



# GCSE Examiners' Report

Built Environment  
GCSE  
Summer 2024

## Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.  For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Unit 1- Introduction to the Built Environment**

This is the third time the GCSE Built Environment unit 1 examination has been offered. As in previous years, it proved to be an accessible paper.

The paper covered all Assessment Objectives namely AO1, AO2 and AO3 whilst sampling the specification content. Candidates were able to provide responses to questions on all assessment objectives. The majority of questions were answered well by many candidates, there are, however, a number of points that can be made with a view to improving performance:

- Candidates should be encouraged to provide further detail for higher tariff questions in order to access the full range of marks available.
- Candidates should also be encouraged to read the questions fully and establish what is being asked of them. Consideration of the command verbs and the total number of marks available is often critical.
- Questions where extended responses are required should be practiced in advance of sitting the paper. This year's question 10 was quite poorly answered by many candidates.
- Centres are advised to use the past papers available as a fundamental part of their revision activities.

### **Unit 2 Pathways A and B**

Unit 2 provides a choice of two pathways – each pathway is internally assessed with specification based assessments. The assessments address all three assessment objectives, however the greatest emphasis is on AO2 – the application of skills, knowledge and understanding.

#### **A. Design the Built Environment**

Candidate work was internally assessed by centres and uploaded to the WJEC. The specification based assessment brief focused on the design of a single storey extension for a community hall. This assessment can be modified or replaced with an assessment of a similar level of demand and focus. There were some instances where centres created their own assessments and provided too much information thereby reducing the potential candidate input.

A significant number of candidates did well in many areas of the work undertaken, there are, however, a number of points that can be made with a view to improving performance:

- Centres should encourage candidates to familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.
- It would aid centres and candidates if the evidence produced was presented in a logical way and clearly linked to the assessment criteria.
- If centres are to provide an alternative assessment, then it should closely follow the specification based assessment. This is to ensure it generates the appropriate evidence to meet the associated assessment criteria.
- Centres are advised to assist their candidates in fully understanding the meaning of success criteria. The importance of the link between success criteria and their evaluation should be emphasised.

10 questions were attempted by 100% of candidates.  
The age profile of the candidates was 63.2%

## **B. Creating the Built Environment**

Candidate work was internally assessed by centres and uploaded to the WJEC. The specification based assessment brief focused on the provision of an extension to a youth hostel. This assessment can be modified or replaced with an assessment of a similar level of demand and focus. There were some instances where centres created their own assessments and provided too much information thereby reducing the potential candidate input.

A significant number of candidates did well in many areas of the work undertaken, there are, however, a number of points that can be made with a view to improving performance:

- Centres should encourage candidates to familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.
- It would aid centres and candidates if the evidence produced was presented in a logical way and clearly linked to the assessment criteria.
- If centres are to provide an alternative assessment, then it should closely follow the specification based assessment. This is to ensure it generates the appropriate evidence to meet the associated assessment criteria.
- Centres are advised to assist their candidates in fully understanding the meaning of success criteria. The importance of the link between success criteria and their evaluation should be emphasised.
- Centres are requested to provide clear photographic evidence which supports candidate attainment.

### Unit 3 – Exploring the Built Environment

This unit is internally assessed by centres with sample candidate work being uploaded to the WJEC. Candidates are required to select two buildings, one being contemporary and the other being built before 1919. An excellent range of buildings were chosen with all centre 'pairs' being wholly appropriate.

The unit is assessed through a specification set brief, which provides a framework of five requirements which are applied to the two buildings chosen. AO1, AO2 and AO3 are all assessed with more emphasis being placed on AO1 and AO3.

The evidence submitted by candidates was, in the main, good with some excellent work being produced. There are, however, a number of points which can be made with a view to improving performance:

- Centres are advised to forge links with the management of the buildings selected
- Centres are also advised to help candidates get the most out of their liaison with the management of the buildings. This could include encouraging them to obtain what they need to meet the requirements of the assessment tasks, rather than simply receiving general information.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Unit 1 general	Qualification textbook	Available from the WJEC.
	Digital blended resource	Available via the main WJEC website – Digital Resources. Provides content coverage of unit 1.
	Digital resource for GCE Built Environment	Knowledge organisers for GCE units 1 and 3.
	Exemplar materials and recorded digital CPD resource for GCSE Built Environment.	Available via the portal.

Unit 2 Pathway A general	<p>Qualification textbook</p> <p>Digital resources for GCE Built Environment</p> <p>Exemplar materials and recorded digital CPD resource for GCSE Built Environment.</p>	<p>Available from the WJEC.</p> <p>Available via the main WJEC website – Digital Resources – Unit 2 GCE.</p> <p>Available via the portal.</p>
Unit 2 Pathway B general	<p>Qualification textbook</p> <p>Exemplar materials and recorded digital CPD resource for GCSE Built Environment.</p>	<p>Available from the WJEC.</p> <p>Available via the portal.</p>
Unit 3 general	<p>Qualification textbook</p> <p>Exemplar materials and recorded digital CPD resource for GCSE Built Environment.</p>	<p>Available from the WJEC.</p> <p>Available via the portal.</p>

# BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## GCSE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

#### Overview of the Unit

This again proved to be an accessible paper with Item Level Data showing that all 10 questions were attempted by 100% of candidates.

The age profile of the candidates was 63.2% taking the examination at 15 years of age with the remainder being 16 years of age.

Male candidates accounted for 91.2% of entries with Welsh medium candidates making up 13% of the cohort.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1** The mean mark for this question was 2.6 out of 6 and the facility factor 44%.

**(a)** was intended as an accessible introduction to the paper for the candidates with only short or one-word answers being required for both parts of the question. Many candidates were able to gain marks here.

**(b)** asked candidates to name two plumbing services and then to explain how the services named affect the health and well-being of a building's occupants. Many candidates misinterpreted the focus of the question and gave answers naming the work carried out by a plumber such as installing pipework and fixing leaks.

**Q.2** This question had a mean mark of 2.9 out of 5 and the highest facility factor on the paper of 57%.

**(a)** was well answered by the majority of candidates. Most could state the mining, forestry and quarrying industries to gain some marks for the question.

**(b)** "frames" and "beams" were the construction components most commonly named by candidates. Other components were much less frequently referenced.

**Q.3** The mean mark for this question was 1.8 out of 7 and the facility factor 26%. Disappointingly, in part (a), this demonstrated that the necessary knowledge of the different forms of maintenance and the basic difference between Planned/Preventative and Corrective maintenance was lacking in the majority of candidates. In part (b) knowledge of the purpose Building Operation and Maintenance Manual was very limited. Extended answers required to gain 3 marks were seldom given by candidates.

- Q.4** The mean mark for this question was 4.8 out of 9 and the facility factor 53%.
- (a) nearly all of the candidates were able to place the buildings listed in the correct column in the table.
  - (b) many candidates were able to outline at least one benefit but were often unable to differentiate between an economic and social benefit. Economic benefits were commonly offered under the social benefit heading. Marks for outlining a possible drawback were gained by a majority of candidates, but rarely in sufficient detail to achieve 2 marks.
- Q.5** This proved to be a difficult question for many candidates with a mean mark of 1.0 out of 7 and a facility factor of 15%.
- (a) the components of external walls (Structural element and Insulation) were not well understood by candidates. Specific examples of components such as masonry and insulated panels were only occasionally named.
  - (b) rubber and fibreglass were often correctly suggested, but in many cases, candidates incorrectly named slate as a suitable finish for a flat roof. Correctly naming guttering, drainpipes and downpipes earned marks for many candidates.
- Q.6** This proved to be an accessible question with the majority of candidates able to explain at least one of the benefits and one of the limitations of wind turbines. Responses showing the thorough knowledge and clear understanding necessary to gain a Band 3 mark were less common. Candidate answers to this type of question that require an extended piece of writing continue to be poorly answered. The mean mark for this question was 2.0 out of 6 and the facility factor 33%.
- Q.7** This was the most poorly answered question on the paper with a mean mark of 1.1 out of 8 and a facility factor 13%.
- (a) a knowledge of Cellular construction was not apparent in the vast majority of cases. Many candidates attempted to base their responses on the word “cellular” and showed no real understanding of the characteristics of this form of construction.
  - (b) the most common response by candidates was to do with restoring or maintaining the original character and preserving the building’s history. One or two marks were often achieved by candidates, but more developed explanations that included more than one relevant factor were not common.

**Q.8** The mean mark for this question was 2.2 out of 8 and the facility factor 28%.

- (a) (i)&(ii) required candidates to describe the benefits and drawbacks of greenfield sites. A basic understanding of the situation was evident in most candidate responses. Answers stating the fact that greenfield sites have “not been built on previously” and are “cheap to build on” were often given by candidates. Lack of infrastructure and a negative effect on nature were the most commonly stated drawbacks.
- (b) the question asked candidates to consider the approaches necessary to reduce the environmental impact during construction of new houses. This was not well understood by many candidates who outlined measures to reduce environmental impact during the post construction or operation phase of the house’s life cycle.

**Q.9** Most candidates were able to basically describe the contribution made by two of the service engineers, however, more comprehensive answers were fairly rare. To gain the full two marks available answers needed to describe two specific job contributions. Many candidates were awarded one mark only for listing two installation tasks, for instance, “a plumber fits sinks and fits showers.” Centres are reminded that all of the subject content necessary to fully answer questions on job roles in construction is included on pages 18 and 19 of the specification. The mean mark for this question was 1.8 out of 4 and the facility factor 45%.

**Q.10** Candidates were required to read the question thoroughly and respond to the outlined scenario with an analysis of the safety issues to be considered when planning for work to be carried out during refurbishment of an underground sewerage system. Marks were also awarded here for quality of written communication.

The two specific considerations for analysis were the possible risks and hazards and the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) necessary to mitigate the dangers that could be encountered by construction workers.

A slight improvement in the breadth and depth of candidate’s responses was noted in some centres but this type of question remains an obvious area for attention in future. Band 2 marks were the most common level of achievement for this question. Candidates generally showed an understanding of the outlined scenario, but most were unable to develop their answers to meet the requirements of the band 3 and 4 mark descriptors. Detail and clarity of communication was often lacking in responses as well as a succinct analysis of the purpose of the PPE listed for use.

The mean mark for this question was 3.1 out of 10 and the facility factor 31%.

## Summary of key points

Centres are advised to:

- Encourage candidates to provide further detail and more concise justification in their responses to questions that are to be awarded 2 or more marks
- Teach candidates to take more time to read and contemplate questions in detail, in order to fully understand what exactly is being asked of them
- Give their students opportunities to practise answering questions prior to sitting the exam. Questions that call for an extended piece of writing, such as this year's question 10, continue to be poorly answered by many candidates
- Use the four past papers (2022, 2023, 2024 and the Sample Assessment Materials) as well as the digital resources; (<https://resources.wjec.co.uk/Pages/ResourceByArgs.aspx?subid=96&lvid=2>) that are now available on the WJEC website to support candidate revision for this Unit 1 examination.

## UNIT 2 (NEA) – PATHWAY A – DESIGNING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Overview of the Unit

This was the second occasion on which this unit pathway has been assessed. Candidate work was internally assessed by centres prior to a sample being presented for external moderation by the WJEC.

The board-set task focused on the design of a single storey extension for a community hall. Centres are permitted to modify the board-set task or to devise a context of their own. A small number of centres did decide to create their own contexts and in these instances the design tasks presented for moderation were appropriate. However, in some cases candidates were provided with too much information which constrained their ability to make an individual interpretation of the design brief.

### Tasks

#### Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Identifying and calculating information.

This section involves an analysis of the outline scenario in order to specify suitable materials and the type of construction that could be used to realise the candidate's final design proposal. Calculations relevant to the design proposal also needed to be included. This aspect of the mark scheme was not always considered in sufficient depth and calculations were often spread throughout the design portfolio rather than being collected and presented for assessment in a logical order.

- (a)** Writing and setting success criteria.  
The mark scheme clearly sets out a requirement for success criteria to consider issues related to tolerance, timescale and quality and to be objective and measurable. The best examples presented by centres were concise and gave realistic parameters to the candidate's design work as well as providing a framework for the evaluation of the completed design proposal. Gantt charts can be used to set out a measurable timescale but should be related to completion of the design tasks and not concerned with proposals for the construction of the design scenario.
- (b)** Drawing plans and elevations.  
Overall attainment remains consistent in this area. The majority of candidate's time and effort being taken up by these activities. A variety of appropriate software was used to communicate the necessary plans, cross-sections and elevations. Computer-generated software was used in all cases with no centres presenting evidence in the form of hand-produced drawings.
- (c)** Drawing two-dimensional plans and three-dimensional virtual models and plans.  
Most candidates demonstrated proficiency in creating three-dimensional virtual models of their individual design proposals. In general, a good range of skills was shown in manipulating a range of software, such as 'Autodesk Revit' and 'Google Sketch Up'. Screenshots of the candidate's final design proposal were presented for moderation purposes.
- (d)** Using the language of drafting.  
Overall, candidates work followed the necessary British Standards and conventions as well as being presented in an appropriate scale.

- (e) Evaluating the design task.  
This continues to be an area in which attainment could be improved in future with candidates often presenting very brief or simplistic evaluation reports. In many cases this seemed to be a direct consequence of the limited success criteria set out earlier in the project. The mark scheme clearly calls for the evaluation report to consider the requirements of the brief, success criteria, end users and suggestions for possible improvement.

## **Task marking**

### **Comments on approaches to internal marking**

Centres are advised to:

- Further familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria and encourage candidates to structure their project work in the order of the assessment criteria.
- Think carefully about structuring the project work so that, where possible, it follows the linear pattern of the assessment criteria. This would aid both centres and students to ensure that they are meeting the assessment requirements. The work of some centres jumped back and forth between different parts of the mark scheme and in the cases where there was little teacher commentary the process of accurate assessment was made difficult.
- Use the board-set scenario or devise their own scenarios that closely follow the pattern of the board-set scenario. Some centre-devised scenarios presented the candidates with too much information relevant to the design which prevented them from being able to interpret and model the scenario to their own needs. There is a need for an 'outline' task scenario rather than an 'over-prescribed' scenario that can limit candidate attainment.
- Improve their student's knowledge of setting and writing success criteria. This in turn should also help to improve the quality and depth of the student's evaluations of the completed design proposal.

## UNIT 2 (NEA) – PATHWAY B – CREATING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Overview of the Unit

This was the second occasion on which this unit pathway has been assessed. Candidate work was internally assessed by centres prior to a sample being presented for external moderation by the WJEC.

The board-set task was about the construction of an extension for a youth hostel. Centres are permitted to modify the board-set task or to devise a context of their own. A number of centres did decide to create their own contexts and in all cases the construction tasks presented for moderation were appropriate and allowed their candidates to gain marks in each section of the marks scheme.

### Tasks

#### Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

- (a) Interpreting technical sources of information identifying resource requirements calculating materials required.

In many instances, it was obvious that centres had provided candidates with too much information which constrained their ability to make an individual interpretation of technical sources of information relevant to the construction task. Resource requirements such as tools, equipment and PPE were generally identified and outlined in some detail by candidates. The mathematical calculation of material quantities was not always given sufficient emphasis. It should also be noted that the costing of materials is not a requirement of the unit marking criteria.

- (b) Writing and setting success criteria.

The mark scheme clearly sets out a requirement for success criteria to consider issues related to tolerance, timescale and quality and to be objective and measurable. The best examples presented by centres were concise and gave realistic parameters to the candidate's construction activities as well as providing a framework for the eventual evaluation of the completed work in the two chosen trade areas.

- (c) Planning and organising work working practices that promote health and safety.

The best examples moderated used appropriate planning methods such as Gantt or Flow charts to present a sequence and timeline for the manufacture of the construction tasks. Teacher comments on health and safety working practices was helpful here in highlighting matters to do with cleanliness, safety of work areas and the appropriate use of correct PPE.

- (d) Preparing for construction tasks removing and disposing of materials.

Preparation tasks (such as properties, stock forms and sizes) were cross-referenced in the resource requirements identified in section (a) by some centres. This is another area in which teacher comment can be helpful to highlight candidate attainment in the processing and safe disposal of the materials during the construction phase.

- (e) Carrying out techniques.

The techniques chosen by most centres were appropriate and challenging to candidates. This was true of centres that chose to follow the WJEC set context or centres that decided to develop their own. Photographic evidence of the two completed construction tasks is an essential requirement here.

A step by step 'diary' of work progress is not necessary but clear photos showing details of the 2 completed trade area activities are essential. Teacher comment and justification also supports the photographic evidence and aids accurate moderation.

- (f) Evaluating the construction tasks.

This is an area in which attainment could be improved in future with candidates often presenting very brief or simplistic evaluation reports. In many cases this seemed to be a direct consequence of the limited success criteria set out earlier in the project. The mark scheme clearly calls for the evaluation report to reflect on the requirements of the brief, success criteria, end users and suggestions for possible improvement.

## **Task marking**

### **Comments on approaches to internal marking**

#### **Summary of key points**

Centres are advised to:

- Further familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria and encourage candidates to structure their project work in line with the assessment criteria.
- Think carefully about structuring the project work so that, where possible, it follows the linear pattern of the assessment criteria. This would aid both centres and students to ensure that they are meeting the assessment requirements. The work of some centres jumped back and forth between different parts of the mark scheme and in the cases where there was little teacher commentary the process of accurate assessment was made difficult.
- Use the board-set scenario or devise their own scenarios that closely follow the pattern of the board-set scenario. Some centre-devised scenarios presented the candidates with too much information on material calculations and quantities which prevented them from being able to interpret and model the scenario to their own needs. There is a need for an 'outline' task scenario rather than an 'over-prescribed' scenario that can limit candidate attainment.
- Improve their students understanding of setting and writing success criteria. This should also improve the quality and depth of the students' evaluations of the completed design proposal.
- Provide clear photographic evidence to support candidate attainment in section (e) carrying out techniques. Photographs need to provide detail of the two completed construction tasks.

## **UNIT 3 (NEA) – EXPLORING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

### **Overview of the Unit**

This was the second occasion on which this unit has been assessed. Candidate work was internally assessed by centres prior to a sample being presented for external moderation by the WJEC.

Candidates were required to select two relevant buildings in their local built environment on which to produce a case study. Without exception, the work presented for moderation met the requirements of the assessment criteria in respect to the characteristics of the buildings identified for study.

### **Tasks**

#### **Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria**

- (a)** Planning and design stages of buildings and structures construction processes.

Most candidates displayed some knowledge of how their chosen built environment has been planned and constructed to meet given needs. The most successful were able to apply this knowledge to RIBA Stages 0 to 5 and gained marks accordingly.

- (b)** Well-being of communities.

Candidates are asked to analyse the contribution made by the chosen contemporary building to their community. Attainment in this category was improved compared to last year with many candidates working methodically through the four factors required in the mark scheme (social, economic, environmental and cultural impact) and as a result were able to access marks in the higher bands of the assessment criteria.

- (c)** Post-occupancy evaluations.

This section highlighted the importance of centres establishing a strong link with a contemporary building and its occupants. The information that is required for candidates to present their conclusions on a buildings impact can only be gained through a site visit or correspondence between building and centre.

- (d)** Building maintenance and repair, change of use.

Again, candidates at those centres that succeeded in establishing a meaningful link with a nearby contemporary building seemed to perform well in this section of the mark scheme. The use of ICT skills and techniques throughout the case study was also adjudged and awarded marks in this section.

**(e) Changing practices.**

A comparison of the design and construction of a contemporary and heritage building was carried out by candidates with a variety of generally effective methods being used to present findings. Some candidates chose to present the work in the form of a table, directly comparing the material and construction characteristics of the two buildings. In the most successful responses, photographs were often included to illustrate aspects of the buildings and their relevant features.

**Task marking**

**Comments on approaches to internal marking**

Centres are advised to:

- Establish strong links with the two buildings chosen for the case study. The best work produced by centres show clear evidence that their students had made site visits and kept in contact throughout the period of composing the case study.
- Aid their students in preparing detailed questionnaires prior to the site visits in order to gain relevant feedback from the owners, occupants and constructors of the buildings.

## **Supporting you**

### **Useful contacts and links**

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 02922 404 259

Email: [Construction@wjec.co.uk](mailto:Construction@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Built Environment \(wjec.co.uk\)](https://www.wjec.co.uk/gcse-built-environment)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

### **CPD Training / Professional Learning**

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

### **WJEC Qualifications**

As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.



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