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ADMISSIONS
PROCESS
REVIEW
**RESPONSE
FORM**

We hope to receive a high level of response to this consultation from all those who have a stake in the higher education admissions process. We want to understand as fully as possible those aspects of the proposals which you support and those which cause concern. Where there are perceived problems, we encourage you to put forward preferred solutions. All your responses will be carefully analysed and a summative report will be published in March 2012.

In order to assist with the analysis and evaluation of responses, we would be grateful if you would provide us with the information requested below. Please note that any information given will be held by us and will only be used for the purposes of consultation and research. You are not required to provide your name but we will treat your identity in confidence if you do give it to us.

Names	Mr Jon Beard Dr Patricia Fara Dr Geoff Parks Professor John Rallison
Job titles	Director of Undergraduate Recruitment Associate Secretary of the Senior Tutors' Committee Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Organisation	University of Cambridge

Are you replying as an individual or on behalf of your organisation?

On behalf of the organisation

Please indicate which of the following categories applies to you/your organisation?

Higher Education – University
Higher Education – College
Higher Education – Private provider
School
FE college
Applicant or potential applicant
Parent of an applicant or potential applicant
Government body
Non-Government body
HE sector body
Other (please state)

Please enter one of these categories below:

Higher Education – University

Application post-results: proposed system

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.1) A system of application post-results would deliver a fairer admissions process because the applicant would submit actual results and the reliance on predicted grades would be removed	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4 - See comment below.

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.2) Applying post-results will not necessarily have positive impacts on equality and diversity.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.3) Two choices is an adequate number for Apply 2, allowing applicants both an aspirational and a more realistic application.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.4) A system of application post-results may encourage a mechanistic approach to admissions with contextual and other data used less effectively.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.5) The lack of flexibility in the proposed post-results system may mean that HEIs are forced to reject candidates they might have accepted in the current system.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.6) Giving young applicants more time to make application decisions recognises how much they mature	
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over the final year at school or college.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4 - See comment below.

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.7)

A post-results system will not be agile enough to provide a better experience for all groups of students; those with A Levels, those with Scottish Highers and those with other academic or vocational qualifications.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

1 - See comment below.

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.8) Please specify any particular group of students whose needs would be less well met in a post-results system

Any students that have particularly complex financial or other support needs, for instance: students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties, mature and international students as well as those from lower socio-economic groups. The timetables in the proposed post-results system will make it very difficult for appropriate support for such students to be put in place before they start their courses.

See also our comment in response to question 26.5.4.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

(23.6.1) A system of applications post-results might deliver a fairer admissions process but this outcome would be heavily dependent on what the system and associated timescales are and the level of information, support and guidance students are likely to receive. A genuinely fair admissions process cannot be condensed into an unworkable timeframe and must allow both applicants and institutions sufficient time in which to make informed decisions.

Institutions would need a long lead-time in which to implement a post-results application system. Failure to implement a post-results system on a workable timescale will force institutions into taking a mechanistic approach to admissions; this would be less fair than the current system, and would fail to give adequate consideration to the aptitude, potential, commitment and background of applicants.

The removal of the reliance on predicted grades in a post-results system would only be beneficial if institutions use them currently. The availability of grades alone will not be sufficient for the University of Cambridge to differentiate between the very strongest applicants. The provision of Unified Mark Scheme (UMS) scores at the same time as the release of A Level grades would be essential. If this cannot be facilitated, we may be forced to introduce additional admissions tests.

(23.6.3) Two choices is an inadequate number for Apply 2. A reduction in choices goes against the best interest of applicants, especially those applying for genuinely competitive courses. It would not be fair for very strong applicants to be forced into Apply 3 (where places on highly sought after courses may already be limited or even non-existent) when they were only permitted to make 2 choices in Apply 2. In our view 4 choices would be a better base from which to start.

If more choices than currently allowed were permitted then, to help institutions in their management of numbers, consideration might be given to the re-introduction of a preference list in which applicants can rank their institution/course choices.

(23.6.5) The lack of flexibility in the proposed post-results system could mean that HEIs are forced to reject applicants they might have accepted in the current system. If highly selective institutions are no longer given sufficient time in which to conduct interviews or set tests then the ability to conduct a robust assessment of applicants on a gathered field basis will be lost. In our opinion operating a proper gathered field system is the fairest way in which to conduct the admissions process.

All applicants who are not actively supported and properly advised through this process are likely to be at a significant disadvantage. The proposed post-results scheme relies on applicants not making last minute decisions, but in reality many are likely to do so. Rushed and ill-informed decisions will benefit no one.

(23.6.6) We would be interested to see the findings of any national research that supports the assumption underlying this statement. It is not a question of maturity but of how well applicants are prepared for and supported through the process. Our experience shows that the vast majority of applicants to the University of Cambridge make responsible and well-informed decisions at an early stage of their final year at school or college.

(23.6.7) Applicants who receive their examination results before the release of the GCE A Level results will be at a significant advantage in the proposed post-results scheme. They will have more time to think and consider their options and will have the opportunity to submit applications through both Apply 1 and Apply 2. Institutions would be forced to handle applications from certain groups of applicants differently which builds unfairness and complexity into the proposed system.

Application post-results: widening participation

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 24.8.1)

A wider group of applicants would be encouraged to make more aspirational applications with the confidence of knowing they have achieved appropriate qualification results.

***1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree***

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4 - See comment below.

4- strongly disagree	
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(APR Consultation ref 24.8.2)
Applicants would be deterred from making aspirational applications by having to make decisions quickly and being restricted to two choices.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1
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(APR Consultation ref 24.8.3)
Applicants may not understand the importance of contextual data and would be deterred from applying for some courses if they have not achieved the grades.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 2 - See comment below.
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(APR Consultation ref 24.8.4)
Widening participation would be supported by more constructive and focussed advice and guidance.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1 - See comment below.
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(APR Consultation ref 24.8.5) How do you think a system of application post results could be managed to enable it to promote widening participation?

See comment below.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

(24.8.1) Much would depend on the precise details of the system introduced. If applicants are given only two choices then we believe they would be deterred from making aspirational applications. Even with the confidence of knowing they have achieved appropriate qualification results there is no guarantee they will be accepted for competitive courses at selective institutions and, understandably, many of these applicants may be risk averse. The very small numbers currently using the UCAS Adjustment Period indicates that applying post-results is unlikely to have much impact at all on applicant behaviour. A likely outcome of the proposals is that students will make assumptions about their suitability for entry and make rushed decisions about what sort of institution will suit them.

(24.8.3) The importance placed on contextual data will depend on the institution applied to. There is little clear evidence, thus far, that demonstrates the benefits, in terms either of correlations to academic performance at university or likelihood of making an application, of using contextual data in

the admissions process, therefore we cannot comment on whether applicants would be deterred from applying for some courses if they have not achieved the requisite grades. We are not aware of evidence that suggests that students take use of contextual data into their own considerations at all when applying to university.

(24.8.4) We strongly agree in general that more constructive and focussed advice and guidance would support applicants from widening participation backgrounds. However, we do not believe that widening participation could be supported through improved advice and guidance under the proposed system of applications post results.

(24.8.5) We have not, to date, seen a model for applications post-results (APR) which would do more to promote widening participation than the existing system. We are concerned that, unless suitable time is allowed for the submission of applications and for their assessment by HEIs, APR proposals could in practice be detrimental to the progression of under-represented groups to higher education. The key issues affecting such students, such as attainment, are unlikely to be addressed by a re-engineering of the process.

Application post-results: Efficiency improvements

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 25.18.1)

A post-results system is an efficient system as fewer applications require processing by HEIs.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4 - See comment below.

(APR Consultation ref 25.18.2)

A more efficient streamlined process would enable HEIs to make financial savings.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

3 - See comment below.

(APR Consultation ref 25.18.3)

A more streamlined process would make the process easier for applicants to navigate.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

3 - See comment below.

(APR Reference 25.18.4) What disadvantages in terms of process efficiency, if any, could be experienced by HEIs, applicants or advisers as a result of a post-results system?

See comment below.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

(25.18.1) This assumes that the post-results application system will allow fewer choices. We fundamentally disagree with this assumption. Also, we question whether “more efficient” necessarily means “more effective”.

(25.18.2) This process should not be driven purely by financial savings. A post-results application system may result in some savings over time, but this is unlikely to offset the additional costs that will inevitably be incurred when dealing with student support issues resulting from hasty institution/course choices and rushed admissions decisions.

The proposed system would have a significant impact on both academic and administrative staff involved in the admissions process. July and August are key months for research activities and conferences and our academics will find their time during this period compromised by a condensed and frenetic admissions process. Anything that has a negative impact on intensive research activity will be extremely problematic.

It is important to note that the proposed timescale is not ‘family friendly’ since July and August are popular times for holidays. This will impact on families with children going through the process, and on teachers and school/college staff. In HEIs, staff shortages during key periods in the admissions cycle will increase reliance on temporary employment services which are expensive and carry risk since admissions experts cannot be guaranteed on these terms.

(25.18.3) Without knowing what the process is it is difficult to say whether or not applicants will find it easier to navigate. Just because a system is streamlined it does not necessarily follow that it will be any easier or more intuitive to use.

(25.18.4) Admissions professionalism is likely to be diluted by a post-results application system. It will place even greater load on those involved in the process during the summer. This will be problematic.

It is not clear to us how several key administrative processes would be managed in a post-results application system. Processes such as Criminal Records Bureau checks, occupational health and disability assessments, Certificate of Acceptance to Study (CAS) generation and visa application support, allocation of accommodation, and processing of student finance and bursary paperwork will be extremely difficult to manage on a large scale within the proposed scheme. This constitutes a significant risk to UCAS institutions. The opportunity for students to attend pre-session courses at their HEI will also be curtailed.

Application post-results: International and part-time students

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.1) It is desirable for international applicants to apply through a centralised system and not direct to HEIs.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.2) It is desirable for part-time applicants to apply through a centralised system and not direct to HEIs.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: <i>No comment – the University of Cambridge does not offer part time undergraduate degrees.</i>

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.3) Access to improved data about international and part-time applications will be a benefit of being part of a central admissions service.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 2

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.4) The proposed new process has the capacity to offer greater flexibilities which will support international and part-time admissions.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4 - See comment below.

Please enter any further comments about this section below	
<p><i>(26.5.4) The proposed new process may offer greater flexibilities which will support international admissions; however, there is a strong possibility that it may also create significant difficulties.</i></p> <p><i>It is not the time of application but the timing of decision that is important for international students. In order to avoid losing students applying to HEIs in other countries which operate their admissions processes to a different timetable, UK HEIs would be compelled to make decisions on such applications outside the gathered field. This would fundamentally undermine the fairness of the admissions process and may well disadvantage UK students who are unable to submit applications until Apply 2.</i></p>	

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Application post-results: Examination, results and applications timetable
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To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.1) The changes to the examination timetable should not have a major impact on the accuracy of assessment; with appropriate changes to their systems, awarding bodies should be able to maintain accuracy and rigour in a shorter marking period.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: <i>4 - See comment below.</i>

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.2) The option of starting the HE term for first year students in late October is worthy of consideration.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: <i>Neither agree nor disagree.</i>

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.3) The option of starting the HE term for first year students in January is worthy of consideration.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: <i>4</i>

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.4) The resources available in schools and colleges will be sufficient to give students support to make applications and manage offers in the timescale proposed.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: <i>No comment.</i>

(APR Reference 28.7.5) What provisions could be made within the educational and qualification structures in Scotland to make a UK system of application post-results workable for Scottish students?	
<i>No comment.</i>	

(APR Reference 28.7.6) What steps could be taken to secure parity for Northern Irish applicants whose school term currently ends at the end of June?

No comment, although please note that it is not just applicants from Northern Ireland who finish their final year of secondary schooling at the end of June.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

(28.7.1) Discussion with awarding bodies suggests that the proposals do not model processes accurately and would have significantly more impact on learning than is suggested.

Many challenges already faced by awarding bodies are connected to compressing the timetable for delivery of examinations and provision of results. The availability of personnel for marking, awarding and completing enquiries on results would be impacted because a large number would still be involved with teaching GCSEs during the proposed period. There is already a significant number of re-marks in the current system and the proposed timescale would seriously affect students' choices and options.

The impact upon the reliability of marking and awarding of a compressed timetable could be serious, which might significantly undermine A Level results – these are repeatedly proven by research to be excellent indicators of university potential.

There is also concern that the exam timetable would be more demanding, which in turn might impact negatively on students' ability to research courses and HEIs of interest prior to point of application. Squeezing exams into a five-week period would increase timetable conflicts, which are already very difficult to avoid. This is likely to result in some learners taking three exams a day. We would not support any arrangement that is detrimental to the learning of students whilst studying A Level or equivalent.

(28.7.3) The option of starting the HE term for first year students in January is not worthy of consideration. Losing a full term of teaching would seriously undermine the quality of education provided to our undergraduates. It would also be very inefficient for HEIs if additional resources had to be found for 3 or 4 years of students for 2 terms, but the resources for only 2 or 3 years of students for the third term.

The proposed timetable would result in the Higher Education year in the UK being out of line with most other systems around the globe and this is likely to have serious knock-on effects on other aspects of HE such as postgraduate applications.

Application post-results: Proposed timetable changes

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 29.4.1)

An earliest start date of circa 8 October for first year students would not have a serious impact on the delivery of HE courses.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

(APR Consultation ref 29.4.2)

Universities could make appropriate resources available to make offer decisions and process applications between mid-July and end August.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4

(APR Consultation ref 29.4.3) Please give any suggestions about what needs to be done to ensure that interviews can be successfully completed within the proposed model of applications post-results.

Interviews cannot be successfully completed within the proposed model. We would require more time in order to ensure the process is conducted fairly.

(APR Consultation ref 29.4.4) Please give any suggestions how to accommodate applications for courses requiring auditions or the submissions of portfolios.

Consideration should already have been given to this in designing the proposed system.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

(29.4.1) Although we appreciate that this is likely to be far more problematic for other institutions, it is important to note that the University of Cambridge term dates are set many years in advance. Attempting to move these dates once set creates significant difficulties, for instance in relation to contracts of employment, dates of retirement etc.

(29.4.2) For a research intensive institution with an academic-led admissions process this will be deeply problematic and will create significant pressure on other essential areas of activity such as research. We would strongly resist any suggestion that academics are removed from the admissions process.

(29.4.3) The proposed model of applications post-results will not only impact on university staff but also applicants and their families and advisers – we anticipate significant difficulty in scheduling interviews and other processes and checks during a period that is commonly used for family holidays. Schools and colleges would need to ensure appropriate resource is available throughout August to support applicants through the process.

Holidays will also be difficult for applicants and their families to take during the Easter period owing to the earlier examination period.

Application post-results: Benefits and risks of the proposed 2014 year of entry enhancements

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 31.3.1)

A single offer date for all applications would help minimise the real or perceived advantages of applying as early as possible in the cycle.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1
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(APR Consultation ref 31.3.2)

The current process can be improved with a more disciplined approach to deadlines, service level agreements for decision-making by HEIs, with no informal agreements to relax them.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1
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(APR Consultation ref 31.3.3)

The replacement of Clearing with a managed process of applications with equal consideration for places available at that point would give students a more positive experience and achieve a better match of applicants to courses.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: No comment – the University of Cambridge does not take part in Clearing.
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(APR Consultation ref 31.3.4)

A short break between Confirmation and Apply 3 would help to improve the process to place applicants after they have received their results.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1
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Please enter any further comments about this section below

(31.3.1) This assumes that all institutions comply and do not indicate a likely outcome of an application in advance of the agreed date.

(31.3.2) As long as all institutions comply.

(31.3.4) We would suggest a break of at least one week in order to give applicants sufficient time to consider their options carefully.

The insurance choice

Option	Description	Benefits	Disadvantages
Keep insurance choice as is	A contractually-binding 2 nd choice, intended to offer a safety net to applicants not meeting the conditions of their firm choice	Supports applicants in making aspirational choices	Evidence shows that it is not well understood by applicants and is not used wisely
Remove insurance choice	Applicants accept one conditional offer and enter Clearing if they don't meet the conditions	Facilitates HEIs in managing their numbers	Does not support applicants in making aspirational choices; disadvantages recruiting institutions for whom the insurance choice may represent an important pool of applicants
Enforce correct use of insurance choice	Application system ensures that applicant has included at least one choice with lower entry requirements	Supports applicants in using the insurance choice as it was intended; fewer applicants needing to enter Clearing	Simple business rules don't reflect complexity of offers and what appears to be an unwise insurance choice may in reality not be, for instance for courses like medicine where the option for entry with lower grades does not exist.
Make insurance choice optional for HEIs	HEIs choose whether applicants can accept them as an insurance choice or only as a firm choice	HEIs for whom insurance choice is beneficial can continue with it; applicants can choose to apply to HEIs that accept insurance	More complex than current process and has capacity for unfairness

		choice	
Replace insurance choice with priority wait list option	Applicant chooses one firm choice and can be added to wait list for up to four others. HEI gives priority to waitlisted applicants once CFs have been confirmed	Provides some back-up for applicant but not contractually binding on HEI so facilitates number management	Provides less certainty for applicants than current process. Is complex and would be difficult to implement

(APR Consultation ref 32.5)

In light of the information given above, please rank the options above in your preferred order (using 1 as the most effective through to 5 as the least effective).

Option	Rank 1 to 5
Keep insurance choice as is	2
Remove insurance choice	
Enforce correct use of insurance choice	1
Make insurance choice optional for HEIs	
Replace insurance choice with priority wait list option	

Please enter any further comments about this section below

From the options above the University of Cambridge will only support the enforcement of the correct use of the insurance choice and keeping the insurance choice as it is. Any move to undermine the important safety net for applicants provided by the insurance choice will cause us to question seriously the benefit of staying in the UCAS system.

Timetable for reform

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 33.2.1)

2016 year of entry is a manageable start date for a system of applications post-results.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: <i>4 - See comment below.</i>
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(APR Consultation ref 33.2.2)

2014 year of entry is a manageable date to be ready for the proposed changes to the current system.

1- strongly agree 2- agree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below:
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3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	2
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(APR Consultation ref 33.2.3) We believe that the proposed changes for 2016 year of entry and 2014 year of entry are workable solutions.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4

(APR Consultation ref 33.2.4) If the proposal for 2016 year of entry does not go ahead, further refinements are needed to the 2014 process.	
1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 2

Please enter any further comments about this section below

(33.2.1) There is too much uncertainty in the design of the proposed system. Therefore we do not feel that 2016 year of entry is a realistic start date for a system of applications post-results, even if the proposals receive widespread support from all key stakeholder groups.

For more information about the UCAS admissions process review, please visit:

www.ucas.com/admissionsprocessreview

Responses must be received in UCAS by 20 January 2012.

Please complete, save and return this document via email to:

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Or if you wish, print out a hard copy and return the document to:-

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