



**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Medieval Institute

# **Graduate Student Handbook**

## **Fall 2023**

### **FIRST-YEAR ORIENTATION**

All incoming students must arrive on campus in time to attend mandatory orientation sessions that take place the week before classes begin. Every new student with a graduate appointment must participate in the Graduate College's Graduate Appointee Training session; all students whether funded or not must attend the Medieval Institute's New Student Orientation. Students will have an opportunity during this week to obtain ID cards, parking permits, and familiarize themselves with the campus.

### **Latin Placement Exam**

The Latin placement exam is required of all incoming students. Normally, a date is arranged during the week of orientations for students to take the exam, which is a multiple-choice exam that lasts just under an hour; it will test your knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and composition skill. This year the placement exam has been replaced by a survey conducted by Dr. Kutzko.

### **REGISTRATION, COURSES, AND GRADES**

#### **Residency Policy of Western Michigan University**

Students generally come to WMU for the primary purpose of attending the University rather than establishing a domicile in Michigan. Admissions will determine a Student's Domicile based on information provided in the student's application to the University. This status will not change for the Period of Enrollment associated with the application, unless the student files an appeal as set forth in the residency policy.

Returning graduate students, those who began the program prior to Summer II 2020, may apply for in-state resident status for any semester/sessions in which they are enrolled in on-campus courses by completing a residency application in accordance with university procedure.

For Western Michigan University graduate students, admitted and enrolled effective with the Summer II 2020 semester or later, residency status is determined at the time of admission and it will remain the same throughout the student's enrollment at Western Michigan University.

For those students eligible to appeal for resident status, the student must demonstrate that his/her previous domicile has been abandoned and a Michigan domicile established.

Find the full residency policy on the Registrar's webpage under Policies and Guidelines →  
Residency

### **Registration Requirements**

Please consult the Graduate Catalog's policies on Academic Regulations and Full-Time enrollment for information on how enrollment influences payment of fees to the university.

### **Full-Time**

Six hours constitutes full-time status during fall and spring semesters. In order to receive funding awards, master's students must register for at least six hours during the fall and spring semesters. Three hours, however, constitutes full-time status during summer sessions.

### **Course Offerings**

Graduate students should take courses at the 5000-, 6000-, or 7000-level. 5000-level courses include a mixed enrollment of advanced undergraduate and graduate students. 6000- and 7000-level courses are for graduate students only. Note that some course descriptions are only available one semester in advance.

### **Courses in Other Departments**

Be aware that a department's own graduate students may have preference over Medieval Institute students for classes offered in that department. It behooves Medieval Institute students to contact the respective Graduate Director in Comparative Religion, English, History, and Spanish as soon as possible to ensure admission into a given course.

### **Independent Reading and Research Courses**

- MDVL 5970: Directed Study. May be taken for 1 to 4 credits.
- MDVL 7000: Masters Thesis. Must be taken for a minimum of 6 credits.
- MDVL 7100: Independent Research. May be taken for 2 to 6 credits.
- MDVL 7120: Professional Field Experience. May be taken for 2 to 12 credits.

In order to arrange a MDVL 5970, MDVL 7000, MDVL 7100, or MDVL 7120 course:

- A student should consult with the director to explain the need for such a course.
- Find a faculty member in the area to supervise the project.
- Fill out the Medieval Institute's permission to elect form with the supervising professor. This form, available from the director or Lisa Carnell, must be signed by both the student and professor and include a detailed explanation of the assignments and expectations for the directed or independent study or for field experience before obtaining the signature of the director.
- Submit the Permission to Elect Form to the director for a signature.

### **Adding and Dropping Courses**

Students must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credits in each fall and spring semester, and are encouraged to take 9. Students may drop a class, but cannot fall below 6 credit hours. Consult the director in the first week of classes if you are thinking about dropping a class.

According to the Graduate Catalog, students can add any course through the first five days of a semester or session. If students drop a course through the fifth day of the semester, the course will not be reflected on their transcript. The Registrar publishes the final date for the drop/add period in the Academic Calendar.

### **Withdrawals**

Students are allowed to withdraw from classes without academic penalty, but there are procedures and deadlines to be followed. There is an official procedure for withdrawing from the University for at least the remainder of the current semester or longer. The deadline for the last day to withdraw from all courses without academic penalty (grade of “W” is on the transcript) is noted each semester or session on the Registrar’s Office website. Students who do not follow the official procedure when withdrawing from the University will earn the grade of “X” for all courses; the “X” grade carries no honor points and affects the grade point average in the same manner as an “E” or failing grade.

If students suffer a hardship that requires the student to drop a course after the last official day to add/drop, they may initiate a hardship appeal. Withdrawal from a course at any time after the end of the student-initiated withdrawal period is effectively a grade change. As such it will be permitted only through the Grade Appeals Process, as described in the section Students Rights and Responsibilities, “Course Grade and Program Dismissal Appeals.” To change an assigned grade to “W,” documented hardship must be determined to have existed by a GAPDAC Hardship Assessment Panel, as described in the section Students Rights and Responsibilities, “Hardship Status.” To find more information about this academic policy and others go the Graduate Catalog, select Academic Policies → Registration → Dropping classes and withdrawing from all classes

### **Incompletes**

Students receive Incompletes when illness, family emergency, or other reasons beyond the control of the students prevent them from completing course requirements for a specific semester. To qualify for an Incomplete grade, the student must have a passing grade in the course and have completed the majority of the coursework. Incomplete grades given at the 5000 and 6000 level will convert to an X if they are not removed within one calendar year. The Graduate Catalog stipulates that “students who receive an incomplete grade in a course must not reregister for the course in order to remove the ‘I.’”

### **Grade Appeals**

Students wishing to appeal a grade should read the university policy referred to under withdrawals.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Student Academic Conduct**

Please consult the Graduate Catalog for specific information regarding academic honesty and conduct in research.

### **Policies Governing Funding**

#### **Applicants**

In January and February of every year, the Admissions Committee (comprised of three members of the Board of the Medieval Institute and the director) evaluates graduate program applications and ranks them prior to offering admission for the following academic year to prospective students. Once admissions decisions are finalized, the director uses the rankings, the financial means, and teaching and research needs to award assistantships. Because the Institute's budget and teaching and research needs vary each year, there is no set number of awards per year.

#### **Enrolled Students without Funding**

Students who have been admitted into the graduate program without an award may apply for an assistantship in any subsequent year. To be considered, students must:

- Be in good standing in the program
- Complete the online Assistantship Application

#### **Funded Students**

Once students sign their contracts, they are bound to the terms of that contract for the upcoming academic year. Students must apply each year for subsequent year funding.

#### **Applications for Teaching and Research Assistantships**

Students who wish to be considered for teaching as well as other assistantships must submit an application; this application is due February 15.

#### **Academic Dismissal Policy**

#### **Students with Funding**

Funding is subject to the terms and limitations in the letter of appointment. Student funding may be removed by the director on the recommendation of the thesis advisor (if there is one) or other relevant faculty. Reasons for removal of funding typically relate to the student's failure to make adequate progress toward completing degree requirements, which might include:

- Failure to meet language requirements
- Failure to meet deadlines in establishing committees or submitting required paperwork
- Accumulation of multiple incomplete grades
- Failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements
- Failure of oral examination
- Academic misconduct

Evaluation of progress is based on a comprehensive review, which includes the department's annual review of students in accordance with the WMU Graduate College policy regarding annual reviews of graduate students. Violations of the WMU Student Code may also provide grounds for dismissal. Any appeal of the revocation of funding must begin with a written appeal to an Ad Hoc Committee comprised of members of the Board of the Medieval Institute, which must include a rationale and any appropriate documentation. That committee will then review the appeal and make its recommendation to the director. Procedures for appeal beyond the Medieval Institute are provided in the Graduate Catalog and the Student Code. Procedures for, and appeals of, revocation of funding for reasons related to Teaching Assistants' performance as employees are stipulated in the TAU agreement.

### **All Graduate Students**

Students may be dismissed from the Medieval Institute's program by the director on the recommendation of the thesis advisor (if there is one) or other relevant faculty members. Reasons for dismissal typically relate to the student's failure to make adequate progress toward completing degree requirements, which might include:

- Failure to meet language requirements
- Failure to meet deadlines in establishing committees or submitting required paperwork
- Accumulation of multiple incomplete grades
- Failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements
- Failure of oral examination
- Academic misconduct

Evaluation of progress is determined based upon the department's annual review of students in accordance with the WMU Graduate College policy regarding annual reviews of graduate students. Violations of the WMU Student Code may also provide grounds for dismissal. Any appeal of the dismissal must begin with a written appeal to an Ad Hoc Committee comprised of members of the Board of the Medieval Institute, which must include a rationale and any appropriate documentation. That committee will then review the appeal and make its recommendation to the director. Procedures for appeal beyond the department are provided in the Graduate Catalog and WMU Student Code.

### **Annual Graduate Student Review**

The Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University, in accordance with the requirements of the Graduate College, administers an annual review of M.A. candidates in medieval studies to encourage graduate students to reflect upon their progress in the program, and to enable the director to better mentor them. Students self-report their progress by means of an online form (due **Jan. 15** for first-year students and **Feb. 15** for second- and subsequent-year students). The link to the form can be found at [wmich.edu/medieval/academics/graduate/review](http://wmich.edu/medieval/academics/graduate/review).

Students meet with the director of the Medieval Institute within three weeks of the deadlines for self-reporting to discuss the student's progress, and a final report, which includes the director's

comments and evaluation, is signed by the student and the director and becomes part of the permanent record.

### **Graduation Auditing**

In order to graduate, students must fulfill all of the requirements of the graduate program and must have gone through the graduation auditing process. During the semester prior to a student's anticipated graduation date, the student should meet with the director to finalize his or her permanent program. At this point, the director will forward the permanent program to the Registrar's Office, and the student will need to make a formal request for a graduation audit.

The Registrar's Office charges a processing fee to the student's account when the student requests a graduation audit. In the event the student must request more than one audit, he or she will be charged for each request.

Graduation Auditing Application Deadlines:

- April graduation deadline: October 1
- June graduation deadline: February 1
- August graduation deadline: February 1
- December graduation deadline: February 1

### **Goliardic Society**

The Goliardic Society is a social organization of the graduate students of the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University. The mission of the society is to facilitate camaraderie among students, faculty, and friends while enhancing the academic environment and multiple opportunities of the Medieval Institute through various donations, volunteer work, and scholarly activities.

## **MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM**

### **M.A. Transfer Credits**

Incoming master's degree students are allowed to transfer six semester hours of credit earned from another accredited graduate program into their Medieval Institute permanent program. To transfer credits, a student should meet with the director and fill out a transfer of credit form that will be sent to the Registrar's Office for approval. If the hours are approved, they are placed in the student's permanent program; the grades are recorded as CR (Credit) and do not factor into the student's overall GPA.

For courses to qualify as transfer credits, students must have:

- Paid for courses as graduate credits
- Received a B (3.0) or higher
- Earned the credits in the preceding six years

## **Master of Arts in Medieval Studies Requirements (31 or 34 hours)**

### **COURSEWORK**

A total of 30 hours of coursework, or 33 hours for thesis writers, including 12 hours of required core courses (with a course grade of B or better); and 18 hours, or 15 hours for thesis writers, of electives. Thesis writers take 6 hours of thesis credit (MDVL 7000). Medieval Institute students must take at least half their degree hours of at the 6000- or 7000-level (15 hours for regular MAs, 18 hours for thesis writers).

### **CORE COURSES**

- ENGL 5300, Medieval Literature (3 credit hours)
- HIST 5501, Medieval History Proseminar (3 credit hours)
- LAT 5600, Medieval Latin (3 credit hours)
- REL 6200, Medieval Religions (3 credit hours)

### **LANGUAGES**

Demonstrated proficiency in Latin and a second medieval or a modern language is required.

### **ORAL EXAMINATION**

The hour-long oral examination is an opportunity for faculty and the student to explore content in medieval studies based on the student's coursework. Students will choose two seminar papers with two distinct disciplinary foci to submit to the examination committee, with the expectation that they will have revised the papers for the examination. The examination committee will be composed of three members named by the director in consultation with the student. Students are encouraged to consult the professors for whom they originally wrote the papers and members of their examination committee for guidance. For students writing theses, one paper may be a chapter of the thesis. These papers will serve as the starting point for the oral exam. Note that students will submit the two papers to the director no later than two weeks prior to examination.

Students will receive an assessment of high pass, pass, low pass, or fail. If a student fails an examination, the examining faculty will determine whether the student is offered a one-time re-examination to be completed within 12 months of the first examination date.

### **THESIS (optional)**

With the thesis advisor's approval of a prospectus, a student may complete the degree by producing a master's thesis under the direction of a thesis committee. The committee will be composed by the student in consultation with the director.

### **Foreign language requirement (and how to fulfill it)**

The Medieval Institute requires M.A. students to have reading proficiency in two foreign languages, medieval Latin and one other. Proficiency in a modern language allows students to read scholarship in another language, thus keeping abreast of scholarly developments in a particular field. The Medieval Institute has several ways that students can meet this requirement.

## **Translation Exam**

Students who have studied a foreign language before may wish to choose this option. The Department of World Languages and Literatures (WLL) and the Department of Spanish offer language exams twice a year, once in October and once in March. WLL posts on their department website information about the exam, including exam dates and registration deadlines. To take the translation exam, a student will:

- Notify the appropriate department by the appropriate date
- Provide the examiner with six texts, all originally written in the language of choice
- Pay a fee of \$50.00

The exam will consist of two passages, each of 300-400 words. All Medieval Institute students will be asked to translate one text more literary in nature and one text more historical in nature. Students should consult the director concerning their selections. The student will have three hours to translate the texts and should bring a hard-copy dictionary to the exam.

The director will notify students about their results once the exams have been graded by the appropriate language professor(s). In the case of a marginal performance, the director will consult further with the faculty member who graded the exam to determine whether the student should pass.

## **Previous Coursework, Language Exams, and Language Study**

Students who earned a major or a minor in an approved foreign language during their undergraduate years or students who passed a foreign language examination at the graduate level from another institution may have their foreign language requirement waived, if the work was carried out within the last seven years and if the student earned a B or above in the courses or on the examination.

Students who believe they have met the requirement in this or another manner (such as study abroad experience or fluency in another language) should set up an appointment with the director to discuss their status.

## **Coursework**

There are several options for students to fulfill the language requirement through coursework while at WMU.

- Reading French and German courses (5000/5010) are offered in the summer, one language sequence each summer. These courses are designed for graduate students who have little to no previous experience in the respective language. If a student passes 5000 and 5010 with a B or better, then the student will have fulfilled the requirement.
- The English department offers a one-year sequence in Old English and a one-year sequence in Old Norse-Icelandic in alternating years. If a student passes both semesters with a B or better, then the student will have fulfilled the requirement.
- The Department of World Languages and Literatures and the Department of Spanish offer undergraduate classes in Ancient Greek, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Latin, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Students who wish to take coursework may do so by



registering for 5020 (French, German, Latin, and Spanish, for instance) for three credit hours and attending the introductory class just as if they were registered for all four credit hours. Forms and permission to register for this call number must be obtained from the WLL or Spanish department. Funded graduate students may take one language class during each semester of the academic year (fall and spring) paid for by their assistantship, but only 2000-level or higher courses will be counted toward the degree. Since the Medieval Institute requirement asks for reading proficiency, students will have to pass the appropriate reading class (3160 in French or German, for instance) with a grade of B or better to fulfill the requirement.

### **Thesis Requirements**

Students who wish to write a thesis should be thinking about this from the time they enter the program. Students should think about what professor to approach to serve as advisor. If the professor agrees to work with the student, then the two of them should work together to form the student's thesis committee. University regulations require that a student's thesis committee be comprised of a chair and two other graduate faculty members. Once a student and professor have agreed to work together, the student notifies the director of the Medieval Institute. When students have completed enough preliminary research, they must obtain the COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT FORM from the Graduate College website → Forms → Dissertation, Specialist Project, Thesis → COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT. This document is signed by:

- Each committee member
- Director of the Medieval Institute
- Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
- Dean of the Graduate College

### **Thesis Advisor/Advisee Relationship**

Once a student has selected the thesis advisor, the student and advisor need to discuss the plan for submitting chapters to the advisor and the role of the rest of the committee. The ideal scenario allows the student feedback from all members of the committee, but the student should consult each committee member as to that committee member's preference.

#### **AN IDEAL SCENARIO MIGHT BE:**

- The student begins by submitting a chapter to the advisor who reads it and gives the student feedback on how to revise.
- The student revises and continues work on the particular chapter.
- Only after the thesis advisor has approved the chapter—meaning that the advisor believes that it is ready to go to the other members of the committee so that they can give their feedback—should the student submit the chapter to the other members of the committee.
- The committee members provide feedback on the revised chapter.

Both students and their advisors should also be aware of deadlines, have reasonable expectations of the time necessary to read and comment on a chapter, and make all attempts to submit and return chapters in as timely a manner as possible. The defensible draft needs to be submitted to

the committee a minimum of three weeks before the defense date; it is a good idea for the student to contact the committee members to see how much time they will need to read the thesis.

### **Thesis Defense**

Students will need to set up a thesis defense; this requires the student to contact the members of the thesis committee to set up a day and time. Once that is done, the student should contact Lisa Carnell to find a location for the defense. Students should review the Graduate College's MASTER'S THESIS/SPECIALIST PROJECT CHECK-IN form well before setting up the thesis defense as there are specific Graduate College requirements that must be met.

Graduate College website → Forms → Dissertation, Specialist Project, Thesis → Dissertation, Specialist Project, Thesis Check-in → Thesis/Specialist Project Check-in Form

### **Request to Extend Time of Program**

If circumstances compel students to request an extension beyond the six-year deadline for earning the M.A., they should obtain a form, the PROGRAM TIME EXCEPTION, from the Graduate College website → Forms → Special Circumstances → Program Time Extension

The student should fill out the part of the form that is applicable and then ask the director to fill out the rest of the form. The director will then submit the form to the Graduate College. The student typically will hear within a week whether or not the request has been approved

## **COMMUNITY OF MEDIEVALISTS**

As students of the Medieval Institute, you become members of the Institute's community and the wider community of medievalists here at WMU. Being a part of these communities means that you will have many opportunities to attend lectures, conferences, workshops, and receptions. As a member of the Medieval Institute community, you are required to attend events, including relevant workshops, sponsored and co-sponsored by the Medieval Institute. You are also expected to attend programs offered by other units on campus that are germane to your studies.

## **POLICIES GOVERNING GRADUATE ASSISTANTS**

All funded graduate students, as graduate assistants (GAs), have a direct supervisor. The supervisor will be indicated when GAs are informed of their duties before the semester begins. If students have a problem with their supervisor, and have already discussed it with their supervisor or are reluctant to do that, they may contact the director of the Medieval Institute.

### **Teaching Assistants—Policies**

Graduate Assistants whose *primary* duties are in teaching may choose to become members of TAU, the Teaching Assistants Union. If students choose to become union members, they must fill out a form and pay dues. All policies pertaining to teaching assistants can be found in the TAU agreement.

## **Graduate Assistants and non-Instructional Duties—Policies**

Graduate Assistants may be assigned research or non-teaching duties as part or all of their appointment. The following policies apply to non-instructional duties.

**Terms of appointment:** Beginning and ending dates are outlined in the letter of appointment. Mandatory training may be scheduled in the week before classes begin in the fall semester, with the regular work schedule beginning with the start of classes and extending through finals week. Full-time GAs, whether assigned to instructional or non-instructional duties, are expected to work 300 hours per semester (20 hours/week for 15 weeks); those with half-time appointments are expected to work 150 hours per semester (10 hours/week for 15 weeks); those with quarter-time appointments are expected to work 75 hours per semester (5 hours/week for 15 weeks).

**Holidays and Recesses:** GAs do not work (and do not make up time for) days when WMU offices are closed. GAs do not work (and do not make up time for) days and times when classes do not meet.

**Inclement weather:** GAs do not make up time missed for university office closures due to inclement weather.

**Sick and bereavement leave:** GAs are entitled to 5 days per semester of sick leave and 5 days per semester of bereavement leave. The time for days missed beyond these entitlements must be made up.

**Breaks:** GAs who work four consecutive hours are entitled to a 15-minute paid break. That time appears as time worked on the time sheet.

**Schedules and time sheets:** During the first week of classes, you and your supervisor will need to establish a tentative schedule of your work hours. This should be finalized by the third week of classes. If you need to rearrange your work schedule to accommodate an onslaught of academic assignments, you must request permission **in advance** and specify when and how you intend to make up the hours. Time sheets should be turned in to your supervisor at the end of each WMU pay period during the semester and must reflect the actual hours worked each day.

**Use of Medieval Institute equipment:** When in the Medieval Institute offices, you may use the computers in the student areas for your academic work—including working on papers and checking email—during the hours you're not working, as long as the computers are not needed by students who are working for MI/MIP at the time. Personal use of printers and the photocopier should be limited to the occasional few pages. Larger jobs should be printed on personal printers or via the facilities available to students on campus (principally in the computing centers and the libraries).

**Dress and decorum:** Dress in the offices is generally business casual (potentially less formal than dressing for teaching). Please dress appropriately for the tasks you expect to perform on any given day. Shoes should be worn whenever you're outside your immediate work area. Ours is

shared work space, and you are expected to conduct conversations at an appropriately low volume. If listening to music is allowed by your supervisor during certain tasks, please be aware of our generally open offices and wear headphones—through which only you should be able to hear the music. Personal phone calls and text messages, when necessary, are to be kept brief.

**Confidentiality:** In the course of your work, you can expect to see and hear certain things that must not be repeated or discussed outside the office. You are likely to know something about what projects are under consideration for publication at MIP and which scholars have proposed sessions or papers for the Congress, as well as how scholars evaluate each other's work in such contexts. You may also know the results of such evaluations and who these readers and evaluators are—and it's crucial to remember that we have promised readers and evaluators that they will remain anonymous unless they've formally given us permission to reveal their identities. It is not unheard of for someone to ask you (innocently or not so innocently) for information that should remain confidential. It is best simply to respond to any queries by saying you don't know anything about whatever is being asked (unless, depending on the circumstances, you prefer to remind the questioner that the question is inappropriate) and to avoid any mention of projects, proposals, etc. that are under consideration. You may not share any contact information from the Medieval Institute's mailing list with third parties (including intra-WMU third parties), no matter how benign a request may seem.

## AFFILIATED FACULTY RESEARCH INTERESTS AND DEPARTMENTS

- **Jeffrey Angles**—gender in modern Japanese literature and culture, history of translation in modern Japan (World Languages and Literatures)
- **Lofton L. Durham III**—cultural importance of performance in late medieval France (Theatre)
- **Joyce Kubiski**—French and Italian manuscript illumination from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, portraiture, representations of the body (Art)
- **David Kutzko**—continuity of literary traditions, Hellenistic poetry, Latin literature of the late republic and the early empire (World Languages and Literatures)
- **Molly Lynde-Recchia**—Old French literature, poetry and translation (World Languages and Literatures)
- **Mustafa Mirzeler**—African historical tradition and folktales, African historiography, Turkish folklore and literature (English)
- **Natalio Ohanna**—Spanish Golden Age and Spanish American colonial literatures (Spanish)
- **James Palmitessa**—history of Europe, ca. 1400-1800, especially society and religion, urban history, material culture, central Europe (History)
- **Pablo Pastrana-Pérez**—Spanish medieval literature and historical linguistics (Spanish)
- **Jana K. Schulman**—Old English and Old Norse language, law, and literature, comparative medieval literature, medieval women (English)
- **Larry J. Simon**—medieval history, especially Spain, Italy and the Mediterranean; Islamic and Jewish history (History)
- **Susan Steuer**—devout medieval women and manuscripts (University Libraries)
- **Anise K. Strong**—Roman social history, gender and sexuality in the ancient world, classical culture in modern mass media (History)
- **Nathan Tabor**—Urdu and Persian literatures and their patronage from the early modern period to the present (History)
- **Grace Tiffany**—Renaissance history and culture (English)
- **Kevin J. Wanner**—medieval Christianity, with a particular focus on the pre- and post-conversion religion and culture of Scandinavia (Comparative Religion)
- **Victor C. Xiong**—Chinese history and archaeology (especially the Sui Tang period with an emphasis on urban, social and cultural history) (History)

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