

**Student Consultation Framework- for decision**

David Goldsmith, Union President

This paper asks for Council's approval for this final draft of the Student Consultation Framework. The framework, as well as an introduction to the framework, is attached as an appendix. This includes a list of people and committees who were consulted in its formation. Union Council was consulted at an earlier stage and its feedback incorporated.

## Introduction to the Student Consultation Framework

Imperial College is a dynamic organisation, with decisions being taken regularly, at all levels, to ensure that the College continues to grow, develop and improve. It's well established that continuous change is essential to the development of any organisation; but it is also well established, within Higher Education, that effective student engagement improves outcomes for institutions and for students. These outcomes manifest themselves in terms of academic attainment, retention, social capital and student satisfaction.

Imperial College Union, as the voice for all students at the College, believes that effective student consultation is not only desirable for the above reasons, but also leads to better decision-making, especially when applied proactively. To this end I have developed this Consultation Framework. It has been developed to act as a resource for departments, in order to provide a suggested approach for efficient and effective decision-making, with student consultation applied in a proportionate and relevant manner.

The framework enables the user to produce a series of suggested consultation methods, to be completed as a guideline, which are flexible according to circumstance, and relate to the potential impacts of the decision being made. The level of consultation the platform recommends has been standardised according to balanced feedback from large numbers of College staff and students, as well as College and Union committees. This framework does not attempt to change the good practice, which already happens in many departments; rather it sets to determine a minimum standard for consultation, agreed by all affected parties, against which departments can set themselves against, should they wish to, without confusion as to what constitutes 'consultation'. In setting this standard, confusion can be avoided between staff and students as to whether appropriate consultation has taken place.

This framework is as much about communication as it is about consultation. Guidance is given on how best to communicate with students, particularly with regard to how their opinions were factored into the decision making process. By improving communication, students will feel better listened to, resulting in a greater feeling of self-efficacy and greater subsequent engagement with the consultation process. Furthermore, by better communicating to students the context of the decision, students will have a greater understanding of why a decision has been taken.

The Union will provide support to individuals and departments in both the application of the framework and, crucially, in the facilitation of the consultation process, with particular consideration given to departments who may lack the resources to consult to the standard advised. For those who are less familiar with the Union, the framework contains guidance regarding the Union representation structures and what help is available.

The Union itself will be applying the method to the decisions it makes on a regular basis, as well as providing strong avenues for feedback, to initiate a

review of the framework each year. The Union also commits to training the network of student representatives in its use, and to publicising good examples of how this process informs future effective student consultations.

Based on my central manifesto pledge, running for the position of ICU President, and fitting in with the objectives of the College's Education and Student Strategy<sup>2</sup>, this framework is responding to a genuine call for best-practice student consultation across the College and presents the opportunity for the Union and the College to act in partnership to achieve this.

Without necessarily being exhaustive, by improving consultation, this framework will reduce unintended consequences and the chance of needing to rework changes. We believe that it will help legitimise decision-making, manage student expectations and ultimately produce better outcomes.



**David Goldsmith**  
President  
Imperial College Union

People and committees who have been individually consulted and their feedback incorporated into this draft

- **Business School Programme Quality Committee**
- **Engineering Faculty Teaching Committee**
- **Medicine Strategic Education Committee**
- **Faculty of Natural Sciences Teaching Committee**
- **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee**
- **Masters Quality Committee- MLSPD**
- **Masters Quality Committee- BEP**
- **Vice Provost's Advisory Group for Education**
- **Union Council**
- Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education)
- Denis Wright, Director of Student Support
- Muir Sanderson, Chief Financial Officer
- Dean Pateman, Academic Registrar
- Simon Archer, College Tutor
- Jonathan Narcross and JP Jones, College Communications
- Lorraine Craig, Department of Earth Science and Engineering
- Stephen Richardson, Associate Provost (Institutional Affairs)
- Bridgette Duncombe, Department of Chemistry
- Jenny Higham, Vice Dean (Education and Institutional Affairs), Faculty of Medicine
- Jon Tucker, Faculty Operating Officer, Business School

- Jeremy Bradley, Department of Computing
- Emma Caseley and Jemma Allan, Education Office
- Mike Russell and Saul Batzofin, ICT
- Simon Harding-Roots, Chief Operations Officer
- Rachel Hounslow and William Brown, Student Academic Representatives, Department of Chemical Engineering
- Mariza de-Souza, James Murphy, Michaela Salacinski (Academic Affairs Officers), Steve Tran (ICSMSU President)
- Rebecca Middleton and Alan Spivey, Faculty of Natural Sciences
- Diane Morgan, Business School
- Stephen Curry, Director of Undergraduate Studies in the department of Life Sciences
- Tony Lawrence, Director of Financial Management
- Shaun Crofton and Patrick Leavers, Mechanical Engineering
- Elspeth Farrar, Careers
- Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School
- Sue Smith and Martin Lupton, Medicine
- Susan Eisenbach, Computing
- Nick Roalfe, Estates
- Tom Miller and Caroline Davis, College Communications
- John Neilson, College Secretary
- James Stirling, Provost
- Dermot Kelleher, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine
- Jeff Magee, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering
- Anand Anandalingam, Dean of the Business School
- Maggie Dallman, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences
- Campus Services
  - Jane Neary
  - Paul Noke
  - Jemma Morris
  - Neil Mosley
  - Charles Gallagher

<sup>1</sup>Education and Student Strategy objectives:

- 3.4 Extend our systematic mechanisms to encourage innovation and the sharing of good practice aimed at enhancing our delivery of education and the student experience
- 3.5 Implement a student survey and feedback framework which will rationalise the current range of surveys, systematically inform enhancement and create a robust feedback loop to students and staff

# Student Consultation Framework



# Contents

- 03 ▲ What is the framework?
- 04 ▲ How to use this framework
- 05 ▲ Step 1 - Achieving the Union Award for Great Consultation
- 06 ▲ Step 2 - Important Guidance
- 08 ▲ Step 3 - What Impact will your decision have?
  - 10 ▲ Inform Affected Users - Green
  - 11 ▲ Minor Impact - Yellow
  - 12 ▲ Moderate Impact - Orange
  - 13 ▲ Major Impact - Red

# What is the framework?

A framework, which will help facilitate good student consultation. It can be used by any department/person within the College, and the Students' Union, as a working tool, when wishing to consult with students on any change that may affect them. It recommends a minimum standard of consultation, which has been determined through extensive consultation with staff and students.



David Goldsmith

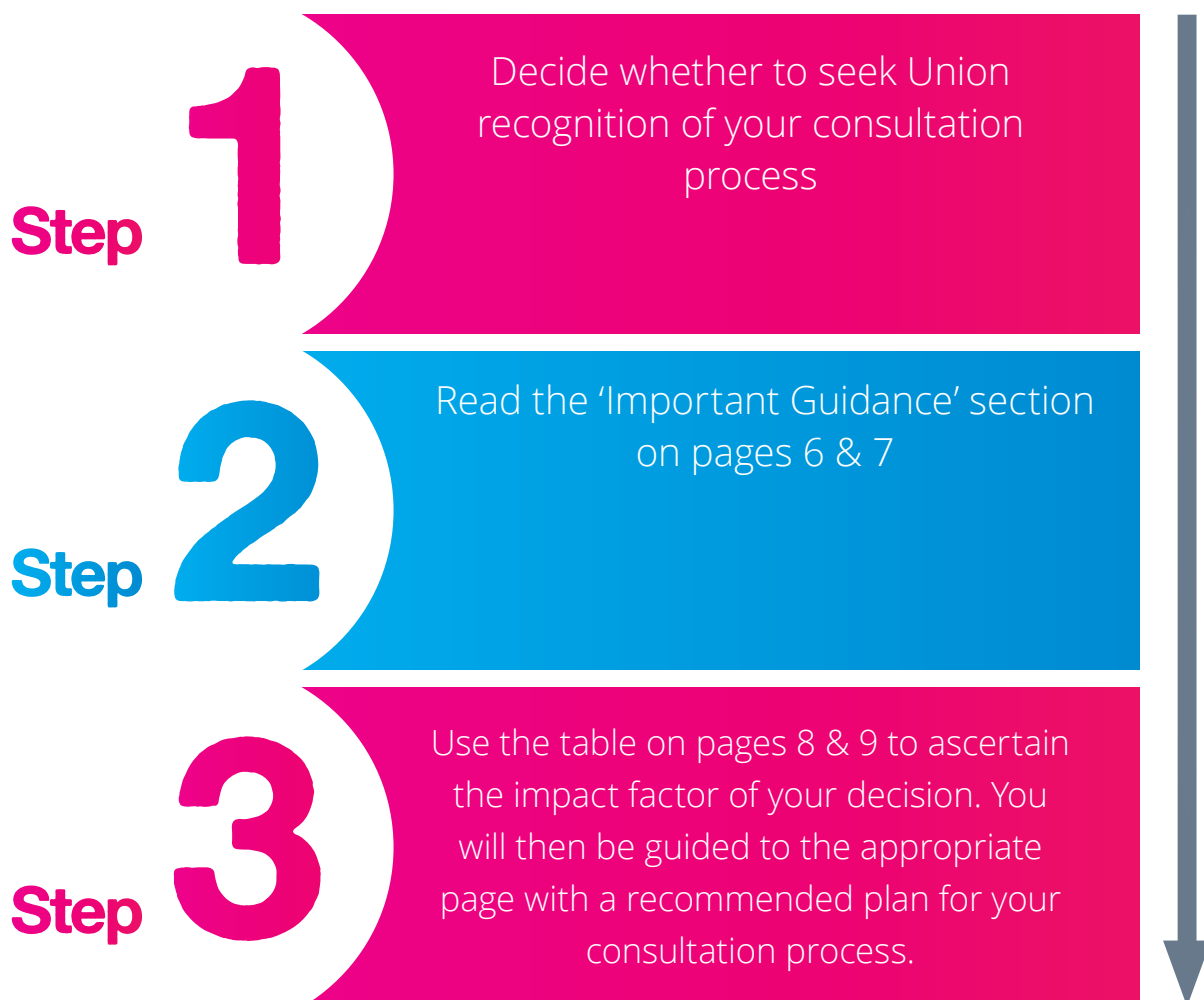
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An online version of this framework  
is available online at:

**[imperialcollegeunion.org/consultation](https://imperialcollegeunion.org/consultation)**



# How to use this framework



Any problems? The Union is here to help facilitate the consultation process. For example, we can help provide access to students, for consultation, for departments that may struggle with this.



# Achieving the Union Award for Great Consultation

For most decisions it is recommended that you use this framework, in tandem with student reps, as a guide to inform how you consult/communicate with students.

However, you may wish to achieve recognition of your consultation process from the Union. It is recommended that you only seek to achieve this recognition, at your discretion, for particularly large decisions. Any recognition or award will be given purely on the merit of the consultation process, with no reference to the decision itself or its outcomes.

Contact the Union President at [union.president@ic.ac.uk](mailto:union.president@ic.ac.uk) who will assign you a contact based on the context of the consultation.

Agree success criteria with the Union contact. These will be the methods recommended by the framework. Any methods which do not apply/ are inappropriate may be removed from the success criteria. Extra methods of consultation may be added, however only if agreed by both parties.

Complete the consultation and evidence completion of methods directly to your Union contact or via student reps you are working with.

Achieve Union recognition of great consultation if success criteria achieved and evidenced.

# Important Guidance

## Principles of good consultation

- Consult with all students who are affected by the change e.g. if a course is being changed, the incoming, as well as the current year group should be consulted. Think about knock-on effects; some students may be affected that you would not at first have considered. A conversation with student reps may help to highlight these, or they may come out in your consultation.
- Ensure that you are asking the right questions, which are not leading. It is useful to devise the questions with student reps.
- Keep the process of consultation fully transparent and communicate it to the students. When communicating that students were consulted on a decision, it is essential that you communicate what student opinion was and how it affected the decision.

## Communicating with Students

- Where possible, speak with students in person. This is the best form of communication, due to the rapport it builds.
- Find out from student reps what they believe are the best ways to communicate with the students, for this particular case. This could be by e-mail, social media, lecture shout-out from reps, etc.
- Students vary in how they access information. Use a few different methods to communicate your message. Ensure you communicate directly as well as through student reps.

## Working with Student Reps

### What exactly does the term 'Student Rep' refer to?

We refer to all elected student representatives as 'Student Reps'. These include, but are not limited to: Sabbatical Officers (i.e. the President and Deputy Presidents)/Constituent Unions (e.g. Graduates students' Union, Royal College of Science Students' Union etc.) Academic Reps (Year reps, Department reps, Academic Affairs officers, Academic and Welfare Officers, Course rep, Group rep, Programme rep)/ Club, Society & Project Officers and Committee members/ Liberation Officers/ Felix editor/ Halls of residence committees.

### Which reps should I work with?

If you are an academic department you will have an existing student rep structure that you know well and can work with. There may be occasions however when different reps will need to be utilised. For when this is the case/ if you are not an academic department, please refer to the links below for details of the student representatives which exist. If you are unsure as to who to work with or feel you would like another level of representation to work with but are not sure which, please contact the Union President for advice.

## How do I get in touch them?

Contact details for all current reps may be found here (including for Halls of Residence committees and Constituent Unions):

<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/a-to-z>

Contact details for all club, society or project (including department societies) committee members can be found here:

<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/activities/a-to-z>

Contact details for all Sabbatical officers may be found here:

<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/sabbatical-officers>

## Important points to bear in mind

### Situations of urgency

This framework recommends that departments consult proactively in order to avoid situations of urgency. However in urgent situations, which are unpredictable, it is recommended that you complete as many of the consultation methods recommended, to the best of your ability. Of course, in some situations, such as a lecturer calling in sick on the day of the lecture, it is not possible to consult. Should you wish to, it may still be possible to achieve Union recognition for your consultation process with a consultation process agreed in advance with the Union.

### Situations which involve sensitive information

If a situation arises which is not covered by this document, or that refers to sensitive information, we would appreciate it if you would contact the ICU President to discuss how best to handle it. It may be possible to work with the union to consult with students whilst keeping the information confidential

### Cases when it may not be judged appropriate to consult with students

We recognise that there may be cases when student consultation may not be judged appropriate and this document not used. In these cases it is recommended that your reasons for not consulting are made clear.

## What Impact will your decision have?

Using the guide on the bottom of the page and, considering the change you are looking to consult on, where on the scale do you think you are?

	Colour	Education Examples	Student Activities Examples
<b>Inform affected users (no consultation necessary)</b>			
<p><b>Inform affected users</b></p> <p>A day-to-day change in operational practice with no ongoing effect on the lives of students. A change which in no way should be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p> <p>See pages 10</p>	<p>One off time or room change for lecture or class</p>	<p>Room change for activity whilst providing an alternative room which is fit for purpose</p>
<b>Inform and consult with affected users</b>			
<p><b>Minor Impact</b></p> <p>A change which will affect the lives of students for a short period but which will have little ongoing impact once embedded. A change which may be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p><b>Yellow</b></p> <p>See pages 11</p>	<p>Changing advertised coursework deadline, Moving exam dates, Change in personal tutor/tutor group</p>	<p>Refurbishment of or storage area will return to original purpose after short period. Has short impact on student group(s)'s ability to function</p>
<p><b>Moderate Impact</b></p> <p>A change which has a time limited, but major, effect on the life of students. A change likely to be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p><b>Orange</b></p> <p>See pages 12</p>	<p>Change in range of course options/streams/modules, Changing PhD student's supervisors, Removing a course which won't affect current students, Significant change in support for professional development</p>	<p>Removal of equipment central to activity Change in facilities affect the core activities of the student group</p>
<p><b>Major Impact</b></p> <p>A change which has a long lasting major day-to-day effect on the life of students for the duration of their relationship with Imperial. A change likely to be very opinion influencing and potentially opinion forming when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p><b>Red</b></p> <p>See pages 13</p>	<p>Removing a department/unit/lab, Removing entire course which will affect current students, Changing the length of the teaching day, Change to the working day for PhD students</p>	<p>Major reduction in funds, services, opportunities that underpin the existence of any student group</p>

### Guide to the scale...

- Use the examples provided as a guideline to ascertain the appropriate impact factor.
- User(s): A generic term. It applies in the traditional sense (eg. of a library), but also to potential users, members of a cohort group, residents of a hall, members of a club, students within a certain demographic etc.
- When deciding on the appropriate impact factor it is useful to bear in mind the percentage or number of user(s) or potential user(s) affected. What may seem to be a low impact change may be interpreted by students as high impact, by virtue of the fact that it affects a large number of users.
- If in doubt between two impact levels, always go higher

	Welfare Examples	Facilities & Campuses Examples	Residence Examples	Union Examples	ICT Examples
club providing information for purpose	Change of contact details for the disability advisory service	Replacing furniture, Closure of a building over a weekend	Closing cooking/ washing facilities for professional cleaning for a short period	Updating e-activities	Planned system outage
of room which final port t-term t to	Relocating chaplaincy, Change in service operating hours	Refurbishment of a room regularly used by students, Removal or addition of a Careers event	Changing cleaning provision in the halls, Annual review of hall rents, Change in opening hours of ethos	Change to opening hours of a service or outlet	Alteration to e-mail mailbox quota/printer credit
ment, es that ctivity oup(s)	Change in the level of service provided by the Counselling service	Walkway redevelopment, Opening of a new catering outlet on campus	Temporary closing of a hall/wing for refurbishment	Redefining sabbatical officer roles, Changes to services offered	Change to software platform or service provision
n t tence oup(s)	Significantly altering the Wardening Service	Closure of a common room/social facility	Purchasing a new hall of residence/ Closing an old Hall of residence	Union space being relocated, Review of democracy of governance structures	Removal or introduction of a major ICT service for example a new e-learning platform

# Inform Affected Users

A day-to-day change in operational practice with no ongoing effect on the lives of students. A change which in no way should be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial. Normally little or no consultation with students is necessary.

## Recommended Timescale

Complete all agreed methods as soon as possible and normally not on the day of the change.

## Recommended Consultation Methods

Normally complete **all** of these methods

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Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply

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Engage student reps and discuss with them if appropriate

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Any problems? The Union is here to help. Email [union.president@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:union.president@imperial.ac.uk).

# Minor Impact

A change which will affect the lives of students for a short period but which will have little ongoing impact once embedded. A change which may be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial. An appropriate consultation process is needed.

## Recommended Timescale

Complete all agreed methods before decision is made. Normally begin consultation process one month or more in advance of decision.

## Recommended Consultation Methods

### Normally complete **all** of these methods

Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply

Work with student reps to devise appropriate questions to ask users

Work with student reps to gather student opinion

### Normally complete of these methods **if relevant**

Use data from SOLE (Student Online Evaluation)

Engage with students at a staff/student committee if one appears within the timeframe of the consultation

Engage with recent alumni (particularly useful for one-year masters courses)

### Normally complete **at least one** of these methods

Seek the opinion of the Union President or one of the Deputy Presidents

Conduct a structured call for ideas and opinions with the help of student reps

Conduct a survey designed and analysed in tandem with student reps. It is recommended however that you avoid conducting surveys, particularly those sent to students via e-mail, and instead feed into an existing survey in order to avoid students being overwhelmed by surveys. Reps may want to conduct a poll on facebook.

Put together and work with, in tandem with student reps, a representative focus group containing students.

Hold an informal meeting with students which has been advertised to all affected students.

### Next steps

Refine ideas after consultation and then re-seek opinion with a method(s) agreed with student reps. You may find that when reflecting on student feedback you realise that you had not chosen the appropriate impact factor. In this case it is recommended that you switch to the appropriate impact factor and complete any additional consultation methods recommended.

Close the feedback loop: communicate the results of the consultation and how it influenced the final decision to be taken, before making the decision. It is important that if a course of action is taken, that is contrary to student opinion, reasons for this being the case are communicated.

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# Moderate Impact

A change which has a time limited, but major effect on the life of students. A change likely to be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial. A moderately sized consultation process is necessary.

## Recommended Timescale

Complete all agreed methods before decision is made. Normally begin consultation process two months or more in advance of decision.

## Recommended Consultation Methods

### Normally complete **all** of these methods

Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply

Work with student reps to devise appropriate questions to ask users

Work with student reps to gather student opinion

Seek the opinion of the Union President or one of the Deputy Presidents

### Normally complete of these methods **if relevant**

Use data from SOLE (Student Online Evaluation)

Engage with students at a staff/student committee if one appears within the timeframe of the consultation

Engage with recent alumni (particularly useful for one-year masters courses)

### Normally complete **at least one** of these methods

Seek the opinion of the Union President or one of the Deputy Presidents

Conduct a structured call for ideas and opinions with the help of student reps

Conduct a survey designed and analysed in tandem with student reps. It is recommended however that you avoid conducting surveys, particularly those sent to students via e-mail, and instead feed into an existing survey in order to avoid students being overwhelmed by surveys. Reps may want to conduct a poll on facebook.

Put together and work with, in tandem with student reps, a representative focus group containing students.

Hold an informal meeting with students which has been advertised to all affected students.

## Next steps

Refine ideas after consultation and then re-seek opinion with a method(s) agreed with student reps. You may find that when reflecting on student feedback you realise that you had not chosen the appropriate impact factor. In this case it is recommended that you switch to the appropriate impact factor and complete any additional consultation methods recommended.

Close the feedback loop: communicate the results of the consultation and how it influenced the final decision to be taken, before making the decision. It is important that if a course of action is taken, that is contrary to student opinion, reasons for this being the case are communicated.

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# Major Impact

A change which has a long lasting major day-to-day effect on the life of students for the duration of their relationship with Imperial. A change likely to be very opinion influencing and potentially opinion forming when students reflect on their time at Imperial. A large scale consultation process is necessary.

## Recommended Timescale

Complete all agreed methods before decision is made. Normally begin consultation process four months or more in advance of decision.

## Recommended Consultation Methods

### Normally complete **all** of these methods

Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply

Work with student reps to devise appropriate questions to ask users

Work with student reps to gather student opinion

Seek the opinion of the Union President or one of the Deputy Presidents

Officially present and seek opinion at a relevant Union committee or Union Council

### Normally complete of these methods **if relevant**

Use data from SOLE (Student Online Evaluation)

Engage with students at a staff/student committee if one appears within the timeframe of the consultation

Engage with recent alumni (particularly useful for one-year masters courses)

### Normally complete **at least two** of these methods

Seek the opinion of the Union President or one of the Deputy Presidents

Conduct a structured call for ideas and opinions with the help of student reps

Conduct a survey designed and analysed in tandem with student reps. It is recommended however that you avoid conducting surveys, particularly those sent to students via e-mail, and instead feed into an existing survey in order to avoid students being overwhelmed by surveys. Reps may want to conduct a poll on facebook.

Put together and work with, in tandem with student reps, a representative focus group containing students.

Hold an informal meeting with students which has been advertised to all affected students.

### Next steps

Refine ideas after consultation and then re-see opinion with a method(s) agreed with student reps. You may find that when reflecting on student feedback you realise that you had not chosen the appropriate impact factor. In this case it is recommended that you switch to the appropriate impact factor and complete any additional consultation methods recommended.

Close the feedback loop: communicate the results of the consultation and how it influenced the final decision to be taken, before making the decision. It is important that if a course of action is taken, that is contrary to student opinion, reasons for this being the case are communicated.

Any problems? The Union is here to help. Email [union.president@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:union.president@imperial.ac.uk).

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