



Glossary for the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) V2.0

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46 **Abstract:**

47 This specification defines terms used throughout the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language
48 (SAML) specifications and related documents.

49 **Status:**

50 This is a **Committee Draft** approved by the Security Services Technical Committee on 17 August
51 2004.

52 Committee members should submit comments and potential errata to the [security-](mailto:security-services@lists.oasis-open.org)
53 [services@lists.oasis-open.org](mailto:security-services@lists.oasis-open.org) list. Others should submit them by filling out the web form located
54 at http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/comments/form.php?wg_abbrev=security. The
55 committee will publish on its web page (<http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security>) a catalog
56 of any changes made to this document.

57 For information on whether any patents have been disclosed that may be essential to
58 implementing this specification, and any offers of patent licensing terms, please refer to the
59 Intellectual Property Rights web page for the Security Services TC ([http://www.oasis-](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/ipr.php)
60 [open.org/committees/security/ipr.php](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/ipr.php)).

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1 Glossary

65

66 This normative document defines terms used throughout the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language
67 (SAML) specifications and related documents.

68 Some definitions are derived directly from external sources (referenced in an appendix), some definitions
69 based on external sources have been substantively modified to fit the SAML context, and some are newly
70 developed for SAML. Please refer to the external sources for definitions of terms not explicitly defined
71 here.

72 Some definitions have multiple senses provided. They are denoted by (a), (b), and so on. References to
73 terms defined elsewhere in this glossary are italicized.

74 Following are the defined terms used in the SAML specifications and related documents.

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76	Term	Definition
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78	Access	To interact with a <i>system entity</i> in order to manipulate, use, gain
79		knowledge of, and/or obtain a representation of some or all of a
80		system entity's <i>resources</i> . [RFC2828]

81	Access Control	To interact with a <i>system entity</i> in order to manipulate, use, gain
82		knowledge of, and/or obtain a representation of some or all of a
83		system entity's <i>resources</i> . [RFC2828]

84	Access Control Information	Any information used for access control purposes, including
85		contextual information [X.812]. Contextual information might
86		include source IP address, encryption strength, the type of
87		operation being requested, time of day, etc. Portions of access
88		control information may be specific to the request itself, some
89		may be associated with the connection via which the request is
90		transmitted, and others (for example, time of day) may be
91		"environmental". [RFC2829]

92	Access Rights	A description of the type of authorized interactions a <i>subject</i> can
93		have with a <i>resource</i> . Examples include read, write, execute,
94		add, modify, and delete. [Taxonomy]

95	Account	A formal business agreement for providing regular dealings and
96		services between a <i>principal</i> and <i>providers</i> .

97	Account Linkage	A method of relating accounts at two different <i>providers</i> that
98		represent the same <i>principal</i> so that the providers can
99		communicate about the principal. Account linkage can be
100		established through the sharing of attributes or through <i>identity</i>
101		<i>federation</i> .

102	Active Role	A role that a <i>system entity</i> has donned when performing some
103		operation, for example accessing a <i>resource</i> .

104	Administrative Domain	An environment or context that is defined by some combination of one or more administrative policies, Internet Domain Name registrations, civil legal entities (for example, individuals, corporations, or other formally organized entities), plus a collection of hosts, network devices and the interconnecting networks (and possibly other traits), plus (often various) network services and applications running upon them. An administrative domain may contain or define one or more security domains. An administrative domain may encompass a single site or multiple sites. The traits defining an administrative domain may, and in many cases will, evolve over time. Administrative domains may interact and enter into agreements for providing and/or consuming services across administrative domain boundaries.
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117	Administrator	A person who installs or maintains a system (for example, a SAML-based security system) or who uses it to manage <i>system entities</i> , users, and/or content (as opposed to application purposes; see also <i>End User</i>). An administrator is typically affiliated with a particular <i>administrative domain</i> and may be affiliated with more than one administrative domain.
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123	Affiliation, Affiliation Group	A set of <i>system entities</i> that share a single <i>namespace</i> (in the federated sense) of <i>identifiers</i> for <i>principals</i> . Anonymity The quality or state of being anonymous, which is the condition of having a name or identity that is unknown or concealed. [RFC2828]
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128	Artifact	A small referential data object communicated in place of a SAML protocol message. The SAML Artifact format is defined in the HTTP Artifact Binding in [SAMLBind].
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131	Assertion	A piece of data produced by a <i>SAML authority</i> regarding either an act of authentication performed on a <i>subject</i> , attribute information about the subject, or authorization permissions applying to the subject with respect to a specified <i>resource</i> .
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135	Asserting Party	Formally, the <i>administrative domain</i> that hosts one or more <i>SAML authorities</i> . Informally, an instance of a <i>SAML authority</i> .
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137	Attribute	A distinct characteristic of an object (in SAML, of a <i>subject</i>). An object's attributes are said to describe it. Attributes are often specified in terms of physical traits, such as size, shape, weight, and color, etc., for real-world objects. Objects in cyberspace might have attributes describing size, type of encoding, network address, and so on. Which attributes of an object are salient is decided by the beholder. See also <i>XML attribute</i> .
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144	Attribute Authority	A <i>system entity</i> that produces <i>attribute assertions</i> . [SAMLAgree]
145	Attribute Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that conveys information about <i>attributes</i> of a <i>subject</i> .
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147	Authentication	To confirm a <i>system entity's</i> asserted <i>principal identity</i> with a specified, or understood, level of confidence. [CyberTrust] [SAMLAgree]
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150	Authentication Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that conveys information about a successful act of <i>authentication</i> that took place for a <i>subject</i> .
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152	Authentication Authority	A <i>system entity</i> that produces <i>authentication assertions</i> .
153		[SAMLAgree]
154	Authorization	The process of determining, by evaluating applicable <i>access control information</i> , whether a <i>subject</i> is allowed to have the specified types of <i>access</i> to a particular <i>resource</i> . Usually, authorization is in the context of authentication. Once a subject is authenticated, it may be authorized to perform different types of access. [Taxonomy]
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160	Authorization Decision	The result of an act of authorization. The result may be negative, that is, it may indicate that the <i>subject</i> is not allowed any access to the <i>resource</i> .
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163	Authorization Decision Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that conveys information about an <i>authorization decision</i> .
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165	Binding, Protocol Binding	Generically, a specification of the mapping of some given protocol's messages, and perhaps message exchange patterns, onto another protocol, in a concrete fashion. For example, the mapping of the SAML <AuthnRequest> message onto HTTP is one example of a binding. The mapping of that same SAML message onto SOAP is another binding. In the SAML context, each binding is given a name in the pattern "SAML xxx binding".
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172	Credentials	Data that is transferred to establish a claimed principal identity.
173		[X.800] [SAMLAgree]
174	End User	A natural person who makes use of resources for application purposes (as opposed to system management purposes; see <i>Administrator, User</i>).
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177	Federation	An association comprising any number of <i>service providers</i> and <i>identity providers</i> .
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179	Identifier	A representation (for example, a string) mapped to a <i>system entity</i> that uniquely refers to it.
180		
181	Identity Defederation	The elimination of the linkage between a <i>principal's</i> accounts at an <i>identity provider</i> and a <i>service provider</i> , such that the identity provider no longer provides the associated <i>identifier</i> to the service provider, and the service provider will no longer accept the associated identifier from the identity provider.
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186	Identity Federation	Linking accounts for a given <i>principal</i> at a pair of <i>providers</i> within a <i>federation</i> by establishing (or using an existing) <i>identifier</i> to refer to the principal.
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189	Identity Provider	A kind of <i>service provider</i> that creates, maintains, and manages identity information for <i>principals</i> and provides principal authentication to other <i>service providers</i> within a <i>federation</i> , such as with web browser profiles.
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193	Initial SOAP Sender	The SOAP sender that originates a SOAP message at the starting point of a SOAP message path. [WSGloss]
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195	Login, Logon, Sign-On	The process whereby a <i>user</i> presents <i>credentials</i> to an <i>authentication authority</i> , establishes a <i>simple session</i> , and optionally establishes a <i>rich session</i> .
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198	Logout, Logoff, Sign-Off	The process whereby a <i>user</i> signifies desire to terminate a <i>simple session</i> or <i>rich session</i> .
199		
200	Markup Language	A set of <i>XML elements</i> and <i>XML attributes</i> to be applied to the structure of an XML document for a specific purpose. A markup language is typically defined by means of a set of <i>XML schemas</i> and accompanying documentation. For example, the <i>Security Assertion Markup Language</i> (SAML) is defined by two schemas and a set of normative SAML specification text.
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206	Name Qualifier	A string that disambiguates an <i>identifier</i> that may be used in more than one <i>namespace</i> (in the federated sense) to represent different <i>principals</i> .
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209	Namespace	This term is used in several senses in SAML: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) (In discussing federated names) A domain in which an identifier is unique in representing a single principal. b) (With respect to authorization decision actions) A URI that identifies the set of action values from which the supplied action comes. c) (In XML) See <i>XML namespace</i>.
210	Party	Informally, one or more <i>principals</i> participating in some process or communication, such as receiving an <i>assertion</i> or accessing a <i>resource</i> .
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213	Persistent Pseudonym	A privacy-preserving name identifier assigned by a <i>provider</i> to identify a <i>principal</i> to a given <i>relying party</i> for an extended period of time that spans multiple <i>sessions</i> ; can be used to represent an <i>identity federation</i> .
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217	Policy Decision Point (PDP)	A <i>system entity</i> that makes <i>authorization decisions</i> for itself or for other system entities that request such decisions. [PolicyTerm] For example, a SAML PDP consumes authorization decision requests, and produces <i>authorization decision assertions</i> in response. A PDP is an “authorization decision authority”.
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222	Policy Enforcement Point (PEP)	A <i>system entity</i> that requests and subsequently enforces <i>authorization decisions</i> . [PolicyTerm] For example, a SAML PEP sends <i>authorization decision</i> requests to a PDP, and consumes the <i>authorization decision assertions</i> sent in response.
223		
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226	Principal	A <i>system entity</i> whose identity can be authenticated. [X.811]
227	Principal Identity	A representation of a principal's identity, typically an <i>identifier</i> .
228	Profile	A set of rules for one of several purposes; each set is given a name in the pattern “xxx profile of SAML” or “xxx SAML profile”. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rules for how to embed <i>assertions</i> into and extract them from a protocol or other context of use. b) Rules for using SAML protocol messages in a particular context of use. c) Rules for mapping attributes expressed in SAML to another attribute representation system. Such a set of rules is known as an “attribute profile”.
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230	Provider	A generic way to refer to both <i>identity providers</i> and <i>service providers</i> .
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232	Proxy	An entity authorized to act for another. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Authority or power to act for another. b) A document giving such authority. [Merriam]
233	Proxy Server	A computer process that relays a protocol between client and server computer systems, by appearing to the client to be the server and appearing to the server to be the client. [RFC2828]
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236	Pull	To actively request information from a <i>system entity</i> .
237	Push	To provide information to a <i>system entity</i> that did not actively request it.
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239	Relying Party	A <i>system entity</i> that decides to take an action based on information from another system entity. For example, a SAML relying party depends on receiving <i>assertions</i> from an <i>asserting party</i> (a <i>SAML authority</i>) about a <i>subject</i> .
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243	Requester, SAML Requester	A <i>system entity</i> that utilizes the SAML protocol to request services from another system entity (a <i>SAML authority</i> , a <i>responder</i>). The term “client” for this notion is not used because many system entities simultaneously or serially act as both clients and servers. In cases where the SOAP binding for SAML is being used, the SAML requester is architecturally distinct from the <i>initial SOAP sender</i> .
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250	Resource	Data contained in an information system (for example, in the form of files, information in memory, etc), as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A service provided by a system. b) An item of system equipment (in other words, a system component such as hardware, firmware, software, or documentation). c) A facility that houses system operations and equipment. [RFC2828]
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252		SAML uses “resource” in the first two senses, and refers to resources by means of <i>URI references</i> .
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254	Responder, SAML Responder	A <i>system entity</i> (a <i>SAML authority</i>) that utilizes the SAML protocol to respond to a request for services from another system entity (a <i>requester</i>). The term “server” for this notion is not used because many system entities simultaneously or serially act as both clients and servers. In cases where the SOAP binding for SAML is being used, the SAML responder is architecturally distinct from the <i>ultimate SOAP receiver</i> .
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261	Role	Dictionaries define a role as “a character or part played by a performer” or “a function or position.” Principals don various types of roles serially and/or simultaneously, for example, active roles and passive roles. The notion of an Administrator is often an example of a role.
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266 267 268	SAML Authority	An abstract <i>system entity</i> in the SAML domain model that issues <i>assertions</i> . See also <i>attribute authority</i> , <i>authentication authority</i> , and <i>policy decision point (PDP)</i> .
269 270 271 272 273 274	Security	A collection of safeguards that ensure the confidentiality of information, protect the systems or networks used to process it, and control access to them. Security typically encompasses the concepts of secrecy, confidentiality, integrity, and availability. It is intended to ensure that a system resists potentially correlated attacks. [CyberTrust]
275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287	Security Architecture	A plan and set of principles for an <i>administrative domain</i> and its <i>security domains</i> that describe the security services that a system is required to provide to meet the needs of its users, the system elements required to implement the services, and the performance levels required in the elements to deal with the threat environment. A complete security architecture for a system addresses administrative security, communication security, computer security, emanations security, personnel security, and physical security, and prescribes security policies for each. A complete security architecture needs to deal with both intentional, intelligent threats and accidental threats. A security architecture should explicitly evolve over time as an integral part of its administrative domain's evolution. [RFC2828]
288 289	Security Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that is scrutinized in the context of a security architecture.
290	Security Assertion Markup Language	
291 292 293 294 295	(SAML)	The set of specifications describing <i>security assertions</i> that are encoded in <i>XML</i> , <i>profiles</i> for attaching the assertions to various protocols and frameworks, the request/response protocol used to obtain the assertions, and <i>bindings</i> of this protocol to various transfer protocols (for example, SOAP and HTTP).
296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311	Security Context	<p>With respect to an individual SAML protocol message, the message's security context is the semantic union of the message's security header blocks (if any) along with other security mechanisms that may be employed in the message's delivery to a recipient. With respect to the latter, an examples are security mechanisms employed at lower network stack layers such as HTTP, TLS/SSL, IPSEC, etc.</p> <p>With respect to a system entity, "Alice", interacting with another system entity, "Bob", a security context is nominally the semantic union of all employed security mechanisms across all network connections between Alice and Bob. Alice and Bob may each individually be, for example, a provider or a user agent. This notion of security context is similar to the notion of "security contexts" as employed in [RFC2743], and in the Distributed Computing Environment [DCE], for example.</p>
312 313 314 315 316 317	Security Domain	An environment or context that is defined by security models and a <i>security architecture</i> , including a set of <i>resources</i> and set of <i>system entities</i> that are authorized to access the resources. One or more security domains may reside in a single <i>administrative domain</i> . The traits defining a given security domain typically evolve over time. [Taxonomy]

318	Security Policy	A set of rules and practices that specify or regulate how a system or organization provides security services to protect <i>resources</i> . Security policies are components of <i>security architectures</i> . Significant portions of security policies are implemented via <i>security services</i> , using <i>security policy expressions</i> . [RFC2828] [Taxonomy]
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324	Security Policy Expression	A mapping of <i>principal identities</i> and/or <i>attributes</i> thereof with allowable actions. Security policy expressions are often essentially access control lists. [Taxonomy]
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327	Security Service	A processing or communication service that is provided by a system to give a specific kind of protection to resources, where said resources may reside with said system or reside with other systems, for example, an authentication service or a PKI-based document attribution and authentication service. A security service is a superset of AAA services. Security services typically implement portions of <i>security policies</i> and are implemented via security mechanisms. [RFC2828] [Taxonomy]
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335	Service Provider	An <i>entity</i> that provides services to <i>principals</i> .
336	Session	A lasting interaction between system entities, often involving a user, typified by the maintenance of some state of the interaction for the duration of the interaction.
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339	Site	An informal term for an <i>administrative domain</i> in geographical or DNS name sense. It may refer to a particular geographical or topological portion of an administrative domain, or it may encompass multiple administrative domains, as may be the case at an ASP site.
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344	SSO Assertion,	
345	Single Sign-On Assertion	An assertion with conditions embedded that explicitly define its lifetime, and that also contains one or more statements about the authentication of a subject. Additional information about the subject, such as attributes, may also be included in the assertion. [SAMLBind]
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350	Subject	A <i>principal</i> in the context of a <i>security domain</i> . SAML assertions make declarations about subjects.
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352	System Entity, Entity	An active element of a computer/network system. For example, an automated process or set of processes, a subsystem, a person or group of persons that incorporates a distinct set of functionality. [RFC2828] [SAMLAgree]
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356	Time-Out	A period of time after which some condition becomes true if some event has not occurred. For example, a <i>session</i> that is terminated because its state has been inactive for a specified period of time is said to "time out".
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360	Transient Pseudonym	A privacy-preserving name identifier assigned by an <i>identity provider</i> to identify a <i>principal</i> to a given <i>relying party</i> for a relatively short period of time that need not span multiple <i>sessions</i> .
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364 365 366 367 368 369 370	Ultimate SOAP Receiver	The SOAP receiver that is a final destination of a SOAP message. It is responsible for processing the contents of the SOAP body and any SOAP header blocks targeted at it. In some circumstances, a SOAP message might not reach an ultimate SOAP receiver, for example because of a problem at a SOAP intermediary. An ultimate SOAP receiver cannot also be a SOAP intermediary for the same SOAP message. [WSGloss]
371 372	User	A natural person who makes use of a system and its resources for any purpose [SAMLAgree]
373 374 375 376 377 378	Uniform Resource Identifier (URI)	A compact string of characters for identifying an abstract or physical <i>resource</i> . [RFC2396] URIs are the universal addressing mechanism for resources on the World Wide Web. Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) are a subset of URIs that use an addressing scheme tied to the resource's primary access mechanism, for example, their network "location".
379 380 381	URI Reference	A <i>URI</i> that is allowed to have an appended number sign (#) and fragment identifier. [RFC2396] Fragment identifiers address particular locations or regions within the identified resource.
382 383 384 385	XML	Extensible Markup Language, abbreviated XML, describes a class of data objects called XML documents and partially describes the behavior of computer programs which process them. [XML]
386 387 388	XML Attribute	An XML data structure that is embedded in the start-tag of an XML element and that has a name and a value. For example, the italicized portion below is an instance of an XML attribute:
389		<code><Address AddressID="A12345">...</Address></code>
390	See also <i>attribute</i> .	
391 392 393	XML Element	An XML data structure that is hierarchically arranged among other such structures in an XML document and is indicated by either a start-tag and end-tag or an empty tag. For example:
394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402		<code><Address AddressID="A12345"> <Street>105 Main Street</Street> <City>Springfield</City> <StateOrProvince> <Full>Massachusetts</Full> <Abbrev>MA</Abbrev> </StateOrProvince> <Post Code="56789"/> </Address></code>
403 404 405 406 407	XML Namespace	A collection of names, identified by a <i>URI reference</i> , which are used in XML documents as element types and attribute names. An XML namespace is often associated with an <i>XML schema</i> . For example, SAML defines two schemas, and each has a unique XML namespace.

408 XML Schema

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The format developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) for describing rules for a *markup language* to be used in a set of XML documents. In the lowercase, a “schema” or “XML schema” is an individual instance of this format. For example, SAML defines two schemas, one containing the rules for XML documents that encode security assertions and one containing the rules for XML documents that encode request/response protocol messages. Schemas define not only XML elements and XML attributes, but also datatypes that apply to these constructs.

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440 *Consensus*. Consensus on the wording for this item occurred during one or more
441 conference calls of the SAML Use Cases and Requirements subcommittee.
442 Meeting minutes are available at <http://lists.oasis-open.org/archives/security-use/>.
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