the relying party. The attesting entity proves possession of the private key corresponding to the public key bound to the certificate, the details of which are out of scope with respect to this profile. The relying party compares the X.509 data in the certificate to the X.509 data bound to the assertion, thereby confirming the attesting entity.

Precisely how the issuer comes to possess a certificate known to be associated with attesting entity and how the assertion and the certificate are presented to the relying party are all out of scope with respect to this profile. On the other hand, the issuing of the holder-of-key assertion itself and the ultimate confirmation of the attesting entity are in scope.

We assume that the relying party trusts the SAML issuer to issue holder-of-key assertions. The SAML issuer, on the other hand, may not even know the intended relying party, so there is no underlying assumption that the SAML issuer trusts the relying party.

2.3 X.509 Certificate Usage

There are no explicit requirements with respect to the X.509 certificate(s) possessed by the SAML issuer and the relying party. If, however, a certificate contains a Subject Key Identifier (SKI) extension, then the certificate MUST be an X.509 v3 certificate [RFC5280]. Other than that, the specific characteristics of these certificates are wholly out of scope with respect to this specification. In particular, there is no expectation that either the SAML issuer or the relying party trusts the issuer of the certificate, and
therefore all portions of the certificate, apart from the X.509 data specified in the following sections, are unspecified.

The only exception to the above rule is the case where the `<ds:X509Data>` element specified in section 2.4.1 contains a `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element or a `<ds:X509SerialIssuer>` element. In these two cases, the relying party MUST trust the X.509 issuer in order to confirm the attesting entity. This is discussed more fully in section 2.5 below.

### 2.4 Issuing Holder-of-Key Assertions

Every assertion containing a holder-of-key `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element MUST conform to [SAML2Core] (see section 2.4.1 of Core, especially section 2.4.1.3) and section 3.1 of [SAML2Prof]. Where this specification conflicts with the SAML V2.0 specification, the former takes precedence.

Suppose a SAML issuer wishes to issue a response containing one or more holder-of-key assertions. As a prerequisite, the SAML issuer MUST possess an X.509 certificate known to be associated with the attesting entity. The SAML issuer binds some or all of the X.509 data in the certificate to the `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element of a SAML assertion.

Briefly, the SAML issuer binds a `<ds:KeyInfo>` element to the `<saml:SubjectConfirmationData>` element of a holder-of-key assertion. The `<ds:KeyInfo>` element contains one or more of the following elements: `<ds:X509Certificate>`, `<ds:X509SKI>`, `<ds:X509SubjectName>`, or `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>`. A `<ds:X509Certificate>` element contains a base64 encoding of the certificate possessed by the SAML issuer. A `<ds:X509SKI>` element contains the base64 encoding of the Subject Key Identifier (SKI) extension (if there is one) bound to the certificate. A `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element contains the subject distinguished name (DN) bound to the certificate. A `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element contains the issuer DN and the issuer serial number bound to the certificate. In each case, the content of the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element conforms to the XML Signature specification [XMLSig]. These requirements are spelled out more clearly in the next section.

If the SAML issuer has reason to believe that the relying party trusts the certificate issuer, the SAML issuer MAY include `NotBefore` or `NotOnOrAfter` XML attributes on the `<saml:SubjectConfirmationData>` element. If so, the values bound to the assertion MUST be consistent with the values in the certificate. In particular, the value of the `NotBefore` attribute (resp., the `NotOnOrAfter` attribute) MUST be greater than or equal to (resp., less than or equal to) the `NotBefore` field (resp., the `NotOnOrAfter` field) of the certificate.

The `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element MAY contain a `<saml:NameID>` element. If it does, the latter identifies an attesting entity different from the subject of the assertion. If the `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element does not contain a `<saml:NameID>` element, then the attesting entity and the subject are one and the same.

If the `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element contains a `<saml:NameID>` element, the attesting entity is presumably acting on behalf of the subject. To more strongly signal such a delegation scenario, a `<saml:Condition>` element MAY be used (cf. [SAML2ConDel]).

#### 2.4.1 KeyInfo Usage

According to the SAML V2.0 specification, a holder-of-key assertion MUST contain at least one `<ds:KeyInfo>` element within the `<saml:SubjectConfirmationData>` element and that the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element MUST conform to the XML Signature specification. This SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile requires that the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element MUST conform to the Second Edition of the XML Signature specification [XMLSig] and further constrains the content of each `<ds:KeyInfo>` element to contain exactly one `<ds:X509Data>` element. The `<ds:X509Data>` element MUST NOT contain a `<ds:X509CRL>` element. Instead, the following content options are specified, at least one of which MUST be satisfied:
• The `<ds:X509Data>` element MAY contain a `<ds:X509Certificate>` element. If it does, the `<ds:X509Certificate>` element MUST contain a base64 encoding of the X.509 certificate possessed by the SAML issuer.

• The `<ds:X509Data>` element MAY contain a `<ds:X509SKI>` element. If it does, the `<ds:X509SKI>` element MUST contain the base64 encoding of the plain (i.e., not DER-encoded) value of the Subject Key Identifier (SKI) extension (as specified in [XMLSig]) of the X.509 certificate possessed by the SAML issuer. If the certificate does not contain an SKI extension, the `<ds:X509Data>` element MUST NOT contain a `<ds:X509SKI>` element.

• The `<ds:X509Data>` element MAY contain a `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element. If it does, the `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element MUST contain the subject distinguished name (DN) bound to the X.509 certificate possessed by the SAML issuer.

• The `<ds:X509Data>` element MAY contain a `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element. If it does, the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element MUST contain the issuer DN and the issuer serial number (as specified in [XMLSig]) bound to the X.509 certificate possessed by the SAML issuer.

Use of the `<ds:X509Certificate>` element or the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element is most restrictive since each implies that the exact same certificate is used by both the SAML issuer and the relying party. Use of the `<ds:X509SKI>` element or the `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element is less restrictive since each permits a different certificate to be used by the relying party provided the certificate contains the same key or DN (resp.) as in the certificate used by the SAML issuer.

Use of the `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element or the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element is warranted in those situations where the relying party trusts the issuer of the X.509 certificate. The SAML issuer SHOULD NOT bind either of these elements to the `<ds:X509Data>` element unless it knows that such a trust relationship exists.

Note that the format of the DN contained in the `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element or the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element is specified in [XMLSig]. In accordance with that specification, it is RECOMMENDED that the DN conform to [RFC4514] in all cases.

Since the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element is extensible [XMLSig], other fields or extensions from the X.509 certificate may be bound to the holder-of-key assertion. These are provided as a convenience to the relying party, so that the relying party need not have to decode and parse the certificate. All such extensions are out of scope with respect to this profile, however.

### 2.4.2 Example

Here is an example of a holder-of-key `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element illustrating three of the content options specified in section 2.4:

```xml
<saml:SubjectConfirmation
xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion"
Method="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:cm:holder-of-key">
<saml:SubjectConfirmationData
xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
xsi:type="saml:KeyInfoConfirmationDataType">
<ds:KeyInfo xmlns:ds="http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmldsig#">
<ds:X509Data>
<!-- a base64 encoding of an X.509 certificate -->
<ds:X509Certificate>
MIIDuDCCAqACCQJZ8K8wF0xVj1ANBkgkqkhkiGw0BAQQFADBnTELMAkGA1UEBhMCQ1Ix
BAgTC1NvbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUXEjAQBgNVBAcTCVNVbWUtU3RhdGUX
</do:X509Data>
</ds:KeyInfo>
</saml:SubjectConfirmationData>
</saml:SubjectConfirmation>
```

3 November 2009
Copyright © OASIS Open 2008–2009. All Rights Reserved.
A relying party can confirm the attesting entity by the matching the available X.509 data to any of the above child elements of the `<ds:X509Data>` element.

2.5 Processing Holder-of-Key Assertions

The attesting entity presents a holder-of-key assertion and an X.509 certificate to the relying party. The attesting entity MUST prove possession of the private key corresponding to the public key bound to the certificate, the details of which are out of scope with respect to this profile. The relying party confirms the attesting entity by comparing the X.509 data in the certificate to the X.509 data bound to the assertion. If the X.509 data in the certificate matches the X.509 data bound to the assertion, the attesting entity is said to be confirmed.

Regardless of the protocol used, any assertions relied upon MUST be valid according to the processing rules specified in [SAML2Core]. In particular, the relying party MUST verify the signature (if any) on each assertion containing a holder-of-key `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element. Any assertion that is not valid, or whose subject confirmation requirements cannot be met, SHOULD be discarded and SHOULD NOT be used to establish a security context for the subject.

If the `<ds:X509Data>` element contains multiple child elements, the relying party may choose to confirm the attesting entity based on any one of them. Specifically, the relying party MUST confirm that the certificate matches the content of the `<ds:X509Data>` element as follows:

- If the `<ds:X509Data>` element contains a `<ds:X509Certificate>` element, and the relying party chooses to confirm the attesting entity based on this element, the relying party MUST ensure that the certificate bound to the assertion matches the X.509 certificate in its possession.
Matching is done by comparing the base64-decoded certificates, or the hash values of the
base64-decoded certificates, byte-for-byte.

- If the `<ds:X509Data>` element contains a `<ds:X509SKI>` element, and the relying party
  chooses to confirm the attesting entity based on this element, the relying party MUST ensure that
  the value bound to the assertion matches the Subject Key Identifier (SKI) extension bound to the
  X.509 certificate. Matching is done by comparing the base64-decoded SKI values byte-for-byte.
  If the X.509 certificate does not contain an SKI extension, the attesting entity is not confirmed and
  the relying party SHOULD disregard the assertion.

- If the `<ds:X509Data>` element contains a `<ds:X509SubjectName>` element, and the relying
  party chooses to confirm the attesting entity based on this element, the relying party MUST ensure
  that the subject distinguished name (DN) bound to the assertion matches the DN bound to the
  X.509 certificate. If, however, the relying party does not trust the certificate issuer to issue such a
  DN, the attesting entity is not confirmed and the relying party SHOULD disregard the assertion.

- If the `<ds:X509Data>` element contains a `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element, and the relying
  party chooses to confirm the attesting entity based on this element, the relying party MUST ensure
  that the issuer DN and issuer serial number bound to the assertion match the issuer DN and the
  issuer serial number (resp.) bound to the X.509 certificate. If the relying party does not trust the
  certificate issuer to issue X.509 certificates, however, the attesting entity is not confirmed and the
  relying party SHOULD disregard the assertion.

In the case of a `<ds:X509Certificate>` element or a `<ds:X509SKI>` element, the matching process
is relatively straightforward. If the `<ds:X509Data>` element contains a `<ds:X509SubjectName>
element or a `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element, however, and the relying party chooses to confirm the
attesting entity based on one of these elements, the relying party MUST trust the issuer of the X.509
certificate before the attesting entity can be considered confirmed. If such a trust relationship between the
relying party and the certificate issuer does not exist, the relying party SHOULD disregard the assertion.

If the `<saml:SubjectConfirmationData>` element includes `NotBefore` or `NotOnOrAfter`
attributes, and the relying party trusts the issuer of the X.509 certificate, the relying party MUST confirm
that the current time is greater than or equal to (resp., less than or equal to) the value of the `NotBefore`
(resp., the `NotOnOrAfter`) attribute. If this requirement is not met, the attesting entity is not confirmed
and the relying party SHOULD disregard the assertion.

### 2.6 Security and Privacy Considerations

This profile assumes that both the SAML issuer and the relying party have access to an X.509 certificate.
For those deployments that wish to avoid or do not require an X.509-based public key infrastructure (PKI),
this may seem unnecessarily restrictive. In fact, the use of X.509 certificates is typical and provides a
number of advantages. First, observe that the SSL/TLS protocol [RFC4346] requires the use of X.509
certificates. Second, and most importantly, since there is no presumption of an underlying trust model for
X.509 certificates, the full range of possible content for the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element is avoided. Those
deployments that are in fact based on such a trust model, or wish to avoid X.509 certificates altogether,
may choose to profile additional child elements such as `<ds:KeyName>` or `<ds:KeyValue>`.

Deployments that rely on holder-of-key SAML assertions will no doubt impose their own requirements on
the X.509 certificates used to obtain those assertions. For example, some deployments will require the
certificate to be an X.509 end-entity certificate [RFC5280] issued by a trusted X.509 certification authority
(CA) or a certificate based on a trusted X.509 end-entity certificate (such as an X.509 proxy certificate
[RFC3820]). This specification imposes no such restrictions, however.

#### 2.6.1 ASN.1 Encoding

For compatibility with the XML Signature specification [XMLSig], this profile intentionally avoids any
discussion of the ASN.1 encoding of the X.509 certificate possessed by the SAML issuer and the relying
Indeed, in the case of the `<ds:X509Certificate>` element, the ASN.1 encoding of the certificate doesn't matter. In this case, the SAML issuer simply base64-encodes the ASN.1-encoded certificate in its possession and binds it to the `<ds:X509Certificate>` element. Later the relying party base64-decodes the content of the `<ds:X509Certificate>` element and compares the resulting certificate (byte-for-byte) with the ASN.1-encoded certificate in its possession.

In the case of the `<ds:X509SKI>`, `<ds:X509SubjectName>`, or `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` elements, however, the ASN.1 encoding of the certificates does matter. To produce these elements, the SAML issuer must ASN.1-decode the certificate in its possession and parse the ASN.1 to obtain the X.509 data to be bound to the assertion. Likewise the relying party must ASN.1-decode the certificate in its possession, parsing the ASN.1 to obtain the required X.509 data, which it compares to the X.509 data bound to the assertion.

The basic problem is that the ASN.1 encoding of an X.509 certificate is not guaranteed. While it is true that an X.509 certificate is often DER-encoded, a robust implementation must be prepared to handle other ASN.1 encodings besides DER, mainly BER and CER. Consequently it is anticipated that deployments will prefer the `<ds:X509Certificate>` element for maximum interoperability. In fact, this preference is reflected in the conformance requirements of this profile (section 3).

### 2.6.2 X.509 Serial Number

Note that some CAs use large random numbers as serial numbers to prevent sequence guessing. However, not all XML libraries are capable of dealing with large integers in the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element. The problem is that the `<ds:X509SerialNumber>` child element of the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element is typed as an arbitrary integer in [XMLSig] yet conforming implementations are required to support only 18 decimal digits. Thus the `<ds:X509IssuerSerial>` element should be used with care.
3 Conformance

3.0.1 SAML V2.0 Holder-of-Key Assertion Profile

Both the SAML issuer and the relying party MUST conform to section 2.3.

A SAML issuer MUST follow the issuing rules in section 2.4. In particular, a SAML issuer MUST produce <ds:KeyInfo> elements that conform to section 2.4.1. Likewise, a relying party MUST follow the processing rules in section 2.5.

To claim conformance to this specification, a SAML issuer implementation MUST support the <ds:X509Certificate> element specified in section 2.4.1. Support for the remaining child elements specified in section 2.4.1 is OPTIONAL for SAML issuers.

Likewise a conforming relying party implementation MUST support the <ds:X509Certificate> element specified in section 2.5. Support for the remaining child elements specified in section 2.5 is OPTIONAL for relying parties.
Appendix A. Acknowledgments

The editor would like to acknowledge the contributions of the OASIS Security Services (SAML) Technical Committee, whose voting members at the time of publication were:

- John Bradley, Individual
- Scott Cantor, Internet2
- Duane DeCouteau, Veterans Health Administration
- Christian Guenther, Nokia Siemens Networks GmbH & Co.
- Thomas Hardjono, M.I.T.
- Frederick Hirsch, Nokia Corporation
- Ari Kermaier, Oracle Corporation
- Nathan Klingenstein, Internet2
- Hal Lockhart, Oracle Corporation
- Paul Madsen, NTT Corporation
- Kyle Meadors, Drummond Group Inc.
- Bob Morgan, Internet2
- Thinh Nguyenphu, Nokia Siemens Networks GmbH & Co.
- Rob Philpott, EMC Corporation
- Anil Saldhana, Red Hat
- Tom Scavo, National Center for Supercomputing Applications
- Kent Spaulding, Skyworth TTG Holdings Limited
- David Staggs, Veterans Health Administration
- Emily Xu, Sun Microsystems

The editor would also like to acknowledge the following contributors:

- Joana M. F. da Trindade, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil)
- The members of the IETF PKIX Working Group
- Peter Sylvester, EdelWeb (France)
- Brett Beaumont, SSC, New Zealand Government
### Appendix B. Revision History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document ID</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Committer</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-01</td>
<td>7 Aug 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Initial draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-02</td>
<td>14 Aug 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Remove all refs to <code>samlp:</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-03</td>
<td>7 Sep 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Remove proof of possession requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-04</td>
<td>6 Oct 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Response to comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-05</td>
<td>20 Oct 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Updated KeyInfo Usage rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-06</td>
<td>13 Nov 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Dropped DER-encoding requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-07</td>
<td>7 Dec 2008</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Added NotBefore/NotOnOrAfter attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-08</td>
<td>11 Jan 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Relaxed the X.509 v3 requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-09</td>
<td>20 Jan 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Response to comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-cd-01</td>
<td>9 Mar 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Committee Draft 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-10</td>
<td>14 Jun 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Response to Public Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-cd-02</td>
<td>5 Jul 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Committee Draft 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-cs-01</td>
<td>29 Jul 2009</td>
<td>tc-admin</td>
<td>Committee Specification 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-draft-11</td>
<td>4 Oct 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Fixed minor bugs in CS 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sstc-saml2-holder-of-key-cd-03</td>
<td>3 Nov 2009</td>
<td>T. Scavo</td>
<td>Committee Draft 03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>