



Standards Development Overview

Edition 2.0, 2007

The OSCRE (Open Standards Consortium for Real Estate) Standards are open e-business data exchange Standards for Real Estate.

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1. Purpose & Scope

This document gives an overview of the framework and processes within which OSCRE Standards are created.

It covers the underlying global standards technologies adopted, the procedure at each stage of development, piloting, and compliance and maintenance of the developed Standards.

2. Principles of Standards Development

Our mission is to provide the framework within which e-commerce standards are developed for the real estate throughout the world.

An effective Standard needs to be practical and responsive. Therefore, two principles have been established and are characterised as follows:

- *The Standards won't be perfect:* the goal of perfection is not achievable; It is much more important to focus on pragmatic proposals that over time can be engineered into more elegant long term solutions; and
- *The Standards will constantly evolve:* any Standard for electronic data exchange is always subject to two fundamental drivers of change: the evolution of the business area and the rapid pace of technological evolution (or revolution). Therefore, it is acknowledged the standards will never become static – they will always need to respond to changes in the real estate market and new opportunities presented by technology to address data exchange more effectively.

Our standards are developed based on established global technology standards for e-commerce. We produce XML based schema that interpret and support the established industry wide business processes for data exchange and interface purposes.

We have developed a framework that introduces a process-aware model for expressing the Standard, is scalable throughout the real estate domain, and above all minimizes the requirements for large datasets or simple datasets containing redundant data.

Therefore, each schema produced is specific to a particular business process and it only transfers data relevant to the particular transaction.

2.1 Requirements for our Standard

In developing the framework we have identified the following key requirements.

The Standard must:

- Support simple business messages as well as complex business processes;
- Support system to system interaction as well as human to system interaction;
- Be able to define contractual obligations between trading partners and hold these in an electronic format to enable the dynamic configuration of message brokers;
- Be reusable: allow generic processes to be defined that can be extended and reused to accommodate variation. For example, the data dictionary must support process specific qualification of attributes thus enabling common attributes to be re-used across different business processes;
- Allow for ad-hoc data exchanges as well as highly automated exchanges;

- Support payloads other than those defined by the Standard;
- Support real-time transactions as well as batch transactions;
- Provide tool support for business process modelling which will enable organisations to easily specify and understand their business processes;
- Produce a framework that is global in scope;
- Be extensible but easy to maintain.

2.2 Chosen Technologies

Our philosophy has been one of “not re-inventing the wheel”. We recognise the value in utilising existing work and applying what we believe to be “best practice” in Standards Development.

As such a “home-grown” solution was not a viable proposition. It would not be cost effective to develop or maintain a proprietary technical framework, and in order to exchange data effectively with other trading partners a globally accepted standard was the pre-requisite.

A Workgroup was formed to conduct research into the global standards industry, leveraging contacts built up from international liaison and discussions with OASIS and from this research [ebXML](#) emerged as the only viable option.

2.2.1 EbXML

[EbXML](#) is predominantly based on other existing widely accepted standards such as SOAP and XML and is expected to be fairly future proof. It provides a comprehensive layered architecture, with each layer optional. The implementation layers are shown in Figure 1.

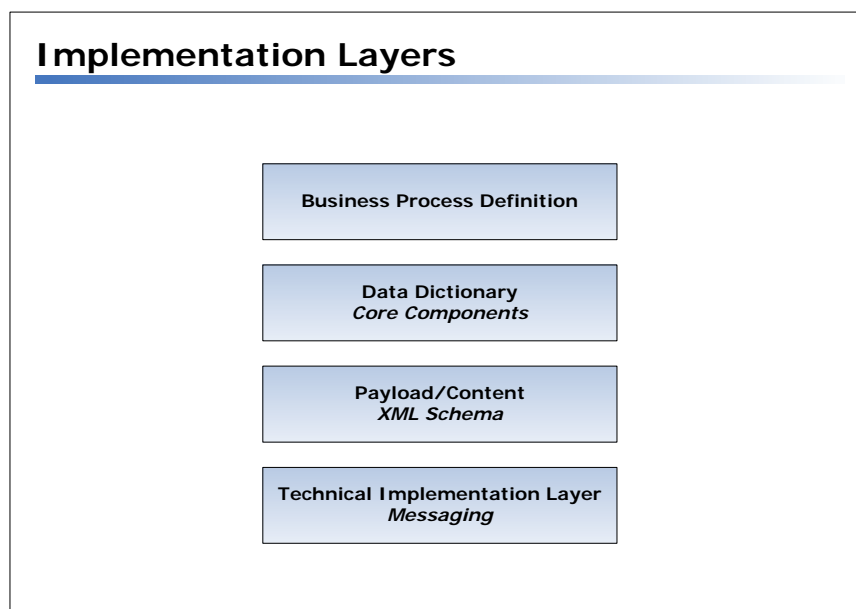


Figure 1 Implementation Layers

EbXML has a strong track record of adoption and now a growing body of ebXML knowledge exists in the market place.

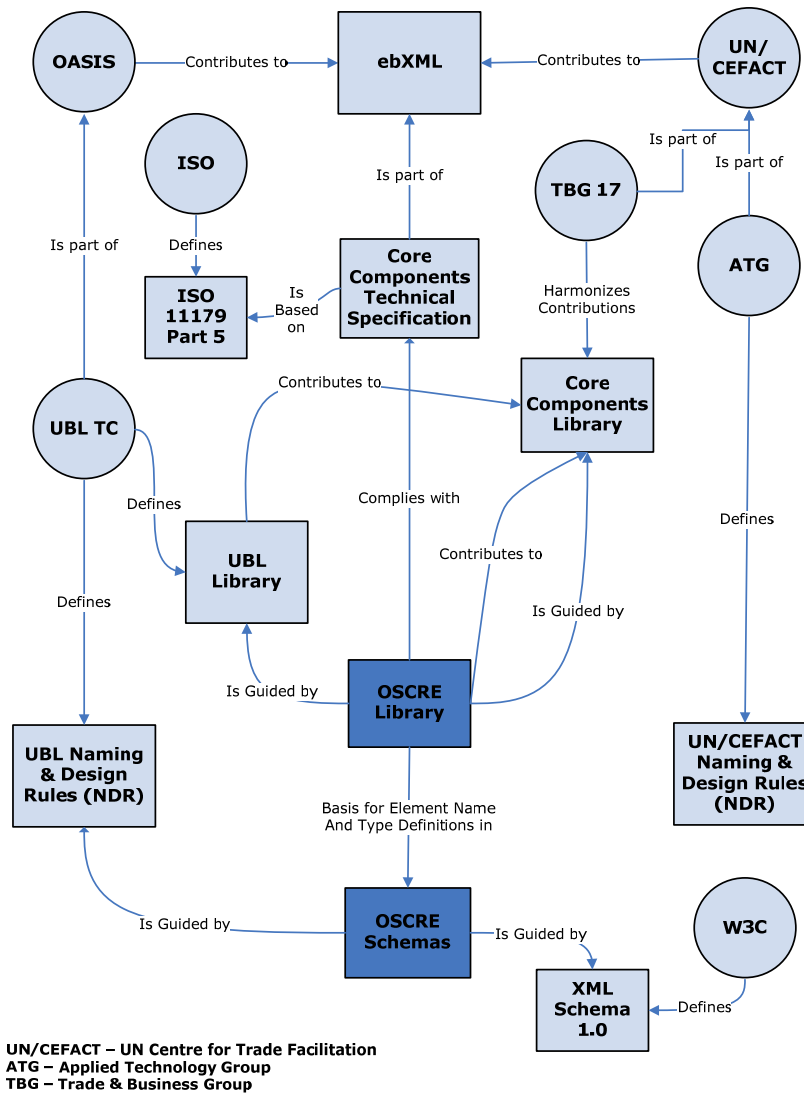
2.2.2 UBL (Universal Business Language)

UBL, a Technical Subcommittee of OASIS, has deployed the Core Components Technical Specification (CTS) and the data dictionary which is part of the ebXML specification, to construct a Business Library of Components and a Schema Library.

We consider the UBL methodology and experience the best route for us to follow in order to address the harmonisation and contextualisation issues that will arise in building our Component Library. We are working closely with both, UBL and with UN/CEFACT who manage the development of ebXML, in the on-going development of global Standards.

2.2.3 Relationships between global standards bodies

Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between the various global standards bodies, how they interact with each other and with the OSCRE Standard.



Adapted from "How the US Federal Government is Using XML" by Ken Sall, with permission

Figure 2 Relationship with other global bodies

3. Standards' Development Framework

3.1 Framework Goal

The aim of the Technical Framework is to translate Business Processes already in operation within the real estate industry, into workable, standard, information models that can be exchanged in XML format.

This transition needs to happen in a consistent way across all business and geographical domains as illustrated in Figure 3.

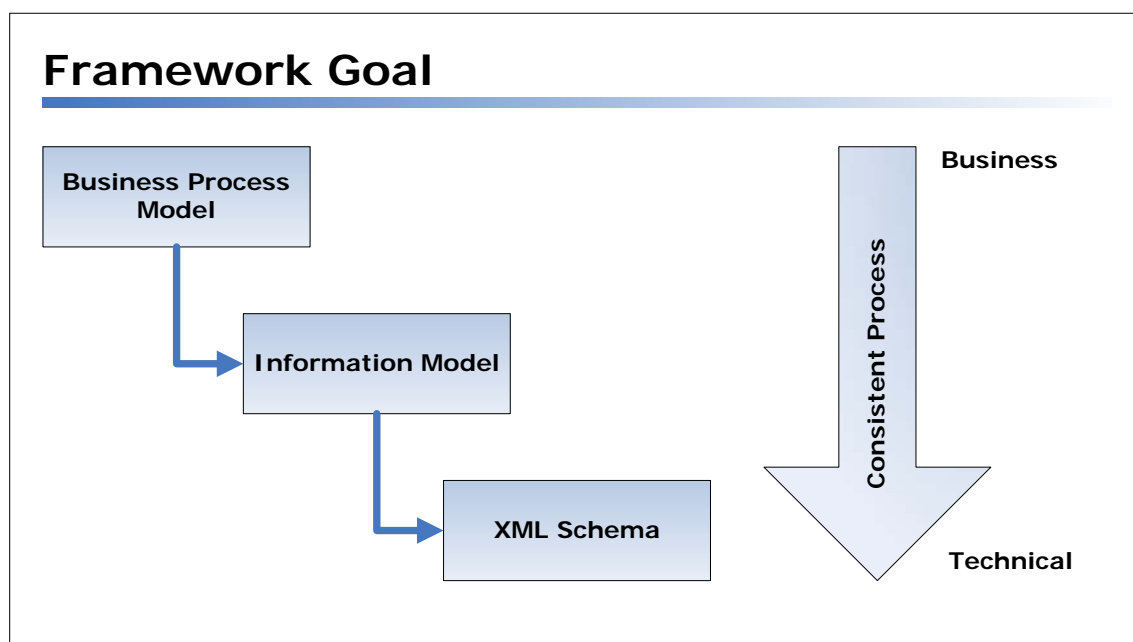


Figure 3 Framework Goal

Our role is to facilitate this process, provide the resources (tools, templates, processes and staff) to assist our Members in achieving this goal and ensure the process operates efficiently, quickly and with consistency.

3.2 Framework Components

Figure 4 illustrates the components and stages of our Standards' Development Framework.

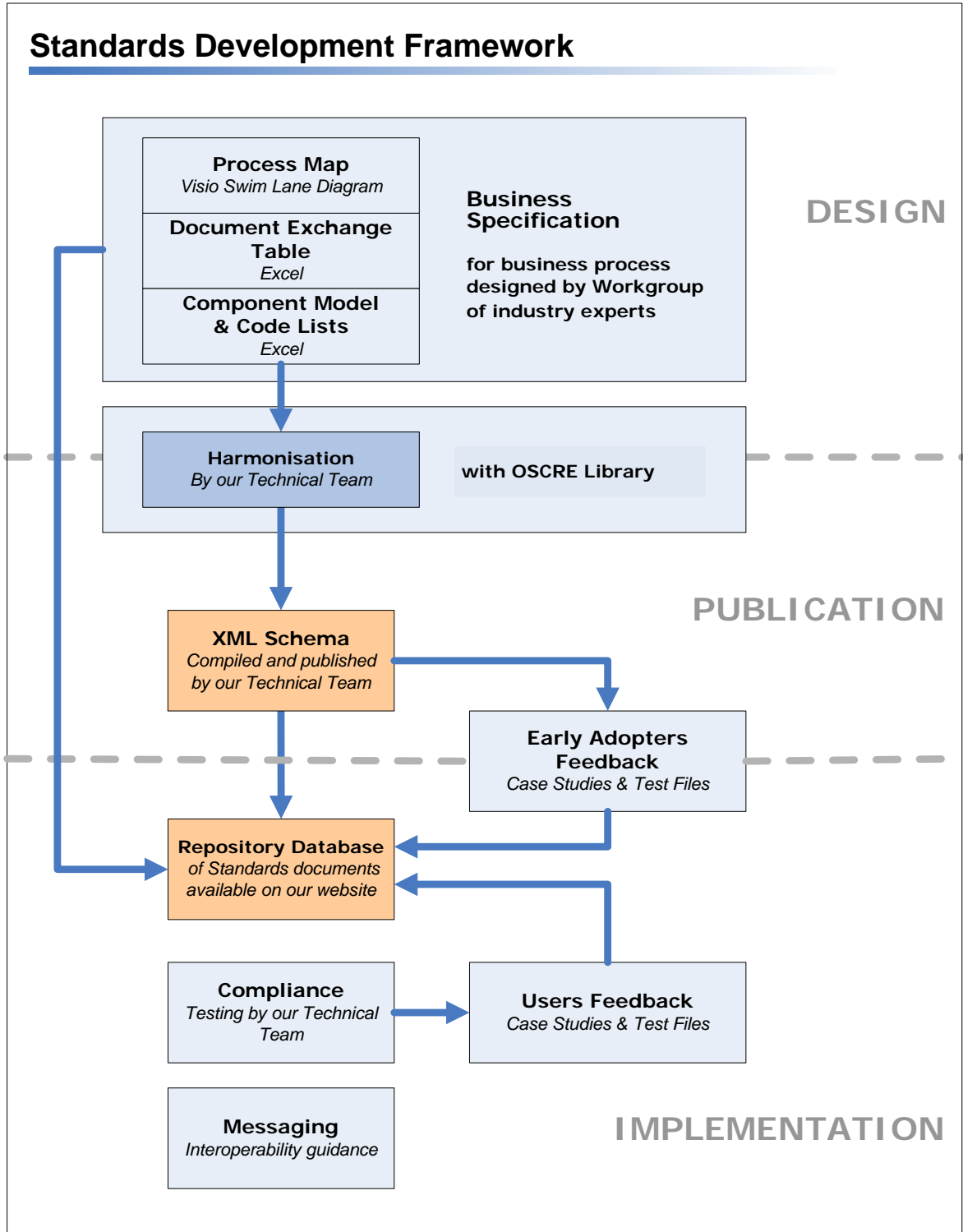


Figure 4: Standard Development Framework

3.2.1 What is a Workgroup?

Workgroups are the industry expert teams that create or refine the Standards by supporting cohesive collections of business processes. They can be requested at any time by any Member and, if approved by the Executive Committee, are managed through the Pisces structured standards development process.

The Workgroup consists of motivated and active participants within the Membership that have the relevant business process knowledge and are lead by Chairs and Vice-Chairs, elected from them.

A Project Manager will guide the Workgroup through the "Business" part of the process. We will ensure the Project Managers are adequately trained and can guarantee the Workgroups produce their output in a timely, correct and consistent format.

3.2.2 What is a Business Specification?

The Business Specification is the main body of work that the Workgroup Participants, under the guidance of the Project Manager, must produce.

It is a defined set of documents containing specifications or guidelines produced by Workgroups, to develop the Standard, and it provides the Technical Team with enough information to manage the data dictionary, harmonisation process and most importantly produce schemas.

These documents include a Microsoft (MS) Visio file describing the Business Process, an MS Excel Spreadsheet listing and describing the candidate data exchanges, and an MS Excel Spreadsheet giving the definitions and structure of the data items and code values.

3.2.3 What is Harmonization

The purpose of Harmonization is to ensure that processes and terminology defined by Workgroups are applied consistently throughout the world.

Harmonization is led by the Technical Team but is undertaken by appointed Panels, selected from a permanent Committee of subject matter experts from all aspects of the real estate and property industry.

3.2.4 Data Modelling and Schema Production

The Technical Team generate the XML schemas based on the completed and Harmonised Business Specification.

3.2.5 Early Adoption

Each Workgroup has a responsibility ensure that the Standard they develop is representative of the business process.

Commitment to early adoption is sought from the Workgroup Participants before the Workgroup is formed and each Standard is released for Public Review as part of its development.

Feedback from early adopters will be reflected in the completed Standard.

3.2.6 Release of the Standard

Extensions to the Standard are released by the Executive Committee, following a Recommendation from the Workgroup Project Manager and the Technical Manager. The Recommendation is the result of extensive consultation and consensus building.

3.2.7 What is the Repository

The repository is a searchable database containing all the contextualised documents from the Standards Development Process, including the schemas.

The Repository is currently in development but once implemented it will be accessible from our website.

3.2.8 Messaging

The OSCRE data Standards are developed independently of how they are exchanged. OSCRE members use a wide variety of transfer technologies to implement such messaging solutions – what we call the ‘Technical Implementation layer’ (TIL).

OSCRE does not promote any particular solution or standard for communications, but has carried out a preliminary study into the available technologies and techniques.

A key aspect of the TIL is the use of existing technical standards where appropriate. This ensures that implementers can take advantage of infrastructure products from a range of software vendors that support these existing standards ensures.

There are two broad groups of standards: ebXML and Web Services. The ebXML Messaging Service addresses most of the TIL requirements for system interconnectivity. However some vendors, such as IBM and Microsoft promote the Web Services family instead (the WS-* family).

Some key Web Service specifications are still under development, although many of those important to TIL are heading for completion.

Member organisations are encouraged to consult with experts in the field of messaging if developing or purchasing a messaging solution to integrate with their existing systems and for ‘production’ use.

3.2.9 Overview of Compliance

Compliance testing enables users of property software systems to establish which systems in the market place are capable of importing and exporting data files that are compliant with the Standard.

We offer tests free to Executive Members and at a discounted rate to Associate Members, but anyone who develops a software system can apply for Compliance.

4. Maintaining the Standard

4.1 Requests for Change

Following the standard implementation any Member, or a Member acting on behalf of several cooperating Members, can make a Request for Change. The term "Submitter" is used below to refer to all of the Members involved in such a Request.

4.1.1 How to make a Request for Change

Requests for Change should be made through the website. The Request must include the following:

- The nature of the request; and
- The name, company and contact details of the submitter(s).

The request will be posted on the website. The Technical Team will review the Request and either accepts or rejects it. The Technical Team may consult the Workgroup that originally developed the Standard.

4.1.2 Acceptance of a Request for Change

If it is accepted the status of the request on the website will be changed to ‘Pending’ and the change will be made to the next release of the Standard.

4.1.3 Rejection of a Request for Change

If it is rejected the status of the request on the website will be changed to 'Rejected' and the Technical Manager must provide the submitter with the rationale.

4.2 Service Releases

Our aim is to ensure the Standards, developed according to the above process, receive wide industry consultation during development, and once released remain as stable as possible.

However, given that perfection is unachievable, we reserve the right to make Service Releases of any Business Process when necessary.

When Service Releases are made we will:

- Inform the Membership a Service Release has been made,
- Publish a release note describing the change(s)

5. Additional Resources

5.1 References

1. Workgroup Formation Procedure Edition 2.0 2007
2. Workgroup Procedure Edition 2.0 2007
3. Workgroup Participants Handbook Edition 2.0 2007
4. Business Specification Handbook Edition 2.0 2007

5.2 Support

Contact information for further support.

	Business spec	Technical spec	Implementation
	Monika Horner	Richard Furze	Tony Bennett
By Phone	+44 (0) 191 230 8094	+44 (0) 191 230 8094	+44 (0) 191 230 8094
By Email	Monika.Horner@pisces.co.uk	Richard.Furze@pisces.co.uk	Tony.Bennett@pisces.co.uk
By Mail	PISCES Ltd, Churchill House, 12 Mosley Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 1DE		