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**SAML Enhanced Client SASL and GSS-API Mechanisms**  
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Abstract

Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) 2.0 is a generalized framework for the exchange of security-related information between asserting and relying parties. Simple Authentication and Security Layer (SASL) and the Generic Security Service Application Program Interface (GSS-API) are application frameworks to facilitate an extensible authentication model. This document specifies a SASL and GSS-API mechanism for SAML 2.0 that leverages the capabilities of a SAML-aware "enhanced client" to address significant barriers to federated authentication in a manner that encourages reuse of existing SAML bindings and profiles designed for non-browser scenarios.

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## 1. Introduction

Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) 2.0

[[OASIS.saml-core-2.0-os](#)] is a modular specification that provides various means for a user to be identified to a relying party (RP) through the exchange of (typically signed) assertions issued by an identity provider (IdP). It includes a number of protocols, protocol bindings [[OASIS.saml-bindings-2.0-os](#)], and interoperability profiles [[OASIS.saml-profiles-2.0-os](#)] designed for different use cases. Additional profiles and extensions are also routinely developed and published.

Simple Authentication and Security Layer (SASL) [[RFC4422](#)] is a generalized mechanism for identifying and authenticating a user and for optionally negotiating a security layer for subsequent protocol interactions. SASL is used by application protocols like IMAP, POP and XMPP [[RFC3920](#)]. The effect is to make authentication modular, so that newer authentication mechanisms can be added as needed.

The Generic Security Service Application Program Interface (GSS-API) [[RFC2743](#)] provides a framework for applications to support multiple authentication mechanisms through a unified programming interface. This document defines a pure SASL mechanism for SAML, but it conforms to the bridge between SASL and the GSS-API called GS2 [[RFC5801](#)]. This means that this document defines both a SASL mechanism and a GSS-API mechanism. The GSS-API interface is optional for SASL implementers, and the GSS-API considerations can be avoided in environments that use SASL directly without GSS-API.

The mechanisms specified in this document allow a SASL- or GSS-API-enabled server to act as a SAML relying party, or service provider (SP), by advertising this mechanism as an option for SASL or GSS-API clients that support the use of SAML to communicate identity and attribute information. Clients supporting this mechanism are termed "enhanced clients" in SAML terminology because they understand the federated authentication model and have specific knowledge of the IdP(s) associated with the user. This knowledge, and the ability to act on it, addresses a significant problem with browser-based SAML profiles known as the "discovery", or "where are you from?" (WAYF) problem. In a "dumb" client such as a web browser, various intrusive user interface techniques are used to determine the appropriate IdP to use because the request to the IdP is generated as an HTTP redirect by the RP, which does not generally have prior knowledge of the IdP to use. Obviating the need for the RP to interact with the client to determine the right IdP (and its network location) is both a user interface and security improvement.



The SAML mechanism described in this document is an adaptation of an existing SAML profile, the Enhanced Client or Proxy (ECP) Profile (V2.0) [[SAMLECP20](#)].

Figure 1 describes the interworking between SAML and SASL: this document requires enhancements to the RP and to the client (as the two SASL communication endpoints) but no changes to the SAML IdP are assumed apart from its support for the applicable SAML profile. To accomplish this, a SAML protocol exchange between the RP and the IdP, brokered by the client, is tunneled within SASL. There is no assumed communication between the RP and the IdP, but such communication may occur in conjunction with additional SAML-related profiles not in scope for this document.

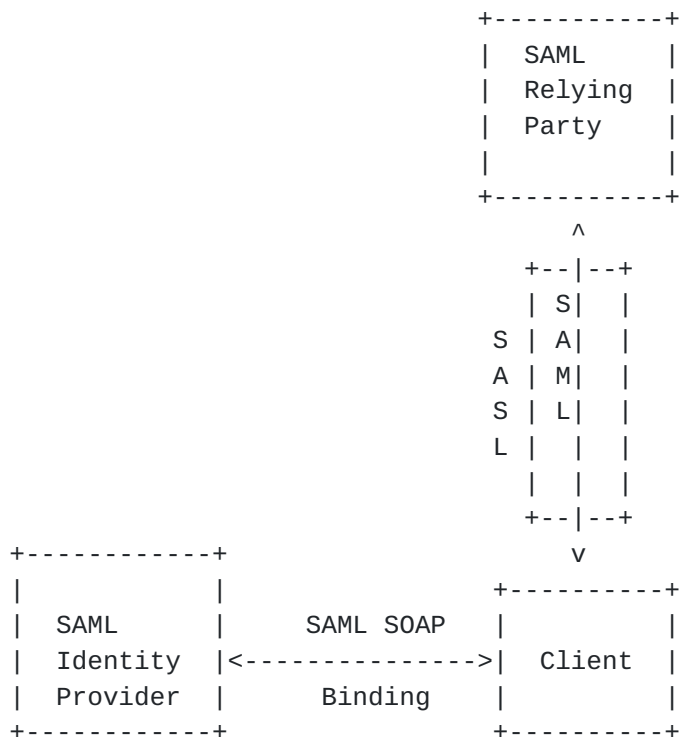


Figure 1: Interworking Architecture

## 2. Terminology

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 [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].



The reader is also assumed to be familiar with the terms used in the SAML 2.0 specification, and an understanding of the Enhanced Client or Proxy (ECP) Profile (V2.0) [[SAMLECP20](#)] is necessary, as part of this mechanism explicitly reuses and references it.

This document can be implemented without knowledge of GSS-API since the normative aspects of the GS2 protocol syntax have been duplicated in this document. The document may also be implemented to provide a GSS-API mechanism, and then knowledge of GSS-API is essential. To facilitate these two variants, the references has been split into two parts, one part that provides normative references for all readers, and one part that adds additional normative references required for implementers that wish to implement the GSS-API portion.

### **3. Applicability for Non-HTTP Use Cases**

While SAML is designed to support a variety of application scenarios, the profiles for authentication defined in the original standard are designed around HTTP [[RFC2616](#)] applications. They are not, however, limited to browsers, because it was recognized that browsers suffer from a variety of functional and security deficiencies that would be useful to avoid where possible. Specifically, the notion of an "Enhanced Client" (or a proxy acting as one on behalf of a browser, thus the term "ECP") was specified for a software component that acts somewhat like a browser from an application perspective, but includes limited, but sufficient, awareness of SAML to play a more conscious role in the authentication exchange between the RP and the IdP. What follows is an outline of the Enhanced Client or Proxy (ECP) Profile (V2.0) [[SAMLECP20](#)], as applied to the web/HTTP service use case:

1. The Enhanced Client requests a resource of a Relying Party (RP) (via an HTTP request). In doing so, it advertises its "enhanced" capability using HTTP headers.
2. The RP, desiring SAML authentication and noting the client's capabilities, responds not with an HTTP redirect or form, but with a SOAP [[W3C.soap11](#)] envelope containing a SAML <AuthnRequest> along with some supporting headers. This request identifies the RP (and may be signed), and may provide hints to the client as to what IdPs the RP finds acceptable, but the choice of IdP is generally left to the client.
3. The client is then responsible for delivering the body of the SOAP message to the IdP it is instructed to use (often via configuration ahead of time). The user authenticates to the IdP ahead of, during, or after the delivery of this message, and perhaps explicitly authorizes the response to the RP.



4. Whether authentication succeeds or fails, the IdP responds with its own SOAP envelope, generally containing a SAML <Response> message for delivery to the RP. In a successful case, the message will include one or more SAML <Assertion> elements containing authentication, and possibly attribute, statements about the subject. Either the response or each assertion is signed, and the assertion(s) may be encrypted to a key negotiated with or known to belong to the RP.
5. The client then delivers the SOAP envelope containing the <Response> to the RP at a location the IdP directs (which acts as an additional, though limited, defense against MITM attacks). This completes the SAML exchange.
6. The RP now has sufficient identity information to approve the original HTTP request or not, and acts accordingly. Everything between the original request and this response can be thought of as an "interruption" of the original HTTP exchange.

When considering this flow in the context of an arbitrary application protocol and SASL, the RP and the client both must change their code to implement this SASL mechanism, but the IdP can remain unmodified. The existing RP/client exchange that is tunneled through HTTP maps well to the tunneling of that same exchange in SASL. In the parlance of SASL [[RFC4422](#)], this mechanism is "client-first" for consistency with GS2. The steps are shown below:

1. The server MAY advertise the SAML20EC and/or SAML20EC-PLUS mechanisms.
2. The client initiates a SASL authentication with SAML20EC or SAML20EC-PLUS.
3. The server sends the client a challenge consisting of a SOAP envelope containing its SAML <AuthnRequest>.
4. The SASL client unpacks the SOAP message and communicates with its chosen IdP to relay the SAML <AuthnRequest> to it. This communication, and the authentication with the IdP, proceeds separately from the SASL process.
5. Upon completion of the exchange with the IdP, the client responds to the SASL server with a SOAP envelope containing the SAML <Response> it obtained, or a SOAP fault, as warranted.
6. The SASL Server indicates success or failure.



Note: The details of the SAML processing, which are consistent with the Enhanced Client or Proxy (ECP) Profile (V2.0) [[SAMLECP20](#)], are such that the client MUST interact with the IdP in order to complete any SASL exchange with the RP. The assertions issued by the IdP for the purposes of the profile, and by extension this SASL mechanism, are short lived, and therefore cannot be cached by the client for later use.

Encompassed in step four is the client-driven selection of the IdP, authentication to it, and the acquisition of a response to provide to the SASL server. These processes are all external to SASL.

Note also that unlike an HTTP-based profile, the IdP cannot participate in the selection of, or evaluation of, the location to which the SASL Client Response will be delivered by the client. The use of GSS-API Channel Binding is an important mitigation of the risk of a "Man in the Middle" attack between the client and RP, as is the use of a negotiated or derived session key in whatever protocol is secured by this mechanism.

With all of this in mind, the typical flow appears as follows:

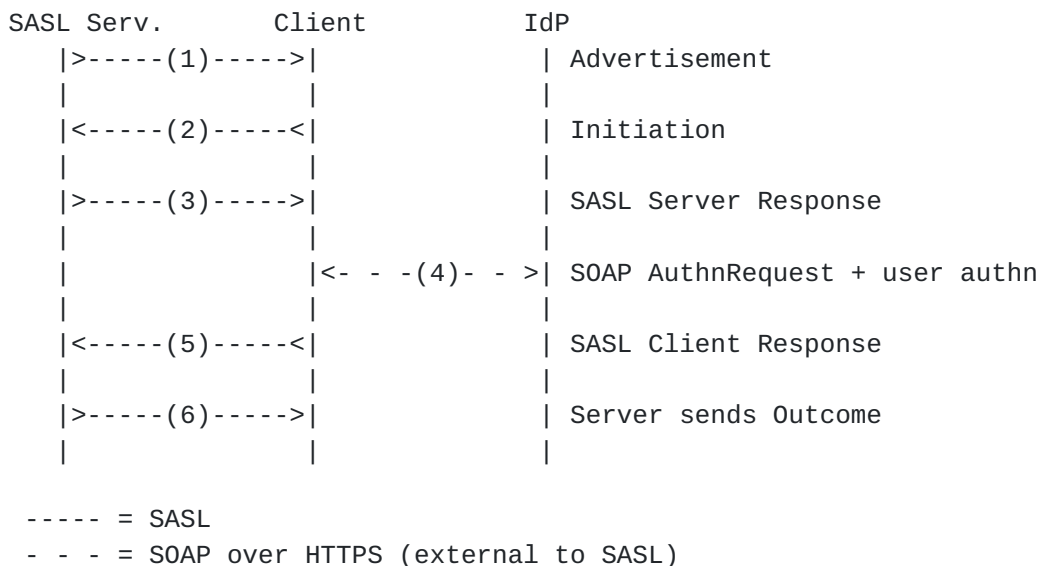


Figure 2: Authentication flow



#### **4. SAML Enhanced Client SASL Mechanism Specification**

Based on the previous figures, the following operations are defined by the SAML SASL mechanism:

##### **4.1. Advertisement**

To advertise that a server supports this mechanism, during application session initiation, it displays the name "SAML20EC" and/or "SAML20EC-PLUS" in the list of supported SASL mechanisms.

In accordance with [[RFC5801](#)] the "-PLUS" variant indicates that the server supports channel binding and would be selected by a client with that capability.

##### **4.2. Initiation**

A client initiates "SAML20EC" or "SAML20EC-PLUS" authentication. If supported by the application protocol, the client MAY include an initial response, otherwise it waits until the server has issued an empty challenge (because the mechanism is client-first).

The format of the initial client response ("initresp") is as follows:

```
hok = "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:cm:holder-of-key"
```

```
mut = "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:profiles:SSO:ecp:2.0:" \
      "WantAuthnRequestsSigned"
```

```
del = "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:conditions:delegation"
```

```
initresp = gs2-cb-flag "," [gs2-authzid] "," [hok] "," [mut] "," [del]
```

The gs2-cb-flag flag MUST be set as defined in [[RFC5801](#)] to indicate whether the client supports channel binding. This takes the place of the PAOS HTTP header extension used in [[SAML ECP 20](#)] to indicate channel binding support.

The optional "gs2-authzid" field holds the authorization identity, as requested by the client.

The optional "hok" field is a constant that signals the client's support for stronger security by means of a locally held key. This takes the place of the PAOS HTTP header extension used in [[SAML ECP 20](#)] to indicate "holder of key" support.

The optional "mut" field is a constant that signals the client's desire for mutual authentication. If set, the SASL server MUST



digitally sign its SAML <AuthnRequest> message. The URN constant above is a single string; the linefeed is shown for RFC formatting reasons.

The optional "del" field is a constant that signals the client's desire for the acceptor to request an assertion usable for delegation of the client's identity to the acceptor.

#### **4.3. Server Response**

The SASL server responds with a SOAP envelope constructed in accordance with section 2.3.2 of [[SAMLECP20](#)]. This includes adhering to the SOAP header requirements of the SAML PAOS Binding [[OASIS.saml-bindings-2.0-os](#)], for compatibility with the existing profile. Various SOAP headers are also consumed by the client in exactly the same manner prescribed by that section.

#### **4.4. User Authentication with Identity Provider**

Upon receipt of the Server Response ([Section 4.3](#)), the steps described in sections [2.3.3](#) through [2.3.6](#) of [[SAMLECP20](#)] are performed between the client and the chosen IdP. The means by which the client determines the IdP to use, and where it is located, are out of scope of this mechanism.

The exact means of authentication to the IdP are also out of scope, but clients supporting this mechanism MUST support HTTP Basic Authentication as defined in [[RFC2617](#)] and TLS client authentication as defined in [[RFC5246](#)].

#### **4.5. Client Response**

Assuming a response is obtained from the IdP, the client responds to the SASL server with a SOAP envelope constructed in accordance with section 2.3.7 of [[SAMLECP20](#)]. This includes adhering to the SOAP header requirements of the SAML PAOS Binding [[OASIS.saml-bindings-2.0-os](#)], for compatibility with the existing profile. If the client is unable to obtain a response from the IdP, or must otherwise signal failure, it responds to the SASL server with a SOAP envelope containing a SOAP fault.

#### **4.6. Outcome**

The SAML protocol exchange having completed, the SASL server will transmit the outcome to the client depending on local validation of the client responses. This outcome is transmitted in accordance with the application protocol in use.



#### **4.7. Additional Notes**

Because this mechanism is an adaptation of an HTTP-based profile, there are a few requirements outlined in [\[SAMLECP20\]](#) that make reference to a response URL that is normally used to regulate where the client returns information to the RP. There are also security-related checks built into the profile that involve this location.

For compatibility with existing IdP and profile behavior, and to provide for mutual authentication, the SASL server MUST populate the responseConsumerURL and AssertionConsumerServiceURL attributes with its service name. As discussed in [Section 5.6.2](#), most SASL profiles rely on a service name format of "service@host", but regardless of the form, the service name is used directly rather than transformed into an absolute URI if it is not already one, and MUST be percent-encoded per [\[RFC3986\]](#).

The IdP MUST securely associate the service name with the SAML entityID claimed by the SASL server, such as through the use of SAML metadata [\[OASIS.saml-metadata-2.0-os\]](#). If metadata is used, a SASL service's <SPSSODescriptor> role MUST contain a corresponding <AssertionConsumerService> whose Location attribute contains the appropriate service name, as described above. The Binding attribute MUST be one of "urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec" (RECOMMENDED) or "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:bindings:PAOS" (for compatibility with older implementations of the ECP profile in existing identity provider software).

Finally, note that the use of HTTP status signaling between the RP and client mandated by [\[SAMLECP20\]](#) may not be applicable.

### **5. SAML EC GSS-API Mechanism Specification**

This section and its sub-sections and all normative references of it not referenced elsewhere in this document are INFORMATIONAL for SASL implementors, but they are NORMATIVE for GSS-API implementors.

The SAML Enhanced Client SASL mechanism is also a GSS-API mechanism. The messages are the same, but a) the GS2 [\[RFC5801\]](#) header on the client's first message is excluded when SAML EC is used as a GSS-API mechanism, and b) the [\[RFC2743\] section 3.1](#) initial context token header is prefixed to the client's first authentication message (context token).

The GSS-API mechanism OID for SAML EC is OID-TBD (IANA to assign: see IANA considerations). The DER encoding of the OID is TBD.



The `mutual_state` request flag (`GSS_C_MUTUAL_FLAG`) MAY be set to `TRUE`, resulting in the "mut" option set in the initial client response. The security context `mutual_state` flag is set to `TRUE` only if the server digitally signs its SAML `<AuthnRequest>` message and the signature and signing credential are appropriately verified by the identity provider. The identity provider signals this to the client in an `<ecp:RequestAuthenticated>` SOAP header block.

The lifetime of a security context established with this mechanism SHOULD be limited by the value of a `SessionNotOnOrAfter` attribute, if any, in the `<AuthnStatement>` element(s) of the SAML assertion(s) received by the RP. By convention, in the rare case that multiple valid/confirmed assertions containing `<AuthnStatement>` elements are received, the most restrictive `SessionNotOnOrAfter` is generally applied.

### **5.1. GSS-API Credential Delegation**

This mechanism can support credential delegation through the issuance of SAML assertions that an identity provider will accept as proof of authentication by a service on behalf of a subject. An initiator may request delegation of its credentials by setting the "del" option field in the initial client response to `"urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:conditions:delegation"`.

An acceptor, upon receipt of this constant, requests a delegated assertion by including in its `<AuthnRequest>` message a `<Conditions>` element containing an `<AudienceRestriction>` identifying the IdP as a desired audience for the assertion(s) to be issued. In the event that the specific identity provider to be used is unknown, the constant `"urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:conditions:delegation"` may be used as a stand-in, per Section 2.3.2 of [[SAMLECP20](#)].

Upon receipt of an assertion satisfying this property, and containing a `<SubjectConfirmation>` element that the acceptor can satisfy, the security context may have its `deleg_state` flag (`GSS_C_DELEG_FLAG`) set to `TRUE`.

The identity provider, if it issues a delegated assertion to the acceptor, MUST include in the SOAP response to the initiator a `<samlec:Delegated>` SOAP header block, indicating that delegation was enabled. It has no content, other than mandatory SOAP attributes (an example follows):



```
<samlec:Delegated xmlns:samlec="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
  S:mustUnderstand="1"
  S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next" />
```

Upon receipt of such a header block, the initiator MUST fail the establishment of the security context if it did not request delegation in its initial client response to the acceptor. It SHOULD signal this failure to the acceptor with a SOAP fault message in its final client response.

As noted previously, the exact means of client authentication to the IdP is formally out of scope of this mechanism. This extends to the use of a delegation assertion as a means of authentication by an acceptor acting as an initiator. In practice, some profile of [\[WSS-SAML\]](#) is used to attach the assertion and a confirmation proof to the SOAP message from the client to the IdP.

## 5.2. GSS-API Channel Binding

GSS-API channel binding [\[RFC5554\]](#) is a protected facility for exchanging a cryptographic name for an enclosing channel between the initiator and acceptor. The initiator sends channel binding data and the acceptor confirms that channel binding data has been checked.

The acceptor SHOULD accept any channel binding provided by the initiator if null channel bindings are passed into `gss_accept_sec_context`. Protocols such as HTTP Negotiate [\[RFC4559\]](#) depend on this behavior of some Kerberos implementations.

The exchange and verification of channel binding information is described by [\[SAMLECP20\]](#).

## 5.3. Session Key Derivation

Some GSS-API features (discussed in the following sections) require a session key be established as a result of security context establishment. In the common case of a "bearer" assertion in SAML, a mechanism is defined to communicate a key to both parties via the identity provider. In other cases such as assertions based on "holder of key" confirmation bound to a client-controlled key, there may be additional methods defined in the future, and extension points are provided for this purpose.

Information defining or describing the session key, or a process for deriving one, is communicated between the initiator and acceptor using a `<samlec:SessionKey>` element, defined by the XML schema in



[Appendix A](#). This element is a SOAP header block. The content of the element further depends on the specific use in the mechanism. The Algorithm XML attribute identifies a mechanism for key derivation. It is omitted to identify the use of an Identity Provider-generated key (see following section) or will contain a URI value identifying a derivation mechanism defined outside this specification. Each header block's mustUnderstand and actor attributes MUST be set to "1" and "http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next" respectively.

In the acceptor's first response message containing its SAML request, one or more <samlc:SessionKey> SOAP header blocks MUST be included. The element MUST contain one or more <EncType> elements containing the number of a supported encryption type defined in accordance with [\[RFC3961\]](#). Encryption types should be provided in order of preference by the acceptor.

In the final client response message, a single <samlc:SessionKey> SOAP header block MUST be included. A single <EncType> element MUST be included to identify the chosen encryption type used by the initiator.

All parties MUST support the "aes128-cts-hmac-sha1-96" encryption type, number 17, defined by [\[RFC3962\]](#).

Further details depend on the mechanism used, one of which is described in the following section.

#### **[5.3.1](#). Generated by Identity Provider**

The identity provider, if issuing a bearer assertion for use with this mechanism, SHOULD provide a generated key for use by the initiator and acceptor. This key is used as pseudorandom input to the "random-to-key" function for a specific encryption type defined in accordance with [\[RFC3961\]](#). The key is base64-encoded and placed inside a <samlc:GeneratedKey> element. The identity provider does not participate in the selection of the encryption type and simply generates enough pseudorandom bits to supply key material to the other parties.

The resulting <samlc:GeneratedKey> element is placed within the <saml:Advice> element of the assertion issued. The identity provider MUST encrypt the assertion (implying that it MUST have the means to do so, typically knowledge of a key associated with the RP). If multiple assertions are issued (allowed, but not typical), the element need only be included in one of the assertions issued for use by the relying party.



A copy of the element is also added as a SOAP header block in the response from the identity provider to the client (and then removed when constructing the response to the acceptor).

If this mechanism is used by the initiator, then the `<samlec:SessionKey>` SOAP header block attached to the final client response message will identify this via the omission of the Algorithm attribute and will identify the chosen encryption type using the `<samlec:EncType>` element:

```
<samlec:SessionKey xmlns:samlec="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
  S:mustUnderstand="1"
  S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next">
  <samlec:EncType>17</samlec:EncType>
</samlec:SessionKey>
```

Both the initiator and acceptor MUST execute the chosen encryption type's random-to-key function over the pseudorandom value provided by the `<samlec:GeneratedKey>` element. The result of that function is used as the protocol and session key. Support for subkeys from the initiator or acceptor is not specified.

### **5.3.2. Alternate Key Derivation Mechanisms**

In the event that a client is proving possession of a secret or private key, a formal key agreement algorithm might be supported. This specification does not define such a mechanism, but the `<samlec:SessionKey>` element is extensible to allow for future work in this space by means of the Algorithm attribute and an optional `<ds:KeyInfo>` child element to carry extensible content related to key establishment.

However a key is derived, the `<samlec:EncType>` element will identify the chosen encryption type, and both the initiator and acceptor MUST execute the encryption type's random-to-key function over the result of the key agreement or derivation process. The result of that function is used as the protocol key.

### **5.4. Per-Message Tokens**

The per-message tokens SHALL be the same as those for the Kerberos V5 GSS-API mechanism [[RFC4121](#)] (see [Section 4.2](#) and sub-sections).



The `replay_det_state` (`GSS_C_REPLAY_FLAG`), `sequence_state` (`GSS_C_SEQUENCE_FLAG`), `conf_avail` (`GSS_C_CONF_FLAG`) and `integ_avail` (`GSS_C_INTEG_FLAG`) security context flags are always set to TRUE.

The "protocol key" SHALL be a key established in a manner described in the previous section. "Specific keys" are then derived as usual as described in [Section 2 of \[RFC4121\]](#), [\[RFC3961\]](#), and [\[RFC3962\]](#).

The terms "protocol key" and "specific key" are Kerberos V5 terms [\[RFC3961\]](#).

SAML20EC is `PROT_READY` as soon as the SAML response message has been seen.

### **5.5. Pseudo-Random Function (PRF)**

The GSS-API has been extended with a Pseudo-Random Function (PRF) interface in [\[RFC4401\]](#). The purpose is to enable applications to derive a cryptographic key from an established GSS-API security context. This section defines a `GSS_Pseudo_random` that is applicable for the SAML20EC GSS-API mechanism.

The `GSS_Pseudo_random()` [\[RFC4401\]](#) SHALL be the same as for the Kerberos V5 GSS-API mechanism [\[RFC4402\]](#). There is no acceptor-asserted sub-session key, thus `GSS_C_PRF_KEY_FULL` and `GSS_C_PRF_KEY_PARTIAL` are equivalent. The protocol key to be used for the `GSS_Pseudo_random()` SHALL be the same as the key defined in the previous section.

### **5.6. GSS-API Principal Name Types for SAML EC**

Services that act as SAML relying parties are typically identified by means of a URI called an "entityID". Clients that are named in the `<Subject>` element of a SAML assertion are typically identified by means of a `<NameID>` element, which is an extensible XML structure containing, at minimum, an element value that names the subject and a `Format` attribute.

In practice, a GSS-API client and server are unlikely to know in advance the name of the initiator as it will be expressed by the SAML identity provider upon completion of authentication. It is also generally incorrect to assume that a particular acceptor name will directly map into a particular RP entityID, because there is often a layer of naming indirection between particular services on hosts and the identity of a relying party in SAML terms.

To avoid complexity, and avoid unnecessary use of XML within the naming layer, the SAML EC mechanism relies on the common/expected



name types used for acceptors and initiators, GSS\_C\_NT\_HOSTBASED\_SERVICE and GSS\_C\_NT\_USER\_NAME. The mechanism provides for validation of the host-based service name in conjunction with the SAML exchange. It does not attempt to solve the problem of mapping between an initiator "username", the user's identity while authenticating to the identity provider, and the information supplied by the identity provider to the acceptor. These relationships must be managed through local policy at the initiator and acceptor.

SAML-based information associated with the initiator SHOULD be expressed to the acceptor using GSS-API naming extensions [[RFC6680](#)], in accordance with [[RFC7056](#)].

#### **5.6.1. User Naming Considerations**

The GSS\_C\_NT\_USER\_NAME form represents the name of an individual user. Clients often rely on this value to determine the appropriate credentials to use in authenticating to the identity provider, and supply it to the server for use by the acceptor.

Upon successful completion of this mechanism, the server MUST construct the authenticated initiator name based on the <saml:NameID> element in the assertion it successfully validated. The name is constructed as a UTF-8 string in the following form:

```
name = element-value "!" Format "!" NameQualifier
      "!" SPNameQualifier "!" SPProvidedID
```

The "element-value" token refers to the content of the <saml:NameID> element. The other tokens refer to the identically named XML attributes defined for use with the element. If an attribute is not present, which is common, it is omitted (i.e., replaced with the empty string). The Format value is never omitted; if not present, the SAML-equivalent value of "urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.1:nameid-format:unspecified" is used.

Not all SAML assertions contain a <saml:NameID> element. In the event that no such element is present, including the exceptional cases of a <saml:BaseID> element or a <saml:EncryptedID> element that cannot be decrypted, the GSS\_C\_NT\_ANONYMOUS name type MUST be used for the initiator name.

As noted in the previous section, it is expected that most applications able to rely on SAML authentication would make use of naming extensions to obtain additional information about the user based on the assertion. This is particularly true in the anonymous case, or in cases in which the SAML name is pseudonymous or transient in nature. The ability to express the SAML name in



GSS\_C\_NT\_USER\_NAME form is intended for compatibility with applications that cannot make use of additional information.

### 5.6.2. Service Naming Considerations

The GSS\_C\_NT\_HOSTBASED\_SERVICE name form represents a service running on a host; it is textually represented as "service@host". This name form is required by most SASL profiles and is used by many existing applications that use the Kerberos GSS-API mechanism. As described in the SASL mechanism's [Section 4.7](#), such a name is used directly by this mechanism as the effective AssertionConsumerService "location" associated with the service and applied in IdP verification of the request against the claimed SAML entityID.

## 6. Example

Suppose the user has an identity at the SAML IdP saml.example.org and a Jabber Identifier (jid) "somenode@example.com", and wishes to authenticate his XMPP connection to xmpp.example.com (and example.com and example.org have established a SAML-capable trust relationship). The authentication on the wire would then look something like the following:

Step 1: Client initiates stream to server:

```
<stream:stream xmlns='jabber:client'
xmlns:stream='http://etherx.jabber.org/streams'
to='example.com' version='1.0'>
```

Step 2: Server responds with a stream tag sent to client:

```
<stream:stream
xmlns='jabber:client' xmlns:stream='http://etherx.jabber.org/streams'
id='some_id' from='example.com' version='1.0'>
```

Step 3: Server informs client of available authentication mechanisms:



```
<stream:features>
  <mechanisms xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-sasl'>
    <mechanism>DIGEST-MD5</mechanism>
    <mechanism>PLAIN</mechanism>
    <mechanism>SAML20EC</mechanism>
  </mechanisms>
</stream:features>
```

Step 4: Client selects an authentication mechanism and sends the initial client response (it is base64 encoded as specified by the XMPP SASL protocol profile):

```
<auth xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-sasl' mechanism='SAML20EC'>
biwsLCw=
</auth>
```

The initial response is "n,,," which signals that channel binding is not used, there is no authorization identity, and the client does not support key-based confirmation, or want mutual authentication or delegation.

Step 5: Server sends a challenge to client in the form of a SOAP envelope containing its SAML <AuthnRequest>:



```
<challenge xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-sasl'>
PFM6RW52ZWxvcGUKICAgIHhtbG5zOnNhbw9InVybjpvYXNpczpuYW1lc3p0Yzpt
QU1MOjIuMDphc3NlcnRpb24iCiAgICB4bWxuczpzYW1scD0idXJuOm9hc2lzOm5h
bWVzOnRjOlNBTUw6Mi4wOnByb3RvY29sIgogICAgeG1sbnM6Uz0iaHR0cDovL3Nj
aGVtYXMueG1sc29hcC5vcmcvc29hcC9lbnZlbG9wZS8iPgogIDxT0kh1YWRlcj4K
ICAgIDxwYW9zOlJlcXVlc3QgeG1sbnM6cGFvcz0idXJuOmxpYmVydHk6cGFvczoy
MDAzLTA4IgogICAgICBTZlZlSUQ9ImMzYTRmOGI5YzJkIiBTOM11c3RVbmRlcnN0
YW5kPSIxIgogICAgICBTOMFjdG9yPSJodHRwOi8vc2NoZW1hcy54bWxzb2FwLm9y
Zy9zb2FwL2FjdG9yL25leHQiCiAgICAgIHJlc3BvbmlQ29uc3VtZXJVUkw9Inhtc
HBAeG1wcC5leGFtcGx1LmNvbSIKICAgICAgc2Vydm1jZT0idXJuOm9hc2lzOm5h
bWVzOnRjOlNBTUw6Mi4wOnByb2ZpbGVzOlNTTzplY3AiLz4KICAgIDx1Y3A6UmVx
dWVzdAogICAgICB4bWxuczplY3A9InVybjpvYXNpczpuYW1lc3p0YzptQU1MOjIu
MDpwcmlmaWxlc3pTU086ZW50IgogICAgICBTOMFjdG9yPSJodHRwOi8vc2NoZW1hcy
54bWxzb2FwLm9yZy9zb2FwL2FjdG9yL25leHQiCiAgICAgIFM6bXVzdFVuZGVy
c3RhbmQ9IjEiIFByb3ZpZGVyTmFtZT0iSmFiYmVYIGF0IGV4YW1wbGUuY29tIj4K
ICAgICAgPHNhbw6SXNzdWVyPmh0dHBz0i8veG1wcC5leGFtcGx1LmNvbTwvc2FtbDp
Jc3N1ZXI+CiAgICAgICA8L2VjcDpSZXF1ZXN0PgogICAgPHNhbw1YzptZXNzaW9u
S2V5IHhtbG5zOnNhbw1Yz0idXJuOm1ldGY6cGFyYW1zOnhtbDpuc3p0YzptQU1M
OjIuMDpwcmlmaWxlc3pTU086ZW50IgogICAgICBTOMFjdG9yPSJodHRwOi8vc2NoZW
1hcy54bWxzb2FwLm9yZy9zb2FwL2FjdG9yL25leHQiCiAgICAgICA8L2VjcDpSZXF
1ZXN0PgogICAgPHNhbw1YzptZXNzaW9uS2V5PgogIDwvUzplZWFkZXI+CiAgPFM6Qm
9keT4KICAgIDxzYW1scDpBdXRoblJlcXVlc3QKICAgICAgSUQ9ImMzYTRmOGI5YzJk
IiBWXzJzaW9uPSIyLjAiIElzc3VlSW5zdGFudD0iMjAwNy0xMj0xMFQxMT0zOT0z
NFoiCiAgICAgIEFzc2VydGlvbkNvbml1bWVyu2Vydm1jZVZVST0ieG1wcEB4bXBw
LmV4YW1wbGUuY29tCiAgICAgIDwvc2FtbDpJc3N1ZXI+CiAgICAgIDxzYW1scDp0
YW1lSURQb2xpy3kgQWxs3dDcmVhdGU9InRydWUiCiAgICAgICAgRm9ybWFOPSJ1cm
46b2FzaXM6bmFtZXM6dGM6U0FNTDoyLjA6bmFtZWlkLWZvcmlhdDpwZXJzaXN0ZW
50Ii8+CiAgICAgIDxzYW1scDpSZXF1ZXN0ZWRBdXR0bkNvbmlleHQgQ29tcGFy
aXNvbjo1ZXhhY3QiPgogICAgICAgPHNhbw6QXV0aG5Db250ZXh0Q2xhc3NSZWY+
CiAgICAgICAgICB1cm46b2FzaXM6bmFtZXM6dGM6U0FNTDoyLjA6YWM6Y2xhc3Nl
czpQYXNzd29yZFB3RlY3RlZFRyYW5zcG9ydAogICAgICAgPC9zYW1sOkF1dGhuQ2
9udGV4dENsYXNzUmVmPgogICAgICA8L3Nhbw01JlcXVlc3RlZEF1dGhuQ29udGV4
dD4gCiAgICA8L3Nhbw0kF1dGhuUmVxdWVzdD4KICA8L1M6Qm9keT4KPC9T0kVudm
Vsb3BlPgo=
</challenge>
```

The Base64 [[RFC4648](#)] decoded envelope:



```
<S:Envelope
  xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion"
  xmlns:samlp="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:protocol"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/">
  <S:Header>
    <paos:Request xmlns:paos="urn:liberty:paos:2003-08"
      messageID="c3a4f8b9c2d" S:mustUnderstand="1"
      S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next"
      responseConsumerURL="xmpp@xmpp.example.com"
      service="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:profiles:SSO:ecp"/>
    <ecp:Request
      xmlns:ecp="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:profiles:SSO:ecp"
      S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next"
      S:mustUnderstand="1" ProviderName="Jabber at example.com">
      <saml:Issuer>https://xmpp.example.com</saml:Issuer>
    </ecp:Request>
    <samlec:SessionKey xmlns:samlec="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec"
      xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
      S:mustUnderstand="1"
      S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next">
      <samlec:EncType>17</samlec:EncType>
      <samlec:EncType>18</samlec:EncType>
    <samlec:SessionKey>
  </S:Header>
  <S:Body>
    <samlp:AuthnRequest
      ID="c3a4f8b9c2d" Version="2.0" IssueInstant="2007-12-10T11:39:34Z"
      AssertionConsumerServiceURL="xmpp@xmpp.example.com">
      <saml:Issuer xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion">
        https://xmpp.example.com
      </saml:Issuer>
      <samlp:NameIDPolicy AllowCreate="true"
        Format="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:nameid-format:persistent"/>
      <samlp:RequestedAuthnContext Comparison="exact">
        <saml:AuthnContextClassRef>
          urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:ac:classes>PasswordProtectedTransport
        </saml:AuthnContextClassRef>
      </samlp:RequestedAuthnContext>
    </samlp:AuthnRequest>
  </S:Body>
</S:Envelope>
```

Step 5 (alt): Server returns error to client:



```
<failure xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-sasl'>
  <incorrect-encoding/>
</failure>
</stream:stream>
```

Step 6: Client relays the request to IdP in a SOAP message transmitted over HTTP (over TLS). HTTP portion not shown, use of Basic Authentication is assumed. The body of the SOAP envelope is exactly the same as received in the previous step.

```
<S:Envelope
  xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion"
  xmlns:samlp="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:protocol"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/">
  <S:Body>
    <samlp:AuthnRequest>
      <!-- same as above -->
    </samlp:AuthnRequest>
  </S:Body>
</S:Envelope>
```

Step 7: IdP responds to client with a SOAP response containing a SAML <Response> containing a short-lived SSO assertion (shown as an encrypted variant in the example). A generated key is included in the assertion and in a header for the client.



```
<S:Envelope
  xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion"
  xmlns:samlp="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:protocol"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/">
  <S:Header>
    <ecp:Response S:mustUnderstand="1"
      S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next"
      AssertionConsumerServiceURL="xmpp@xmpp.example.com"/>
    <samlec:GeneratedKey xmlns:samlec="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec">
      3w1wSBKUosRLsU69xGK7dg==
    </samlec:GeneratedKey>
  </S:Header>
  <S:Body>
    <samlp:Response ID="d43h94r389309r" Version="2.0"
      IssueInstant="2007-12-10T11:42:34Z" InResponseTo="c3a4f8b9c2d"
      Destination="xmpp@xmpp.example.com">
      <saml:Issuer>https://saml.example.org</saml:Issuer>
      <samlp:Status>
        <samlp:StatusCode
          Value="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:status:Success"/>
        </samlp:Status>
        <saml:EncryptedAssertion>
          <!-- contents elided, copy of samlec:GeneratedKey in Advice -->
        </saml:EncryptedAssertion>
      </samlp:Response>
    </S:Body>
  </S:Envelope>
```

Step 8: Client sends SOAP envelope containing the SAML <Response> as a response to the SASL server's challenge:



The Base64 [\[RFC4648\]](#) decoded envelope:



```

<S:Envelope
  xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:assertion"
  xmlns:samlp="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:protocol"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/">
  <S:Header>
    <paos:Response xmlns:paos="urn:liberty:paos:2003-08"
      S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next"
      S:mustUnderstand="1" refToMessageID="6c3a4f8b9c2d"/>
    <samlec:SessionKey xmlns:samlec="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec"
      xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
      S:mustUnderstand="1"
      S:actor="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/actor/next">
      <samlec:EncType>17</samlec:EncType>
    </samlec:SessionKey>
  </S:Header>
  <S:Body>
    <samlp:Response ID="d43h94r389309r" Version="2.0"
      IssueInstant="2007-12-10T11:42:34Z" InResponseTo="c3a4f8b9c2d"
      Destination="xmpp@xmpp.example.com">
      <saml:Issuer>https://saml.example.org</saml:Issuer>
      <samlp:Status>
        <samlp:StatusCode
          Value="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:status:Success"/>
      </samlp:Status>
      <saml:EncryptedAssertion>
        <!-- contents elided, copy of samlec:GeneratedKey in Advice -->
      </saml:EncryptedAssertion>
    </samlp:Response>
  </S:Body>
</S:Envelope>

```

Step 9: Server informs client of successful authentication:

```
<success xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-sasl'/>
```

Step 9 (alt): Server informs client of failed authentication:

```

<failure xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-sasl'>
  <temporary-auth-failure/>
</failure>
</stream:stream>

```

Step 10: Client initiates a new stream to server:



```
<stream:stream xmlns='jabber:client'  
xmlns:stream='http://etherx.jabber.org/streams'  
to='example.com' version='1.0'>
```

Step 11: Server responds by sending a stream header to client along with any additional features (or an empty features element):

```
<stream:stream xmlns='jabber:client'  
xmlns:stream='http://etherx.jabber.org/streams'  
id='c2s_345' from='example.com' version='1.0'>  
<stream:features>  
  <bind xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-bind'/>  
  <session xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-session'/>  
</stream:features>
```

Step 12: Client binds a resource:

```
<iq type='set' id='bind_1'>  
  <bind xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-bind'>  
    <resource>someresource</resource>  
  </bind>  
</iq>
```

Step 13: Server informs client of successful resource binding:

```
<iq type='result' id='bind_1'>  
  <bind xmlns='urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:xmpp-bind'>  
    <jid>somenode@example.com/someresource</jid>  
  </bind>  
</iq>
```

Please note: line breaks were added to the base64 for clarity.

## **7. Security Considerations**

This section will address only security considerations associated with the use of SAML with SASL applications. For considerations relating to SAML in general, the reader is referred to the SAML specification and to other literature. Similarly, for general SASL Security Considerations, the reader is referred to that specification.



Version 2.0 of the Enhanced Client or Proxy Profile [[SAMLECP20](#)] adds optional support for channel binding and use of "Holder of Key" subject confirmation. The former is strongly recommended for use with this mechanism to detect "Man in the Middle" attacks between the client and the RP without relying on flawed commercial TLS infrastructure. The latter may be impractical in many cases, but is a valuable way of strengthening client authentication, protecting against phishing, and improving the overall mechanism.

### **7.1. Risks Left Unaddressed**

The adaptation of a web-based profile that is largely designed around security-oblivious clients and a bearer model for security token validation results in a number of basic security exposures that should be weighed against the compatibility and client simplification benefits of this mechanism.

When channel binding is not used, protection against "Man in the Middle" attacks is left to lower layer protocols such as TLS, and the development of user interfaces able to implement that has not been effectively demonstrated. Failure to detect a MITM can result in phishing of the user's credentials if the attacker is between the client and IdP, or the theft and misuse of a short-lived credential (the SAML assertion) if the attacker is able to impersonate a RP. SAML allows for source address checking as a minor mitigation to the latter threat, but this is often impractical. IdPs can mitigate to some extent the exposure of personal information to RP attackers by encrypting assertions with authenticated keys.

### **7.2. User Privacy**

The IdP is aware of each RP that a user logs into. There is nothing in the protocol to hide this information from the IdP. It is not a requirement to track the activity, but there is nothing technically that prohibits the collection of this information. Servers should be aware that SAML IdPs will track - to some extent - user access to their services. This exposure extends to the use of session keys generated by the IdP to secure messages between the parties, but note that when bearer assertions are involved, the IdP can freely impersonate the user to any relying party in any case.

It is also out of scope of the mechanism to determine under what conditions an IdP will release particular information to a relying party, and it is generally unclear in what fashion user consent could be established in real time for the release of particular information. The SOAP exchange with the IdP does not preclude such interaction, but neither does it define that interoperably.



### **7.3. Collusion between RPs**

Depending on the information supplied by the IdP, it may be possible for RPs to correlate data that they have collected. By using the same identifier to log into every RP, collusion between RPs is possible. SAML supports the notion of pairwise, or targeted/directed, identity. This allows the IdP to manage opaque, pairwise identifiers for each user that are specific to each RP. However, correlation is often possible based on other attributes supplied, and is generally a topic that is beyond the scope of this mechanism. It is sufficient to say that this mechanism does not introduce new correlation opportunities over and above the use of SAML in web-based use cases.

## **8. IANA Considerations**

### **8.1. GSS-API and SASL Mechanism Registration**

The IANA is requested to assign a new entry for this GSS mechanism in the sub-registry for SMI Security for Mechanism Codes, whose prefix is `iso.org.dod.internet.security.mechanisms (1.3.6.1.5.5)` and to reference this specification in the registry.

The IANA is requested to register the following SASL profile:

SASL mechanism profiles: SAML20EC and SAML20EC-PLUS

Security Considerations: See this document

Published Specification: See this document

For further information: Contact the authors of this document.

Owner/Change controller: the IETF

Note: None

### **8.2. XML Namespace Name for SAML-EC**

A URN sub-namespace for XML constructs introduced by this mechanism is defined as follows:

URI: `urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec`

Specification: See [Appendix A](#) of this document.

Description: This is the XML namespace name for XML constructs introduced by the SAML Enhanced Client SASL and GSS-API Mechanisms.



Registrant Contact: the IESG

## 9. References

### 9.1. Normative References

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[OASIS.saml-profiles-2.0-os]

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[RFC5246] Dierks, T. and E. Rescorla, "The Transport Layer Security (TLS) Protocol Version 1.2", [RFC 5246](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC5246, August 2008, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc5246>>.

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## [Appendix A](#). XML Schema

The following schema formally defines the "urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:saml" namespace used in this document, in conformance with [\[W3C.REC-xmlschema-1\]](#) While XML validation is optional, the schema that follows is the normative definition of the constructs it defines. Where the schema differs from any prose in this specification, the schema takes precedence.



```
<schema
  targetNamespace="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec"
  xmlns="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema"
  xmlns:ds="http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmldsig#"
  xmlns:S="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
  xmlns:samlec="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:samlec"
  elementFormDefault="unqualified"
  attributeFormDefault="unqualified"
  blockDefault="substitution"
  version="1.0">

  <import namespace="http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmldsig#" />
  <import namespace="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/" />

  <element name="SessionKey" type="samlec:SessionKeyType" />
  <complexType name="SessionKeyType">
    <sequence>
      <element ref="samlec:EncType" maxOccurs="unbounded" />
      <element ref="ds:KeyInfo" minOccurs="0" />
    </sequence>
    <attribute ref="S:mustUnderstand" use="required" />
    <attribute ref="S:actor" use="required" />
    <attribute name="Algorithm" />
  </complexType>

  <element name="EncType" type="integer" />

  <element name="GeneratedKey" type="samlec:GeneratedKeyType" />
  <complexType name="GeneratedKeyType">
    <simpleContent>
      <extension base="base64Binary">
        <attribute ref="S:mustUnderstand" />
        <attribute ref="S:actor" />
      </extension>
    </simpleContent>
  </complexType>

  <element name="Delegated" type="samlec:DelegatedType" />
  <complexType name="DelegatedType">
    <sequence />
    <attribute ref="S:mustUnderstand" use="required" />
    <attribute ref="S:actor" use="required" />
  </complexType>

</schema>
```



## [Appendix B](#). Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Klaas Wierenga, Sam Hartman, Nico Williams, Jim Basney, and Venkat Yekkirala for their contributions.

## [Appendix C](#). Changes

This section to be removed prior to publication.

- o 15,16,17, avoid expiration
- o 14, address some minor comments
- o 13, clarify SAML metadata usage, adding a recommended Binding value alongside the backward-compatibility usage of PAOS
- o 12, clarifying comments based on WG feedback, with a normative change to use enctype numbers instead of names
- o 11, update EAP Naming reference to RFC
- o 10, update SAML ECP reference to final CS
- o 09, align delegation signaling to updated ECP draft
- o 08, more corrections, added a delegation signaling header
- o 07, corrections, revised section on delegation
- o 06, simplified session key schema, moved responsibility for random-to-key to the endpoints, and defined advertisement of session key algorithm and encypes by acceptor
- o 05, revised session key material, added requirement for random-to-key, revised XML schema to capture enctype name, updated GSS naming reference
- o 04, stripped down the session key material to simplify it, and define an IdP-brokered keying approach, moved session key XML constructs from OASIS draft into this one
- o 03, added TLS key export as a session key option, revised GSS naming material based on list discussion
- o 02, major revision of GSS-API material and updated references
- o 01, SSH language added, noted non-assumption of HTTP error handling, added guidance on life of security context.



- o 00, Initial Revision, first WG-adopted draft. Removed support for unsolicited SAML responses.

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