

DRIVING FORWARD PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS



Professional Update Guidance Notes

August 2014

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1 Background

- 1.1 On 17 March 2011, the Scottish Parliament approved the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011 which set out the Government's plans for the granting of independent status to GTC Scotland from April 2012. As part of this legislation (Article 31), the Government placed the GTC Scotland under **a duty** to introduce a scheme "setting out measures to be undertaken for the purposes of allowing it to keep itself informed about the standards of education and training of registered teachers".
- 1.2 In its response to the consultation on the future of GTC Scotland, the Scottish Government had anticipated that the above scheme would "build on those aspects of current good practice which can help teachers to keep their skills up-to-date as their careers develop and school curriculum and learning patterns change". In addition, the Government recognised that a "supportive but rigorous system of professional review and development" can help to confirm that teachers have maintained high standards and to ensure the future quality of professional teaching skills across Scotland's schools, colleges and more widely across the education profession.
- 1.3 Following a consultation exercise, and in discussions with national partners, GTC Scotland has adopted the title "Professional Update" for this process. GTC Scotland believes that Professional Update, which is premised on "supportive and rigorous professional review and development" and sustained professional learning, will contribute to the future quality of the education profession.
- 1.4 Engagement in the Professional Update process is a requirement of registration for fully registered teachers from August 2014.
- 1.5 A working group comprising representatives of unions, employers, government, parents, universities, Education Scotland and GTC Scotland has met regularly to agree a way forward, produce guidelines and review progress. GTC Scotland's Education Committee, Executive Committee and Council have been consulted on various aspects of the process and kept informed of progress. From August 2014, the functions of the working group will be mainstreamed as part of the GTC Scotland committee cycle, with the working group assuming an advisory role as the process is rolled out nationally. This will ensure a continued commitment to partnership working with key stakeholders.
- 1.6 As with all its functions, GTC Scotland is committed to working with regards to the interests of the public in the development and implementation of the Professional Update process.

2 Purposes and Principles of Professional Update

- 2.1 The **key purposes** of Professional Update for teachers are:
 - ❖ To maintain and improve the quality of our teachers as outlined in the relevant Professional Standards and to enhance the impact that they have on pupils' learning.
 - ❖ To support, maintain and enhance teachers' continued professionalism and the reputation of the teaching profession in Scotland.
- 2.2 The **key principles** of Professional Update for teachers are:
 - ❖ A responsibility to consider their development needs.
 - ❖ An entitlement to a system of supportive professional review and development (PRD) which can:

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- assist them to identify constructive ways to engage in self-evaluation and professional learning in order to maintain and enhance professional knowledge, skills and practice;
 - provide access to professional learning experiences which can develop and enhance professional practice as well as addressing those areas identified as requiring support; help them to manage change; and
 - offer a focus on ways in which they can enhance their careers.
- ❖ Confirmation that they have maintained the high standards required of a teacher in Scotland's educational establishments.

3 Features of Professional Update

3.1 Professional Update is a continuous process which builds on the key purposes outlined above and which includes the following interlinked features:

- ❖ **An annual update of contact information by registered teachers**, involving the submission to GTC Scotland of address and personal details, as appropriate. This can be done through the creation of a MyGTCS account; at www.gtcs.org.uk/GTCS-login. It is a condition of registration with GTC Scotland that all registered teachers ensure that address contact details are up to date.
- ❖ **A career-long commitment to, and engagement in, professional learning, including continuing engagement in PRD.** Professional learning is what teachers engage in to stimulate their thinking and professional knowledge and to ensure that their practice is critically informed and up-to-date. Further information about professional learning can be found at: www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/professional-learning. By undertaking a wide range of high-quality, sustained professional learning experiences, teachers are more likely to inspire pupils and provide high-quality teaching and learning experiences, enabling learners to achieve their best. It is important that professional learning provides rich opportunities for teachers to develop and enhance their professional knowledge and practice, in order to progress the quality of learning and teaching and school improvement.
- ❖ **Opportunities for all teachers to engage in ongoing self-evaluation against appropriate GTCS Professional Standards** in order to reflect on their professional knowledge, skills and actions, and plan their development needs and relevant future professional learning. Teachers should make use of the revised GTC Scotland Professional Standards which came into effect on 1 August 2013 for this process. Further information about the Professional Standards can be found at www.gtcs.org.uk/standards. It should be noted that the Standard for Full Registration continues to be the baseline Professional Standard for competence for the teaching profession in Scotland.
- ❖ **Maintenance of a reflective record of professional learning and associated evidence of impact on thinking and professional actions, discussed with a line manager as part of the PRD process.** Whilst engagement in the Professional Update process will be a requirement of all fully registered teachers from August 2014, the implementation of the Professional Update sign-off will be on a phased basis, as outlined in 4.3. Therefore, teachers will not be asked to provide retrospective evidence of engagement in professional learning and the PRD process prior to August 2014.

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- ❖ **5 yearly confirmation of engagement in the Professional Update process with GTC Scotland**, referred to throughout these guidance notes as the Professional Update sign-off. Like the professional learning record, this will be done in a number of ways depending on employers' recording systems. The teacher makes the following confirmation, which is endorsed by the teacher's line manager:

'I confirm that I have engaged in ongoing professional learning and reflected against the appropriate GTCS Professional Standards. I have maintained a reflective record of professional learning and evidence of its impact on my thinking and professional actions. I have discussed this with my line manager as part of my Professional Review and Development process.'

- ❖ The system of recording that teachers will use to record their professional learning will vary depending on where they are currently employed. Teachers employed in local authorities, the independent sector, universities, the college sector and a number of national bodies will receive further information from their employers about the systems in place to enable recording of professional learning and completion of the Professional Update sign-off. GTC Scotland has developed an on-line professional learning record which can be accessed through MyGTCS. Where a local authority or other employer has an existing system in place, there will be no requirement for a teacher to duplicate information on the MyGTCS on-line profile. Where an existing system is in place, arrangements will be made for the Professional Update sign-off information to be transferred to GTC Scotland. Teachers with no access to an employers' system will be able to access the system developed by GTC Scotland and accessed through MyGTCS.

4 Who is Required to Engage in Professional Update?

- 4.1 Engagement in the Professional Update process, as outlined in section 3, is a requirement of all Fully Registered Teachers. Completion of the Professional Update sign-off is not a requirement of teachers holding provisional registration with GTC Scotland. However, as teachers holding provisional registration are generally working towards full registration, it is important that provisionally registered teachers are engaging in self evaluation, professional learning and PRD as they work towards achieving the Standard for Full Registration (SFR).
- 4.2 When a teacher is awarded full registration with GTC Scotland, they will receive a letter from GTC Scotland outlining the requirements of the Professional Update process.
- 4.3 The designated year of completion of the Professional Update sign-off is determined by a teacher's year of initial registration with GTC Scotland. The year of registration is the first two numbers of a teacher's registration number.
- 4.4 Where a teacher has lapsed from the GTC Scotland Register of Teachers and subsequently rejoined, the year of initial registration with GTC Scotland will determine the designated year of completion of the Professional Update sign-off.
- 4.5 As of August 2014 all teachers will engage in the Professional Update process. Teachers will sign off in the following years confirming their engagement and every five years thereafter.
 - ❖ 2014/15 – registrants with the following registration numbers **x9xxxx** and **x4xxxx**
 - ❖ 2015/16 – registrants with the following registration numbers **x0xxxx** and **x5xxxx**
 - ❖ 2016/17 – registrants with the following registration numbers **x1xxxx** and **x6xxxx**
 - ❖ 2017/18 – registrants with the following registration numbers **x2xxxx** and **x7xxxx**

❖ 2018/19 – registrants with the following registration numbers **x3xxxx** and **x8xxxx**

The first two digits of your registration number denotes the year you first came onto the Register.

- 4.6 Teachers who have participated in the pilot programmes of Professional Update in sessions 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 **and** completed the Professional Update sign-off will not be required to repeat the sign-off process for a further five years.
- 4.7 The development of Professional Update has been premised on all registered teachers having to meet the requirements of the process. It is recognised that not all registered teachers are involved in day-to-day-teaching, although some retain a direct engagement with teaching and learning and /or a responsibility for the assurance of its quality. GTC Scotland believes that those working in such roles (e.g. Quality Improvement Officers, Education Officers, Directors of Education, registered teachers working in national bodies such as Education Scotland) and who are eligible for registration should be encouraged to maintain their registration as a commitment to the important role they play in maintaining and enhancing the standards set for the teaching profession as a whole. The Professional Update process for teachers in such roles will enable them to confirm their continued understanding of relevant aspects of the Professional Standards and engagement in appropriate professional learning. It will not, however, be necessary for these registered teachers to confirm this by active service in the classroom.
- 4.8 From August 2014, 'Fully Registered (General)' will become the default status for all those holding full registration. The status of 'Fully Registered (Associate)' is available as an option for those holding full registration who do not wish to remain in the Fully Registered (General) category because of their employment circumstances e.g. not working, working in a non-education related environment or retired.
- 4.9 Teachers with Fully Registered (Associate) status will be exempt from the five yearly Professional Update sign-off process. As fully registered teachers however, they will still be expected to meet the Professional Update expectation of updating contact details annually and will have access to the MyGTCS on-line professional learning record to record their professional learning and associated evidence if they so wish.
- 4.10 Teachers who are planning, on retirement, to undertake supply work may choose to complete the Professional Update sign-off process in their last year of teaching prior to retirement in order to maintain Fully Registered (General) status for a further five years.
- 4.11 GTC Scotland recognises that some supply teachers can have difficulty accessing aspects of professional learning and the PRD process. Supply teachers engaging in only sporadic supply and working across a number of local authorities using different recording systems can record their professional learning on the on-line professional learning record available through MyGTCS. Supply teachers with no access to a designated line manager at the point of the required Professional Update sign-off can submit their professional learning record and confirmation of engagement in the process directly to GTC Scotland using the MyGTCS on-line profile system. Further guidance on engaging in professional learning and the Professional Update process for supply teachers has been developed and can be found on the GTC Scotland website.
- 4.12 Further information on the Professional Update process can be found at www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update

5 Communication with Registered Teachers

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- 5.1 GTC Scotland will send an e-mail to each registered teacher at the beginning of the school session in which they are required to complete the Professional Update sign-off process to alert them of this requirement. The planned date for this communication is 1 September each year.
 - 5.2 GTC Scotland will monitor completion of the Professional Update sign-off on a monthly basis. Every April, registered teachers who have not yet undertaken the sign-off process in their year of Professional Update will receive a reminder e-mail, setting out the requirements and timescales for completion of the sign-off process.
 - 5.3 GTC Scotland expects teachers to undertake the Professional Update sign-off process by the end of the academic session in which they are required to do so, normally by 1 July. However, it is recognised that, due to unforeseen circumstances, completion of this process can sometimes be delayed until the start of the next academic session. Therefore, at the start of this next academic session, registered teachers who have not yet completed the Professional Update sign-off process will be reminded of the immediate requirement to do so by no later than 31 October. Local authorities and other employers will be notified of the details of teachers in their employment who have still to complete the Professional Update sign-off process at the start of each academic year.
 - 5.4 GTC Scotland recognises that there are a number of circumstances which may make completion of this process within the designed timescale difficult, including career breaks, extended periods of illness, maternity / paternity / adoption leave, unemployment, recent change in employment circumstances, engagement in only occasional and sporadic supply work or other exceptional circumstances, for which extensions to the 5 year sign-off period may be required. If a teacher is genuinely unable to undertake the Professional Update sign-off process in the designated year, then the teacher should have the opportunity to request a deferral of the sign-off process. Deferral processes are outlined in section 9 of these guidance notes.
 - 5.5 Within existing Rules, GTC Scotland has the power to remove teachers from the register if they fail to pay their annual fee or do not have an up-to-date address on the Register. The same power of removal will apply to any registered teacher failing to notify the GTC Scotland that Professional Update has been completed by the required date, in line with the process of reminders outlined in 5.2 and 5.3.
 - 5.6 Any teacher removed from the Register in this way can use the existing process to apply for re-admission to the Register. This involves their application being considered by a Registration Panel.

6 Partnership with Employers

- 6.1 Employers have a responsibility to produce, in association with their employees, a process which meets both national (GTC Scotland) principles and local needs. This includes links to constructive and supportive PRD systems and information on appeals processes. In local authorities, local plans are likely to be discussed and endorsed by Council LNCTs.
- 6.2 In preparation for the national roll out of Professional Update, GTC Scotland has engaged constructively with employers (Local Authorities, Independent Schools, Universities, national bodies) in order to secure the validation of their schemes, allowing flexibility for local circumstances. GTC Scotland has developed and agreed validation criteria in order to ensure that local authority and employer PRD systems are robust and that registered teachers are enabled to engage with and complete the Professional Update sign-off process.

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- 6.3 This validation process requires local authorities and employers to submit written documentation outlining agreed PRD systems to GTC Scotland prior to a validation event taking place. The event then includes consideration of the submitted information, a meeting with staff responsible for the strategic implementation of PRD and focus group discussions with teachers. The validation criteria and reports of completed validations can be found at www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update. The validation criteria have been adapted to meet the needs of local authorities, the independent sector, Universities, Colleges and national bodies.
- 6.4 The validation process in local authorities will seek to establish arrangements regarding registered teachers employed centrally who participate in corporate PRD schemes. However, GTC Scotland will not seek to validate corporate PRD schemes as part of the validation process.
- 6.5 Following the national roll out of Professional Update, local authority and other employer PRD schemes will continue to be validated by GTC Scotland every 5 years, in line with the expectation that individual teachers will complete the Professional Update process within the same timescale. Link officers from GTC Scotland will continue to engage with employers on an on-going basis to ensure appropriate support and regular quality assurance. Local authorities and employers will be asked to submit information to GTC Scotland every 5 years, outlining the PRD process currently in place and highlighting any significant changes to the previously validated processes, taking into account local circumstances and nationally published guidance, including that which may be published by GTC Scotland. The validation meeting will comprise a face-to-face meeting with one link person, one GTC Scotland officer and one GTC Scotland panel member and include discussion with one focus group of registered teachers. A rolling programme for the independent sector will require to be devised separately.
- 6.6 It is inevitable that some registered teachers will participate in PRD schemes that will not have been validated by GTC Scotland, or have no access to a PRD scheme. Where GTC Scotland is not able to validate a scheme, or there is no scheme in place, individual registered teachers can record their professional learning on the on-line professional learning record available through MyGTCS and at the time of completion of the Professional Update sign-off can submit this professional learning record with further information about engagement in the process directly to MyGTCS. GTC Scotland will assess the information provided, and reserves the right to sample this submission and associated evidence.

7 The Use of the Professional Standards and the Professional Update Process

- 7.1 The Professional Update process requires all registered teachers to reflect against appropriate GTC Scotland Professional Standards. The revised suite of Professional Standards, which came into effect from August 2013, includes The Standards for Registration, the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning and the Standards for Leadership and Management.
- 7.2 For teachers who have achieved the Standard for Full Registration, GTC Scotland has developed Standards which offer constructive support for teachers as they consider how they might develop their professional knowledge, skills and actions through engagement with on-going self-evaluation and professional learning. The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning has been developed to support teachers choosing to reflect on this Standard as part of their professional learning, whilst the Standards for Leadership and Management have been developed to support the self-evaluation and professional learning of those in, or aspiring to, formal leadership roles in schools.

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- 7.3 Whilst the revised standards have been designed to meet the needs of teachers at all career stages working in Scotland's schools, aspects of these may not be directly relevant to teachers working outwith the school system e.g. centrally based local authority staff, teachers working in universities or national organisations. Therefore, in addition to the revised suite of Professional Standards and the related support materials, GTC Scotland will develop further guidance notes and support materials for teachers working outwith the school system following feedback from the Professional Update pilots.
- 7.4 Further information about the Professional Standards and related support materials can be found at: www.gtcs.org.uk/standards

8 Professional Update and Fitness to Teach

- 8.1 Professional Update focuses on professional learning and *continuous improvement* rather than determining whether or not a teacher is, or has remained, competent. In line with the GTCS Framework on Teacher Competence (FTC), competence cases will continue to be handled by local authorities and employers in the first instance, with cases of alleged professional incompetence referred subsequently to GTC Scotland for resolution.
- 8.2 The failure to complete Professional Update is envisaged to be a relatively rare occurrence and for most teachers in that situation it will be due to valid reasons such as career breaks, extended periods of illness, maternity / paternity / adoption leave, unemployment, recent change in employment circumstances, engagement in only occasional and sporadic supply work or other exceptional circumstances, For such circumstances, a deferral process has been developed, which is outlined in the following section 9.
- 8.3 If a registered teacher were to make a deliberate and conscious decision not to meet the requirements of the Professional Update through non-compliance with contractual requirements for Continuing Professional Development or PRD this would be an employment matter and dealt with as such by the teacher's local authority / employer in line with existing processes in the first instance. Further information on possible referral to GTC Scotland can be found at: www.gtcs.org.uk/fitness-to-teach/employer-responsibilities
- 8.4 As Professional Update is an ongoing process which includes reflection against the appropriate GTC Scotland Professional Standard(s) and continued engagement in professional learning and the PRD process, a teacher who is undergoing competence procedures should still be engaging in these components of the process. However, if the Professional Update sign-off process is due to be completed whilst the teacher is engaged in competence procedures from stage 2 onwards, GTC Scotland considers that it is not in the teacher's best interests to complete the sign-off process. Therefore, the employer should notify GTC Scotland at professional.update@gtcs.org.uk in order to suspend this until the conclusion of the competence procedures. This information will be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTC Scotland register.
- 8.5 Registered teachers subject to sanctions as a result of GTC Scotland's Fitness to Teach processes should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the teacher feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, the teacher has the right to request a deferral. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTC Scotland register.
- 8.6 Registered teachers who are subject to Fitness to Teach processes in non competence matters should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the teacher feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process

difficult, the teacher has the right to request a deferral. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

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- 8.7 Registered teachers subject to a Temporary Restriction Order (TRO) and still in employment should continue to engage in the Professional Update process. If the teacher feels that there are specific circumstances which would make completion of the sign-off process difficult, the teacher has the right to request a deferral. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTC Scotland register.
 - 8.8 Where registered teachers are subject to a TRO and not in employment the requirement to complete the Professional Update sign-off process should be suspended. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTC Scotland register.
 - 8.9 Where a teacher has been removed from the register and has subsequently appealed this decision to the Court of Session, the requirement to complete the Professional Update sign-off process should be suspended. This information should be flagged against the individual teacher's entry on the GTC Scotland register.

9 Professional Update Deferral Processes

- 9.1 GTC Scotland recognises that there are a number of circumstances which may make completion of the Professional Update process within the designed timescale difficult, including career breaks, extended illness, maternity / paternity or adoption leave, unemployment, engagement in only occasional and sporadic supply work, recent change in employment circumstances or other exceptional circumstances for which extensions to the 5 year sign-off period may be required. If a teacher is genuinely unable to undertake the Professional Update sign-off process in the designated year, then he / she has the opportunity to request a deferral.
- 9.2 In the validation process for local authorities, universities and independent schools who had not participated in the pilot programmes of Professional Update, each employer was asked to provide information on a 'planned deferral process which is based on GTC Scotland guidelines, with clear criteria and lines of communication between all parties.' In the case of employers who have participated in the pilot programmes, GTC Scotland link officers have provided further information on the requirement to build a deferral process into the local processes in preparation for the national roll-out of Professional Update from August 2014.
- 9.3 Employers should confirm the deferrals process for teachers they employ as part of local guidance and dissemination of information. The deferral process in each local context should include the arrangements for seeking approval and lines of communication, including for example whether the teacher seeking deferral is only required to communicate the request to the line manager with responsibility for confirming his/her Professional Update sign-off, or if additional local arrangements are required.
- 9.4 The professional learning record accessed as part of MyGTCS includes an electronic process for deferral requests. Registered teachers working in local authorities who use the Gateway or SOPRA systems for the purpose of the Professional Update sign-off will receive further information from their employers about the operational aspects of the deferral process as contained in these systems.
- 9.5 Deferrals will normally be requested for a period of one year. If a deferral request is successful, the teacher will normally be expected to complete the Professional Update sign-off process during the following academic session.

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- 9.6 Where a teacher knows in advance that a deferral period greater than one year will be required e.g. an extended career break, the teacher should discuss this with his / her employer in the first instance, and notify GTC Scotland of the planned deferral period and the related reasons. This should be done by sending an e-mail to: professional.update@gtcs.org.uk
- 9.7 If a teacher is unable to instigate a request for a deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process, for example during a period of extended absence through ill-health, the teacher's line manager can notify GTC Scotland directly of the requirement for a deferral. This should be done by sending an e-mail to: professional.update@gtcs.org.uk
- 9.8 The decision to grant a deferral from completion of the Professional Update sign-off process sits with the employer in the first instance. A registered teacher seeking a deferral will be required to notify their employer of their request using the relevant system (see section 4) outlining the reasons for the proposed deferral. Local processes will outline any requirements to submit evidence as part of the deferral process. Registered teachers not currently in employment and seeking deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process will be required to notify GTC Scotland directly, outlining the reasons for the proposed deferral, and the expected length of the deferral. This should be done by sending an e-mail to: professional.update@gtcs.org.uk.
- 9.9 GTC Scotland cannot consider or address employment contract, occupational health or any other employment related issues. Such matters should be addressed by the teacher and his / her current employer.
- 9.10 Existing employers' appeals and grievance procedures should be implemented if an individual teacher disagrees with a decision regarding a deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process.
- 9.11 Registered teachers not currently in employment and seeking deferral of the Professional Update sign-off process will be required to notify GTC Scotland directly, outlining the reasons for the proposed deferral, and the expected length of the deferral. This should be done by sending an e-mail to: professional.update@gtcs.org.uk.
- 9.12 Registered teachers not currently in employment can choose to opt for Fully Registered (Associate) status. As such, they will be exempt from the five yearly sign-off process, but will still be expected to meet the other Professional Update expectation of updating contact details annually and will have access to the MyGTCS on-line professional learning record to record their professional learning and associated evidence if they so wish.
- 9.13 GTC Scotland will provide the local authority / employer with a summary of information regarding the teachers who have confirmed that they will be deferring their completion of the Professional Update sign-off process in a given year.
- 9.14 GTC Scotland has developed an administrative process to monitor this deferral process effectively, and will report on the related statistics as part of regular reporting to employers, GTCS Committees and Council.
- 9.15 If the deferral request is unsuccessful, the teacher will be given the option to complete the Professional Update sign-off process in the designated year, to select Fully Registered (Associate) as their GTCS registration category (noting that teachers selecting this category are not able to teach) or to notify GTC Scotland in order to have their details removed from the GTC Scotland register of teachers.

GTC Scotland aims to promote equality and diversity in all its activities

GTC Scotland *Comhairle Choitcheann Teagaisg na h-Alba*

The General Teaching Council for Scotland is the independent professional body which maintains and enhances teaching standards and promotes and regulates the teaching profession in Scotland. We strive to be a world leader in professional education issues.

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www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update

Professional Learning and Development:
www.gtcs.org.uk/probation

Fitness to Teach:
www.gtcs.org.uk/fitness-to-teach

Probation site:
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