



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

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Editors:

Jeff Hodges, Neustar
Rob Philpott, RSA Security
Eve Maler, Sun Microsystems

SAML V2.0 Contributors:

Conor P. Cahill, AOL
John Hughes, Atos Origin
Hal Lockhart, BEA Systems
Michael Beach, Boeing
Rebekah Metz, Booz Allen Hamilton
Rick Randall, Booz Allen Hamilton
Thomas Wisniewski, Entrust
Irving Reid, Hewlett-Packard
Paula Austel, IBM
Maryann Hondo, IBM
Michael McIntosh, IBM
Tony Nadalin, IBM
Nick Ragouzis, Individual
Scott Cantor, Internet2
RL 'Bob' Morgan, Internet2
Peter C Davis, Neustar
Jeff Hodges, Neustar
Frederick Hirsch, Nokia
John Kemp, Nokia
Paul Madsen, NTT
Steve Anderson, OpenNetwork
Prateek Mishra, Principal Identity
John Linn, RSA Security
Rob Philpott, RSA Security
Jahan Moreh, Sigaba
Anne Anderson, Sun Microsystems
Eve Maler, Sun Microsystems
Ron Monzillo, Sun Microsystems
Greg Whitehead, Trustgenix

45 **Abstract:**

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

48 **Status:**

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53 at http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/comments/form.php?wg_abbrev=security. The
54 committee will publish on its web page (<http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security>) a catalog
55 of any changes made to this document.

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59 [open.org/committees/security/ipr.php](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/ipr.php)).

60 **Table of Contents**

61	1 Glossary.....	4
62	2 References.....	13

1 Glossary

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

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

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

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

Term

Definition

Access

To interact with a *system entity* in order to manipulate, use, gain knowledge of, and/or obtain a representation of some or all of a system entity's *resources*. [RFC2828]

Access Control

Protection of *resources* against unauthorized *access*; a process by which use of resources is regulated according to a *security policy* and is permitted by only authorized system entities according to that policy. [RFC2828]

Access Control Information

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

Access Rights

A description of the type of authorized interactions a *subject* can have with a *resource*. Examples include read, write, execute, add, modify, and delete. [Taxonomy]

Account

Typically a formal business agreement for providing regular dealings and services between a *principal* and business service providers.

Account Linkage

A method of relating *accounts* at two different *providers* that represent the same *principal* so that the providers can communicate about the principal. Account linkage can be established through the sharing of *attributes* or through *identity federation*.

Active Role

A role that a *system entity* has donned when performing some operation, for example *accessing a resource*.

104	Administrative Domain	An environment or context that is defined by some combination
105		of one or more administrative policies, Internet Domain Name
106		registrations, civil legal entities (for example, individuals,
107		corporations, or other formally organized entities), plus a
108		collection of hosts, network devices and the interconnecting
109		networks (and possibly other traits), plus (often various) network
110		services and applications running upon them. An administrative
111		domain may contain or define one or more security domains. An
112		administrative domain may encompass a single site or multiple
113		sites. The traits defining an administrative domain may, and in
114		many cases will, evolve over time. Administrative domains may
115		interact and enter into agreements for providing and/or
116		consuming services across administrative domain boundaries.
117	Administrator	A person who installs or maintains a system (for example, a
118		SAML-based security system) or who uses it to manage <i>system</i>
119		<i>entities</i> , users, and/or content (as opposed to application
120		purposes; see also <i>End User</i>). An administrator is typically
121		affiliated with a particular <i>administrative domain</i> and may be
122		affiliated with more than one administrative domain.
123	Affiliation, Affiliation Group	A set of <i>system entities</i> that share a single <i>namespace</i> (in the
124		federated sense) of <i>identifiers</i> for <i>principals</i> .
125	Anonymity	The quality or state of being anonymous, which is the condition of
126		having a name or identity that is unknown or concealed.
127		[RFC2828]
128	Artifact	See SAML Artifact.
129	Assertion	A piece of data produced by a <i>SAML authority</i> regarding either
130		an act of <i>authentication</i> performed on a <i>subject</i> , <i>attribute</i>
131		information about the subject, or <i>authorization</i> data applying to
132		the subject with respect to a specified <i>resource</i> .
133	Asserting Party	Formally, the <i>administrative domain</i> that hosts one or more
134		<i>SAML authorities</i> . Informally, an instance of a <i>SAML authority</i> .
135	Attribute	A distinct characteristic of an object (in SAML, of a <i>subject</i>). An
136		object's <i>attributes</i> are said to describe it. Attributes are often
137		specified in terms of physical traits, such as size, shape, weight,
138		and color, etc., for real-world objects. Objects in cyberspace
139		might have attributes describing size, type of encoding, network
140		address, and so on. Attributes are often represented as pairs of
141		"attribute name" and "attribute value(s)", e.g. "foo" has the value
142		"bar", "count" has the value 1, "gizmo" has the values "frob" and
143		"2", etc. Often, these are referred to as "attribute value pairs".
144		Note that <i>Identifiers</i> are essentially "distinguished attributes". See
145		also Identifier and XML <i>attribute</i> .
146	Attribute Authority	A <i>system entity</i> that produces <i>attribute assertions</i> . [SAMLAgree]
147	Attribute Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that conveys information about <i>attributes</i> of a
148		<i>subject</i> .
149	Authentication	To confirm a <i>system entity's</i> asserted <i>principal identity</i> with a
150		specified, or understood, level of confidence. [CyberTrust]
151		[SAMLAgree]

152	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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154	Authentication Authority	A <i>system entity</i> that produces <i>authentication assertions</i> .
155		[SAMLAgree]
156	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 <i>authentication</i> . Once a subject is authenticated, it may be authorized to perform different types of access. [Taxonomy]
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162	Authorization Decision	The result of an act of <i>authorization</i> . The result may be negative, that is, it may indicate that the <i>subject</i> is not allowed any <i>access</i> to the <i>resource</i> .
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165	Authorization Decision Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that conveys information about an <i>authorization decision</i> .
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167	Back Channel	Back channel refers to direct communications between two <i>system entities</i> without “redirecting” messages through another system entity such as an HTTP client (e.g. A user agent). See also <i>front channel</i> .
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171	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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178	Credentials	Data that is transferred to establish a claimed <i>principal identity</i> . [X.800] [SAMLAgree]
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180	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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183	Federated Identity	A <i>principal's identity</i> is said to be <i>federated</i> between a set of <i>Providers</i> when there is an agreement between the providers on a set of <i>identifiers</i> and/or <i>attributes</i> to use to refer to the Principal
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187	Federate	To link or bind two or more entities together [Merriam].
188	Federation	This term is used in two senses in SAML: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The act of establishing a relationship between two entities [Merriam]. b) An association comprising any number of <i>service providers</i> and <i>identity providers</i>.
189	Front Channel	Front channel refers to the “communications channel” that can be effected between two HTTP-speaking servers by employing “HTTP redirect” messages and thus passing messages to each other via a user agent, e.g. a web browser, or any other HTTP client [RFC2616]. See also <i>back channel</i> .
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194	Identifier	This term is used in two senses in SAML: c) One that identifies [Merriam]. d) A data object (for example, a string) mapped to a <i>system entity</i> that uniquely refers to the system entity. A system entity may have multiple distinct identifiers referring to it. An identifier is essentially a "distinguished attribute" of an entity. See also <i>Attribute</i> .
195	Identity	The essence of an entity [Merriam]. One's identity is often described by one's characteristics, among which may be any number of identifiers. See also <i>Identifier</i> , <i>Attribute</i> .
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198	Identity Defederation	The action occurring when <i>Providers</i> agree to stop referring to a <i>Principal</i> via a certain set of <i>identifiers</i> and/or <i>attributes</i> .
199		
200	Identity Federation	The act of creating a <i>federated identity</i> on behalf of a <i>Principal</i> . .
201	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 <i>profiles</i> .
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205	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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207	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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210	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> .
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212	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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218	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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221	Namespace	This term is used in several senses in SAML: e) (In discussing federated names) A domain in which an identifier is unique in representing a single principal. f) (With respect to authorization decision actions) A URI that identifies the set of action values from which the supplied action comes. g) (In XML) See <i>XML namespace</i> .
222	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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225	Persistent Pseudonym	A privacy-preserving name <i>identifier</i> 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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229	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]
230		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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234	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.
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238	Principal	A <i>system entity</i> whose identity can be authenticated. [X.811]
239	Principal Identity	A representation of a principal’s identity, typically an <i>identifier</i> .
240	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”.
241		<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”.
242	Provider	A generic way to refer to both <i>identity providers</i> and <i>service providers</i> .
243		
244	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]
245	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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248	Pull	To actively request information from a <i>system entity</i> .
249	Push	To provide information to a <i>system entity</i> that did not actively request it.
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251	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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255	Requester, SAML Requester	A <i>system entity</i> that utilizes the SAML protocol to request
256		services from another system entity (a <i>SAML authority</i> , a
257		<i>responder</i>). The term “client” for this notion is not used because
258		many system entities simultaneously or serially act as both
259		clients and servers. In cases where the SOAP binding for SAML
260		is being used, the SAML requester is architecturally distinct from
261		the <i>initial SOAP sender</i> .
262	Resource	Data contained in an information system (for example, in the
263		form of files, information in memory, etc), as well as:
		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]
264		SAML uses <i>resource</i> in the first two senses, and refers to
265		resources by means of <i>URI references</i> .
266	Responder, SAML Responder	A <i>system entity</i> (a <i>SAML authority</i>) that utilizes the SAML
267		protocol to respond to a request for services from another
268		system entity (a <i>requester</i>). The term “server” for this notion is
269		not used because many system entities simultaneously or serially
270		act as both clients and servers. In cases where the SOAP
271		binding for SAML is being used, the SAML responder is
272		architecturally distinct from the <i>ultimate SOAP receiver</i> .
273	Role	Dictionaries define a role as “a character or part played by a
274		performer” or “a function or position.” <i>System entities</i> don various
275		types of roles serially and/or simultaneously, for example, active
276		roles and passive roles. The notion of an Administrator is often
277		an example of a role.
278	SAML Authority	An abstract <i>system entity</i> in the SAML domain model that issues
279		<i>assertions</i> . See also <i>attribute authority</i> , <i>authentication authority</i> ,
280		and <i>policy decision point (PDP)</i> .
281	Security	A collection of safeguards that ensure the confidentiality of
282		information, protect the systems or networks used to process it,
283		and control access to them. Security typically encompasses the
284		concepts of secrecy, confidentiality, integrity, and availability. It is
285		intended to ensure that a system resists potentially correlated
286		attacks. [CyberTrust]
287	Security Architecture	A plan and set of principles for an <i>administrative domain</i> and its
288		security domains that describe the security services that a
289		system is required to provide to meet the needs of its users, the
290		system elements required to implement the services, and the
291		performance levels required in the elements to deal with the
292		threat environment. A complete security architecture for a system
293		addresses administrative security, communication security,
294		computer security, emanations security, personnel security, and
295		physical security, and prescribes security policies for each. A
296		complete security architecture needs to deal with both intentional,
297		intelligent threats and accidental threats. A security architecture
298		should explicitly evolve over time as an integral part of its
299		administrative domain’s evolution. [RFC2828]

300	Security Assertion	An <i>assertion</i> that is scrutinized in the context of a security architecture.
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302	Security Assertion Markup Language(SAML)	
303		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).
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308	SAML Artifact	A small, fixed-size, structured data object pointing to a typically larger, variably-sized SAML protocol message. SAML artifacts are designed to be embedded in URLs and conveyed in HTTP messages, such as HTTP response messages with "3xx Redirection" status codes, and subsequent HTTP GET messages. In this way, a service provider may indirectly, via a user agent, convey a SAML artifact to another provider, who may subsequently dereference the SAML artifact via a direct interaction with the supplying provider, and obtain the SAML protocol message. Various characteristics of the HTTP protocol and user agent implementations provided the impetus for concocting this approach. The HTTP Artifact binding section of [SAMLBind] defines both the SAML Artifact format and the SAML HTTP protocol binding incorporating it.
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322	Security Context	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.
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330		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.
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338	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]
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344	Security Policy	A set of rules and practices that specify or regulate how a system or organization provides <i>security services</i> to protect <i>resources</i> . Security policies are components of <i>security architectures</i> . Significant portions of security policies are implemented via security services, using <i>security policy expressions</i> . [RFC2828] [Taxonomy]
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350	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 <i>access control</i> lists. [Taxonomy]
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353	Security Service	A processing or communication service that is provided by a
354		system to give a specific kind of protection to <i>resources</i> , where
355		said resources may reside with said system or reside with other
356		systems, for example, an <i>authentication</i> service or a PKI-based
357		document attribution and authentication service. A security
358		service is a superset of AAA services. Security services typically
359		implement portions of <i>security policies</i> and are implemented via
360		security mechanisms. [RFC2828] [Taxonomy]
361	Service Provider	A <i>role</i> donned by a <i>system entity</i> where the system entity
362		provides services to <i>principals</i> or other system entities.
363	Session	A lasting interaction between <i>system entities</i> , often involving a
364		<i>Principal</i> , typified by the maintenance of some state of the
365		interaction for the duration of the interaction.
366	Session Authority	A <i>role</i> donned by a <i>system entity</i> when it maintains state related
367		to <i>sessions</i> . <i>Identity providers</i> often fulfill this role.
368	Session Participant	A <i>role</i> donned by a <i>system entity</i> when it participates in a <i>session</i>
369		with at least a <i>session authority</i> .
370	Site	An informal term for an <i>administrative domain</i> in geographical or
371		DNS name sense. It may refer to a particular geographical or
372		topological portion of an administrative domain, or it may
373		encompass multiple administrative domains, as may be the case
374		at an ASP site.
375	Subject	A <i>principal</i> in the context of a <i>security domain</i> . SAML assertions
376		make declarations about <i>subjects</i> .
377	System Entity, Entity	An active element of a computer/network system. For example,
378		an automated process or set of processes, a subsystem, a
379		person or group of persons that incorporates a distinct set of
380		functionality. [RFC2828] [SAMLAgree]
381	Time-Out	A period of time after which some condition becomes true if
382		some event has not occurred. For example, a <i>session</i> that is
383		terminated because its state has been inactive for a specified
384		period of time is said to "time out".
385	Transient Pseudonym	A privacy-preserving <i>identifier</i> assigned by an <i>identity provider</i> to
386		identify a <i>principal</i> to a given <i>relying party</i> for a relatively short
387		period of time that need not span multiple <i>sessions</i> .
388	Ultimate SOAP Receiver	The SOAP receiver that is a final destination of a SOAP
389		message. It is responsible for processing the contents of the
390		SOAP body and any SOAP header blocks targeted at it. In some
391		circumstances, a SOAP message might not reach an ultimate
392		SOAP receiver, for example because of a problem at a SOAP
393		intermediary. An ultimate SOAP receiver cannot also be a SOAP
394		intermediary for the same SOAP message. [WSGloss]
395	User	A natural person who makes use of a system and its resources
396		for any purpose [SAMLAgree]

397	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".
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403	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.
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406	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]
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410	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:
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412		
413		<code><Address AddressID="A12345"...</Address></code>
414		See also <i>attribute</i> .
415	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:
416		
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418		<code><Address AddressID="A12345"></code>
419		<code> <Street>105 Main Street</Street></code>
420		<code> <City>Springfield</City></code>
421		<code> <StateOrProvince></code>
422		<code> <Full>Massachusetts</Full></code>
423		<code> <Abbrev>MA</Abbrev></code>
424		<code> </StateOrProvince></code>
425		<code> <Post Code="56789"/></code>
426		<code></Address></code>
427	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.
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432	XML Schema	The format developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) for describing rules for a <i>markup language</i> 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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