



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: CORE REQUIREMENT (CR) 8.1

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Session Agenda

- I. CR 8.1: Structure - Compliance Components
- II. **Review Project: Institutional Responses to CR 8.1**
 1. Criteria/Indicators/Measures
 2. Thresholds of Acceptability
 3. Achievement Goals
 4. Outcomes
 5. Publishing
- III. CR 8.1: Emerging Non-Compliance Factors
- IV. Concluding Remarks



I. CR 8.1: STRUCTURE

- Notion of “Compliance Components”



Compliance Components

- Embedded in the wording of the *Principles*
(and frequently signaled by numbers, commas, and the use of compound modifiers),
- the **compliance components** are
 - the discrete elements that must be addressed for each requirement and standard





8.1: Key Compliance Components

The institution **identifies, evaluates, and publishes GOALS** and **OUTCOMES** for student achievement *appropriate* to the institution's **mission**, the nature of the **students** it serves, and the kinds of **programs** offered. The institution uses **multiple MEASURES** to document student success. (Student achievement) [emphases added]

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Resource Manual Note (federal regulations)

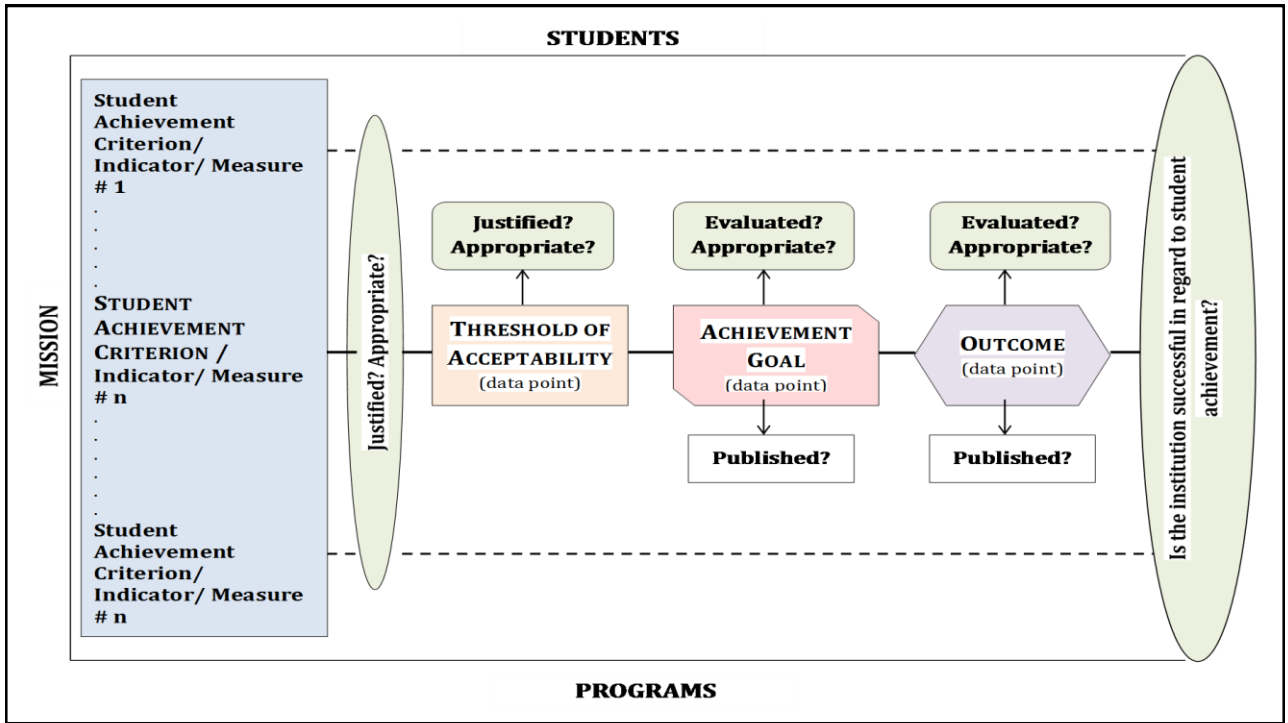
8.1: Resource Manual Note

[I]t is expected that the institution will demonstrate its success with respect to student achievement and indicate the **CRITERIA** and **THRESHOLDS OF ACCEPTABILITY** used to determine that success...The institution is responsible for **JUSTIFYING** both the **criteria** it utilizes and the **thresholds of acceptability** it sets...

In their reviews, SACSCOC committees will examine and analyze (1) **documentation** demonstrating success with respect to student achievement, (2) the **APPROPRIATENESS** of **criteria** and **thresholds of acceptability** used to determine student achievement, and (3) whether the data and other information to document student achievement is appropriately **published**. [emphases added]


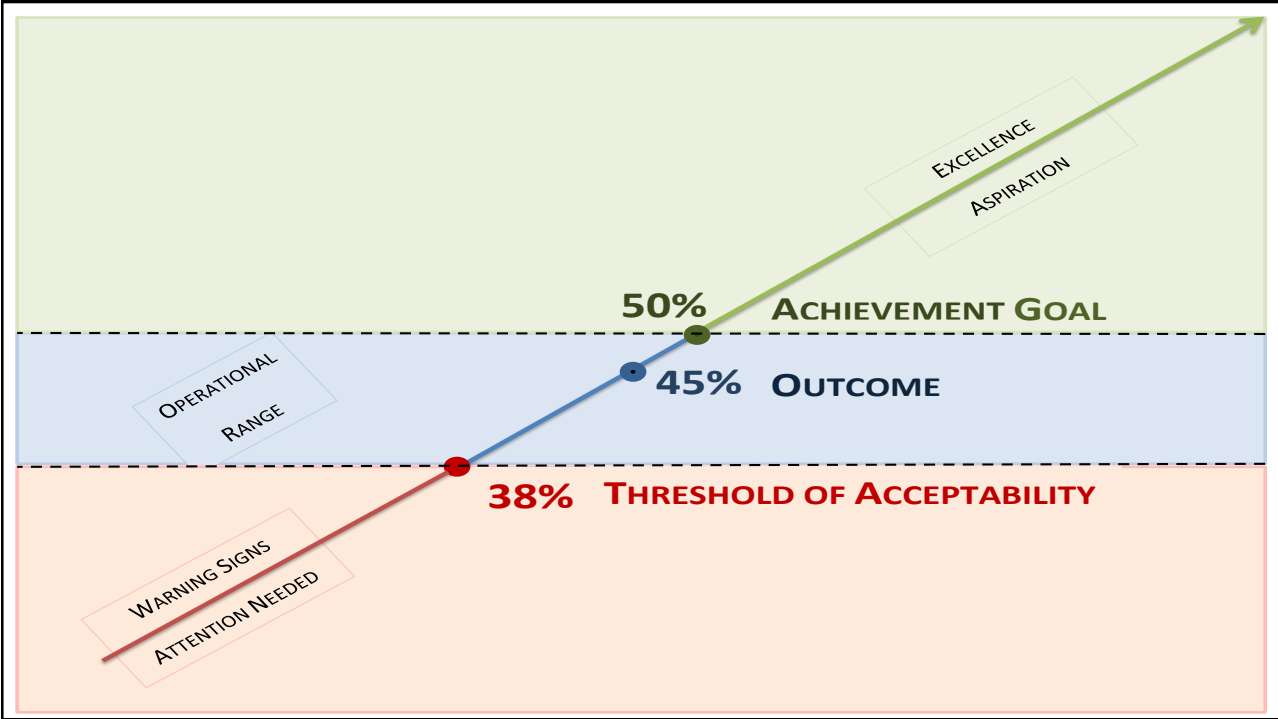
8.1: Selected Key Terms

- “Criteria”
 - Items or indicators of student achievement to be measured/evaluated (and published)
- “Multiple measures”
 - Several distinct criteria/indicators of student achievement, not multiple ways to measure the same student achievement outcome.
- “Goals”
 - Target levels of performance/achievement
- “Thresholds of acceptability”
 - Minimal expectation set by the institution to define its own acceptable level of performance
- “Outcomes”
 - Actual performance data



Thresholds of Acceptability

- A sample institutional definition
 - “Minimum thresholds are established at a level below which the University would not want to perform and which would require intervention if those levels were [observed in more] than an isolated instance.”



II. REVIEW PROJECT: Institutional Responses to CR 8.1



Review Sample and Purpose

- **56** institutional Compliance Certification Report narratives on Core Requirement 8.1 from Spring and Fall 2018
 - 446 pages
- Descriptive, exploratory content analysis of common approaches to addressing compliance components embedded in 8.1
 - No evaluative judgment about the quality/strength of the case for compliance



Key Limitations and Delimitations

- First Reaffirmation Class under the 2018 *Principles*
 - “Calibration” in interpretation and application
- Program/General Education Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (re: 8.2.a/b)
- Supporting Documentation
 - Focus on the Compliance Certification report narrative

1. Criteria/Indicators/Measures

5.9

Average/Mean Number
of Identified Student
Achievement Indicators

1. Credential completion rates
2. Retention/persistence rate
3. Job placement/post-graduation employment/graduate school acceptance rates
4. Licensure/certification exam pass rates
5. Course completion pass/success rates

89%

discussed **appropriateness** of *at least 1*
selected criterion

Appropriateness of Criteria/Indicators/Measures

• Reference to Institutional Mission

- “The third goal is that at least #% of graduates will have one or more experiences in applied learning, defined as capstone projects & courses, community-based leadership projects, cross-cultural experiences, internships ... & practicums, student research & scholarship. This is a goal...consistent with our mission to ‘A student body of committed learners, actively involved in the programs of the college and in service to the greater community’.”
- “Sitting alongside the goal of academic excellence is [Institution’s] commitment to engage students with Christ’s message of love and salvation and to equip them for a life of service in the world...The University employs two primary assessments, ..., to measure how students are growing in their faith and its impacts on their personal habits and behaviors.”



Appropriateness of *Criteria/Indicators/Measures* (cont'd)

- **Reference to Programs**
 - “Institutional Goal #... states ‘[Institution] will operate as an essential component of postsecondary education and workforce training.’ As such, the College felt that need for a student achievement [indicator] focused on the successful employment of completers from Career Technical Education and Health Services programs.”
- **Reference to Students’ Progression Patterns**
 - “In addition to graduation rates, [Institution] also measures the completion rates of several programs, particularly those that are degree completion in nature where a high percentage of students transfer in the general education component of the degree program. This data is significant in that these programs represent # %...of total enrollment, ...”



Appropriateness of *Criteria/Indicators/Measures* (cont'd)

- **Reference to External Accountability Requirements**
 - “[Institution] measures student achievement utilizing the [State System's] performance measures.”
 - “Student achievement [indicators] have been identified through mandates of [programmatic] accrediting bodies...”
- **Reference to Peers/Commonly-Accepted Practices**
 - “A quick scan of the measures used for documenting achievement at [Institution] will demonstrate consistency with similar institutions across the country.”
 - “The retention of the first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students is a standard metric that [Institution] tracks and reports to federal and state governing bodies each year.”



Appropriateness of Criteria/Indicators/Measures (cont'd)

• Reference to Internal Process of Criteria Identification

- “In 2015-16, the College established a sub-committee of the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Task Force to review the student achievement criteria being used and to identify additional achievement criteria that [Institution] could utilize to evaluate student success. As part of their charge, the sub-committee was asked to provide [a] rationale for each criterion they recommended to gauge student achievement, ...”



2. Thresholds of Acceptability

23%

set thresholds of acceptability for
at least 1 selected criterion

23%

discussed appropriateness
of thresholds for *at least 1*
selected criterion

2%

set thresholds of acceptability for
ALL selected criteria



Justification of *Thresholds of Acceptability*

- **Reference to Own Trend Data**
 - “[A] minimum threshold serves to ensure that our numbers don’t drop below levels approximating those we have maintained over the last several years.”
- **Reference to Peers**
 - “The College uses the average results of the IPEDS Comparison groups as the threshold of acceptability for these [indicators].”



Justification of *Thresholds of Acceptability* (cont’d)

- **Reference to State/System Accountability Benchmarks**
 - “The state sets the threshold of accountability for all indicators.”
 - “Based on three years of data for each measure, baseline levels are set two standard deviations below the system mean,…”
- **Reference to Programmatic Accreditors Standards**
 - “Benchmarks for accredited programs [on licensing examinations] are set by the program’s accrediting agency.”
 - “[T]he minimum (70%) [is] required by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education.”



Justification of *Thresholds of Acceptability* (cont'd)

- **Reference to Federal Requirements**
 - “[T]he Federal Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress standard of a minimum of 67% completion of all courses attempted cumulatively...”
- **Reference to Internal Process of Threshold Setting**
 - “The Retention Advisory Board has established (minutes) and the Strategic Planning Council has endorsed (minutes) the threshold of acceptability (minimum expectation) for retention of first-time, full-time (FTFT) students at 80%...The Retention Advisory Board set the threshold of acceptability...based on a review of [Institution’s] retention rates over the past decade...”



3. Achievement Goals

79%

identified achievement goals for at least 1 selected criterion

38%

identified achievement goals for **ALL** selected criteria

77%

discussed appropriateness of goals for *at least 1* identified goal



Evaluation of *Achievement Goals*

• Reference to Peers

- “The goal for graduation rates of first time, full-time students within six years is to meet or exceed the average of peer institutions (see list and process).”
- “This target of #% was identified as it represents exceeding both the [Institutional Association 1] mean (#%) and the [Institutional Association 2] mean (#%). Further, surpassing this identified target represents achieving the top quartile of the [Institutional Association 1].”



Evaluation of *Achievement Goals* (cont'd)

• Reference State/System Accountability Standards

- “Based on three years of data for each measure..., and excellence levels are set one standard deviation above the system mean.”
- “[Institution] has set a pass rate goal of # percent for the NCLEX-RN exam which is ten percentage points above the # percent required by the [State Board.]”

• Reference to Available Resources

- “[T]hese [enrollment] targets are contingent upon projected resources, such as space, personnel, accreditation requirements, and clinical rotation availability. See below for each school’s rationale for selecting these targets...”




Evaluation of *Achievement Goals* (cont'd)

- **Reference to Expectations of Programmatic Accreditors and to Admissions Standards**
 - “The Law School sets goals of bar passage rates reports pursuant to American Bar Association Legal Education Standard 316, which indicates 75% or more of the students who graduate from an ABA accredited law school within the five most recently completed calendar years and sat for a state bar exam must pass. Further, given the selectivity and rigor of [Institution’s Law School], the school sets a goal that the average bar passage rate for ... graduates...is #% [+15 percentage points] or higher.”



Evaluation of *Achievement Goals* (cont'd)

- **Reference to Internal Process of Goal Setting**
 - “A cross-section of faculty and staff worked together to produce [Institution’s] initial performance targets...[Institution’s] President and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) collected and analyzed data from several prior academic years to develop appropriate long-term targets based on historic trend data and align with [Institution’s] institutional mission. The administrators took into consideration contextual issues specific to [Institution] such as implementation of admission standards and declining regional high school graduate numbers...Both the [State System] and [Governing Board] subsequently reviewed the submitted information and accepted the rationales and approved these targets based on the appropriateness to [Institution’s] mission, students, and programs.”




4. Outcomes

91%
reported outcomes for at least 1 selected criterion

73%
reported outcomes for **ALL** selected criteria


84%
juxtaposed outcomes with a reference data point (e.g., threshold of acceptability, achievement goal, peer/state/system/accreditor benchmark)

59%
discussed/evaluated outcomes for at least 1 selected criterion



Evaluation of Outcomes

- Discussion of the Extent to Which Goals are Met / Peer Comparisons
 - “Students in ENG 101 have met the benchmark in all but one of the six semesters for which data has been analyzed. Students in ENG 102 have met the benchmark in all six semesters. Students in MTH 120 and 130 have failed to meet the benchmark approximately 50% of the time.”
 - “The target for this criterion was not met for fiscal year (FY) 2017, with the overall 1-year persistence/retention rates for freshman students standing at #%. Although the target was not met, this rate exceeded the average rate for the [State University System] (#%), the [State Institutional Peer Group] (#%), and is on par with the overall average for public institutions in [State].”



Evaluation of Outcomes (cont'd)

• Discussion of Performance Dynamics Over Time / Comparison to Peers

- “[Institution’s] retention rate has grown from a low of #% for the fall 2012 cohort to #% in the fall 2016 cohort. This growth is good, but not yet reaching our target of #% set in the 2012-18 Strategic Plan.”
- “The University’s FTFT retention rate has exceeded the average of universities that comprise the [State System] for each of the years displayed. [Institution’s] retention rate has increased since the 2007 Cohort (#%) and remained above the #% threshold of acceptability since that time. Although the University is not regularly meeting its aspirational goals, the retention rate is trending up over this period of time.”



5. Publishing (Outcomes)

84%

published outcomes for at
least 1 selected criterion

- Dedicated institutional Student Achievement Data webpage
- Institutional Consumer Information webpage
- Institutional Fact Book

73%

published outcomes for ALL
selected criteria

- External reference:
 - NCES College Navigator
 - State Accountability Reports
 - Programmatic Accreditor Reports
 - SACSCOC Institutional Directory (student achievement link)

Initial Observations

- **Confusion in terminology** (Thresholds of Acceptability vs Achievement Goals)
- Thresholds of Acceptability are not set
- Appropriateness of Criteria/Indicators and associated Thresholds of Acceptability and Achievement Goals are not discussed
- **Outcomes are not evaluated**
- Report narratives are not self-contained

Confusion in Terminology

(Thresholds of Acceptability vs Achievement Goals)

- “Minimum achievement target”
- “The [Year-Year] Strategic Plan outlines the **threshold** for **achievement** relative to student retention; the University's **goal** was to increase retention to #% by Fall 2018. The University implemented a number of initiatives in an attempt to meet the *threshold for achievement* set for retention rates in the [Year-Year] Strategic Plan.” (emphases added)
- “One of the ways in which [Institution] measures student achievement is by comparing the percentages of students who pass these exams to a **standard**. These standards are established by the [Institution] schools...Doctor of Psychology...The **threshold** for the pass rate is...Counseling...The **expectation** is that #% of the students who take the [Exam 1] and [Exam 2]. This **target** has been exceeded....” (emphases added)



Outcomes Are Not Evaluated

- “Here you can find a selection of key scores for [Institution]’s academic programs and the comparison scores for all the [schools] that use the [standardized assessment instrument]... **We hope this helps you make your own assessment of the value of a [Institution] education.**” (emphasis added)



Next Research Steps

- Increase the sample
- Capture the extent to which thresholds of acceptability are met and goals are achieved
- Explore potential differences among key institutional segments (e.g., level, size, control, etc.)



III. *PEER EVALUATORS: EMERGING KEY NON-COMPLIANCE FACTORS ON CR 8.1*

- Excerpts from Spring and Fall 2018 *Off-Site* Reaffirmation Committee Reports



Emerging Non-Compliance Factors

- Justification of appropriateness of **Criteria/ Indicators/ Measures**
 - *“The institution...does not indicate how it ... evaluates these metrics as indicators of student achievement... [N]o rationale was offered for how each indicator is appropriate and aligned with the college’s mission, the students it serves, or the kinds of programs it offers.”*

(emphases added)



Emerging Non-Compliance Factors

- Identification and Justification of Thresholds of Acceptability
 - “[T]he institution did not provide a threshold of acceptability for this achievement goal...”
 - “[T]here is no rationale offered for the thresholds of acceptability.”
- (emphases added)



Emerging Non-Compliance Factors

- Identification and Evaluation of Appropriateness of Achievement Goals
 - “The goal for the retention rate is not fully articulated, but appears to be somewhere between the national average for open enrollment institutions (#%) and the national average for private institutions (#%), but no rationale for this goal is provided.”
- (emphases added)



Emerging Non-Compliance Factors

- Evaluation of Outcomes
 - “[T]he Committee could not find evidence that the institution actually evaluates ... the level of student achievement on the identified measures.”
 - “While the university supplied data for several indicators, the university did not provide sufficient evaluation of its goals and outcomes for student achievement.”

(emphases added)



Emerging Non-Compliance Factors

- Publication of Goals and Outcomes
 - “[N]o evidence that the six-year graduation rate and applied learning experience outcomes are published was provided.”
 - “[T]he Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee was unable to find information regarding how the institution publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement such that it is accessible to the public.”

(emphases added)



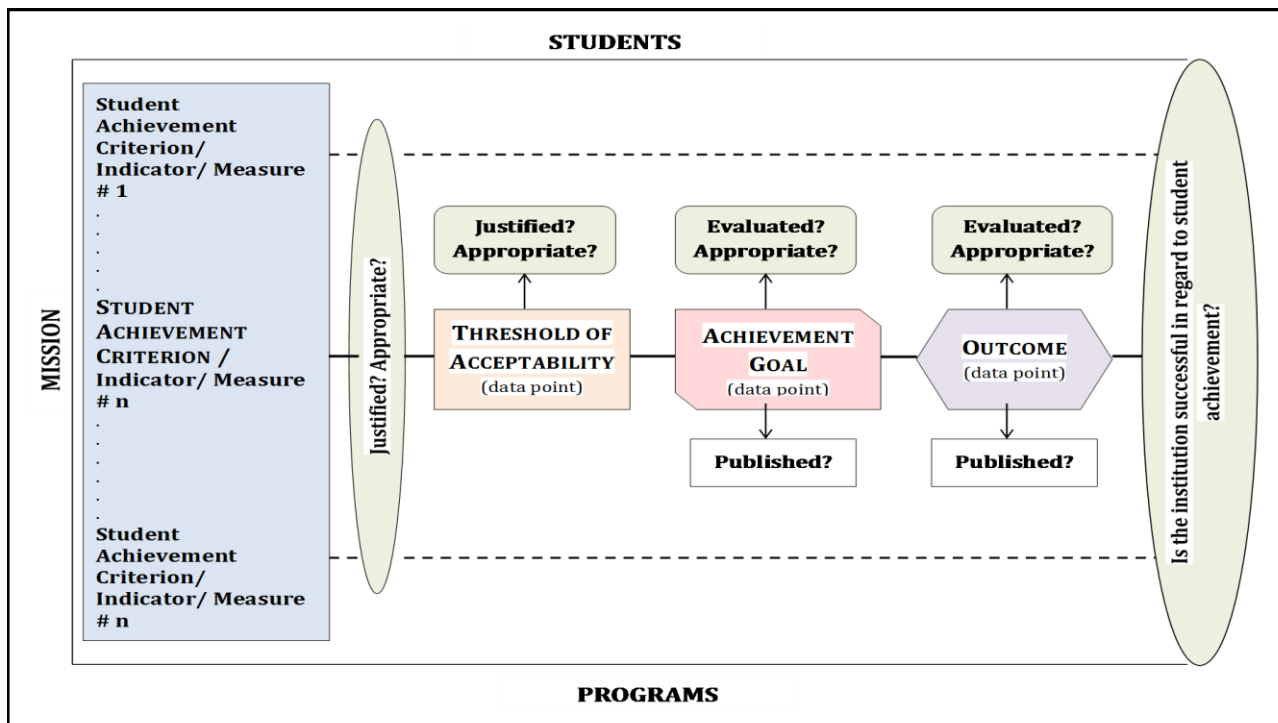
IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS



Key Pointers

3
Data Points

6
Questions



Good Practice Questions

1. How does your institution operationally define the concept of “student achievement”? How many indicators/criteria of student achievement does your institution assess, track, and report?
2. How were the indicators/criteria of student achievement selected? Who decided? What was the process? How does your institution **justify the appropriateness** of selected indicators/criteria?
3. Are thresholds of acceptability **established** for all identified indicators/criteria? How does your institution **justify the appropriateness** of established thresholds of acceptability?
4. Are achievement goals **established** for all identified indicators/criteria? How does your institution **evaluate the appropriateness** of established achievement goals?

Good Practice Questions (cont'd)

5. Are outcomes reported for all identified indicators/criteria? Are outcomes discussed? How does your institution **evaluate** the outcomes? Are outcomes **appropriate** given institution's mission, students, and programs?
6. *Where* and *how* (narratives, data tables, charts, bullet points, etc.) does your institution **publish** goals and outcomes for selected student achievement criteria/indicators?
7. *Overall*, is your institution **successful** in regard to student achievement?
8. If applicable, how would your institution address the situation of *consistently falling short of meeting* identified thresholds of acceptability?





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