# PKCS #9: Selected Attribute Types

An RSA Laboratories Technical Note
Version 1.1
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## 1. Scope

This standard defines selected attribute types for use in PKCS #6 extended certificates, PKCS #7 digitally signed messages, PKCS #8 private-key information, and PKCS #10 certificate-signing requests.

## 2. References


PKCS #6 RSA Laboratories. *PKCS #6: Extended-Certificate Syntax Standard.* Version 1.5, November 1993.

PKCS #7 RSA Laboratories. *PKCS #7: Cryptographic Message Syntax Standard.* Version 1.5, November 1993.

PKCS #8 RSA Laboratories. *PKCS #8: Private-Key Information Syntax Standard.* Version 1.2, November 1993.

PKCS #10 RSA Laboratories. *PKCS #10: Certification Request Syntax Standard.* Version 1.0, November 1993.

X.208 CCITT. *Recommendation X.208: Specification of Abstract Syntax Notation One (ASN.1).* 1988.

X.402 CCITT. *Recommendation X.402: Message Handling Systems–Overall Architecture.* 1988.


*Supersedes June 3, 1991 version, which was also published as NIST/OSI Implementors' Workshop document SEC-SIG-91-24. PKCS documents are available by electronic mail to <pkcs@rsa.com>.



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X.509 CCITT. *Recommendation X.509: The Directory–Authentication Framework.* 1988.

X.520 CCITT. *Recommendation X.520: The Directory–Selected Attribute Types.* 1988.

DIS 10646 ISO/IEC JTC 1. *DIS 10646-1.2: Information Technology—Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set (UCS)—Part 1: Architecture and Basic Multilingual Plane.* February 1992.

## 3. Definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the following definitions apply.

**ASN.1:** Abstract Syntax Notation One, as defined in X.208.

`Attributes`: A type that specifies a set of attributes. Each attribute contains an attribute type (specified by object identifier) and one or more attribute values. Some attribute types are restricted in their definition to have a single value; others may have multiple values. This type is defined in PKCS #6, #7, #8, and #10.

`CertificationRequestInfo`: A type that specifies a subject name, a public key, and a set of attributes. This type is defined in PKCS #10.

`ExtendedCertificate`: A type that consists of an X.509 public-key certificate and a set of attributes, collectively signed by the issuer of the X.509 public-key certificate. This type is defined in PKCS #6.

`ContentInfo`: A type that specifies content exchanged between entities. The `contentType` field, which has type `OBJECT IDENTIFIER`, specifies the content type, and the `content` field, which has type `ANY DEFINED BY contentType`, contains the content value. This type is defined in PKCS #7.

`PrivateKeyInfo`: A type that specifies a private key and a set of extended attributes. This type is defined in PKCS #8.

`SignerInfo`: A type that specifies per-signer information in the signed-data content type, including a set of attributes authenticated by the signer, and a set of attributes not authenticated by the signer. This type is defined in PKCS #7.

**DER:** Distinguished Encoding Rules for ASN.1, as defined in X.509, Section 8.7.

**UCS:** Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set, as defined in DIS 10646.

## 4. Symbols and abbreviations

No symbols or abbreviations are defined in this standard.

## 5. General overview

The following sections specify new attribute types and object identifiers. This standard exports the various object identifiers.

New attribute types that are useful in PKCS #6 extended certificates are electronic-mail address, unstructured name, and unstructured address. The attributes would be used in the `attributes` field of a `CertificateWithAttributes` value.

New attribute types that are useful in PKCS #7 digitally signed messages are content type, message digest, signing time, and countersignature. The attributes would be used in the `authenticatedAttributes` and `unauthenticatedAttributes` fields of a `SignerInfo` value.

No new attribute types that are useful in PKCS #8 private-key information are given.

New attribute types that are useful in PKCS #10 certification requests are challenge password and extended-certificate attributes. The attributes would be used in the `attributes` field of a `CertificationRequestInfo` value.

**Note.** The X.520 and X.402 attributes types in Table 1, and probably several others, might also be helpful in PKCS #6 and PKCS #10.

| X.520 Attribute Types | |
|---|---|
| businessCategory | preferredDeliveryMethod |
| commonName | presentationAddress |
| countryName | registeredAddress |
| description | roleOccupant |
| destinationIndicator | serialNumber |
| facsimileTelephoneNumber | stateOrProvinceName |
| iSDNAddress | streetAddress |
| localityName | supportedApplicationContext |
| member | surname |
| objectClass | telephoneNumber |
| organizationName | teletexTerminalIdentifier |
| physicalDeliveryOfficeName | telexNumber |
| postalAddress | title |
| postalCode | x121Address |
| postOfficeBox | |
| **X.402 Attribute Types** | |
| mhs-or-address | |

**Table 1.** X.520 and X.402 attribute types useful in PKCS #6 extended certificates.

## 6. Attribute types

This standard defines nine new attribute types: electronic-mail address, unstructured name, content type, message digest, signing time, countersignature, challenge password, and extended-certificate attributes.

### 6.1 Electronic-mail address

The electronic-mail address attribute type specifies the electronic-mail address or addresses of the subject of a certificate as an unstructured ASCII string. The interpretation of electronic-mail addresses is intended to be specified by the issuer of the certificate; no particular interpretation is required. The electronic-mail address attribute type is intended for PKCS #6 extended certificates.

Electronic-mail address attribute values have ASN.1 type `EmailAddress`:

```
EmailAddress ::= IA5String
```

An electronic-mail address attribute can have multiple attribute values.

**Note.** It is likely that other standards bodies overseeing electronic-mail systems will register electronic-mail address attribute types specific to their system. The electronic-mail address attribute type is intended as a short-term substitute for those specific attribute types.

### 6.2 Unstructured name

The unstructured-name attribute type specifies the name or names of the subject of a certificate as an unstructured ASCII string. The interpretation of the names is intended to be specified by the issuer of the certificate; no particular interpretation is required. The unstructured-name attribute type is intended for PKCS #6 extended certificates.

Unstructured-name attribute values have ASN.1 type `UnstructuredName`:

```
UnstructuredName ::= IA5String
```

An unstructured-name attribute can have multiple attribute values.

**Note.** It is expected that if UCS becomes an ASN.1 type (e.g., `UNIVERSAL STRING`), `UnstructuredName` will become a `CHOICE` type:

```
UnstructuredName ::= CHOICE {
  IA5String, UNIVERSAL STRING }
```

### 6.3 Content type

The content-type attribute type specifies the content type of the `ContentInfo` value being signed in PKCS #7 digitally signed data. The content-type attribute type is required if there are any PKCS #7 authenticated attributes.

Content-type attribute values have ASN.1 type `ContentType`:

```
ContentType ::= OBJECT IDENTIFIER
```

A content-type attribute must have a single attribute value.

### 6.4 Message digest

The message-digest attribute type specifies the message digest of the contents octets of the DER encoding of the `content` field of the `ContentInfo` value being signed in PKCS #7 digitally signed data, where the message digest is computed under the signer's message digest algorithm. The message-digest attribute type is required if there are any PKCS #7 authenticated attributes.

Message-digest attribute values have ASN.1 type `MessageDigest`:

```
MessageDigest ::= OCTET STRING
```

A message-digest attribute must have a single attribute value.

### 6.5 Signing time

The signing-time attribute type specifies the time at which the signer (purportedly) performed the signing process. The signing-time attribute type is intended for PKCS #7 digitally signed data.

Signing-time attribute values have ASN.1 type `SigningTime`:

```
SigningTime ::= UTCTime
```

A signing-time attribute must have a single attribute value.

**Note.** No requirement is imposed concerning the correctness of the signing time, and acceptance of a purported signing time is a matter of a recipient's discretion. It is expected, however, that some signers, such as time-stamp servers, will be trusted implicitly.

### 6.6 Countersignature

The countersignature attribute type specifies one or more signatures on the contents octets of the DER encoding of the `encryptedDigest` field of a `SignerInfo` value in PKCS #7 digitally signed data. Thus, the countersignature attribute type countersigns (signs in serial) another signature. The countersignature attribute must be an unauthenticated PKCS #7 attribute; it cannot be an authenticated attribute.

Countersignature attribute values have ASN.1 type `Countersignature`:

```
Countersignature ::= SignerInfo
```

`Countersignature` values have the same meaning as `SignerInfo` values for ordinary signatures (see Section 9 of PKCS #7), except that:

1. The `authenticatedAttributes` field must contain a message-digest attribute if it contains any other attributes, but need not contain a content-type attribute, as there is no content type for countersignatures.

2. The input to the message-digesting process is the contents octets of the DER encoding of the `encryptedDigest` field of the `SignerInfo` value with which the attribute is associated.

A countersignature attribute can have multiple attribute values.

**Notes.**

1. The fact that a countersignature is computed on a signature (encrypted digest) means that the countersigning process need not know the original content input to the signing process. This has advantages both in efficiency and in confidentiality.

2. A countersignature, since it has type `SignerInfo`, can itself contain a countersignature attribute. Thus it is possible to construct arbitrarily long series of countersignatures.

### 6.7 Challenge password

The challenge-password attribute type specifies a password by which an entity may request certificate revocation. The interpretation of the password is intended to be specified by the issuer of the certificate; no particular interpretation is required. The challenge-password attribute type is intended for PKCS #10 certification requests.

Challenge-password attribute values have ASN.1 type `ChallengePassword`:

```
ChallengePassword ::= CHOICE {
  PrintableString, T61String }
```

A challenge-password attribute must have a single attribute value.

**Note.** It is expected that if UCS becomes an ASN.1 type (e.g., `UNIVERSAL STRING`), `ChallengePassword` will become a `CHOICE` type:

```
ChallengePassword ::= CHOICE {
    PrintableString, T61String, UNIVERSAL STRING }
```

### 6.8 Unstructured address

The unstructured-address attribute type specifies the address or addresses of the subject of a certificate as an unstructured ASCII or T.61 string. The interpretation of the addresses is intended to be specified by the issuer of the certificate; no particular interpretation is required. A likely interpretation is as an alternative to the X.520 `postalAddress` attribute type. The unstructured-address attribute type is intended for PKCS #6 extended certificates and PKCS #10 certification requests.

Unstructured-address attribute values have ASN.1 type `UnstructuredAddress`:

```
UnstructuredAddress ::= CHOICE {
  PrintableString, T61String }
```

An unstructured-address attribute can have multiple attribute values.

**Note.** T.61's newline character (hexadecimal code `0d`) is recommended as a line separator in multi-line addresses.

It is expected that if UCS becomes an ASN.1 type (e.g., `UNIVERSAL STRING`), `UnstructuredAddress` will become a `CHOICE` type:

```
UnstructuredAddress ::= CHOICE {
    PrintableString, T61String, UNIVERSAL STRING }
```

### 6.9 Extended-certificate attributes

The extended-certificate-attributes attribute type specifies a set of attributes for a PKCS #6 extended certificate in a PKCS #10 certification request. (The value of the extended-certificate-attributes attribute becomes the `attributes` field of the requested PKCS #6 extended certificate.)

Extended-certificate-attributes attribute values have ASN.1 type `ExtendedCertificateAttributes`:

```
ExtendedCertificateAttributes ::= Attributes
```

An extended-certificate-attributes attribute must have a single attribute value. (That value is a set, which itself may contain multiple values, but there must only be one set.)

## 7. Object identifiers

This standard defines 10 object identifiers: `pkcs-9`, `emailAddress`, `unstructuredName`, `contentType`, `messageDigest`, `signingTime`, `countersignature`, `challengePassword`, `unstructuredAddress`, and `extendedCertificateAttributes`.

The object identifier `pkcs-9` identifies this standard.

```
pkcs-9 OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::=
  { iso(1) member-body(2) US(840) rsadsi(113549) pkcs(1) 9 }
```

The object identifiers `emailAddress`, `unstructuredName`, `contentType`, `messageDigest`, `signingTime`, `countersignature`, `challengePassword`, `unstructuredAddress`, and

extendedCertificateAttributes identify, respectively, the electronic-mail address, unstructured-name, content-type, message-digest, signing-time, countersignature, challenge-password, unstructured-address and extended-certificate-attributes attribute types.

```
emailAddress OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 1 }
unstructuredName OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 2 }
contentType OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 3 }
messageDigest OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 4 }
signingTime OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 5 }
countersignature OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 6 }
challengePassword OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 7 }
unstructuredAddress OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { pkcs-9 8 }
extendedCertificateAttributes OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::=
  { pkcs-9 9 }
```

The object identifiers are intended to be used in the attributeType field of a value of type Attribute. The attributeValue field of that type, which has the syntax SET OF ANY, would have ASN.1 type SET OF EmailAddress, UnstructuredName, ContentType, MessageDigest, SigningTime, Countersignature, ChallengePassword, UnstructuredAddress, and ExtendedCertificateAttributes, respectively.

The content-type, message-digest, signing-time, challenge-password and extended-certificate-attributes attributes must have a single attribute value. All other attributes can have multiple attribute values.

## Revision history

### Version 1.0

Version 1.0 is part of the June 3, 1991 initial public release of PKCS. Version 1.0 was published as NIST/OSI Implementors' Workshop document SEC-SIG-91-24.

### Version 1.1

Version 1.1 incorporates several editorial changes, including updates to the references and the addition of a revision history. The following substantive changes were made:

- Section 6: Challenge-password, unstructured-address, and extended-certificate-attributes attribute types are added.
- Section 7: `challengePassword`, `unstructuredAddress`, and `extendedCertificateAttributes` object identifiers are added.

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