ADMINISTRATIVE, EDUCATIONAL, AND STUDENT SUPPORT (AES) UNIT REVIEW GUIDE

Borough of Manhattan Community College makes a distinction between assessment and evaluation. Assessment is about continuous improvement and is reflected in the assessment of student learning (SLOs) or Support Outcomes (SOs) while evaluation is represented through the AES unit review process. The Unit Review process is a comprehensive review of activities for the past several years, but the impetus for planning and most impactful data utilized during the process comes from the annual assessments. Assessment and evaluation are conducted as foundational elements of the College’s institutional effectiveness system and, accordingly, assessments and evaluations emanating from AES units are as important to improving the environment for teaching and learning as those conducted in the academic programs. Additional information including the framework for institutional effectiveness, BMCC’s assessment philosophies, electronic resources, and other helpful information is available on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics homepage (https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/iresearch/).

ASSESSMENT, UNIT REVIEW, AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

While assessment is widely understood as important and necessary for improving student learning and the environment for student learning, it is one piece of a larger effort. The same holds true for unit review, which utilizes the information from the assessments to assist with evaluation of mission and goal achievement as well as future planning. Both of these activities are part of BMCC’s institutional effectiveness system – a system which allows for documentation of progress toward achievement of the College’s mission as well as CUNY’s various university and sector goals. As a foundational element of the comprehensive institutional effectiveness system, assessment and evaluation, along with planning and resource allocation, provides BMCC with the information necessary to ensure improvement to the teaching and learning environment.

Revised September 26, 2017
ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS AND AES UNIT REVIEW

As noted in the BMCC Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan, the College’s evaluation cycle is five years. Between the five year periods in which identified AES units undergo a yearlong review, four annual assessments of SLOs and SOs will occur. It should be noted that every outcome must be assessed at least once during this time frame so that the unit can evaluate how effectively it has met its goals. This evaluation will also be necessary for determining how to plan for future assessments.

The unit review provides an opportunity for units to stop and determine the meaning of the various assessments, to gauge progress, examine philosophies and visions, and establish a plan of action for success in the future. Rather than engaging in assessments, AES units meet internally with staff in the unit, collaborate with colleagues whom they work with regularly, and receive input from external parties regarding their effectiveness and current direction. A template, which is housed in the College’s assessment management system (AMS), PlanningPoint, is provided to help guide the process (see Appendix A). Additionally, staff from IEA are available and will help facilitate the SWOT, assist with logistics, and will attend internal committee meetings to provide guidance.
AES UNIT REVIEW at BMCC

The AES Unit Review allows units to take approximately 18 months to examine how effectively they have been meeting goals and making progress towards achieving their unit mission. In addition to reviewing results and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the SLO and SO assessments, the process allows for and encourages substantial discussions with unit staff, colleagues, and external evaluators about the past, present, and future of the unit. While highly systematic and incremental in nature, the unit review process at BMCC is guided by flexibility and the ability to contextualize and customize. Units will have different goals and objectives for their review and this is taken into account both within the BMCC AES Unit Review Template and the support provided by IEA. The template includes a section that allows for the units to identify important information not required and IEA staff will work with the unit throughout the process to ensure that all ideas are supported. Some potential goals of the review may include:

- To determine the extent to which SLO’s and SO’s are met;
- To determine if the existing scope of work is appropriate;
- To establish benchmarks and gather data designed to evaluate unit direction;
- To better understand how to more effectively collaborate across units;
- To measure successes against external benchmarks and best practices; and
- To determine where opportunities for greater success lie and establish plans to realize the opportunities.

These are among the many reasons to engage in an AES Unit Review and the unit should consider, during the planning stage, what the objectives of the review are. IEA will work with the unit to accomplish these objectives.

It is also important to note that there are three phases to the unit review process. While addressed in depth in the timeline, the phases are:

- Planning (semester and summer before the review begins) – the phase that lays the groundwork for the review. This includes gathering 5-7 years of data (why not just 5), assessments, reports, and other information that can assist with the evaluation of whether goals have been achieved. Additionally, the unit should consider internal committee members and external evaluators. There is no writing during this phase.

- Internal Development (fall and early spring) – the phase in which writing of the review begins. The unit starts completing the unit review template; assembles the internal committee; participates in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis; and completes all sections of the template prior to the external review section. This phase will initiate the development of internal recommendations for the unit.

- External Development/Completion (mid-late spring and summer) – the phase in which external evaluators provide guidance to the unit and the process is completed. The external evaluators will review the documentation, participate in a site visit, provide an oral report, and deliver a set of recommendations. The unit will then combine the internal and external recommendations, set up a four-year assessment and strategic activities plan, and complete the process.
**The Internal Committee**

The AES Unit Review internal committee should consist of no more than 12 members and should include not only staff from within the unit, but also colleagues who work with the unit on a regular basis. It is important to consider the breadth of daily activities to ensure representation from all units that have regular interaction with the unit. AES units should consider representation on the committee through the lens of anticipated review objectives. In other words, consider what you want the unit review to accomplish and include members who will be helpful in achieving the objectives. During the planning phase, the unit should develop a committee charge that can be shared with potential committee members.

While the level of involvement from the internal committee will vary in accordance with the desired objectives (typically a committee member’s involvement requires a 20-30 hour commitment during the academic year), there are three major functions for the committee:

- Participate in the unit SWOT;
- Review/contribute to the development of the unit review document; and
- Meet with the external reviewers.

**Committee Membership**

There is no standard number of committee members, however, it is suggested that the committee consists of either all or a representative number of managers, assistant managers, and staffers within the unit. Generally, this should be 4-5 members; additionally, the cabinet member responsible for the unit and a member from IEA will serve on the committee in an ex-officio capacity. In addition to these individuals, again, consideration should be given to establishing an inclusive and representative group of individuals from units or academic departments with which the unit undergoing review interacts with on a regular basis. Where appropriate, units may want to consider students, advisory board members, or other external members. For the purposes of expediency, it is suggested that units limit their internal committee to no more than 12 members (excluding ex-officio members).

To guide the unit review process, the cabinet member responsible for the unit will appoint a unit review chairperson. While not required, it is recommended that the individual responsible for the day-to-day activities of the area serve as the chair. This individual is responsible for:

- Serving as the unit review liaison to both IEA and the AES Assessment Committee;
- Establishing a membership list as well as a committee charge in collaboration with the appropriate cabinet member and IEA;
- Identifying and reaching out to external evaluators as well as site visit logistics; and
- Completing the template and final AES Unit Review report.
**THE EXTERNAL REVIEW**

Along with the SWOT, perhaps the most useful and enduring individual portion of the unit review is the external review. It is essential that the unit not depend solely on internal data, opinions, and recommendations, but rather compare internally-generated information against external benchmarks and practices. Without this comparison, it is impossible for the unit to effectively understand the appropriateness of the mission, goals, and outcomes, the effectiveness of the evaluation, or the relevance of recommendations. The unit must work to select two individuals with significant experience, knowledge, and understanding of their mission. Doing so not only ensures better information, but also increased validity of the review process. Upon selecting two individuals, the unit should submit their choices to the appropriate VP/Dean for approval.

In general, it is recommended that two individuals are chosen for the external review; however, units can select more if deemed appropriate. The following must be considered when selecting the external members:

- At least one member should be from a CUNY institution and at least one should be from a community college. One individual can meet both of these standards. In addition, one member should be from outside CUNY. Reviewers will be confirmed in consultation with IEA and the appropriate cabinet member.
- These individuals should be confirmed during the fall term of the unit review year to ensure participation.
- External evaluators are expected to not only review the template and provide recommendations, but also to spend time at BMCC during a site visit.

The unit must ensure that the external reviewers receive an electronic copy of the first six chapters of the report (chapters listed below as well as in Appendix A), plus any appendices, at least two weeks before the visit. During the visit, the reviewers will meet with the cabinet member(s) responsible for the area, staff from the unit, staff from IEA, the internal committee, and other groups as appropriate. Whenever possible, units should consider involving students and advisory board members during the visit. The unit review chair is responsible, in collaboration with the cabinet member and IEA, for handling all visit logistics. This process should be completed at least one month prior to the visit. After the visit, external evaluators will have two weeks to submit a 2-3 page report on findings and recommendations. Up to two evaluators will receive reimbursement for their travel as well as an honorarium for their participation.

**THE AES UNIT REVIEW TEMPLATE**

The report template, which is housed within PlanningPoint, is the mechanism for inputting responses to the questions posed. In addition, PlanningPoint is designed for the inclusion of all important documents such as meeting minutes, the SWOT report, and any additional information included as appendices. It is important to be thorough during the review, however, only pertinent information should be included. Typically, the narrative portion of the review should range between 20 and 30 pages.
Chapter 1: History

The history is an important section of the report because it sets the tone for the report and provides necessary context. While completing this chapter, the unit should consider what information is necessary for both internal and external reviewers to understand why the unit functions as it does today. While there are no requirements about the length of time to cover, units should identify any major technological, demographic, University, or College changes that have affected the unit.

Chapter 2: Unit Profile

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the unit. This summary will include information on the mission, goals, and outcomes, day-to-day functions, and structure and staffing. The goal of this section is to provide readers with a description of how the unit is staffed, whom it serves, the scope of activities, and a glimpse into the culture and climate that impacts operations.

Chapter 3: Identification of Internal Committee Members

This is a short, but important section that should be used for planning the committee structure. The unit is asked to identify which units are interacted with most frequently and to then consider membership from those units. The unit under review should be very intentional about membership and the request for rationale is designed to assist the process.

Chapter 4: SWOT

The internal committee is expected to participate in a SWOT session that will be facilitated by IEA. The purpose of the meeting is to gather unique and diverse perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats surrounding the unit. IEA not only facilitates the SWOT, but also prepares a final report. The unit is expected to review the report, respond to the questions, and include the document as an appendix. Review of the SWOT report will be important as the unit prioritizes future assessments.

Chapter 5: Planning and Assessment

In order to conduct a comprehensive, useful review, the unit requires data. Given that outcomes assessment is designed to regularly collect information on the effectiveness of goal attainment, it is the ideal data source for the AES Unit Review. The more years that a unit has to conduct systematic assessment, the easier it becomes to complete this section. In the meantime, however, IEA will work with the units during the planning phase to identify potential data sources from previous years and to connect them to current goals and outcomes. This information is essential when considering overall unit effectiveness.
Chapter 6: Additional Information

Given the heterogeneity of the AES units, it is impossible for one template to provide all the information necessary for a sound review for every unit. In response, units are provided the opportunity to thoroughly consider categories or topics that must be considered based on their impact on the unit. This can include topics such as culture, technology, political environment, and numerous others. When identified, IEA will work with the unit to determine the appropriate sub questions to flesh about appropriate data.

Chapter 7: External Evaluation

After receiving the final reports from the external evaluators, the unit will respond to the questions provided. In short, the unit should look at the observations, opinions, and recommendations in the report and consider if the existing report should be revised as well as which recommendations should be included regarding future activities. The reports should also be included within the appendices.

Chapter 8: Final Conclusion

Each chapter template ends with a summary section. The final conclusion is automatically populated by these summary sections. Additionally, the unit is asked to indicate which improvements are planned and to complete an assessment and strategic activities four-year unit plan to guide annual assessments and strategic activities evaluations between unit reviews. As indicated in the BMCC Institutional Effectiveness Plan, annual assessment of student learning and support outcomes and evaluation of strategic activities are the foundation of operational planning. It should be noted that the planning matrix requires the unit to consider alignment with the strategic plan for all proposed activities.

It is important for the writers of the report (at the discretion of the chair and the committee) to remember that the report is being written for planning purposes and will be seen by external reviewers. In consideration, writers should:

- Avoid the use of institution specific jargon or acronyms unless necessary and appropriately explained;
- Be completely accurate and not shy away from information that can be perceived negatively while also showing discretion (verbal conversations should occasionally remain verbal);
- Consider the full breadth, depth, and scope of the unit functions rather than honing in only on specific functions;
- Document alignment with institutional and unit mission and goals as well as the strategic plan where possible; and
- Increase the readability of the report through the use of action oriented language, graphics and tables where possible, and including only significantly important appendices.
AES UNIT REVIEW TIMELINE

February – May

IEA meets with the unit and the cabinet member responsible for the unit to take the unit through an orientation. During the orientation, the unit is presented with the unit review guidelines, template, and past unit reviews. The unit should come to the meeting with a chairperson selected and part of the meeting will be spent brainstorming in preparation for data collection.

May – July

In addition to an optional retreat, the unit works on compiling data and information in preparation for completion of the unit review. IEA works closely with the unit to determine if any new data or reports need to be generated for the review.

August – October

The unit begins completing the first three chapters of the unit review. These chapters must be completed prior to the end of October as they must be shared with the internal committee before the November meeting.

November

The internal committee conducts its first meeting, which includes the facilitation of a SWOT session by IEA. IEA analyzes the results and provides the report before the end of the month. Finally, the unit identifies the external evaluators and confirms in consultation with IEA and the appropriate cabinet member.

December

The unit completes chapter four of the unit review and begins work on chapters five and six. In addition, final arrangements are made for the external review, which will occur in the spring.

December – March

The unit completes chapters five and six, and works with the internal committee on revisions. The revisions should be completed at least one month before the visit, but must be completed at least two weeks before the visit.

March – May

The unit conducts the external evaluator site review. The evaluators submit their final reports within two weeks of their visit and the unit completes chapter seven of the report.

May – June

The unit completes chapter eight and finalizes the unit review document. The document will be reviewed by the AES Assessment Committee in the fall and results will be returned to the unit. In addition, the unit will present at the spring AES day.
INTRODUCTION

The unit review process at BMCC provides the College’s administrative, educational, and student support (AES) units with an opportunity to engage in a yearlong evaluation and make a self-judgement about its effectiveness. Effectiveness is operationalized as the degree to which the unit’s mission has been achieved and is determined through an analysis of how much progress has been made towards realizing the unit’s goals, which are proxy measure for effectiveness. Through yearly assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and support outcomes (SOs) as well as an examination of additional relevant reports, activities, and data points, the unit is positioned to analyze and discuss findings in support of developing a 5 year assessment planning framework.

While analysis of data is central to the review, effective planning also requires unit members to consider and determine contextual impacts on the unit. These include:

- Unit History
- Unit Profile
- Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

In addition to these elements, the BMCC AES Unit Review includes both an internal committee as well as external evaluation. The majority of this document reflects intentional, significant, and internal consideration of unit effectiveness and while this is both important and necessary, the AES unit review process is designed to offer a complete analysis. To support this goal, units are required to establish an internal committee comprised of between 5 and 10 individuals. Committee members should include individuals from units with significant and meaningful interaction, but who are not officially affiliated. External evaluators (at least 2, but no more than 3) should reflect individuals with significant experience and recognized expertise in fields related to the mission of the unit. Where possible, one individual should be from inside CUNY and one should come from outside CUNY. In addition, one of the members should be from a community college.

**Unit Name:**

**Unit Division:**

**Unit Director/Leader:**

**Unit Review Coordinator:**

Revised May, 2016
CHAPTER 1: HISTORY

Please provide pertinent information that will provide a comprehensive historical context to the report. Consider that numerous individuals outside of your unit will be reviewing this document and will likely be unaware of conditions that have impacted and possible altered the direction of the unit over time.

SUMMARY

Please summarize the major points from this chapter. This summary will both assist the reader and can be used within the report’s conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: UNIT PROFILE

This section asks the units to profile and discuss the operations of the unit. This will include provision of the mission, goals, and outcomes, a description of the unit functions and culture, a discussion of both staffing and structure, and other important factors. Please provide substantial, yet clear narrative so that readers gain a good sense of the unit, however, also include documentation where appropriate. It is important that the narrative reflect, where possible, an objective presentation of information. As part of the evidence, where possible, provide copies of unit meetings agendas and notes to document involvement from all individuals within the unit.

Unit Mission:

Unit Goals and Accompanying Outcomes

Affiliated Institutional/Strategic Goals

Affiliated Strategic Planning Outcomes

Affiliated Strategic Planning Objectives
UNIT FUNCTIONS
Provide a description of the major functions of your unit. Consider how these function align with BMCC’s institutional mission.

UNIT STRUCTURE AND STAFFING
Please identify the unit’s reporting structure and staffing within this section (include a unit organizational chart as an appendix). Note that it is very important that the unit include data to support assertions made within this section.

What strengths exist in regards to staffing (i.e. blend of new and seasoned staff, specialized skill sets, continuity, etc.)

What challenges exist in regards to staffing (i.e. likely retirements, lack of specialized skill sets, turnover, lack of success planning, etc.)?

What methods are undertaken to ensure effective communication within the unit?

Please complete the following chart (add rows as necessary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Primary Responsibilities</th>
<th>Additional Responsibilities</th>
<th>Responsibility/Job Descriptions Aligned (Y/N)</th>
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Identify any gaps between job responsibilities and job descriptions.

Please list the professional development activities, by staff member, over the last five years.

Identify any other areas of strength or concern regarding structure and staffing (i.e. lack of technology, communication, skill gaps, reporting structure, etc.)

**SUMMARY**

Please summarize the major points from this chapter. This summary will both assist the reader and can be used within the report’s conclusion.

**CHAPTER 3: IDENTIFICATION OF INTERNAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Your unit’s internal committee will act as a major resource during the AES unit review process. Their primary responsibilities include oversight of the process, review of the report, and participating in the site visit. Accordingly, you should seek a membership reflective of individuals with whom the unit works frequently and well and who have a general understanding of the unit’s functions. The unit should also seek to establish a committee that is diverse in its composition respective of both demographic factors and unit affiliation. The chair of the committee is the AES Unit Review Coordinator.

Please list the five units that your unit works with most frequently as well as the nature of the interactions

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Please complete the following table highlighting the final roster of the internal committee

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<th>Name (chair)</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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Please identify both the charge of the internal committee as well as the expectations (both should be shared at the initial meeting)

**CHAPTER 4: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT)**

A tactic commonly used in both strategic planning and self-studies within Colleges is the use of the SWOT analysis. This process involves both members of the unit as well as the internal committee and requires individuals to consider what is going well, could be better, needs improvement, and is potential problematic within the unit. This process will be facilitated by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics (OIEA) and will result in a formal report. This report should be included within your appendices.

*Please respond to the following questions after completing the SWOT and discussing the results with the internal committee*

**Strengths:**
What stood out the most with the results?

What are some ways that the strengths can be enhanced/better leveraged?

What are the unit’s proposed priorities as a result of the strengths analysis

**Weaknesses:**
What stood out the most with the results?

What are some ways that the weaknesses can be mediated/transformed?

What are the unit’s proposed priorities as a result of the weaknesses analysis?

**Opportunities:**
What stood out the most with the results?

What are some ways that the opportunities can be realized?

What are the unit’s proposed priorities as a result of the opportunities analysis?
**Threats:**

*What stood out the most with the results?*

*What are some ways that the threats can be eliminated?*

*What are the unit’s proposed priorities as a result of the threats analysis?*

**SUMMARY**

Please summarize the major points from this chapter. This summary will both assist the reader and can be used within the report’s conclusion.

**CHAPTER 5: PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT**

Assessment and planning are foundation elements of understanding unit effectiveness. This section allows the unit to consider the impact of assessment, formal or otherwise, on the success of the unit. It is important to brainstorm and detail any and all data points, documents, reporting processes, or activities that reflect movement towards the realization of goals, whether they were formally analyzed or not. By inventorying all available information, the unit can use the unit review process to formally analyze, with the assistance of OIEA, results and utilize data-influence decision making in its planning processes. When in doubt, include the information and work with the internal committee and OIEA.

*Please identify which outcomes have been assessed by the unit*

*For each outcome assessed, please provide a summary of both the results of the assessment as well as the plans that emerged from the assessments*

*Please identify changes that were implemented as a result of implementing the plans driven by yearly assessments*

*In addition to formal assessments, please provide a list of important activities and initiatives conducted over the past five years. Include what data was gathered, whether they were successful, and changes that have been implemented as a result. Also consider analyzing reports that have been developed to document progress.*

*Please include any additional information regarding planning and assessment. For example, if the unit has engaged in a strategic planning process, formal retreat, or external evaluation, please provide information on the process, results, and changes made.*
**SUMMARY**

Please summarize the major points from this chapter. This summary will both assist the reader and can be used within the report’s conclusion.

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**Chapter 6: Additional Information**

AES units represent an extremely and diverse set of units that impact student learning directly, the environment for student learning, and backbone College operations. Accordingly there is likely to be a significant number of questions, issues, and topics that are important to your unit, but which have not been addressed. This section allows the committee to review, discuss, and evaluate these issues.

Given the potentially broad range of topics (i.e. technology, culture, partnerships, etc.) that will be covered, this template will only provide a couple of guiding questions. Please respond to these questions for each unique topic.

**Topic:**

What is the impact on the Unit’s mission?

Which Unit Goal(s) and Outcome(s) are directly impacted by this topic?

What are some positive impacts on the unit?

What are some negative impacts on the unit?

What data is available to support the discussion?

What are the results of the analysis of the data?

What recommendations does the committee have?

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**SUMMARY**

Please summarize the major points from this chapter. This summary will both assist the reader and can be used within the report’s conclusion.
Chapter 7: External Evaluation

It is important for units to look outside of BMCC when evaluating the effectiveness of its operations. Not only is this a Middle States requirement, but it reflects commonly accepted good practices. While the College is only asking for each unit to secure two external reviews, there is certainly no limit.

Please identify the two external reviewers who will be examining this unit. Note, at least one should be from a community college or have worked in community colleges and one should be from a CUNY community or senior college. One individual can meet both requirements. You are not precluded from choosing individuals not currently within a higher education institution, but you must provide sound rationale for your choice. Include the name, affiliation, title, and rationale for the selections.

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<th>Name</th>
<th>College/Employer</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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Summary

Please summarize the major findings, observations, and recommendations from the reports. Also indicate how these align with the internal findings as well as the results of committee discussion about internal and external recommendations. This summary will be used within the report’s conclusion.

Include, within the appendices to this report, the final report from the external evaluators. In addition, provide the notes from this and all other formal committee discussions.

Section 8: Final Conclusion

With all of the information gathered from multiple sources, the internal committee is now prepared to engage in planning discussions. The first step in this process is to take all of the summaries written at the end of chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 and combine them into the final conclusion. Please do so below.
Planned Improvements

After examining the final conclusion in its entirety, the internal committee will move to discuss next steps. The internal committee should consider the pertinent information that emerged from each of the sections as well as the recommendations of the external evaluators. To help prioritize the planning process, however, the unit must also consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

List below all of the actions that, based upon the internal and external reviews, the unit wants to engage in over the next five years.

List below the top 3 most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Use the listing of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to prioritize your actions and to complete the following table.

4-year Operational Planning (assessments and strategic actions) Table

<table>
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<th>Year (1-4)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Anticipated Resources Required</th>
<th>Outcomes Assessment (Y/N)</th>
<th>Unit Goal</th>
<th>Strategic Plan Outcome</th>
<th>Strategic Objective</th>
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