



Publisher: Centre for Behaviour and Wellness  
Advocacy, Ghana  
Co-publisher: Cherkas Global University, USA  
Has been issued since 2014  
ISSN 2410-4981. E-ISSN 2508-1055  
2024. 11(3): 401-411

DOI: 10.13187/jare.2024.3.401

Journal homepage:  
<http://kadint.net/our-journal.html>



## Management and Public Procedures for Providing Higher Legal Education

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### Abstract

The provision of higher legal education is formed from a set of material and institutional measures that have the appropriate procedural form of implementation. Public management procedures are integral elements of this provision. Higher legal education is defined as a complex system of knowledge, skills, expertise, legal-related ways of reasoning, qualities, and competencies acquired during training in a higher education institution according to a standardized educational program; the completion of this program is the ground for awarding a higher education degree. The purpose of the article is to determine the managerial and procedural aspects of providing higher legal education. The findings substantiate the need to improve legislation in the field of higher legal education by developing and adopting special legislation. The study's methodological framework involved general and special scientific approaches, such as methods of philosophical argument, system analysis, deductive reasoning, structural-functional, and empirical methods. The authors present an argument for special features determining the provision of higher legal education. The findings can be of avail to legislators and law enforcement bodies to regulate relations in higher legal education.

**Keywords:** Accreditation, Administrative Procedure, Educational Program, Higher Legal Education, International Law, Law, Licensing.

### 1. Introduction

Article 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine enshrines the right of a person to free and unimpeded access to education ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1996](#)). If necessary, a person can exercise the right to get an education in the language of national minorities. This right applies to all levels and forms of education, including pre-higher, higher, adult, and vocational education ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017a](#)). In order to guarantee this right, the state provides a supportive environment for accessing educational services by funding various educational, research, and socio-economic initiatives and programs. Given the above, authorized bodies of the state are obliged to take all necessary actions to provide access to higher education under any conditions.

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Received: 23 April 2024 Revised: 22 November 2024 Accepted: 26 November 2024

Published: 31 December 2024

European integration affects all social life spheres, subject to legal ordering. This is especially true for the activities of public institutions in all their forms and external manifestations. A positive step in this direction was the adoption of legislation on administrative procedures, which allowed law enforcement activities of all subjects entitled by law to execute public administration functions and shift toward a new paradigm. This shift aligns with the principle of upholding the rule of law in a democratic state governed by the rule of law ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022](#)). Even though the scope of the provisions of the legislation on the administrative procedure is quite obvious, there is a need to examine how certain public procedures can be applied as administrative ones in the field of legal higher education.

Law has always been one of the most in-demand professions as highly qualified lawyers need to make sure that the state is improving its efforts to uphold the rule of law, promote human and civil rights and freedoms as the most important societal values, and bolster national security ([Dunn et al., 2023](#); [Economides, 2015](#); [Flood, 2011](#)). One of the challenges facing the rule of law is the lack of normative consolidation of the notion of “higher legal education”, and specific legislation governing its provision results in gaps in this field and a generalization of the fundamental principles that affect the protection of the right to education. The existing research scope on higher legal education is limited to the issues of its definition and educational program specifications. In comparison, the administrative aspect of relationships for the provision of higher legal education is still overlooked. This article fundamentally raises the issue of the formal application of management tools in higher legal education by outlining its subject boundaries, determining public procedures for its provision, and analyzing the legal nature of licensing and accreditation as procedures for managing educational activities.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The modeling method was the primary method used for the first stage of the study. This method helped to build a theoretical model of higher legal education by analyzing existing doctrinal works, which was the first stage of this research. These works were a kind of research materials for examining existing approaches to improving the field of legal education ([Latkovska et al., 2019](#); [Lucky et al., 2019](#); [Muilenburg, Berge, 2005](#); [Wu, 2015](#)).

The second stage of this research was the search for new modifications and interpretations of established regulatory approaches to management procedures in higher legal education. As a method of analysis, comparison, classification, and systematization were used during this research stage. The current regulatory framework for higher education was examined with the help of a method of analysis. We used the comparative method to determine the differences between the current and desired states of legal regulation of public relations in the discussed field.

Furthermore, it can be noted as per our methods that no doctrinal works on public management aspects of higher legal education had been developed yet. Studies that discuss the areas for improving legal education formed the theoretical basis of the research. These studies highlighted the following important issues: the implementation of new national educational programs in higher legal education in Ukraine and the use of open education forms as a condition for sustainable development ([Kivalov, Bila-Tiunova, 2020](#)); intensification of the practice of digital education and digitalization of law learning process ([Boon, Webb, 2008](#)); determination of the essence of licensing in the education and administrative procedures.

Licensing of educational activities of a higher education institution was interpreted through the dogmatic method. Accordingly, it was interpreted as the basis of the mechanism for regulating the activities of the institution and the higher education quality assurance system in Ukraine ([Sysoiev, 2019](#); [Sytnyk et al., 2022](#)). A praxeological method helped to identify, based on statistical analysis, the purpose of the licensing procedure; it is a guarantee of higher education quality ensured by using the potential and effectiveness of higher education institutions in providing educational services ([Kovalova et al., 2019](#); [Svizhevskaya, 2012](#)).

The analysis, synthesis, and modeling methods were used during the third stage of this research, which concerned regulatory approval. At this stage, changes and recommendations that should be introduced into the legislation to improve management procedures in the field of higher legal education were identified. The fourth stage of this research concerned the practical approbation of the findings. The presence of a dialectical correlation between the studied phenomena and the suggested theoretical and regulatory concepts would be worthless without

putting it into practice. In this case, the empirical method was applied in combination with the methods of analysis and deduction. As a result, the research substantiated the importance of standardizing educational programs in higher legal education and updating their structure.

## Results

### *Scope of higher legal education*

The draft law “On Legal Education and Legal Profession” ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017b](#)) was the first certified attempt to specialize in higher legal education in Ukraine. The draft law defined legal education as higher education majoring in Law or International Law obtained in Ukraine or foreign countries, provided that it is recognized in Ukraine by the procedure established by law. Even though the draft law was rejected in 2019, its attempt to formally distinguish higher legal education as a separate field of education and introduce a single qualification exam provided a basis for further improvement of this sphere of public life.

According to the list of fields of knowledge and majors for which higher education students are trained, persons who graduated with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Law or International Law may hold positions or carry out activities, the qualification requirements for which provide for the availability of full higher or higher legal education ([Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015c](#); [Yuldashev et al., 2022](#)).

In order to define higher legal education, majors such as Law or International Law, which are equivalent for this purpose, should be used as the basis. In accordance with the standards of higher education, the subject boundaries of the educational program majoring in law encompass learning laws, their sources, legal doctrines, values, and principles that are based on fundamental rights and freedoms. The learning objectives presuppose that students become able to address complex legal problems and acquire a comprehensive understanding of their essence and content.

Methods of understanding legal phenomena of general and special nature are fundamental for all legal techniques or technologies. These methods include ways to assess the behavior or actions of individuals and social groups within the framework of the law, as well as techniques for identifying legal issues and problems ([Pavliuchenko, Savchuk, 2021](#); [Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022](#)). In contrast, students majoring in International Law study legal relations arising in the field of foreign policy and foreign economic activity of public authorities and local self-government. International Law as a major also involves examining legal relations with a foreign element between public authorities and local self-government of different states, natural and legal persons of different nationalities and jurisdictions ([Ministry of Education..., 2017](#)). Regardless of the chosen major (Law or International Law), students must confirm their Master’s degree by passing the Unified State Qualification Examination ([Ministry of Education..., 2021](#)).

It is advisable to adopt specialized legislation, which will enshrine the notion of higher legal education and the features of its provision. This is argued by the importance of legal education, the acquisition of which is the basis for engaging in professional legal activities, such as the profession of a judge, lawyer, prosecutor, etc. The importance of the justice sector in a developed democratic state should be confirmed by the proper provision of education for future lawyers.

### *Public management procedures for the provision of higher legal education*

It should be noted that the draft Concept for the Development of Higher Legal Education provides for the following areas of the provision of higher legal education ([Ministry of Education..., 2019b](#)):

- Activities of centers for quality assurance of higher education in law schools;
- Annual assessment of higher education students and academic staff of law schools;
- Advanced training of academic staff;
- Accessibility to the resources required for managing the educational process, including students’ self-study;
- Accessibility to the information systems for organizing the educational process;
- Involvement of legal practitioners in lecturing or teaching individual courses for future lawyers;
- Transparency in disseminating information about educational program and qualifications;
- Compliance with the principles of academic integrity for academic staff and students by establishing an efficient plagiarism detection and prevention system;

- Development of an efficient system to hold individuals accountable for violating academic integrity standards;
- Access for students to educational resources, including recognized academic databases, international information, research-to-practice, library, and other resources;
- Combined training of students with practice in legal clinics, internships, etc.

The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance is the key entity obliged to provide higher education, including legal education. Given this, there is a need to examine the types of activities of this body, which include the following:

- Well-worked educational program that are essential for maintaining a high quality of the provided educational services and are ensured by implementing an accreditation procedure and complying with rigorous standards for both the Agency and higher education institutions;
- The guidance, information provision, and local quality system benchmarking to promote internal quality assurance systems; approval of principles and establishment of requirements for ensuring the quality of higher education based on best international and national experiences;
- The acknowledgment of research outcomes (raising awareness about research integrity policies, implementing transparent and efficient procedures, and exhibiting zero tolerance towards pseudoscientific tendencies);
- The implementation of academic staff certification procedures in accordance with the foremost European standards; supervision of the activities of specialized academic councils based on the designed regulations;
- The exercise of control in higher education (education quality maintenance through academic staff accreditation and certification procedures; efficient interaction between all stakeholders for higher education quality assurance through ensuring transparency in communication and mutual respect);
- The encouragement of higher education institutions in Ukraine to participate in international research rankings according to the designed qualitative criteria, etc. ([National Agency..., 2022](#)).

Thus, the procedural format of higher education quality assurance is limited to academic staff accreditation and certification ([Sukhonos, 2021](#)). However, little attention is devoted to educational activity licensing carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. By the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014](#)), educational activities can be carried out exclusively by those institutions of higher education or professional pre-higher scientific institutions that have received a license from the central executive body in the field of education and science.

### ***The legal nature of licensing and accreditation as management procedures in higher legal education***

Educational program accreditation constitutes a public management procedure that determines whether the quality of such a program and its educational activities comply with higher education standards. This evaluation seeks to ascertain its capability to achieve the designated learning outcomes, all based on predetermined criteria for assessing study program quality ([Ministry of Education..., 2019a](#)).

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine is responsible for approving standards of higher legal education; it establishes whether a higher educational institution is eligible to provide educational services, the result of which will be a student’s qualification as a lawyer. Educational activity licensing in the field of higher legal education is a public management procedure when a higher education institution exercises its right to provide educational activities. Viktorov (2006) notes that licensing is a form of public administration associated with granting permission to educational institutions to conduct a particular type of educational activity. Safonova (2005) identified the following stages in the periodization of the formation and development of educational activity licensing: formal resolution on reforming the higher education system and granting specific levels of accreditation to higher education institutions; drafting documents that establish licensing principles; development and enhancement of the licensing and accreditation procedures. Thus, it can be assumed that accreditation and licensing procedures are administrative ones by their legal nature. Analysis of the Law of Ukraine “On Administrative Procedure” indicates the following features of the procedures, which will be hereinafter referred to as administrative:

- 1) this is the procedure for consideration and resolution of the case enshrined by law;
- 2) the specified case should concern public relations to ensure the exercise of the rights, freedoms, or legitimate interests of persons and (or) the fulfillment of their obligations provided by law, the protection of their rights, freedoms, or legitimate interests, which are considered by an administrative body;
- 3) the administrative body will be authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, local self-government or executive bodies, their officials, or other entities authorized by law to perform the functions of public administration;
- 4) a result of the administrative procedure is an administrative act drawn by an administrative body to resolve a particular case and ensure a person's rights and (or) obligations, etc. (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022).

Thus, the procedure for accreditation and licensing of educational activities in higher legal education as a type of administrative procedure will be characterized by the following features: a) will be carried out by the procedure established by the legislation on higher education; b) will relate to public relations to ensure the exercise of the rights, freedoms, or legitimate interests of persons in the field of education; c) will be decided with the participation of an administrative body (the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine) or a collegial body (the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance); d) as a result of these administrative procedures, an administrative act will be passed in the form of a license or accreditation certificate, etc. (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015b). The summarized findings are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Correlation of findings with the designed methodology

No.	Procedural components of research methodology	Correlation of findings
1	Suggested theoretical model	Interpretation of the concept of "higher legal education", which is the sphere of implementation of special managerial administrative procedures with the corresponding justification of the legal nature of the latter
2	Suggested modifications and interpretations	Specification of higher legal education rather than its equalization with higher education. This thesis mediates the need for the management apparatus to adhere not to quantitative but qualitative indicators
3	Regulatory approval	Adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Legal Education" Adoption of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the Features of Licensing Educational Activities in the Field of Higher Legal Education"
4	Law-enforcement approval	Development of standards for higher legal education, filling in the components of educational program profiles, improving the skills of the management staff involved in the accreditation and licensing of higher legal education institutions

#### 4. Discussion

##### ***Scope of higher legal education: definition of subject boundaries***

The findings establish the following key characteristics of higher legal education:

- 1) It comprises a set of systemized knowledge, competencies, skills, ways of reasoning, professional qualities, ideological and civil values, moral and ethical principles, and other aspects relevant to the fields of law and international law.
- 2) Legal education acquired within higher education institutions that are individual legal entities governed by either private or public law. These institutions are authorized to conduct educational activities at various levels of higher education and engage in innovative, technical, research, or methodological activities. Under the issued license, higher education institutions are entitled to facilitate educational processes, their organization, and the attainment of higher or

postgraduate education by individuals, taking into account their interests, vocations, and capabilities ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014](#)).

3) It is an education in a specific field of knowledge in law, which may include related legal majors.

4) Higher legal education will be considered obtained, regardless of its degree (junior specialist, bachelor, master, doctor of philosophy), provided that a person completed the educational program as a basis for awarding the appropriate degree of higher education.

5) The successful completion of a single qualification exam is an obligatory condition for getting a Master's degree in law.

6) Higher legal education is based on the standards of education in this field of knowledge, etc.

Thus, higher legal education is defined as a complex system of knowledge, skills, expertise, legal-related ways of reasoning, qualities, and competencies acquired during training in a higher education institution according to a standardized educational program, and the completion of this program is the ground for awarding a higher education degree.

### ***Public management procedures for provision of higher legal education***

Regulations governing the licensing of educational activities ought to be categorized according to several factors. However, this article uses the regulation's subject as a main factor in order to fulfill the objectives of this research, even though it is not a popular approach in the scientific community. Thus, the following regulations are distinguished:

- 1) those that regulate the static characteristics of educational activity licensing;
- 2) those that regulate the dynamic characteristics of educational activity licensing.

Apart from the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education," the second group includes those regulations that determine licensing principles. These are the provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On Licensing of Certain Types of Economic Activity" ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015](#)). On the one hand, it establishes the extension of the main provisions to the field of education (paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Article 7). On the other hand, it determines the general principles of licensing (type, licensing principles, and the definition of terms of licensing activities, such as licensee, license, issuance of a license, etc.).

Regulations governing the static characteristics of educational activity licensing include those that are subordinate. First of all, this applies to the following:

1) Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 630 regarding the attribution of licensing powers to the powers of this central executive body (paragraph 44 of Part 4 of Art. 1 provides that the powers of the Ministry of Education and Science include "licensing of educational activities in the fields of higher, postgraduate, professional pre-higher and professional (vocational) education") ([Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2014](#));

2) Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1187, which outlines both educational areas requiring licensing and licensing conditions that depend on the level of higher education or educational programs, where the last ones provide awarding qualifications in fields subject to additional regulation at specific higher education levels (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015a);

3) Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 620, which refers to a single electronic database containing information about the licensing conditions of a particular educational institution, etc. ([Ministry of Education..., 2018](#)).

The laws of Ukraine, "On Higher Education" and "On Administrative Procedure", are the regulations that govern the licensing procedure. However, the current legislation does not provide for a special licensing procedure. Therefore, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should be adopted to approve the procedure for educational activity licensing. Consequently, the public management procedures for providing higher legal education are formally related to higher education, but their content should be based on the verification of compliance with the requirements for the provision of knowledge in the field of law.

Yakovliev (2016) defined the essence of administrative procedures, their participants, and the final decisions. The researcher noted that the procedural form is of great instrumental importance; it ensures the observance of citizen's rights and freedoms in public administration, the comprehensiveness, objectivity, completeness, and due time of consideration of administrative cases. Furthermore, the procedural form provides for the validity of law enforcement acts issued by authorized bodies and the legality of their power influence on public relations. In turn, the absence of

predictable procedures in the law has negative consequences for both the application of the substantive rule of law and the implementation of legal prescriptions (Korniienko et al., 2020; Golovin et al., 2022).

### ***The legal nature of licensing and accreditation: Definition and classifications***

Accreditation and licensing procedures for educational activities should be classified as administrative procedures of a certain type in order to determine their qualitative features. Shkolyk (2021) singled out a general administrative procedure (uniform for all areas of public administration) and a special one (variable for certain areas of public administration). According to the level of legal regulation, these procedures can be divided into the following: 1) complete or complex, determining all aspects of the procedure for the activities of public administration entities in a certain area; 2) partial or fragmentary, containing separate elements of regulation of such an order of activities (Shkolyk, 2021; Smokov et al., 2022). Thus, the procedures for licensing and accrediting educational programs represent an example of a particularized partial administrative procedure.

It is possible to classify administrative procedures depending on their impact on social relations. Consequently, the procedures for licensing and accreditation of educational activities are a type of law enforcement administrative procedures carried out directly when applied by public administration entities that carry out public administration in the field of education. Depending on the presence or absence of a dispute between the subject of public administration and a private person, jurisdictional (disputed, conflict) and non-jurisdictional (organizational, indisputable, non-conflict) administrative procedures are distinguished. Therefore, the procedures in question are classified as non-jurisdictional procedures.

According to the direction of activity, there are internal (internal organizational) and external (external organizational) administrative procedures. The licensing and accreditation procedures are external, as they relate to the rights and interests of individuals. According to the subject of legislative initiative, there are application and interventional administrative procedures. An initiator of claim administrative procedure is an individual, and interventional administrative procedures are initiated by subjects of public administration in cases established by law (Shkolyk, 2021). Therefore, licensing and accreditation procedures for educational activities are administrative application procedures. According to the classification criteria, the licensing and accreditation procedure for educational activities is a kind of the following: 1) special partial; 2) law enforcement; 3) non-jurisdictional; 4) external; 5) application administrative procedure.

The features of the license as an administrative act of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine are associated with its classification as an act of individual action. The qualifying feature of administrative acts is not the form of their adoption but their relation to the exercise of public authority and focus on the rights, freedoms, and obligations of particular persons. The concept of an administrative act is defined in the Law of Ukraine "On Administrative Procedure" as a decision or a legally binding action of an individual nature taken (committed) by an administrative body to resolve a specific case and designed to acquire, change, terminate, or exercise the rights and (or) obligations of the individual(s) (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022).

Having compared the concepts provided in the administrative legislation and the legislation on education, the license can be defined as an individual decision taken by the executive body authorized to perform the functions of public administration to resolve a specific case for the acquisition, change, termination, or implementation of rights and (or) obligations in the field of education.

It should be noted that the license to conduct educational activities in higher legal education is granted by the decision of the licensing body to grant the business entity the right to perform educational functions within the licensed scope or to conduct educational activities under the educational program of the standardized sample "Law" or "International Law." These programs are designed to confer professional qualifications in regulated professions, extending beyond the authorized scope at the respective level.

## **5. Strengths and Limitations**

The methodology applied to examine the established socio-legal phenomena and the findings constitute the scientific novelty of this study. A new approach to public administration in the field of legal education is developed based on the dialectical relationship between the standardization and establishment of public management procedures for higher legal education. The standardization of public management procedures involves determining the specifics of legal

education and verifying the compliance of educational programs with Law and International Law majors. This approach can become the basis for improving the regulatory framework and developing initial programs within higher educational institutions that train lawyers in Ukraine. As a result, more rigorous and balanced steps to standardize higher legal education will enhance the training of professional personnel in the legal field. Given the European integration, many standards from various branches of law must be implemented and adapted in Ukraine, while a significant part of the existing ones must be reformed. Accordingly, the state will need professional lawyers who can put the declared European values into practice.

The findings of this research may interest theorists in higher education management and improvement and practitioners who directly perform public administrative functions in higher legal education. In addition, scientifically grounded conclusions are the basis for legislative and law enforcement activities in accordance with the proposed innovations.

## **6. Conclusions and Implications**

In the course of the study, it is proposed to interpret the concept of higher legal education as a complex system of knowledge, skills, expertise, legal-related ways of reasoning, qualities, and competencies acquired during training in a higher education institution according to a standardized educational program. Completing this program is the ground for awarding a higher education degree.

The study substantiates the expediency of adopting specialized legislation to enshrine the concept of higher legal education and its features. The study also advocates the need to adopt the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which will approve the procedure for licensing educational activities. It is noted that public management procedures for providing higher legal education are formally related to higher education in general. However, they should be based on the verification of compliance with the requirements for the provision of knowledge in the field of law.

Accreditation and licensing procedures in the field of higher legal education are analyzed. The standards of higher legal education are defined as those that determine whether a higher educational institution is eligible to provide educational services, the result of which will be a student's qualification as a lawyer. Accreditation and licensing procedures are defined as administrative procedures by their legal nature. According to the classification criteria, licensing and accreditation procedures for educational activities are a kind of the following: 1) special partial; 2) law enforcement; 3) non-jurisdictional; 4) external; and 5) application administrative procedure.

This study is limited in the analysis of curricula used in legal education institutions in Ukraine. Further research should involve identifying the common and distinctive components of curricula, comparing them with international and European standards, and developing recommendations regarding the content of legal education in Ukraine, its internal structure, and its mandatory and optional courses.

## **9. Declarations**

### ***Ethics approval and consent to participate***

This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors for which ethical approval is required.

### ***Consent for publication***

All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication. They also affirm their accountability for all aspects of the work and commit to addressing and resolving any issues related to the accuracy or integrity of any component of the manuscript.

### ***Availability of data and materials***

Data will be made available upon request

### ***Conflict of interest statement***

The authors declare that they have no personal or financial conflicts of interest related to this study.

### ***Funding***

This research received no external funding. However, the authors sincerely thank the Centre for Behaviour and Wellness Advocacy, Ghana, for providing financial support through the Institutional Open Access Publication Fund.








**Authors' contributions**

Tetiana Bilous-Osin – Writing – Review & Editing; Visualization; Formal analysis  
 Mykola Yurchenko – Project administration; Writing – Original Draft; Methodology  
 Mykhailo Goncharenko – Conceptualization; Software; Validation  
 Natalia Sukhytska – Investigation; Resources; Software  
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**Acknowledgements**

Not applicable.

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