

Quantum-safe Hierarchical Deterministic Keys with the pqARKG-H extension

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Abstract

Hierarchical Deterministic Keys (HDK) is a draft specification using key blinding techniques including ARKG to create hierarchies of keys all derived from a single root secret key, in such a way that only the root secret key needs to be kept in a secure element (SE) and new public keys can be generated without invoking the SE. However, when ARKG is used in HDK, the original ARKG procedures would require one SE invocation per HDK layer when exercising derived private keys. This is undesirable in contexts where each SE invocation would require a distinct user gesture.

To address this we analyze the security of an ARKG extension pqARKG-H that enables any number of HDK layers with a single SE invocation. We base pqARKG-H on the ARKG generalization pqARKG, and demonstrate that it retains msKS security by a straightforward reduction of the security experiment.

1 Introduction

Hierarchical Deterministic Keys (HDK) [Dij25] is a draft specification using key blinding techniques including ARKG [LB25] to create hierarchies of keys all derived from a single root secret key, in such a way that only the root secret key needs to be kept in a secure element (SE) and new public keys can be generated without invoking the SE. However, when ARKG is used in HDK, the original ARKG procedures would require one SE invocation of `DeriveSK` per HDK layer when exercising derived private keys. This is undesirable in contexts where each SE invocation would require a distinct user gesture. One such context is the WebAuthn “sign” extension [Lun24] proposed to introduce general-purpose signing capabilities to the Web Authentication API (WebAuthn) [Bal+25], including signing using private keys derived via ARKG. Since WebAuthn requires a user gesture for any sign-

ing operation, HDK operations based on this “sign” extension would also require one user gesture per HDK layer.

The ARKG construction in [LB25] is based upon pqARKG [Wil23], a post-quantum compatible generalization of the original ARKG [Fry+20]. Here we propose and analyze pqARKG-H, an extension of pqARKG for better compatibility with HDK. pqARKG-H enables any number of HDK layers with a single invocation of the DeriveSK procedure.

The next section repeats the definition of pqARKG and its msKS security experiment. Then we propose the extension pqARKG-H and its corresponding security experiment, and finally demonstrate by a straightforward reduction that pqARKG-H retains the msKS property of pqARKG.

2 pqARKG

Here we repeat the definition of pqARKG and its msKS security experiment [Wil23]. The instance parameters are a key blinding scheme Δ , a key encapsulation mechanism (KEM) Π and a pseudo-random function PRF outputting blinding factors in the domain of Δ .

pqARKG is defined as the suite of procedures in Figure 2. The msKS security experiment for pqARKG is defined in Figure 2.¹

3 pqARKG-H

Here we define our modified pqARKG-H scheme and a corresponding msKS security experiment.

A new parameter b is added to the DerivePK and DeriveSK functions. This b is an additional blinding factor in the key blinding scheme Δ , allowing the ARKG delegating party (the party holding the ARKG private seed) to add any number of additional blinding layers on top of the one performed by the ARKG subordinate party (the party generating public keys). To prevent choosing $b = -\tau$ so that it cancels the blinding factor τ computed in step 2 of DeriveSK of pqARKG, this b is also mixed into the PRF arguments to compute τ . This disrupts any algebraic relationship between b and τ , thus preventing extraction of the private seed \mathbf{sk} by a malicious choice of b even if a derived private key \mathbf{sk}' is leaked.

The new argument mixed into the PRF is however not b directly, but a blinded public key \mathbf{pk}_Δ^b incorporating the blinding factor b . This enables the delegating party to share a derived public pqARKG-H seed with a subordinate party without having to disclose b . This is desirable if the delegating party does not wish to reveal the relationship with other keys in an HDK tree which might be used for unrelated purposes; knowing b would enable

¹We have corrected a misprint in [Wil23] writing τ in place of k on line 3 of $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{sk}'}$, renamed the variable \mathbf{ck} to τ in $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{pk}'}$, and made explicit the argument \mathbf{pp} to Check.

Setup(λ)

1: **return** $pp = (\Delta, \Pi, \text{PRF})$

Check(pp, sk', pk')

1: **return** $\Delta.\text{Check}(sk', pk')$

KeyGen(pp)

1: $(sk_\Delta, pk_\Delta) \leftarrow \Delta.\text{KeyGen}()$
 2: $(sk_\Pi, pk_\Pi) \leftarrow \Pi.\text{KeyGen}()$
 3: **return** $sk = (sk_\Delta, sk_\Pi), pk = (pk_\Delta, pk_\Pi)$

DerivePK($pp, pk = (pk_\Delta, pk_\Pi), aux$)

1: $(c, k) \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Encaps}(pk_\Pi)$
 2: $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, aux)$
 3: $pk' \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, \tau)$
 4: **return** $pk', cred = (c, aux)$

DeriveSK($pp, sk = (sk_\Delta, sk_\Pi), cred = (c, aux)$)

1: $k \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Decaps}(sk_\Pi, c)$
 2: $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, aux)$
 3: **return** $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(sk_\Delta, \tau)$

Figure 1: Algorithms of the pqARKG scheme [Wil23].

$\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda)$

1: $pp \leftarrow \text{Setup}(1^\lambda)$
 2: $\text{PKList} \leftarrow \emptyset$
 3: $\text{SKList} \leftarrow \emptyset$
 4: $(sk, pk) \leftarrow \text{KeyGen}()$
 5: $(sk^*, pk^*, cred^*) \leftarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}, \mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(pp, pk)$
 6: $sk' \leftarrow \text{DeriveSK}(pp, sk, cred^*)$
 7: **return** $\text{Check}(pp, sk^*, pk^*)$
 8: $\wedge \text{Check}(pp, sk', pk^*)$
 9: $\wedge [cred^* \notin \text{SKList}]$

$\mathcal{O}_{pk'}(aux)$

1: $(c, k) \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Encaps}(pk_\Pi)$
 2: $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, aux)$
 3: $pk' \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, \tau)$
 4: $\text{PKList} \leftarrow \text{PKList} \cup \{(pk', (c, aux))\}$
 5: **return** $pk', (c, aux)$

$\mathcal{O}_{sk'}(c, aux)$

1: **if** $(\cdot, (c, aux)) \notin \text{PKList}$ **then return** \perp
 2: $\text{SKList} \leftarrow \text{SKList} \cup \{(c, aux)\}$
 3: $k \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Decaps}(sk_\Pi, c)$
 4: $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, aux)$
 5: **return** $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(sk_\Delta, \tau)$

Figure 2: The msKS security experiment for pqARKG [Wil23].

the subordinate party to unblind the derived public key \mathbf{pk}' to reveal the root public seed \mathbf{pk}_Δ . Instead, the subordinate party may determine k and \mathbf{aux} and compute steps 3–5 of `DerivePK` with $\mathbf{pk}_\Delta = \mathbf{pk}_\Delta^b$ and $b = \text{id}_\Delta$, the identity blinding factor, and thus be convinced that \mathbf{pk}' was generated from the claimed public seed \mathbf{pk}_Δ^b .

Finally, the `DeriveSK` function of `pqARKG-H` also receives the blinding key \mathbf{pk}_Δ as a new parameter in order to reconstruct the same PRF output as `DerivePK`. This \mathbf{pk}_Δ parameter may be eliminated in instantiations where \mathbf{pk}_Δ can be computed from \mathbf{sk}_Δ .

`pqARKG-H` requires three additional properties of the the key blinding scheme Δ :

1. There exists an *identity blinding factor*, denoted id_Δ , such that

$$\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, \text{id}_\Delta) = \mathbf{pk} \text{ and } \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, \text{id}_\Delta) = \mathbf{sk}$$

for all \mathbf{pk} and \mathbf{sk} .

2. Δ supports *public key unblinding* in addition to private key unblinding: A function $\Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, b)$ such that

$$\Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, b), b) = \mathbf{pk}$$

for all \mathbf{pk} and b .

3. Δ is *commutative* in the blinding factor: for all \mathbf{pk} , \mathbf{sk} , a and b ,

$$\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, a), b) = \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, b), a)$$

$$\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, a), b) = \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, b), a).$$

For example, any construction based on cyclic groups is likely to satisfy these properties.

`pqARKG-H` is defined as the suite of procedures in Figure 2. The operator \parallel denotes binary concatenation, and we assume some well-known encoding is used for \mathbf{pk}_Δ^b . Note that if $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, b)$ is linear in b with operation \circ , then steps 4–5 of `DeriveSK` may be optimized as "4. **return** $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}_\Delta, b \circ \tau)$ ".

We also modify the `msKS` security experiment accordingly, resulting in the security experiment $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$. The main difference is that the adversary \mathcal{B} also returns the value b^* to be used as the b argument to `DeriveSK`. The public and private key oracles $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{pk}'}$ and $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{sk}'}$ are also updated to include the b parameter and the additional blinding step. Finally, the check against \mathcal{B} trivially querying $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{sk}'}$ for a solution is relaxed to forbid only the exact combination of b^* and cred^* returned as the solution.

Setup: Same as pqARKG.
 Check: Same as pqARKG.
 KeyGen: Same as pqARKG.

DerivePK(pp, pk = (pk_Δ, pk_Π), b, aux)

```

1 : (c, k) ← Π.Encaps(pkΠ)
2 : pkΔb ← Δ.BlindPK(pkΔ, b)
3 : τ ← PRF(k, pkΔb || aux)
4 : pk' ← Δ.BlindPK(pkΔb, τ)
5 : return pk', cred = (c, aux)

```

DeriveSK(pp, pk_Δ, sk = (sk_Δ, sk_Π), b, cred = (c, aux))

```

1 : k ← Π.Decaps(skΠ, c)
2 : pkΔb ← Δ.BlindPK(pkΔ, b)
3 : τ ← PRF(k, pkΔb || aux)
4 : skΔb ← Δ.BlindSK(skΔ, b)
5 : return Δ.BlindSK(skΔb, τ)

```

Figure 3: Algorithms of the pqARKG-H scheme. The Setup, Check and KeyGen algorithms are unchanged from pqARKG.

Exp_{pqARKG-H, B}^{msKS}(λ)

```

1 : pp ← Setup(1λ)
2 : PKList ← ∅
3 : SKList ← ∅
4 : (sk, pk) ← $ KeyGen()
5 : (sk*, pk*, b*, cred*) ← $ BOpk', Osk'(pp, pk)
6 : sk' ← DeriveSK(pp, pkΔ, sk, b*, cred*)
7 : return Check(pp, sk*, pk*)
8 :   ∧ Check(pp, sk', pk*)
9 :   ∧ [(b*, cred*) ∉ SKList]

```

O_{pk'}(b, aux)

```

1 : (pk', cred) ← $ DerivePK(pp, pk, b, aux)
2 : PKList ← PKList ∪ {(pk', cred)}
3 : return (pk', cred)

```

O_{sk'}(b, c, aux)

```

1 : if (·, (c, aux)) ∉ PKList then return ⊥
2 : SKList ← SKList ∪ {(b, (c, aux))}
3 : return DeriveSK(pp, pkΔ, sk, b, (c, aux))

```

Figure 4: The msKS security experiment for pqARKG-H.

$\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}, \mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(pp = (\Delta, \Pi, PRF), pk = (pk_\Delta, pk_\Pi))$	$\overline{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}}(b, aux)$
1 : $(sk^*, pk^*, \bar{b}^*, (\bar{c}^*, \overline{aux^*})) \leftarrow \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}, \mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(pp, pk)$	1 : $pk_\Delta^b \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, b)$
2 : $sk^* \leftarrow \Delta.\text{UnblindSK}(sk^*, \bar{b}^*)$	2 : $(pk', (c, \cdot)) \leftarrow \mathcal{O}_{pk'}(pk_\Delta^b \ aux)$
3 : $pk^* \leftarrow \Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(pk^*, \bar{b}^*)$	3 : $\overline{pk'} \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk', b)$
4 : $pk_\Delta^{b^*} \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, \bar{b}^*)$	4 : return $(\overline{pk'}, (c, aux))$
5 : return $(sk^*, pk^*, (\bar{c}^*, pk_\Delta^{b^*} \ \overline{aux^*}))$	

$\overline{\mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(b, c, aux)$
1 : $pk_\Delta^b \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, b)$
2 : $sk' \leftarrow \mathcal{O}_{sk'}(c, pk_\Delta^b \ aux)$
3 : return $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(sk', b)$

Figure 5: Reduction of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$ to $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$.

4 Reduction of pqARKG to pqARKG-H in msKS security experiment

We now show that pqARKG-H can satisfy malicious strong key security msKS. The proof requires two additional properties of some key blinding schemes that are defined in [Wil23]: unique blinding and private-key unblinding. Recall from [Wil23] that pqARKG satisfies msKS when instantiated with a key blinding scheme that provides these properties. Therefore a reduction proof from pqARKG-H to pqARKG suffices.

Theorem 4.1. *Let pqARKG-H be the ARKG construction described in Figure 3, instantiated with a key blinding scheme Δ that provides unique blinding and supports private-key unblinding. For any efficient adversary \mathcal{B} , there exists an efficient algorithm \mathcal{A} such that*

$$\text{Adv}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda) = \text{Adv}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda)$$

where the security experiment msKS is defined in Figure 3 for pqARKG-H and in Figure 2 for pqARKG.

Proof. Given an adversary \mathcal{B} that defeats $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$, we construct an adversary \mathcal{A} that defeats $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$.

When invoked, this adversary \mathcal{A} simply invokes the given adversary \mathcal{B} with its own challenge. The $\mathcal{O}_{pk'}$ and $\mathcal{O}_{sk'}$ oracles are adapted for \mathcal{B} by adding the pk_Δ^b prefix to aux and performing the additional blinding with the b argument, thus \mathcal{A} faithfully simulates $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$ for \mathcal{B} . The aux^* returned to the challenger is adapted with the $pk_\Delta^{b^*}$ prefix computed using the blinding factor $\bar{b}^* = b^*$ returned by \mathcal{B} , thus pqARKG-H produces the

same τ on line 3 of its `DerivePK` and `DeriveSK` functions as `pqARKG` does on line 2 of its `DerivePK` and `DeriveSK` functions.

To prove that \mathcal{A} wins its game precisely when \mathcal{B} wins its game, we observe that \mathcal{A} passes each of the three conditions on lines 7–9 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$ if and only if \mathcal{B} passes the corresponding condition from the ones on lines 7–9 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$.

For the first condition this holds because by definition of sk^* and pk^* , and applying the unique blinding and private-key unblinding properties,

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}^*, \text{pk}^*) &= \Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \Delta.\text{UnblindSK}(\overline{\text{sk}^*}, \overline{b^*}), \Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\overline{\text{pk}^*}, \overline{b^*})) \\ &= \Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \overline{\text{sk}^*}, \overline{\text{pk}^*}).\end{aligned}$$

For the second condition this holds because of the following argument. First, observe that $c^* = \overline{c^*}$ and $\text{aux}^* = \text{pk}_\Delta^{b^*} \parallel \overline{\text{aux}^*}$, and therefore

$$\tau = \text{PRF}(\Pi.\text{Decaps}(\text{sk}_\Pi, c^*), \text{aux}^*) = \text{PRF}(\Pi.\text{Decaps}(\text{sk}_\Pi, \overline{c^*}), \text{pk}_\Delta^{b^*} \parallel \overline{\text{aux}^*})$$

so `DeriveSK` on line 6 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$ computes the same τ as on line 6 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$. The above gives

$$\begin{aligned}\text{sk}' &= \text{DeriveSK}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}, \text{cred}^*) \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \text{PRF}(\Pi.\text{Decaps}(\text{sk}_\Pi, c^*), \text{aux}^*)) \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \tau)\end{aligned}$$

where $\text{cred}^* = (c^*, \text{aux}^*)$. Let $\overline{\text{sk}'}$ be an alias of the target symbol on line 6 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$. Then

$$\begin{aligned}\overline{\text{sk}'} &= \text{DeriveSK}(\text{pp}, \text{pk}_\Delta, \text{sk}, \overline{b^*}, \overline{\text{cred}^*}) \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \overline{b^*}), \tau) \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \tau), \overline{b^*}) \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}', \overline{b^*})\end{aligned}$$

and therefore

$$\text{sk}' = \Delta.\text{UnblindSK}(\overline{\text{sk}'}, \overline{b^*})$$

so by the definitions of unblinding and unique blinding, the second condition in $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$ is equivalent to

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \overline{\text{sk}'}, \overline{\text{pk}^*}) &= \Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \overline{\text{sk}'}, \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\overline{\text{pk}^*}, \overline{b^*}), \overline{b^*})) \\ &= \Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \overline{\text{sk}'}, \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\text{pk}^*, \overline{b^*})) \\ &= \Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}', \overline{b^*}), \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\text{pk}^*, \overline{b^*})) \\ &= \Delta.\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}', \text{pk}^*).\end{aligned}$$

For the third condition this holds because \mathcal{A} only appends to SKList when invoking $\mathcal{O}_{sk'}$, which it does only when \mathcal{B} invokes $\overline{\mathcal{O}_{sk'}}$. Therefore if \mathcal{B} does not invoke $\overline{\mathcal{O}_{sk'}}$ with arguments (b^*, c^*, aux^*) , then \mathcal{A} also does not invoke $\mathcal{O}_{sk'}$ with arguments (c^*, aux^*) . This is the case when \mathcal{B} wins its game, therefore \mathcal{A} passes the condition $(c^*, \text{aux}^*) \notin \text{SKList}$ whenever \mathcal{B} does. \square

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