
**Reference data for financial
services — Specification for the
description of banking products or
services (BPoS)**

*Données de référence pour les services financiers — Spécification
pour la description de produits ou services bancaires (BPoS)*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 68, *Financial services*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Reference data for financial services*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

Banking is an ancient industry. Until the middle of the last century, most banking services had been simple and could be easily understood by common people. Services provided by different banks were similar and did not require any specific explanation. Thus, standardizing the descriptions of banking services was unnecessary at that time.

This situation gradually changed with the introduction of information technology into the banking industry and the faster adoption of financial innovation. Since the beginning of this century, especially when Fintech started to play a more important role in the banking industry, the situation has changed dramatically. On the one hand, traditional banking services are becoming more integrated through **productization** as the functions and behaviours of services are determined before they are provided to customers. The establishment of product management functions in many banks can be deemed circumstantial evidence of this development. On the other hand, the working of banking products or services (BPoS, see 3.3) has become so **complex** that even the practitioner of its issuer cannot always explain it thoroughly and unambiguously. Moreover, a growing number of institutions other than traditional financial institutions are selling and servicing BPoS around the world. In some cases, these institutions are not even supervised by financial supervisory authorities.

To compensate for the increase in complexity, many institutions have started to provide some structured descriptions for their BPoS, often related to retail products. However, those descriptions are so diverse amongst the different institutions that customers can barely perform a proper comparison, even for similar products. Writing the description for BPoS can be a complex job for which only a small number of experienced staff meet the requirements. Consequently, the standardization of the BPoS descriptions has become more and more important.

At first glance, it seems relatively easy to establish a specification for the description of BPoS. However, some issues arise when a specification requires several provisions of the required elements to be combined.

This document is intended to solve the issues mentioned above. **Key elements** necessary to describe a BPoS are defined. These elements are grouped into three categories: required, optional and voluntary.

Required elements: readers would not understand the BPoS correctly if these elements were described incompletely or ambiguously.

Optional elements: readers would understand the BPoS more completely, clearly and accurately by acquiring information from these elements.

Voluntary elements: readers would understand the peculiarities and extra benefits of the BPoS.

Required and optional elements are focused on answering four questions: 'How to identify a BPoS', 'How to identify the issuer of a BPoS', 'What are the credentials of a BPoS?' and 'What are the fundamental financial characteristics of a BPoS?'. Voluntary elements are not listed as they are determined when the description of a BPoS is being formulated so that innovation is not constricted. [Figure 1](#) illustrates the relationship between these elements.

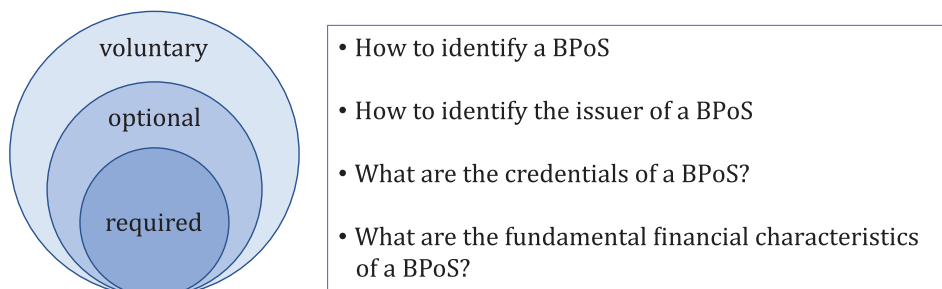
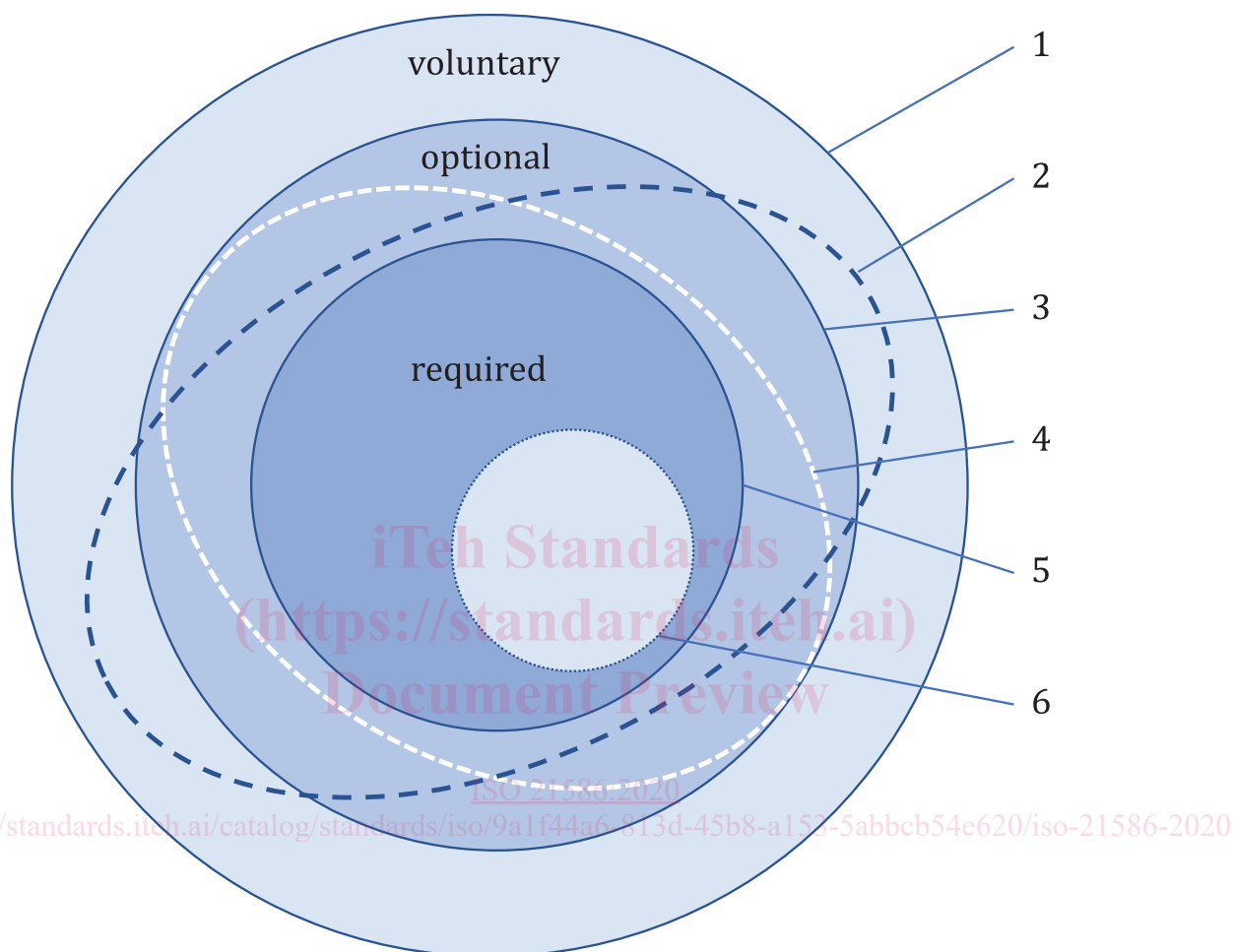


Figure 1 — Logical categories and groups of elements

Ordinary customers as well as many employees of financial institutions have no interest in reading or opportunity to read an ISO standard. How to choose appropriate elements might be a cumbersome matter. Considering this, six templates are given, called the **level of conformity**. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual mapping on key elements for every level of conformity. If the concept of conformity is introduced when this document is implemented, customers might easily judge which elements of a BPoS have been described and practitioners might easily write a description of a BPoS by choosing a suitable template.



Key

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1 expanded | 4 picked |
| 2 picked and expanded | 5 baseline |
| 3 coincident | 6 below baseline |

Figure 2 — The relationship of six conformity level templates

After defining the necessary key elements to describe a BPoS, the next step is how to present them in an appropriate fashion. In this document, this question is dealt with at two levels: a logical tier and a physical tier. The organization of the information is considered the logical tier and deals with the correctness of the contents of the BPoS description. Plain language should be used in describing BPoS. Additionally, more structured ways to organize information (such as XML or JSON) can be used. The presentation of the information is considered the physical tier and deals with the suitability of the content for human reading. Some ISO guides, such as ISO/IEC Guide 14 and ISO/IEC Guide 37, are followed, with mentions of special elements involving personal safety or environmental protection.

These developments around BPoS are considered not only by ISO TC68/SC8 but also by many regulatory authorities, with regulations having been implemented recently. Methodologies have also been developed in relation to BPoS (see [Annex D](#)). These factors have been considered in this document.

In conclusion, many stakeholders can benefit from this document. In particular:

- customers can understand the characteristics of a BPoS and take better-informed decisions;
- practitioners can be more efficient in describing the characteristics of a BPoS using the tailoring templates;
- regulatory authorities can detect whether the information provided for a BPoS is compliant or transparent enough.

Furthermore, descriptions of BPoS can be readily stored, processed and compared. Innovation can be triggered by analysing key elements. In a sense, the change induced by Fintech could be considered to begin with the expansion of channels while the channel is a key element.

This document contains the following clauses:

Scope (Clause 1)	This document is intended to be used to describe banking products or services (BPoS) only. The main addressees are practitioners.
Normative references (Clause 2)	Documents which are referred to normatively in this document.
Terms, definitions and abbreviated terms (Clause 3)	The terms used in this document are defined. The definition of BPoS is based on ISO 9000.
General principles (Clause 4)	Five principles are followed: 1. Types of key elements 2. Description of multiple BPoS 3. Sequence of key elements 4. Descriptive style (concise everyday language) 5. Implementation as a complement to regulations
Level of conformity (Clause 5)	Six patterns of conformity are described: 1. Below baseline 2. Baseline 3. Picked 4. Coincident 5. Picked and expanded 6. Expanded
Key elements (Clause 6)	Relevant information elements for customers to understand the nature of a BPoS.
Requirements of representation (Clause 7)	Presentation of the elements in logical (organizing elements correctly) and physical (showing elements correctly) mode.
Annexes	

The content of [Clause 4](#) to [Clause 6](#) aims to depict the relevant aspects of describing a BPoS. [Figure 3](#) gives a landscape of those clauses.