



IVOA Document Standards Version 1.0

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This version:

<http://www.ivoa.net/Documents/REC/DocStandard/DocumentStandards-20031024.html>

Latest version:

<http://www.ivoa.net/Documents/latest/DocStd.html>

Previous versions:

<http://www.ivoa.net/Documents/PR/DocStandard/DocumentStandards-20030911.html>

<http://www.ivoa.net/Documents/WD/DocStandard/DocumentStandards-20030709.html>

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Abstract

This document describes the types of official IVOA documents and the process by which documents are advanced from Working Drafts to formal Recommendations.

Status of this document

This is a Recommendation.

This document has been produced by the [IVOA Standards & Process Working Group](#). It has been reviewed by IVOA Members and other interested parties, and has been endorsed by the IVOA Executive Committee as an IVOA Recommendation. It is a stable document and may be used as reference material or cited as a normative reference from another document. IVOA's role in making the Recommendation is to draw attention to

the specification and to promote its widespread deployment. This enhances the functionality and interoperability inside the Astronomical Community.

Acknowledgments

This document is based on the W3C documentation standards, but has been adapted for the IVOA.

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1 Document types

The IVOA publishes two types of documents:

Recommendation track documents. These are specifications, guidelines, etc. produced by Working Groups. Documents on the Recommendation track may progress from [Working Draft](#) (WD) to [Proposed Recommendation](#) (PR) and finally to [Recommendation](#) (REC).

IVOA Notes. An IVOA Note is a dated, public record of an idea, comment, or document. Authorship of a Note may vary greatly (e.g., by an IVOA Working Group, by an IVOA Member, etc.).

All public documents are available at the [Web site](#). IVOA will make every effort to make archival documents indefinitely available at their original address in their original form.

The IVOA Executive Committee appoints a Documentation Coordinator (DC) who oversees the document collection and assures that technical reports conform to these guidelines.

The DC may reformat documents so as to conform to changes in IVOA practice (e.g., changes to document styles or the "Status of this Document" section).

Each public document must clearly indicate whether it is a Note, [Working Draft](#), [Proposed Recommendation](#), or [Recommendation](#) (REC).

The primary language for IVOA technical reports is English.

1.1 Status

Each document must include a section about the status of the document. The status section should explain why IVOA has published the technical report, whether or not it is part of the Recommendation track, who developed it, where to send comments about it, whether implementation experience is being sought, any significant changes from the previous version, and any other relevant metadata.

The status section of a Working Draft must set expectations about the stability of the work (e.g., that it may be superseded, obsoleted, or dropped at any time, that it should not be cited as other than a work in progress, etc.) and must indicate how much consensus within IVOA there is about the Working Draft (e.g., no consensus, consensus among the Working Group participants, etc.).

The status section of a Note must indicate the level of endorsement within or by IVOA for the material in the Note, and set expectations about future commitments from IVOA to pursue the topics covered by the Note or to respond to comments about the Note.

1.2 Naming convention

Every document should have a meaningful, but relatively short, name. Names may be reviewed and modified by the DC. All versions will be stored in the IVOA [Documents Repository](#). The full document name has the form TYPE-NAME-DATE.EXT, where TYPE is a code for the document type (NOTE, WD, PR, REC), NAME is the short name, DATE is of the form YYYYMMDD, and EXT is the file extension type (.HTML, .PDF, .DOC, etc.). EXT should follow MIME type conventions.

1.3 Format

The standard format for IVOA documents is HTML, though any document preparation tools may be used that allow for the publication of HTML and that retain the standard formatting elements and style. Document templates are provided for MSWord and HTML at <http://www.ivoa.net/Documents/templates/>. Final Recommendations will also be available as printable PDF in A4 (and, optionally, US 8.5 x 11") size.

2 Standards process

The IVOA standards process is used to build consensus around a Virtual Observatory technology, both within IVOA and in the VO community as a whole. IVOA Working Drafts become Recommendations by following this process. The labels that describe increasing levels of maturity and consensus in the standards process are:

Working Draft. A document begins as a Working Draft. A Working Draft is a chartered work item of a Working Group and generally represents work in progress and a

commitment by IVOA to pursue work in a particular area. The label "Working Draft" does not imply that there is consensus within IVOA about the document.

Proposed Recommendation. A Proposed Recommendation is believed to meet the relevant requirements of the Working Group's charter and any accompanying requirements documents, to represent sufficient implementation experience, and to adequately address dependencies from the IVOA technical community and comments from previous reviewers.

IVOA Recommendation. An IVOA Recommendation is a document that is the end result of extensive consensus-building within the IVOA about a particular technology or policy. IVOA considers that the ideas or technology specified by a Recommendation are appropriate for widespread deployment and promote [IVOA's mission](#).

Generally, Working Groups create Working Drafts with the intent of advancing them through the standards process. However, publication of a technical report at one maturity level does not guarantee that it will advance to the next. Some documents may be dropped as active work or may be subsumed by other documents. If, at any maturity level of the standards process, work on a document ceases (e.g., because a Working Group or Activity closes, or because the work is subsumed by another document), a final version of the document should be issued with the status section noting that work on this document has concluded, and for what rationale, and with links provided to relevant follow-on documents. Any time a document advances to a higher maturity level, the announcement of the transition must indicate any formal objections. If, at any maturity level prior to Recommendation, review comments or implementation experience result in substantive changes to a document, the document should be returned to Working Draft for further work. The relationship between Working Drafts, Proposed Recommendations, and Recommendations is shown in the figure below.

2.1 Working Draft (WD)

Entrance criteria. Working Drafts are published at the discretion of Working Groups, and are subject to review by the document coordinator for compliance to these guidelines. Publication of a Working Draft is **not** an assertion of consensus, of endorsement, or of technical and editorial quality. Consensus is not a prerequisite for approval to publish; the Working Group may request publication of a Working Draft even if it is unstable and does not meet all Working Group requirements.

Ongoing work. Once a Working Draft has been published, the Working Group should continue to develop it by encouraging review and feedback within and outside of IVOA.

Next maturity level. After a suitable review and trial period, the chair of the Working Group may promote the Working Draft to a Proposed Recommendation. Such advancement should occur only when the chair of the Working Group is satisfied that consensus has been reached, and more formal and extensive review is now warranted. Advancement to Proposed Recommendation implies:

1. The Working Group has fulfilled the relevant requirements of the Working Group charter and those of any accompanying requirements documents.
2. The Working Group has formally addressed issues raised during the development and review process (possibly modifying the technical report).

3. The Working Group has reported all formal objections.
4. Each feature of the technical report has been implemented. Preferably, the Working Group should be able to demonstrate two interoperable implementations of each feature. If the chair of the Working Group believes that broader review is critical, the chair may advance the document to Proposed Recommendation even without adequate implementation experience. In this case, the document status section should indicate why the chair promoted the document directly to Proposed Recommendation.

2.2 Proposed Recommendation (PR)

Entrance criteria. Proposed Recommendations are published by the chair of a Working Group following the criteria described above. Proposed Recommendations are considered to be technically mature and ready for wide review.

Ongoing work. The Working Group should continue to encourage review and feedback within and outside of IVOA.

Next maturity level. After a publication period of at least two weeks, the chair of the Working Group that developed the Proposed Recommendation may call for a formal Request for Comments (RFC). The RFC is sent to the widest possible IVOA distribution lists (interop@ivoa.net) and announced on the website. Distribution of the RFC initiates a four-week public review period. All comments submitted during this review period must be posted publically and responded to publicly. If the review identifies significant deficiencies in the document, such that revisions must be undertaken beyond minor editorial changes or where revisions require changes to software based on the document, the document must be returned to the Working Draft status.

Following the RFC period, the document and the public record of comments and responses will be reviewed by the IVOA Executive Committee. If they are satisfied that all comments have been taken into regard appropriately, they can promote the document to a Recommendation.

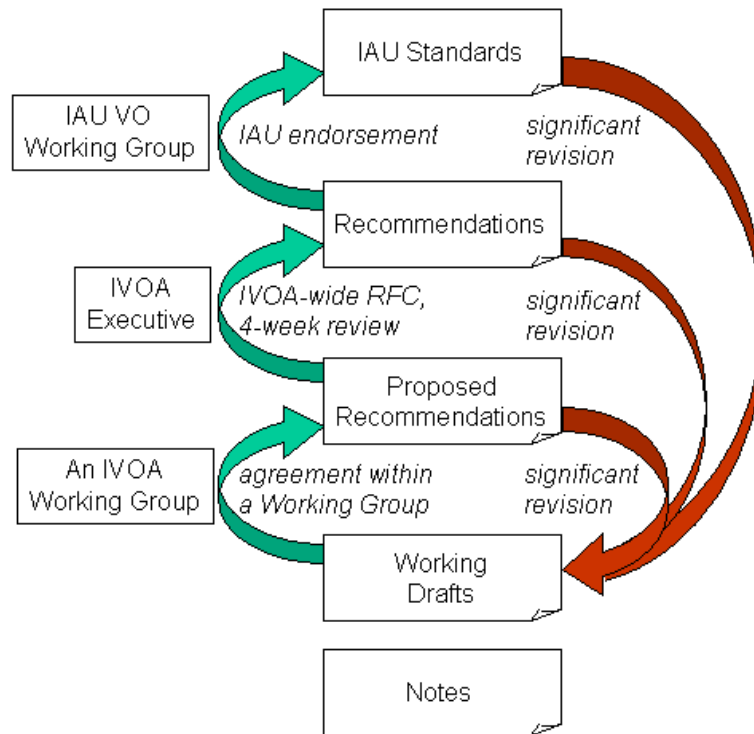
2.3 Recommendation (REC)

Entrance criteria. Recommendations are published by the IVOA Executive Committee following the criteria described above. Recommendations are the final form of IVOA documents and constitute an IVOA Standard.

Ongoing work. Recommendations may need to be revised and extended as time goes on. Significant revisions of Recommendations must proceed through the Working Draft and Proposed Recommendation phases. A significant revision is any revision that requires changes in software based on the document.

Next maturity level. A Recommendation is the highest level of maturity for an IVOA document. The IVOA Executive Committee may propose that Recommendations be endorsed as standards by the International Astronomical Union, working through IAU Commission 5.

IVOA Document Standards Process



3 Changes from previous versions

None.