

Initial Professional Development (IPD)

Guide for Trainees

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1.0 Welcome

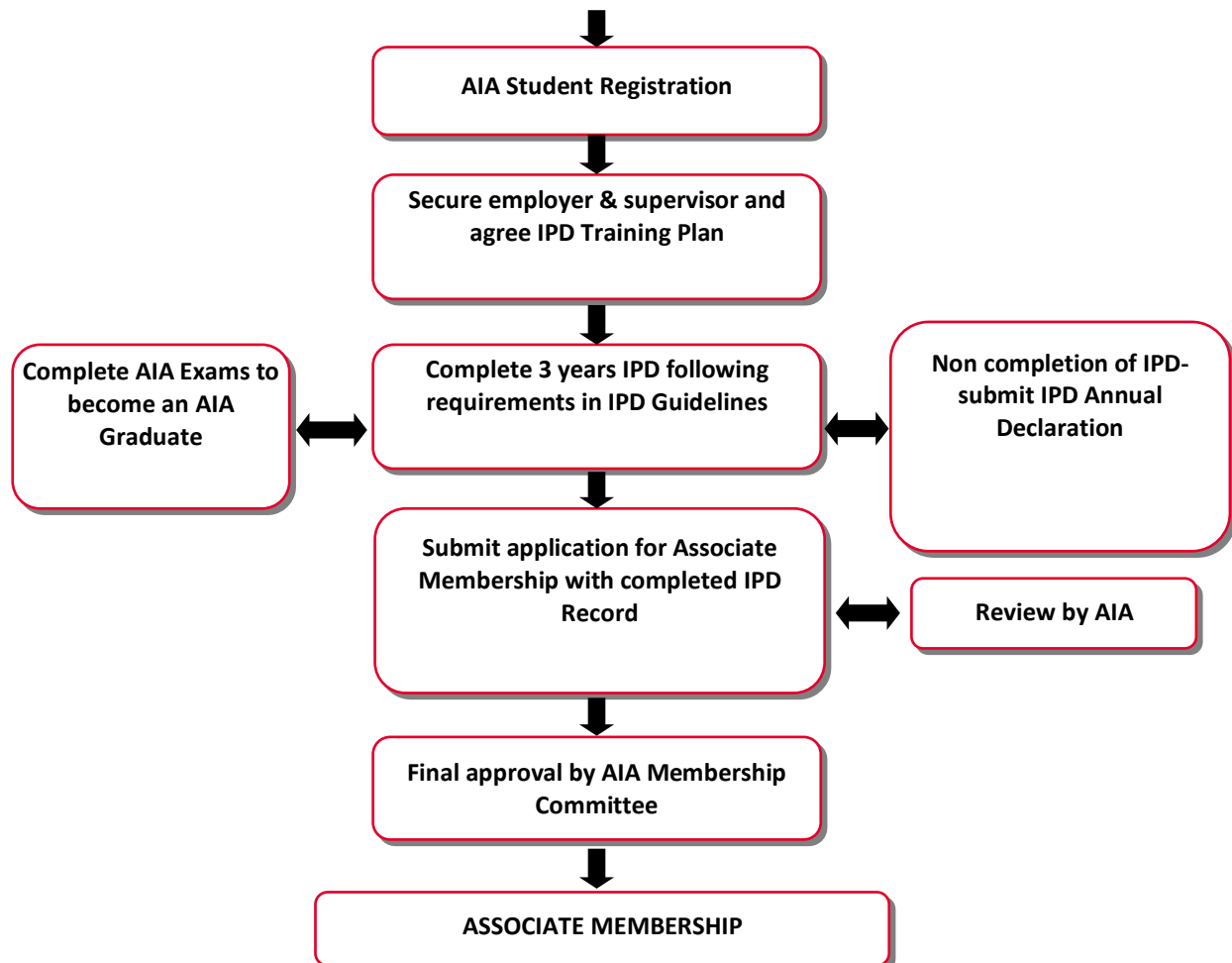
Completing AIA's Initial Professional Development (IPD) ensures that you have demonstrated the ability to apply theoretical knowledge, professional and practical skills in a work environment.

AIA's IPD Requirements have been established within the framework of guidelines issued by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and provide the foundation for the Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme of lifelong learning, essential for every professional accountant.

N.B. The IPD Requirements outlined in this guide do not cover the Recognised Professional Qualification (RPQ) for Statutory Audit, available in the UK/EU.

2.0 Becoming an AIA Professional Accountant

The diagram illustrates the combination of theoretical study (exams) and training (Initial Professional Development) which are required to achieve qualified professional accountant status.



3.0 The Importance of IPD

Initial Professional Development (IPD) is defined as work experience gained by performing the work of a professional accountant under qualified supervision at progressive levels of responsibility.

The AIA professional accountancy qualification is designed to produce professional, competent accountants and IPD requirements play an essential part in this process.

To qualify as an International Accountant, you must demonstrate academic ability and technical knowledge by passing the AIA exams, and demonstrate the application of professional knowledge, professional skills and professional ethics, values and attitudes in the workplace.

IPD provides a framework in which to develop professional skills and competence in the work environment by requiring trainees to:

- Work at progressive levels of responsibility;
- Develop an awareness of the working environment, an understanding of relevant organisations and how business works;
- Apply technical knowledge and relate accounting work to other business functions and activities
- Develop and apply professional conduct in practical, real-life situations;
- Enhance their Information Communication Technology (ICT) competency.

4.0 IPD Requirements

4.1 Overview

Your IPD should demonstrate technical competency together with the ability to apply professional skills, values and ethics in the workplace.

AIA requires a minimum of three years' IPD, which must be:

- relevant
- carried out at progressive levels of responsibility
- fully documented
- reviewed and certified by a professionally qualified accountant (an AIA qualified Accountant, a member of an IFAC member body, or a member of a statutorily recognised professional body)

4.2 Where to obtain IPD

The diverse nature of accountancy work allows trainees to gain experience in industry, commerce, public practice and the public sector. You may obtain experience in more than one sector; a variety of experience will benefit your overall career.

The organisation can be any size and the type of work may vary from one employer to another, however your employer should be able to offer you a varied training environment and access to guidance and support from a professionally qualified accountant.

4.3 When to begin IPD

IPD may be gained before, during study for, or on successful completion of the AIA exams, or a combination of these, however AIA strongly recommends that IPD is completed alongside your exams. All routes must be concluded within ten years of registration as an AIA student.

4.4 What can be counted as IPD

AIA accepts periods of six months or more full-time employment as IPD.

Part-time work experience will be assessed on its merits; if you are opting for part-time work you should contact AIA for further guidance.

In order for experience to count as IPD it must be fully documented, reviewed and certified by a professionally qualified accountant.

4.5 Prior work experience

AIA will accept up one-year prior work experience (work undertaken before registration as an AIA student) towards IPD.

To be eligible for consideration as part of the three years IPD, prior work experience must have been gained in full time employment in the accountancy profession, under appropriate supervision and must be appropriately documented and certified by a professionally qualified accountant.

4.6 Who can certify prior work experience?

Ideally all prior work experience should already be certified by your previous employer. If this is not possible your current employer or supervisor can certify prior work experience as long as they are satisfied with the evidence, you have provided.

There is no time limit on what experience can be counted towards IPD, however you should, along with your employer, consider carefully the appropriateness and relevance of experience gained more than five years

previously.

REMEMBER

Examples of documents that could support your experience include:

- training records from another professional body
- curriculum vitae supported by references
- appraisal records
- certificates of training courses attended

5.0 Planning IPD

You should meet with your employer at the beginning of your IPD training.

Your employer should recommend an appropriately qualified supervisor to oversee and certify IPD in order to ensure consistent and effective assessment of your performance in the workplace.

Employers and Supervisors should contact ipd@aia worldwide.com for a copy of the IPD Guide for Employers and Supervisors, containing more specific guidance.

5.1 Developing a training schedule

When commencing your IPD you must meet with your supervisor to discuss and prepare a training schedule.

The schedule should take into consideration the whole training period, establishing training goals and an overall training timetable. The schedule should also include agreed dates for six-monthly review meetings and be used throughout the IPD period to plan activities and monitor your progress. AIA may request access to your record as part of the monitoring process.

5.2 Developing a training plan

Following establishment of the schedule you should meet with your supervisor to create and record a training plan.

The initial plan should cover the first six months of training leading up to the first review meeting, be appropriate for the needs of your employer and prepared in line with AIA's requirements.

The three-year IPD Training Plan should recognise the need for the trainee to demonstrate that they have:

- worked at progressive levels of responsibility;
- achieved technical competency in financial accounting, financial management, auditing, management accounting, taxation and tax planning and Information Communication Technology (ICT); and,
- are able to apply professional skills, values and ethics in their work.

Refer to the Skills and Competencies section for further detailed guidance on how to cover and demonstrate competency in specific areas.

Employers who already have a training programme in place may use this as the basis of the IPD plan and should liaise with AIA if they require any assistance with developing the IPD training plan.

Once the plan is agreed progress should be regularly reviewed and future goals identified as part of the six-monthly formal review meetings.

AIA recommends that copies of all training plans should form a part of the trainee IPD portfolio of supporting evidence. AIA may request this evidence during its final IPD review.

5.3 Review meetings

Review meetings are an essential part of the IPD training.

You should bring training plans and any other additional evidence of training undertaken or courses attended to

your meetings and reflect upon progress with regards to technical competency and development in professional skills, values and ethics.

Suggested framework for IPD Review Meetings

At each review meeting the supervisor should:

- consider and discuss the training undertaken since the last meeting
- sign off completed IPD Record
- deliver feedback
- agree the training goals for the next six-month period

6.0 IPD Record

AIA requires that you keep a continuous and detailed record of IPD over the three-year training period. It's down to you to complete this record.

You should write a summary of the experience you have gained for each competency and employment position in the IPD Record. A template of the IPD Record may be downloaded from the AIA website. At www.aiaworldwide.com/ipd-requirements.

The Record must be signed off (certified) as a true and correct description of your progress and competencies by a professionally qualified accountant, usually your current supervisor or employer.

At the commencement of a new position either within the company or with a new employer it is essential that you notify the AIA and record the details of the new position in the IPD Record.

REMEMBER

Before moving to a new employer, you should ensure your supervisor confirms any IPD obtained at your prior workplace and verifies your IPD Record.

Your IPD Record should also include full details and documented outcomes of any progress reviews and training courses in which you have participated, together with any supporting evidence such as appraisal certificates or reports. Your Record should tell a complete story, commencing at year one to the end of your training in year three.

AIA may ask to review this evidence when assessing IPD.

REMEMBER

All forms and supporting evidence should be completed in English.

6.1 IPD Annual Declaration

All trainees are required to complete and submit an IPD Annual Declaration, in October of each year.

The declaration contains details of your current employment and IPD and allows AIA to monitor your progress and where necessary provide further guidance and support.

6.2 Progressive levels of responsibility

Initially you will work under close supervision, progress to working independently, and eventually may be responsible for supervising the work of others.

Working under supervision

Early IPD training requires you to work within a supervised environment demonstrating the ability to carry out instructions, take control of specific tasks and perform within the operating structure of the organisation. Working under supervision, you should:

- work effectively and according to instructions
- make good use of the information and communication technology available to collect and categorise relevant information
- display a degree of practical understanding and knowledge appropriate for the position you hold, raise queries and formulate questions to address any gaps in knowledge
- demonstrate an awareness of significant external factors such as the overall business environment, standards, rules and regulatory issues
- effectively manage yourself and all areas of responsibility assigned to you, adhere to established reporting lines and standards at all times
- utilise work experience to contribute to the improvement of departmental performance

Working independently

You should progress to working independently with a minimum of supervision, demonstrating initiative in the application of advanced knowledge and the ability to effectively manage workloads and make informed professional decisions and recommendations. Working independently, you should demonstrate that you can:

- work effectively in unfamiliar situations
- display an advanced practical understanding and comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of any task and be able to develop and implement solutions to complex problems
- apply highly developed interpretive and evaluative skills to the collection of information and the preparation of internal and external reports; subsequent recommendations should incorporate advice on the effect any regulatory issues may have on proposed objectives and demonstrate the application of ethical sensitivity and judgement
- demonstrate an ability to effectively manage budgets, contribute to budget planning and produce forecasts and projections
- make professional decisions and recommendations informed by a critical analysis of the relevant issues and the application of professional scepticism and acknowledge the broader implications of these decisions
- effectively manage and support junior colleagues to meet performance objectives

This progression should be reflected in the information you include within your training record.

7.0 Skills and competencies

7.1 Technical competency

IPD should illustrate the gaining of experience and technical competency in the main subject areas of financial accounting, financial management, auditing, management accounting, taxation and tax planning and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

The following section provides some examples of how competency in various technical areas may be demonstrated.

Financial Accounting
Preparation from incomplete records of a full set of financial statements for an entity, for example an unincorporated/incorporated entity
Full book-keeping service for an entity
Cash flow forecast for an entity
Financial Management
Financial control and decision making
Short term financial planning
Long term financial planning
Investment decisions
Auditing
Audit strategy and evaluation of risk
Audit process; systems compliance
Reporting and communication
Management Accounting
Business planning
Operation and development of management accounting systems
Decision management; management performance
Taxation and Tax Planning
Taxation liability; taxation planning and mitigation
Presentation

Current legislation
Information Communication Technology (ICT)
Installing a fully integrated off-the-shelf accounting system onto a client's computer and providing initial guidance on its operation and use
Installing a new in-house self-assessment tax return system and training colleagues on the use of the system
Advising clients on control aspects of computerised wages systems
Use of spread sheet techniques when carrying out day-to-day tasks

7.2 Professional Conduct

It is essential that professional accountants adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct when carrying out their day-to-day duties and when developing professional relationships.

Accountants should act with professional competence and due care to ensure that the services they provide are in accordance with accepted best practice and the manner in which they deal with clients and other professional service providers is beyond reproach. International Accountants and trainees should also act in line with the AIA Code of Ethics.

Throughout their IPD training, trainees should demonstrate how they have developed their proficiencies in these aspects whilst adhering to high standards of professional conduct at all times.

The specific aspects of professional conduct where competence should be demonstrated are itemised in the following section.

Upholding of professional ethics, values and standards
Ongoing, strict compliance with all applicable codes of professional conduct and professional standards
Maintaining and demonstrating professional objectivity; providing advice and guidance
Commitment to personal professional development and professional knowledge
Completion of CPD activities, with evidence of self-reflection and self-appraisal of professional development
Attendance at regular appraisal meetings and evidence of follow up action taken in accordance with advice and guidance received
Displaying professional competence and due care in carrying out tasks
Apply intellectual skills in making professional judgement decisions when carrying out work and completing complex work tasks to agreed deadline dates and to exemplary standards
Developing and maintaining effective, ethical professional relationships, both written and external to the firm
Providing support to peer colleagues and junior staff

Working effectively as a senior person and developing good business relationships with customers and other professional contacts
Ongoing awareness of professional developments
Reading professional accountancy journals, relevant literature and articles
Attending in-house or external technical update sessions
Preparing technical updates or presentations for colleagues or other professional accountants
Publication of an appropriate technical article in a recognised accountancy, auditing or taxation journal

7.3 Professional Skills

IPD is more than simply gaining experience in technical competencies and professional conduct and should illustrate the professional skills you can demonstrate following your training.

Whilst you require technical skills to undertake accounting roles, the expanded business role of many of today's accountants means that you will require a range of professional skills in addition.

The specific professional skills where competence should be demonstrated are itemised in the following table.

Intellectual skills
Evaluate information from a variety of sources and perspectives through research, analysis and integration
Apply professional judgement, including identification and evaluation of alternatives, to reach well-reasoned conclusions based on all relevant facts and circumstances
Identify when it is appropriate to consult with specialists to solve problems and reach conclusions
Apply reasoning, critical analysis and innovative thinking to solve problems
Interpersonal and communication skills
Display cooperation and teamwork when working towards organisational goals
Communicate clearly and concisely when presenting, discussing and reporting in formal and informal situations, both in writing and orally
Demonstrate awareness of cultural and language differences in all communication
Apply active listening and effective interviewing techniques
Apply negotiation skills to reach solutions and agreements
Apply consultative skills to minimise or resolve conflict, solve problems, and maximise opportunities
Present ideas and influence others to provide support and commitment

Personal skills
Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning
Apply professional scepticism through questioning and critically assessing all information
Set high personal standards of delivery and monitor personal performance, through feedback from others and through reflection
Manage time and resources to achieve professional commitments
Anticipate challenges and plan potential solutions
Apply an open mind to new opportunities
Organisational skills
Undertaken assignments in accordance with established practices to meet prescribed deadlines
Review own work and that of others to determine whether it complies with the organisation's quality standards
Apply people management skills to motivate and develop others
Apply delegation skills to deliver assignments
Apply leadership skills to influence others to work towards organisational goals
Apply appropriate tools and technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness and improve decision making

8.0 IPD at a Glance

8.1 Completing IPD

Trainee professional accountants are responsible for managing their own career development. You should begin working towards completing the exams and IPD as soon as your registration process is complete.

Trainees are strongly advised to follow the advice provided in this guide and the steps listed here in order to successfully complete their IPD.

8.1.1 Secure Appropriate Employment

You should be in full-time employment within the accountancy profession with an employer who is supportive of training and able to offer a varied training environment.

Trainees are responsible for providing employers with a copy of this guide and to ascertain employer willingness and ability to provide training.

8.1.2 Appoint a qualified supervisor

IPD must be carried out under the observation of a supervisor who is appointed by your employer. Your supervisor should be a professionally qualified accountant willing to commit to regular meetings throughout the IPD period and be prepared to assess and certify IPD.

AIA may contact a supervisor for further information if necessary, during the IPD process.

8.1.3 Develop an IPD training schedule and plan

For IPD to be effective it is essential that you work together with your employer, supervisor and AIA throughout the training period.

You should arrange an initial meeting with your supervisor to agree a training schedule and plan.

The schedule should encompass the whole training period and include goals, a training timetable and agreed dates for review meetings, preferably at six monthly intervals. Previously established training programmes can be adapted to accommodate AIA IPD Requirements as long as the needs of your employer continue to be met.

The training plan covers the first six months of training leading up to the first review meeting after this the plan is reviewed and developed for the next six months. Please contact AIA for further guidance if required.

8.1.4 IPD Records

You must submit an AIA IPD Record for each year of your training. They should record details accurately and in a timely manner.

Entries should be made in English and should include the date of the work carried out and the type of task involved. Entries should cover all aspects of IPD.

You should agree the type of evidence to be recorded with your supervisor.

8.2 Supporting Information – IPD Evidence

You should always be aware that trainees are required to keep a portfolio (collection) of supporting evidence which AIA may request as part of the final IPD review. This evidence must be kept until the application process for Associate Membership has been completed.

REMEMBER

The following can be used for your IPD portfolio of supporting evidence:

- IPD schedule and training plans
- Written statements reflecting on development in Professional Conduct
- IPD diary
- Timesheets
- Internal appraisals
- Job specifications
- Reports written by you in your employment position
- Summary of projects undertaken
- Certificates of attendance at internal and external training courses

9.0 Review meetings and signing off your IPD

You should take your training plan and any other additional evidence of training undertaken or courses attended to each review meeting. It is important that trainees reflect upon their progress with regard to the competencies and requirements set out in this guide: technical development, professional conduct and development in professional skills, values and ethics.

During each review meeting the supervisor should provide you with feedback on your IPD progress, agree training goals for the next six-month period and verify your completed IPD Record if you have completed a full year of training.

Remember

It is your responsibility to ensure that meaningful reviews take place with your supervisor and AIA recommends that these take place at least every six months. If your organisation carries out regular performance reviews these could be combined with your IPD reviews.

10.0 Apply for Associate Membership

Trainees are eligible to apply for Associate membership when the following criteria have been met:

- successful completion of AIA exams
- minimum three years practical work experience
- current employment in the accountancy profession

10.1 IPD Annual Declaration

Graduates who have passed the AIA exams but have not obtained the required work experience should complete and submit an IPD Annual Declaration form until the requisite three years' experience is accrued. AIA contacts graduates each year to request submission of the declaration.

Remember

To apply for Associate membership, you will need to:

- complete and return an Application for Associate Membership Form (www.aiaworldwide.com/associate-membership)
- submit your completed, signed, IPD Record and appropriate evidence relating to your work experience
- submit the application fee

11.0 Checklist for new trainees

Follow this checklist to ensure you complete all requirements for your Initial Professional Development



Read all the information available in this guide and the AIA website relating to IPD; email ipd@aia worldwide.com with any queries.



Arrange for a suitably qualified person to act as your supervisor throughout your training. Submit your completed IPD Registration for Training Offices form to AIA.



Meet with your supervisor to agree your training plan for the first six-month period. Draw up a list of the type of evidence for your portfolio suitable for your employment circumstances.



Arrange six-monthly reviews with your supervisor. Keep copies of any documents relating to your training in your portfolio of supporting evidence until your application for Associate membership has been approved by AIA.



Complete your IPD Record throughout your training using a different profile for each year, making sure that they are certified by the appropriate supervisor.



When you have successfully completed the AIA exams and your three years IPD, apply for full AIA Associate membership, submitting your completed IPD Records with the application.



12.0 Frequently Asked Questions

I have just registered as an AIA student but am not working at the moment, what should I do?

AIA strongly recommends that IPD is completed alongside the exams or shortly after their completion.

If you are not in employment when you apply for student registration you should pursue employment in an appropriate field and inform AIA as soon as you secure full-time employment within the accountancy profession.

Can I use work experience gained before I registered as an AIA student?

AIA will consider up to one-year prior work experience (work undertaken before registration as an AIA student) towards your IPD. You should seek approval first.

To be eligible for consideration as part of your three years IPD, prior work experience must have been gained in full time employment in the accountancy profession under appropriate supervision and must be appropriately documented and certified by a professionally qualified accountant.

How many hours do I need to work for my employment to be counted as full-time?

Full-time work is defined as more than 35 hours per week.

Will AIA count any part-time work as IPD?

Appropriate and supervised part-time work may be considered on a pro-rata basis. Please contact AIA if you are in a part-time position for further guidance.

Will AIA consider contract work as part of my IPD?

Contract work may be acceptable if it is agreed by your supervisor to be equivalent to that of other employees and is relevant within the AIA IPD Requirements.

Do I have to gain my IPD in a particular sector or employment position?

IPD may be acquired in any business sector (e.g. industry, commerce or public practice) or in more than one sector.

I work in a specialist area; can I use this experience towards gaining my three years IPD?

IPD may be acquired in a specialist area (e.g. corporate finance, internal audit) provided it is relevant and appropriately supervised.

Will AIA accept lecturing as part of my IPD?

AIA will accept lecturing provided it is at the equivalent level of the AIA Foundation level exams and above (i.e. comparable to the first year of a UK degree). A maximum of 12 months lecturing experience will count towards the qualifying period.

I am self-employed; will my work count towards my IPD?

AIA will only recognise appropriately supervised accounting experience as contributing to your IPD, however, some supervised sub-contract work may be acceptable. Please contact AIA directly for further advice.

I have just left my current job after four months; can I still count this as part of my IPD?

To ensure that trainees receive the best possible start to their career, AIA will only accept IPD periods of six months or more as qualifying towards IPD.

Shorter periods will be eligible for consideration if promotion is received within the same company leading to a position in a different section, or if a move is made to a different employment address of the same firm. Please contact AIA for advice specific to your situation.

How much detail do I need to record?

Your record should be clear and concise and should provide adequate detail to demonstrate ability and progressive levels of responsibility in technical competency and professional skills, values and ethics. You should

ensure that you adequately meet the requirements set out in this guide and show a broad range of skills and experiences.

Can I complete my IPD record retrospectively?

It is possible to complete your record retrospectively although AIA advises that the record is completed as you progress. This allows for regular review by you and your supervisor and ensures that your work experience is progressing in line with your IPD training plan.

Who can be a supervisor?

Your supervisor should be a professionally qualified accountant. Where possible they should be your direct supervisor within your organisation.

Can my employer also be my supervisor?

Yes, your employer can also be your supervisor provided that they meet the requirements of being a professionally qualified accountant and that they are able to allocate appropriate time to meet the requirements of both supervisor and employer.

What if my employer is not appropriate or my supervisor is not appropriately qualified?

AIA will contact you and offer guidance as to how best to proceed.

I am the most senior member of accounting staff, who can I ask to sign my IPD Record?

Your IPD Record should then be signed by the auditors or accountants of your organisation.

13.0 Contact us

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