



Strategic Plan

2010-2016



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Pictures on the front cover - Views of campus and our students and graduates

Pictures on the back cover - Views of Bolton and our students

Top - Senate House: viewed with Barbara Hepworth's Two Forms in the foreground

Centre - Inside Senate House

Above - Recently refurbished teaching suites

Introduction



The University of Bolton faces the future with optimism. We have a history of providing higher education since 1966 and were formally designated as a university in 2005; our progress since then has been dramatic.

Student enrolments have grown from 8,000 to 13,000. Annual surpluses have been returned for three consecutive years. £20 million has been invested in our campus and student facilities. We operate in seven countries, employ 700 academic and professional staff and make a contribution of £50m annually to the economy of Bolton and the North West.

We are proud to offer educational opportunity and advancement to the people, businesses and public services in our community. Together we must:

- stimulate economic growth;
- expand opportunity;
- improve skills and knowledge;
- advance social and cultural cohesion;
- promote health and well-being and champion environmental sustainability.

We have an outstanding record in recruiting students from groups under-represented in higher education. We enable them to succeed at the highest levels, whatever their educational background and family circumstances.

We are well set to develop and thrive in a tough and challenging economic and social climate, because we are:

- adaptable and innovative, developing courses to address real world issues;
- responsive and agile, reacting quickly to changes in government policy, employer demand and student preference;
- committed to expanding opportunity and achieving positive transformation of individuals and organisations;
- dedicated to the view that every student matters and that we must do our very best for each one;

We shall achieve our ambitions and maintain our growth by:

- investing in our staff and facilities;
- understanding our markets and our clients and delivering an excellent service to them;
- forging strategic partnerships in both public and private sectors;
- satisfying the aspirations of the people of Bolton, the North West and beyond for higher level learning and relevant knowledge and skills;



Investing in our campus: (top) opening our Innovation Factory with Dragons' Den winner and i-Teddy inventor Imran Hakim (centre) HRH Prince Edward opening multi-million student facilities, including our Social Learning Zone and new campus in the UAE and (above) working in partnership with Bolton Council and NHS Bolton to create Bolton One, seen here as an artist's impression of the £31m health, leisure, teaching and research centre opening in 2012



Every student matters: the Social Learning Zone, in the heart of the campus, gives a relaxed open-plan working space for group study as well as comfy sofa chill-out areas for relaxing

- equipping our students for living and working in a fast-changing, globalised economy and society;
- bringing more people into higher education and raising the skills of the workforce.

We have assessed our core characteristics and strengths. We have taken account of the changing environment facing universities and considered how we will maintain our distinctive role within the sector. We have reviewed the opportunities and potential for growth available to us and the priorities we need to pursue if we are to develop and prosper.

This new Strategic Plan reflects our optimism and our realism – it is a true agenda for change.

Our core characteristics and strengths



Imagination, innovation, creativity: (top) Poet and broadcaster, Ian McMillan, works with University students as a Visiting Professor (top right) students explore the creative potential of materials in textile surface design and (above) Professor Carole Truman and colleagues win an award for their community research – conducted in the back of a taxi cab!

Our plans are shaped by the recognition that the University has a distinctive background and character. To be successful in a period of uncertainty and change we must work to and build on our strengths.

Our strengths are:

Accessibility and flexibility

We have a long-standing national reputation for widening access to Higher Education. This has been achieved through flexible programmes of study, well-matched to the needs and vocational aspirations of our students. The University will continue to provide opportunities for all who have the potential to succeed and benefit from the experience. We will continue to work closely with partners in the public and private sectors to develop a 'ladder' of educational opportunity with multiple entry and exit points, flexible delivery, and alternative modes of attendance, study patterns and locations.

Imagination, innovation, creativity and enterprise

We believe that our success as a University is due to two principal factors: our ability to develop innovative research and study programmes and the capacity of our staff and students to think imaginatively and creatively, approaching challenges and opportunities with an entrepreneurial attitude. We will continue to be open and responsive, encouraging and supporting new ideas and approaches.



Student-centred (top left) Industry experience is key for film production students (top right) Students at Bolton celebrate at the annual International Evening.

Employable graduates: (above) NHS Bolton's Pearl Burgess puts her promotion success down to the skills she learned during her studies at Bolton

Internationalism

We have a long tradition of welcoming overseas students and researchers to Bolton. In recent years we have developed international partnerships for the delivery of our programmes overseas. Our teaching and research is enriched by this international experience, promoting the concept of global citizenship with our staff and students. International perspectives are incorporated into our curriculum so that students can place their studies in a global context while working alongside students from different countries and cultures.

Quality and excellence

We have received consistent confirmation of the quality of our work through external assessments such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the Quality Assurance Agency's Institutional Audit process, Investors in People, Matrix and Customer Service Excellence awards. We will continuously enhance our teaching, research, scholarship and student support, and work with staff, students, partners and other stakeholders to achieve excellence in all that we do.

Student-centred

As a relatively small University we enjoy the benefits of small class sizes and the opportunity to provide personal attention and support for our students. We are recognised for our friendly and caring environment, which enables students from very varied educational backgrounds and family circumstances to achieve success. We aim to produce employable graduates who are independent learners with well-developed higher level skills and a capacity to engage in lifelong learning.

Strategic overview



Environmental sustainability: (top) the University main campus where an innovative cooling system is being installed in computer and server rooms, using 85-90% less energy than traditional air-con and cutting carbon emissions by a similar amount

Students as customers: (above) the Loft is just one new Student Union facility built by the University

Strategic Context

This Strategic Plan charts the University's direction in the context of a turbulent and challenging external climate. The major factors affecting the University sector as we plan for the next five years are:

- an increased empowerment of students as 'customers' who expect more transparency of information and evidence of 'value for money' from their higher education studies;
- the need to prepare and enable our students and our staff to operate effectively in a globalised economy and society;
- economic recession and the implications of public expenditure cuts for higher education and the balance to be set between grant and tuition fee funding;
- the growth of competition for HE students within a 'borderless' globalised higher education system and the emergence of private as well as public suppliers of higher education services;
- demographic change and its impact on higher education demand;
- the opportunities presented by the growth of new industries, new economic sectors and environmental change for the development of new careers and the education and training of new professionals;
- the imperative of taking a lead in promoting environmental sustainability and social responsibility in the way we conduct our operations and the content of our curriculum;
- public concern about the quality and standards of higher education and the emphasis on 'output' measures of retention, achievement and employability;



- increasing differentiation of the HE system by mission, reputation, funding levels, student background and the balance between teaching and research activity;
- technological change and its impact on learning, communications and business processes;
- the challenge of meeting national targets for increasing higher level skills and improving employability;
- the requirement to provide more flexible modes of higher education – work-based, remote delivery, accelerated degrees – in response to changes signalled in government higher education policy;
- 14-19 curriculum change, the balance to be struck between 'academic' and 'practical' education, and the emergence of new Level 3 qualifications;
- the challenge of broadening access to the professions in terms of the social class, gender and ethnic background of entrants as identified in the Milburn Report;
- the diversity of the student body and the growth of part-time, flexible, lifelong learning;
- the pressure on universities to balance their traditional commitment to knowledge creation and dissemination for its own sake with the need to demonstrate the social and economic relevance of their teaching and research.

Student success: (top left) Automobile Engineering graduate and entrepreneur, Tony Keating, with his latest Keating Supercar at Manchester Science Museum (top right) students in the state-of-the-art Senate House learning environment and (centre, above) Broadening access: Construction Management graduate Garry Ion attributes his degree success to the support he received from our Student Services when he was diagnosed with dyslexia. For the past 15 years he has worked in Sudan and Uganda, empowering communities to rebuild their own lives, including their own schools and hospitals

In this challenging context, the University must resolutely pursue its mission and create for itself a distinctive role within the University system.

Our mission



Our mission is to unlock the potential within individuals and organisations through the excellence and responsiveness of our teaching, research and student support.

We aim to fulfil our mission by:

- ensuring that every student matters and is treated as an individual;
- enhancing the academic and support services we are able to offer students;
- continuously improving the learning environment and applying new technology to the delivery of learning and student support services;
- reaching out to diverse communities and hard to reach groups in order to provide a genuinely inclusive and accessible university which guarantees broader and fairer access;
- working in partnership with employers and business sectors to provide the higher skills needed by the economy and society;
- offering our graduates continuous and flexible lifelong learning to support their career progression, and equipping them to succeed;
- ensuring our research and innovation activities address critical economic, environmental, technological, social and cultural issues;
- internationalising our curriculum and offering our students the opportunity of international study or work-related placement as part of their programmes through our network of overseas partnerships;
- being central to the educational, economic and cultural needs of Bolton and its neighbouring towns, and contributing to its growth and development as a core location within the Greater Manchester area;
- developing our staff as academics, teachers and professional service providers who put students and clients first and who have a 'can do, will do' attitude to service and satisfaction;
- never losing sight of the critical and challenging role of the university through its teaching, research and cultural activities, creating new knowledge and developing active and engaged public citizens.



Working in partnership: (top) our Sports and Spinal Injuries Clinic offers treatment to the whole community as it gives students hands-on real world experience. Accessible University: (above) all faiths come together and celebrate the opening of our Chaplaincy

Strategic objectives



Working in partnership: the University works closely with the BBC and the NHS in developing and delivering profession-focused courses and giving students work-related experience

We aim to fulfil our mission by organising our development around the achievement of five key objectives.

To develop our strength as a flexible and responsive university

- by providing varied models of delivering higher education beyond the standard three year full-time undergraduate degree;
- by building upon our traditional strength as a provider of part-time, work-based, vocational and professional higher education;
- by meeting the needs of employers and people in work by delivering our courses in a variety of ways, including face-to-face and online.

To offer higher education opportunities to as diverse a community as possible

- by building upon our strong reputation for widening participation;
- by radically enhancing the ways in which we reach out to students both full-time and part-time and with academic and practical qualifications;
- by strengthening the support we give them to progress and achieve.

To build on our core academic strengths in Creative Industries and Technologies (including Educational Technology), Built Environment, Engineering and Materials, Health and Wellbeing, and Business and Management

- by investment in high quality teaching and applicable research which support new jobs, new industries and new professions.

To become a model of public engagement in the development of the economy and society of Bolton and the North West

- by forging strategic partnerships with local government, other educational and cultural organisations, the NHS and private companies, so that we make a positive contribution to improving people's lives and the prosperity of our region.

To be a leading supplier of international professional higher education

- by offering our model of blended and supported Lifelong Professional Learning, to emerging professionals in the Middle East, Asia and parts of Africa, in conjunction with selected international partners.

Key targets



Broadening access: the University is part of a groundbreaking programme working to overturn the statistic that 75% of looked after children and care leavers finish school with no qualifications and less than one in 100 goes to University. (top) Pictured is Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof Peter Marsh, presenting certificates to 'graduates' from a self-development programme for Manchester, Wigan, Trafford and Rochdale looked after children

Social responsibility: (above) the University hosts a lecture by UN Peace Ambassador, Kim Phuc, who told students and staff her amazing life story. Kim is the nine-year-old girl captured in the Pulitzer prize-winning photo of a young girl fleeing a napalm attack on her Vietnam village in 1972

By 2016 we will have achieved the following targets:

- produced surpluses on our operations to ensure a sustainable future for the University;
- established flagship subjects which are attractive and competitive in the marketplace through a rigorous review and focusing of our academic portfolio;
- reached a total population of some 20,000 students taught both on and off campus;
- implemented a 'Bolton Commitment' which requires us to provide public information about every course of study we offer. Data will include learning and study support hours, enrichment activities and other opportunities, retention, achievement and employability rates;
- consolidated our partnerships with one or more local further education colleges, through federation or merger;
- established three international campuses;
- established the University as the heart of a vibrant Bolton Innovation Zone with a Health and Wellbeing Centre, a Media and Creative Technologies Centre and a Business and Innovation Centre as part of our expanded campus;
- developed our world-leading and internationally excellent research in Advanced Materials, the Built Environment, Educational Technology and Social Policy;
- be able to offer all our programmes through blended learning so that they can be delivered both on and off-campus, in the workplace, and overseas;
- created a rich range of academic and professional experience and personal development for our students through internships, exchanges, study and work abroad, volunteering, social, cultural and sporting activities;
- embedded corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability in all our activities.

Strategic themes



Employability skills: (top) a developing, unique partnership with Bolton's Octagon Theatre gives students real-world professional skills as part of their studies

Professional Development: (above) within Bolton One the University's facilities will develop research and teaching opportunities within primary care that are unique within the UK university sector

Key performance targets

- Applications and enrolments
- Student entry qualifications
- Professional body accreditations

Curriculum and Programme Change

Aim

To provide programmes which meet the local, regional, national and international needs of students and their employers.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- review our programmes to ensure that they are attractive, relevant and well-matched to the needs of students and their employers. They will have flexible methods of delivery and locations and will consistently achieve high rates of student satisfaction, retention and career outcomes;
- continue to refresh our course portfolio, anticipating demand and building on our strengths in delivering vocational and professionally accredited provision, particularly in our flagship subjects: Creative Industries and Technologies (including Educational Technology), Built Environment, Engineering and Materials, Health and Wellbeing, and Business and Management;
- work closely with selected partners in the UK and overseas to develop new access and progression routes into higher education, recognising a wider range of certificated and experiential learning as qualifications for entry;
- increase the number and range of programmes, including postgraduate and professional development degrees, and full cost courses;
- ensure that concepts of sustainability and global citizenship are incorporated into the curriculum;
- incorporate into all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes employability skills and career preparation, along with career management and development for students in employment;
- enhance the opportunities for students to undertake work experience or internships, to study or work overseas, or work on live briefs as an integral part of their course;
- continue to seek professional accreditation for our courses, and strengthen our relationship with professional bodies.



Learning and teaching: (top) University staff working with students studying in Special Effects and the Built Environment (above)

Key performance targets

- Student satisfaction
- Academic staff qualifications
- HEA professional recognition

Learning and Teaching Professionalism

Aim

To improve the academic and professional knowledge, skills and qualifications of staff.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- increase the percentage of academic staff with doctoral level qualifications;
- increase the capacity of university staff to undertake research supervision by ensuring access to appropriate training and experience;
- ensure that all new academic staff without a teaching qualification complete our HEA accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education;
- launch an Academic Practice and Professional Development CPD scheme for all staff supporting learning and teaching;
- increase the percentage of staff using e-learning to support students;
- develop systems to record and manage the research, scholarship, knowledge transfer and professional engagement of staff;
- implement a revised peer review process to enhance academic practice;
- raise the profile and status of teaching, learner support and employer engagement by continuing our Learning and Teaching Fellowship scheme and by establishing a Senior Teaching Fellow grade;
- increase the number of staff supporting learning who achieve professional recognition by the Higher Education Academy;
- ensure the active engagement of students in the University's quality enhancement processes, and develop a culture of responsiveness to student feedback;
- ensure that all staff are equipped to respond effectively to learners from a wide range of social, cultural, ethnic and international backgrounds and have the required experience and knowledge to include an international dimension to their teaching.



Professional students: (top) Enterprise skills are learned on real-life briefs, here developing a turnstile mechanism for a security company and (above) developing innovative disability products with the NHS

Key performance targets

- Continuation and success rates
- Qualifications awarded
- Employment indicators

The Professional and Successful Student

Aim

To ensure that students are supported to complete their programmes and achieve their career aspirations.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- review our admissions arrangements to ensure that students are only admitted to programmes which are appropriate to their qualifications and experience and are well-matched to their career aspirations;
- improve the preparation of new students for the challenges of higher education by offering pre-enrolment sessions and implementing a transition to Higher Education programme;
- revitalise our arrangements for personal tutoring to ensure that all students have access to high-quality proactive academic and pastoral advice and guidance;
- embed information literacy in all programmes;
- review the learning, teaching and assessment strategies of all programmes to ensure that students are enabled to become independent, lifelong learners; that the skills required for graduate level employment are developed; and that assessment enhances learning and supports student retention;
- provide improved access to careers information, advice and guidance and incorporate career preparation and professional development in all degree programmes;
- increase the flexibility of delivery methods making best use of appropriate technologies to support learning independent of time/place to meet the needs of learners;
- provide a range of opportunities both within and outside the curriculum for students to enhance their knowledge, skills and experience in preparation for employment in the UK or overseas;
- implement the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) to record in greater detail the achievements and experiences of students.



World-leading research: (top) crash-expert Professor Clive Chirwa working on a new seatbelt especially designed for pregnancy

Offering facilities and expertise: (above) our masters students took pictures for Leap, a collaborative charity project with the award-winning Bolton Lads and Girls Club

Key performance targets

- Research student enrolments
- Research income
- CPD activity
- Attendance at public events hosted by the University
- Student volunteering

Research, Professional Practice and Public Engagement

Aim

To build the University's reputation for research, innovation, enterprise and public engagement.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- develop a new research and knowledge transfer strategy which articulates our priorities for investment and indicators of success;
- invest strategically in our research infrastructure, including professorial appointments, supervisory capacity and research studentships;
- increase the proportion of the University's income earned from research and knowledge transfer activities;
- develop the international research reputation of our flagship subjects;
- establish a Research and Graduate School to provide a focus for the long-term development of postgraduate and research programmes and projects;
- increase the proportion of staff actively engaged in research, advanced scholarship and other knowledge transfer activities by removing barriers and providing focused support;
- host a public programme of lectures and other events, both in the UK and overseas, incorporating external and university academic and professional speakers to engage staff, students, alumni, employers, the professions and the local community in the academic life of the University;
- develop the capacity of the Business Development and Support Unit to provide a one-stop shop for employers seeking applied research, product design and development, consultancy and business support services;
- play a leading role in the cultural, creative and social life of our local community, by offering our facilities and expertise, sponsoring events, and involving staff and students in community activities;
- build on the success of the Health and Wellbeing Centre (Bolton One) to develop other strategic partnerships with education, business, public sector and cultural organisations.



Programmes across borders: Students studying in China take photographs across into North Korea

Key performance targets

- International student enrolments
- Staff and student mobility
- International student satisfaction
- International hub campuses
- International research agreements

The International University

Aim

To develop an international dimension to all core activities within the University.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- increase by five per cent each year; the number of international students studying at the University in the UK;
- double the number of students studying with the University in overseas centres;
- develop three dedicated hubs of activity for teaching and research in internationally strategic locations;
- exploit the University's expertise in learning technologies to facilitate the accessibility and transferability of the University's programmes across borders;
- establish new strategic partnerships for the delivery of overseas programmes in a number of new international locations;
- develop the range of opportunities for staff and students to study, work or volunteer overseas;
- review all our programmes to ensure they incorporate an international perspective and the concept of global citizenship;
- increase the number and range of collaborative agreements with international organisations for the development of joint research and scholarly activity.



Business Processes and Internal Culture

Aim

To develop professional, robust and effective services and systems to support staff and students.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- develop our on-line services to meet the needs, expectations and preferences of our students, staff and partners;
- ensure that our staff have access to professional development opportunities to enable them to enhance the services provided to other staff, students and other stakeholders;
- renew and extend the external accreditation and recognition of the quality of our services, e.g. Investors in People, Matrix, Customer Service Excellence;
- review our approach to the management of projects and third stream activity, to ensure that they deliver the intended benefits, on time and to budget;
- implement a system of regular professional service review, incorporating external expertise, to ensure that our professional service units are operating effectively and efficiently, providing value for money, and working towards sector best practice, and are meeting the needs of academic departments;
- ensure access to reliable and timely management information to enable managers to make evidence-based decisions;
- develop a customer service approach which puts our students, partners and clients first;
- develop a single equality scheme and reinvigorate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and providing an environment of mutual respect and tolerance in which staff and students can achieve their full potential;
- create a self-critical community which seeks to learn from others and is committed to continuous improvement.



Developing staff and students: the University holds awards for its quality of service and commitment to its student customers

Key performance targets

- Staff satisfaction surveys
- Staff training
- Staff and student profile
- Student success rates
- External recognition/accreditation



Institutional Sustainability

Aim

To ensure the long term security and sustainability of the University as an independent higher education institution.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- seek to achieve planned annual operating surpluses of three per cent;
- strengthen our balance sheet and increase our discretionary reserves to ensure a more secure financial position;
- increase our fundraising activity to enable us to raise £500k a year by 2016;
- reduce our reliance on funding council recurrent grants by increasing the return on research, enterprise and consultancy and full cost course provision;
- launch the new Bolton One in partnership with Bolton Council and NHS Bolton to provide a teaching and research facility for health, sport and leisure;
- develop a new estates strategy to ensure that our campus continues to provide an appropriate environment for research, teaching, learning and employer engagement activities;
- invest in our information and communication technology infrastructure and expertise to enable the University to deliver flexible learning and student support through distributed means;
- implement an environmental and sustainable development strategy which will promote the concept of sustainable development in all University activities, including research, teaching and administration; and will contribute to a managed reduction in our carbon emissions.



Developing fundraising: the Marriott Trust has funded research, including (top) social history conducted by Dr Peter Swain, (centre) documentary photography based on Worktown and (above) a social cohesion project looking at Bolton's Asian Community

Key performance targets

- Financial indicators, including operating surplus, % staff costs
- External income
- Carbon emissions
- Amount raised through fundraising
- Estate

Priority initiatives 2010-13



2010-11

Undertake an Academic Review to shape future subject and programme mix

Identify flagship subjects in each School and agree a five-year development strategy

Ensure every academic area has an articulated suite of programmes from HE Level 4 to 7

Full implementation of the University's personal tutoring policy

Specification of core curriculum for all programmes to incorporate information literacy, environmental sustainability, international perspectives, employability/career preparation, work based learning

Publish the Bolton Commitment for students specifying study hours, enrichment activity and other learning opportunities (for 2012 entry Prospectus)

Establish a Talent Development Centre to support literacy, numeracy and study skills

Establish Retention Monitoring group to focus on School/Programme retention and completion patterns

School careers tutor role to be established

Launch the Bolton Learning Environment

Deliver School-based module for all academic staff involved in postgraduate dissertation and doctoral supervision

Undertake major review of the part-time student experience

Deliver development programme for senior managers to support delivery of the Strategic Plan

Develop a Single Equality Scheme

Approve new Estates Strategy

Launch Research and Graduate School

Develop new on-line programmes in Business and Computing for overseas markets



Graduate success: (top) Darren Armstrong turned his life around from a past of homelessness, drugs and crime to achieve a Sports Development degree (centre) Phil Crompton used his Health Studies degree to change careers – from paramedic to a university Head of Paramedic Science (above) our first Special Effects graduates, fresh from a fact-finding trip to LA



2011-12

Open the Bolton One (Bolton Health and Wellbeing Centre)

Establish a local integrated model of progression from 14-19 qualifications into HE, including vocational routes

Establish second overseas campus

Introduce pre- enrolment summer schools for new full time undergraduates

Establish a peer mentor network for all first year full-time students

Establish a Senior Teaching Fellow grade

Develop financial aid packages to support student placements overseas

Academic placement officer role established in each School

Establish the ASPIRE shop on campus

Full implementation of University CRM system to support employer engagement

Establish central database to record and manage research, scholarship and professional engagement of staff

Launch accredited Academic Practice and Professional Development CPD Scheme

Implement revised peer review of teaching process

Implement system of professional service reviews

Implement revised resource allocation model



2012-13

Establish an in-house journal to showcase research and scholarly output

Implement key findings of Co-educate project to streamline academic business processes

Secure one strategic employer partnership in each School for workforce development

Develop plans for a third overseas campus

Develop plans and secure funding for a University Media and Creative Technologies Centre and a Business and Innovation Centre

Provide on-line learning materials for all courses via the Bolton Learning Environment



Graduate success: (top) Sound Engineering and Design graduate Nicola Walters, working as a sound technician in Sussex (centre) employer-sponsored John Barker who studied Mechanical Engineering part-time and (above) Danielle Edge who didn't let giving birth to the lovely Evie interrupt her final year in Fashion Product Development



Campus people, places and partnerships: (top, from left) Chancellor of the University, Baroness Morris of Bolton OBE DL; Vice Chancellor, Dr George Holmes and graduating students at the front of the University's Bolton campus Senate House, (centre) students studying Product Design, (below, from left) our branch campus in Ras al Khaimah in UAE and a student studying in Bolton





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