



SAML V2.0 Subject Identifier Attributes Profile Version 1.0

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Related work:

This specification is related to:

- eduPerson Object Class Specification (201602)
<http://software.internet2.edu/eduperson/internet2-mace-dir-eduperson-201602.html>.

Abstract:

This specification standardizes two new SAML Attributes to identify security subjects, as a replacement for long-standing inconsistent practice with the `<saml:NameID>` and `<saml:Attribute>` constructs, and to address recognized deficiencies with the SAML V2.0 `urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:nameid-format:persistent` Name Identifier format.

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1 Introduction

1.1 IPR Policy

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1.2 Terminology and Notation

The key words “MUST”, “MUST NOT”, “REQUIRED”, “SHALL”, “SHALL NOT”, “SHOULD”, “SHOULD NOT”, “RECOMMENDED”, “MAY”, and “OPTIONAL” in this document are to be interpreted as described in [\[RFC2119\]](#).

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:

Prefix	XML Namespace	Comments
saml:	urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion	This is the SAML V2.0 assertion namespace [SAML2Core] .
samlp:	urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:protocol	This is the SAML V2.0 protocol namespace [SAML2Core] .
md:	urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:metadata	This is the SAML V2.0 metadata namespace [SAML2Meta] .
mdattr:	urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:metadata:attributes	This is the SAML V2.0 metadata extension for entity attributes namespace [MetaAttr] .
xsd:	http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema	This namespace is defined in the W3C XML Schema specification [XMLSCHEMA-2] .

1.3 Normative References

- [RFC2119]** Bradner, S., “Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels”, BCP 14, RFC 2119, March 1997. <http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2119.txt>.
- [RFC2234]** Crocker, D, Overell, P., “Augmented BNF for Syntax Specifications: ABNF”, RFC 2234, November 1997. <http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2234.txt>.
- [SAML2Core]** *Assertions and Protocols for the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) V2.0*. Edited by Scott Cantor, John Kemp, Rob Philpott, Eve Maler. 15 March 2005. OASIS Standard. <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/v2.0/saml-core-2.0-os.pdf>
- [MetaAttr]** *SAML V2.0 Metadata Extension for Entity Attributes Version 1.0*. Edited by Scott Cantor. 4 August 2009. OASIS Committee Specification. <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/Post2.0/sstc-metadata-attr-cs-01.pdf>. Latest version: <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/Post2.0/sstc-metadata-attr.pdf>.
- [SAML2Errata]** *SAML V2.0 Errata*. Edited by Scott Cantor. 1 May 2012. OASIS Approved Errata. <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/v2.0/errata05/os/saml-v2.0-errata05-os.pdf>. Latest version: <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/v2.0/sstc-saml-approved-errata-2.0.pdf>

- [SAML2Meta]** *Metadata for the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) V2.0*. Edited by Scott Cantor, Jahan Moreh, Rob Philpot, Eve Maler. 15 March 2005. OASIS Standard. <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/v2.0/saml-metadata-2.0-os.pdf>
- [SAML2Prof]** *Profiles for the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) V2.0*. Edited by John Hughes, Scott Cantor, Jeff Hodges, Frederick Hirsch, Prateek Mishra, Rob Philpot, Eve Maler. 15 March 2005. OASIS Standard. <http://docs.oasis-open.org/security/saml/v2.0/saml-profiles-2.0-os.pdf>
- [XMLSCHEMA-2]** *XML Schema Part 2: Datatypes Second Edition*. Paul V. Biron, A. Malhotra, Editors. W3C Recommendation. October 28, 2004. <http://www.w3.org/TR/2004/REC-xmlschema-2-20041028/>. Latest version: <http://www.w3.org/TR/xmlschema-2/>.

17 1.4 Non-Normative References

- [eduPerson]** Internet2, “eduPerson Object Class Specification (201602)”, February 2016. <http://software.internet2.edu/eduperson/internet2-mace-dir-eduperson-201602.html>.
- [RFC4648]** Josefson, S., “The Base16, Base32, and Base64 Data Encodings”, RFC 4648, October 2006. <http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc4648.txt>.
- [ShibMetaExt]** Shibboleth Project, “Shibboleth Metadata Extensions V1.0”, July 2018. <https://wiki.shibboleth.net/confluence/x/QACt>.

18 2 Motivation

19 2.1 Problem Statement

20 Identification of subjects in security protocols and applications has a fraught history of inconsistent syntax,
21 bugs, terrible but deeply cemented practices such as misuse of email addresses, vertical market-specific
22 approaches, and failure to precisely communicate intended semantics and constraints. These problems
23 lead to overly complex burdens on both asserting and relying parties to issue and consume a variety of
24 different identifiers in different formats, many of which work poorly with off the shelf applications. Much of
25 this is self-inflicted fragmentation due to the constant tension between fixing problems with new solutions
26 and avoiding new solutions to ensure wider adoption.

27 SAML itself has its origins in a design philosophy that tried to avoid breaking new ground in this area, and
28 instead attempted to design for generality, which is valuable, but did not ease adoption due to a lack of
29 guidance. SAML also complicates itself by providing an optional, singly-appearing construct for
30 identification (the `<saml:NameID>` element) *and* a more general multiply-appearing
31 `<saml:Attribute>` construct that inherently overlap.

32 This, together with inconsistent technical precision by implementers and deployers, creates complexity.
33 Deployment experience has shown that use of the NameID feature is confusing in many implementations.
34 It also, through its presence in the SAML Single Logout protocol, potentially appears (indirectly but
35 recoverably) in web access logs, leading to the added complexity of encryption when privacy is a
36 consideration.

37 There is a general consensus by most federated identity practitioners around a few common
38 requirements:

- 39 • Identifiers should be as stable as possible and should have little or no risk of reassignment to
40 different subjects due to the lack of tight synchronization¹ inherent between loosely-coupled
41 systems.
- 42 • Opaque (i.e., superficially random) identifiers are inherently more stable than name-based
43 identifiers or email addresses in many organizations.
- 44 • Identifiers should be compact and simple to handle and manipulate.
- 45 • The ability to clearly express the scope of an identifier's uniqueness and enforce policy stipulating
46 the asserting parties permitted to issue an identifier is crucial to federated systems and the lack of
47 such policy has led to widely-publicized breaches.

48 Another requirement perhaps more common to education and research is the ability for different asserting
49 parties to issue the same identifier. This is facilitated by ensuring the scope of an identifier is part of its
50 value and not implicit in a protocol-specific construct specific to an asserting party.

51 SAML does not define an identifier that meets all of these requirements well. It does standardize a kind of
52 NameID termed "persistent" that meets some of them in the particular case of so-called "pairwise"
53 identification, where an identifier varies by relying party. It has seen minimal adoption outside of a few
54 contexts, and fails at the "compact" and "simple to handle" criteria above, on top of the disadvantages
55 inherent with all NameID usage.

56 Pairwise identification may help meet certain privacy and regulatory requirements (though this is far from
57 clear to date), but does not address many common use cases that demand cross-system correlation
58 without the friction of complex linking protocols and the involvement of the data subject.

1 It's worth noting that SAML actually defines a protocol for managing changes to NameID values, but it has seen very little adoption, further demonstrating the lack of value of NameID usage.

59 In addition, it has come to light that many, if not most, applications have a predisposition to handle
60 identifiers case-insensitively, partly due to a long-standing, though factually untrue, assumption that e-mail
61 address mailbox names are case-insensitive data. SAML's "persistent" NameID definition explicitly
62 requires case-sensitive handling, making them impossible to use safely with such applications without
63 resorting to additional layers of profiling. Note that any other specification promulgating such identifiers is
64 potentially unsafe in combination with such applications and should be used with caution.

65 For all of these reasons, this profile attacks these problems by taking a clean-slate approach that
66 abandons existing practice instead of attempting to layer more profiling and out of band agreements on
67 top of existing solutions, an approach that has seemingly reached its breaking point.

68 **2.2 Relationship to Existing Work**

69 A clean slate notwithstanding, this profile is based on a thorough review of practice within the higher
70 education sector, which has seen extensive adoption of SAML and partially-successful efforts to
71 standardize subject identification and avoid the "email address" trap that most of the technical world fell
72 into many years ago.

73 Among the significant work in this space, the [eduPerson] schema includes a number of identifier
74 attributes, some widely adopted and some less so. This profile is particularly influenced by:

- 75 • Experience with the SAML "persistent" NameID construct and the related eduPersonTargetedID
76 attribute.
- 77 • The eduPersonPrincipalName and eduPersonUniqueid attributes, the former successful but
78 deeply flawed, the latter less successful but more carefully defined.
- 79 • Success with DNS domain-based scoping of values and managing policy around their use in
80 SAML.
- 81 • Challenges in the adoption of profiles required to accommodate the limitations of widely deployed
82 identifiers.

83 Portions of this specification are borrowed liberally from the [eduPerson] specification in a deliberate
84 desire to remain consistent with the formulation of the eduPersonUniqueid attribute.

85 3 SAML V2.0 Subject Identifier Attributes Profile 86 Version 1.0

87 3.1 Required Information

88 **Identification:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:profiles:subject-id

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

90 **Description:** Given below.

91 **Updates:** None.

92 3.2 Overview

93 This profile defines a pair of SAML Attributes providing for unique identification of security subjects (which
94 are generally but not exclusively people). One is designed for general use as a correlatable identifier, and
95 the other is a pairwise identifier suitable for more specialized use.

96 Both SAML Attributes are limited to a single value when expressed in SAML assertions and other
97 constructs. They may be mapped to and from other technical forms (e.g., LDAP attributes) but this profile
98 does not include such mappings.

99 In the terminology used in this profile:

- 100 • "asserting party" refers to a uniquely-named SAML entity that issues assertions containing one or
101 both of these Attributes
- 102 • "relying party" refers to one or more uniquely-named SAML entities that receive assertions
103 containing one or both of these Attributes

104 In addition, this profile defines a signaling mechanism for a relying party to express its subject
105 identification requirements via SAML metadata [[SAML2Meta](#)], by means of the
106 <mdattr:EntityAttributes> extension [[MetaAttr](#)]. This allows asserting parties to unambiguously
107 understand the requirements of a peer and facilitates deployment profiles that wish to mandate support for
108 one or both of these Attributes, while maintaining appropriate privacy expectations.

109 3.3 General Purpose Subject Identifier

110 For general purpose identification of subjects, the following SAML Attribute is defined:

111 **Name:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:attribute:subject-id

112 **NameFormat:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:attrname-format:uri

113 This is a long-lived, non-reassignable, omni-directional identifier suitable for use as a globally-unique
114 external key. Its value for a given subject is independent of the relying party to whom it is given.

115 3.3.1 Syntax and Handling

116 The <saml:Attribute> element MUST contain exactly one <saml:AttributeValue> element,
117 whose xsi:type SHOULD be absent or if present MUST BE bound to the XML Schema xsd:string
118 data type [[XMLSCHEMA-2](#)].

119 Any leading or trailing whitespace, as defined by XML (ASCII 32, ASCII 9, ASCII 10, ASCII 13), present in
120 the <saml:AttributeValue> element's content is not significant and MUST be stripped by the relying
121 party prior to evaluation or comparison.

122 The value consists of two substrings (termed a "unique ID" and a "scope" in the remainder of this
123 definition) separated by an @ symbol (ASCII 64) as an inline delimiter.

124 The unique ID consists of 1 to 127 ASCII characters, each of which is either an alphanumeric ASCII
125 character, an equals sign (ASCII 61), or a hyphen (ASCII 45). The first character MUST be alphanumeric.

126 The scope consists of 1 to 127 ASCII characters, each of which is either an alphanumeric ASCII
127 character, a hyphen (ASCII 45), or a period (ASCII 46). The first character MUST be alphanumeric. The
128 scope deliberately resembles, and typically is, a DNS domain name, but is drawn from a more limited
129 character set due to case folding considerations, and no attempt is made to limit the allowable grammar to
130 legal domain names (e.g., it allows consecutive periods).

131 The ABNF [\[RFC2234\]](#) grammar is therefore:

132 <value> = <uniqueID> "@" <scope>

133 <uniqueID> = (ALPHA / DIGIT) 0*126(ALPHA / DIGIT / "=" / "-")

134 <scope> = (ALPHA / DIGIT) 0*126(ALPHA / DIGIT / "-" / ".")

135 Value comparison MUST be performed case-insensitively (that is, values that differ only by case are the
136 same, and MUST refer to the same subject).

137 In the grammar above, only the ALPHA production contains characters that can be expressed in both
138 upper and lower case. It is RECOMMENDED that alphabetic characters be in lower-case when
139 expressing and storing values to facilitate ease of comparison.

140 **3.3.2 Semantics and Practices**

141 A value (the unique ID and scope together) MUST be bound to one and only one subject, but the same
142 unique ID given a different scope may refer to the same or (far more likely) a different subject.

143 The relationship between an asserting party and a scope is an arbitrary one and does not reflect any
144 assumed relationship between a scope in the form of a domain name and a domain found in a given
145 SAML entity identifier.

146 A value MUST NOT be assigned to more than a single subject over its lifetime of use under any
147 circumstances. The unique ID should therefore be constructed in a fashion that reduces the probability of
148 non-technical or political considerations leading to a violation of this requirement, and any such violation
149 should be treated as a potential security risk to the relying parties to which the value may have been
150 given.

151 Relying parties should not treat this identifier as an email address for the subject as it is unlikely (though
152 not precluded) for it to be valid for that purpose. Most organizations will find that existing email address
153 values will not serve well as values for this Attribute.

154 The unique ID should not change as a result of a change to any other data associated with the subject
155 (e.g., name, email address, age, organizational role).

156 A given value MUST identify the same subject regardless of the context of use or the relying parties to
157 which the Attribute is given. It is therefore to be assumed by relying parties that receive a given value that
158 the same subject has been identified.

159 Note that, policy permitting, a given value could be provided by any asserting party, and the requirement
160 still holds: identical values correspond to the same subject. While it will be common in many deployments
161 to limit values with a given scope to a single asserting party, this is ultimately left to the discretion of the
162 relying party and the use case.

163 A single subject MAY be identified simultaneously by a single asserting party by multiple values, but this
164 should be minimized to the extent possible.

165 3.3.3 Example

166 The following is an example of the SAML Attribute defined in this section:

```
167 <saml:Attribute Name="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:attribute:subject-id"  
168     NameFormat="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:attrname-format:uri">  
169   <saml:AttributeValue>idm123456789@example.com</saml:AttributeValue>  
170 </saml:Attribute>
```

171 3.4 Pairwise Subject Identifier

172 For pairwise identification of subjects, the following SAML Attribute is defined:

173 **Name:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:attribute:pairwise-id

174 **NameFormat:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:attrname-format:uri

175 This is a long-lived, non-reassignable, uni-directional identifier suitable for use as a unique external key
176 specific to a particular relying party. Its value for a given subject depends upon the relying party to whom it
177 is given, thus preventing unrelated systems from using it as a basis for correlation.

178 3.4.1 Syntax and Handling

179 The requirements for this Attribute are identical to those described in Section 3.3.1. That is, values of this
180 Attribute are indistinguishable, lacking the context, from the other.

181 3.4.2 Semantics and Practices

182 Given a particular relying party, a value (the unique ID and scope together) MUST be bound to only one
183 subject, but the same unique ID given a different scope may refer to the same or (far more likely) a
184 different subject. The same value provided to different relying parties MAY refer to different subjects, and
185 indeed that is the primary distinguishing characteristic of this identifier Attribute.

186 The relationship between an asserting party and a scope is an arbitrary one and does not reflect any
187 assumed relationship between a scope in the form of a domain name and a domain found in a given
188 SAML entity identifier.

189 A value MUST NOT be assigned to more than a single subject over its lifetime of use under any
190 circumstances. The unique ID should therefore be constructed in a fashion that reduces the probability of
191 non-technical or political considerations leading to a violation of this requirement, and any such violation
192 should be treated as a potential security risk to the relying parties to which the value may have been
193 given.

194 The value MUST NOT be mappable by a relying party into a non-pairwise identifier for the subject through
195 ordinary effort. This precludes the degenerate case of providing a non-pairwise value to all relying parties
196 for a given subject.

197 Relying parties should not treat this identifier as an email address for the subject as it is unlikely (though
198 not precluded) for it to be valid for that purpose. Most organizations will find that existing email address
199 values will not serve well as values for this Attribute.

200 The unique ID should not change as a result of a change to any other data associated with the subject
201 (e.g., name, email address, age, organizational role).

202 Assuming a particular scope, a given subject MUST be identified with a different, though consistent,
203 unique ID for each relying party to which a value is provided; however, the relationship between relying
204 parties and SAML entities is not defined by this profile and is interpreted from the perspective of the
205 asserting party. For example, in the context of the SAML Web Browser SSO profile [[SAMLProf](#)] it would
206 be typical for an Identity Provider to base its notion of a relying party boundary on a single Service

207 Provider's entity identifier, but that is not specifically required by this profile. The boundary MAY be larger
208 or even smaller, at the Identity Provider's discretion or as addressed by additional profiles.

209 While it will be common in many deployments to limit values with a given scope to a single asserting party,
210 this is ultimately left to the discretion of the relying party and the use case. It is unspecified by this profile
211 whether a given value provided by two or more asserting parties correspond to the same subject. This
212 would depend on out of band arrangements made between the parties. But, in such cases, the "standard"
213 subject identifier defined in Section 3.3 is likely to be a much better choice.

214 3.4.3 Strategies

215 Supporting pairwise identifiers typically involves either the generation and storage of random values, or
216 the computation of reproducible values that can be produced on demand but need not be stored. This
217 profile does not require any specific approach, but implementers should be aware that some techniques
218 for computing values may result in an unacceptable risk of case conflicts. For example, a salted hash over
219 a seed identifier together with a relying party identifier produces a "safe" generated value, but becomes
220 unsafe when encoded in Base64 [RFC4648] (and the allowable character set is defined in part to preclude
221 this choice). However, encoding hashes in Base32 [RFC4648] is a safe choice, and the equals sign is
222 included in the allowable character set to accommodate this.

223 3.4.4 Differences from "persistent" NameIDs

224 This Attribute is a direct replacement for the `urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:nameid-`
225 `format:persistent` NameID Format defined in SAML [SAML2Core]. There are obvious syntactic
226 differences, in a deliberate attempt at simplification. The XML syntax and data "triple" are replaced with a
227 simpler id/scope pair encoded into a string, and the awkward use of a URI to qualify the value is replaced
228 with a simpler, shorter, and more flexible approach that more easily emulates the email address syntax
229 required by many applications, and decouples identifier scoping from SAML entity naming.

230 One functional gap is the interoperable mechanism of SAML "affiliations" to group entities for the purpose
231 of targeting pairwise identifiers to multiple Service Providers, which was baked into the SAML protocol. It
232 has been left out of this profile due to the general lack of adoption by implementers or deployers in the
233 intervening years since the publication of the standard. Were there demand, it could be incorporated into a
234 future revision of this work.

235 3.4.5 Example

236 The following is an example of the SAML Attribute defined in this section:

```
237 <saml:Attribute Name="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:attribute:pairwise-id"  
238     NameFormat="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:attrname-format:uri">  
239   <saml:AttributeValue>  
240     HA2TKNZZGE2TOZDCGMZWKOLDHQBQWIMBSGM4TGZBYGUYGINRQHAYTINBZGYZDOZBZMZRGKNZTME3TMN  
241     BXGYTTIOBYGMYWKNLPMYYDAYY=@osu.edu  
242   </saml:AttributeValue>  
243 </saml:Attribute>
```

244 3.5 Considerations for SAML Profiles

245 The Attributes defined in this profile are designed to be used in conjunction with any SAML profiles that
246 support the use of SAML Attributes, though its predominant expected use is with the various SAML single
247 sign-on profiles [SAML2Prof] such as the Web Browser SSO Profile and Enhanced Client or Proxy (ECP)
248 Profile.

249 3.5.1 Requirements Signaling

250 In the event that SAML metadata [SAML2Meta] is used, a relying party MUST express its identifier
251 requirements by including an `<mdattr:EntityAttribute>` extension [MetaAttr] in its metadata
252 containing the following Attribute:

253 **Name:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:profiles:subject-id:req

254 **NameFormat:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:attrname-format:uri

255 This Attribute, MUST contain exactly one <saml:AttributeValue> element, whose xsi:type
256 SHOULD be absent or if present MUST BE bound to the XML Schema xsd:string data type
257 [XMLSCHEMA-2].

258 The value MUST be one of the following, signaling the corresponding requirement:

- 259 • subject-id
 - 260 ◦ The relying party requires the standard identifier Attribute defined in Section 3.3.
- 261 • pairwise-id
 - 262 ◦ The relying party requires the pair-wise identifier Attribute defined in Section 3.4.
- 263 • none
 - 264 ◦ The relying party does not require any subject identifier and is designed to operate without a
 - 265 specific user identity (e.g., with authorization based on non-identifying data).
- 266 • any
 - 267 ◦ The relying party will accept any of the identifier Attributes defined in this profile but requires
 - 268 at least one.

269 This profile does not define specific normative behavior on the part of asserting parties in response to this
270 metadata, but it is expected that other profiles will do so in the future.

271 This profile does not provide (nor preclude) any guidance around the use of the
272 <md:RequestedAttribute> element for signaling requirements, but notably it is impossible without
273 additional specification work to reflect the semantics of the any value defined above using that
274 mechanism.

275 **3.5.2 NameID Considerations**

276 While the Attributes defined in this profile have as a goal the explicit replacement of the <saml:NameID>
277 element as a means of subject identification, it is certainly possible to compose them with existing NameID
278 usage provided the same subject is being identified. This can also serve as a migration strategy for
279 existing applications.

280 Some profiles such as the Single Logout Profile [SAML2Prof] require the use of a <saml:NameID>
281 element, which implies the earlier use of a NameID. In such cases, it is RECOMMENDED that the
282 urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:nameid-format:transient NameID Format be used.

283 This specification does not define any syntax by which the SAML Attributes defined within would be used
284 directly within the NameID construct. Such use is discouraged, but is not precluded by this specification. In
285 practice, the most appropriate mechanism to express any string-valued SAML Attribute in a
286 <saml:NameID> element is to express the Attribute's Name as a Format and omit any qualifiers, and
287 such an approach is safe to use with the Attributes defined in this specification.

288 **3.5.3 Security Considerations**

289 All identifiers have inherent and generally well-understood concerns; most applications traditionally
290 associate users directly with resources, privileges, and/or data by uniquely identifying those users and
291 remembering them during subsequent interactions. Federated protocols don't alter these concerns, but
292 can complicate them because of the particular issues introduced by multiple asserting parties that may (but
293 usually do not) share a common identifier namespace.

294 Applications not originally designed to support federation often treat each asserting party as a kind of silo
295 of identity, and the identifiers used are inherently segregated by these silos such that global uniqueness
296 (or lack thereof) is irrelevant. In such cases, the asserting party's own identifier acts as an implicit "scope"
297 for all of the identifiers it asserts. In some cases, a lack of this implicit enforcement of scope has led to
298 security vulnerabilities involving impersonation of users across asserting parties, demonstrating that, no
299 matter what kind of identifier is used, some form of scoping of user identifiers is an absolute necessity in
300 federated systems. This requirement is more obvious when applications are truly federated and combine
301 identifiers from multiple asserting parties within a data set.

302 The identifier attributes defined in this specification contain an explicit scope as part of their syntax,
303 providing globally uniqueness, but, more subtly, creating indirection between the scopes and the asserting
304 party or parties that provide them. That is, the scope is explicit, but the relationship between that scope
305 and an asserting party is indirect, at least when looking solely at the identifier. This indirection adds power,
306 in that use cases involving identity linking between asserting parties become simpler to support, and it
307 adds simplicity from the point of view of safe handling of identifier values since the scope is harder to
308 "lose" or ignore. But this also adds complexity because a policy decision is required to authorize an
309 asserting party to supply identifiers in a given scope.

310 As an example, consider an identifier such as "abcdef123@osu.edu"; SAML doesn't define anything in its
311 core machinery that associates "osu.edu" with the Identity Provider representing The Ohio State
312 University. Domain ownership proofs are of course a common and sensible practice to use to establish
313 this association, but nothing in SAML specifies that, so it's an additional step.

314 This specification does not define a single such policy layer, principally because the most common
315 community of practice from which it has emerged already has one based on a proprietary SAML metadata
316 extension [[ShibMetaExt](#)] that associates authorized scope values with asserting parties. By using SAML
317 metadata, the problem of self-assertion is addressed; if an asserting party were able to self-authorize its
318 ability to supply an identifier in a different asserting party's scope, impersonation becomes easy.
319 Communities that rely on curated, third-party sources of metadata have a vehicle for automating policy
320 around scopes, and for off-loading domain/scope verification. Thus, use of metadata in this fashion and
321 use of scoped identifiers become mutually reinforcing.

321 4 Conformance

322 4.1 Conformance Clause 1: Asserting Party Implementations

323 An asserting party implementation conforms to this specification if it can be configured to produce both
324 identifier Attributes conforming to the normative requirements in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

325 4.2 Conformance Clause 2: Relying Party Implementations

326 A relying party implementation conforms to this specification if it can be configured to consume neither,
327 either, and both of the two identifier Attributes conforming to the normative requirements in Sections 3.3
328 and 3.4.

329 If the relying party implementation provides a mechanism for generation and/or publication of SAML
330 metadata [[SAML2Meta](#)], then it MUST support the inclusion of the extension defined in Section 3.5.1.

331 **Appendix A Acknowledgments**

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334 **Appendix B Revision History**

Revision	Date	Editor	Changes Made
WD 01	30 Aug 2017	Scott Cantor	Initial draft
WD 02	13 Sep 2017	Scott Cantor	Added considerations for other profiles
WD 03	15 Sep 2017	Scott Cantor	Added hyphen as legal character in unique ID
WD 04	1 Feb 2018	Scott Cantor	Many nits, missing references, clarifying changes in response to public review

335