

CMS Webinar 2024 **Transcript**



Transcript

Paul Smith

Hello and welcome to SLC's annual Courses Management Service webinar for academic year 2025-26. I'm Paul Smith and I'm Head of Partner Services at SLC which means I'm ultimately responsible for ensuring students can access funding on eligible courses at the point of application.

The process for course collection last year worked very well and we had over 95% of courses available and validated when we opened our student finance application window. question-and-answer courses were validated successfully. Downstream changes to course details means we question-and-answer reassess student for their entitlement, which is undesirable for you, us and the student. And last year we had a slight increase in the number of students affected by course changes, so this is one area we are focusing on.

This broadcast will run for around 45 minutes and be followed by a question and answer session which we've allowed around 15 to 20 minutes for. You can submit any questions you may have during the webinar by entering the details into the box below and clicking submit.

On the 4th of November, DfE confirmed that the maximum Undergraduate full-time rate for Undergraduate tuition fees is increasing to £9,535 alongside an increase to the same level of maximum fee loan support. And we will explore this change shortly.

The position for Scotland is as follows:

Ministers have now confirmed that Scottish institutions will have the flexibility to charge students from the rest of the UK the maximum fee of £9,535, in line with the maximum that will be charged by English institutions. I can confirm therefore that from academic year 2025-26, providers will be able to charge students up to the maximum fee of £9535.

Also, the Scottish Government will make the necessary changes to allow Scottish Domicile students studying in the rest of the UK to access an increased tuition fee loan of £9535 to cover the cost of their tuition fees from the 2025-26 academic year onwards.

The position for Wales is currently as follows:

Designated providers outside Wales can plan on the assumption that Welsh domiciled students will be eligible for the full fee loan of up to £9,535 or equivalent. Welsh Ministers are considering an equivalent increase to the tuition fee loan limits in Wales, and this will be confirmed in due course.



In respect of Northern Ireland, the level of fees and fee loans is currently under consideration by DfENI. We anticipate that we will have the final policy decisions established whilst we make changes to our systems so that we commence course collections knowing the position across the whole of the UK.

Before we run through the course collection system, we will take a minute to consider LLE.

I wanted to acknowledge the recent change to the launch schedule for LLE. Lots of you have been in touch already to enquire about our planned engagement programme. We are working on this detail and will be in touch with you separately as soon as we have the revised timetable finalised.

DfE remains committed to the delivery of LLE with the key objectives of expanding access and helping business to fill skills gaps and kick-start growth. The one-year postponement to launch would ensure LLE is fully aligned with the Government's ambitious vision for the future of the UK's skills landscape. It will also give providers time to prepare for the launch of this new, transformational student finance system.

LLE will now launch in academic year 2026-27 for students joining courses starting on or after the 1st of January 2027. More information is available from the .gov.uk website in the meantime and we will be in touch with policy clarification and guidance as soon as it becomes available.

I'm now pleased to introduce two of our HEP Account Managers, Bev McDonald and Sam Stokell, who will explain the course service for the next academic year.

Bev McDonald

Thanks Paul. We will now cover the background to provide some context.

The Courses Management Service, or CMS as we'll refer it, is a single database for providers to submit their course information.

As this information is used to assess students for funding, it is vital that only designated courses are uploaded onto the database and all information relating to a course is accurate and meets policy regulations.

When students are making their application online for student finance, they will only be able to see courses which you have created or rolled over on CMS. And we will look at this process in more detail shortly.

The information you provide on CMS links into our customer portal for student assessments, as well as the Student Information Service and the Bursary Administration Service too, if you subscribe to this.

Based on the information you provide for each course, SLC can ensure that students are accurately assessed for student finance and that their funding is scheduled for payment at the right time.

And for yourselves as providers, it gives you a central log of all of your course information.

SLC have a timeline each year for Course Collection, Application Launch and Payments.

First, let's look at Course Collection. We stagger our approach for collecting your courses and our course collection windows are related to the specific products we offer.

Each November we write out to you and ask you to add your full time Undergraduate courses to the system and Scottish Postgraduate courses, if you offer these.

We have a similar exercise around March and April, asking for both your part time Undergraduate and all of your Postgraduate Masters and Doctoral courses.

Once the courses are submitted to CMS, a validation exercise where we check the integrity of the course information you've added to the system.

If there is anything we need you to clarify or amend, our CMS team will contact you via email, so it's important that you review and respond as quickly as possible. We will go through the validation process in more detail later in the presentation.

Planning and working to our timeline is vitally important as this allows SLC to complete our checks and open the relevant applications to allow the students to apply for their Finance. Like course collection, our application launches are staggered over a period of a few months, with the first being open for full-time Undergraduate students around mid-February each year. This is followed by part-time Undergraduate applications around April to June. And lastly, Postgraduate student applications shortly thereafter.

At this stage, these dates are always indicative and subject to change as they are set by the various devolved authorities.

So, what happens once all the above is in place?

Once students begin applying and their applications are approved, you will start to see students' details appearing in SIS, the Student Information Service. It's important to note that you will only see applications that are at an 'approved' state.

Through SIS, you can view this information and make amendments if needs be. And it's here you are also required to administer the registration and attendance worklists.



The Registration worklist opens 30 days prior to the course start date. And from this point, you can start to check your student's application details are correct and begin to confirm your students are registered, or not registered. A positive registration confirmation allows SLC to schedule and pay their loan and grant funding which is paid to the students in three instalments on the first day of each term.

You will also be required to take action on the first day of term when we open the Attendance work list for you to confirm the student is in attendance or not. This will then release your Tuition Fees. And as you can see, we pay these in three instalments to providers in October, February and May for Autumn start courses.

There is a joint SLC and HEP Service Agreement which defines the service measures between SLC and providers for the administration of student finance.

The Service Agreement includes service standards for both timeliness and for accuracy and right first-time submission.

So, let's have a look specifically at your obligations for CMS.

To support the optimum customer experience, we require providers to submit 100% of their courses at least two weeks ahead of our full-time service launch date, and for colleges, submission is required at least one week prior.

In recognising that on occasion you may experience unforeseen factors, such as later courses, or genuine uncertainty around confirmed course structure, our service standard provides for a 15% tolerance to allow for these scenarios.

Of these courses are uploaded, likewise, we are striving for 100% right first-time accuracy by the initial deadline, but with a 5% tolerance for any changes that need to happen by the time the student applications open, usually around mid to late February.

This is vitally important as once the service is open and students have made applications, any amendments you make to your courses create reassessments and this can impact the student's funding entitlement.

The service standard for your part-time Undergraduate courses also provides a 15% tolerance level and courses are to be submitted at least two weeks ahead of our part-time service launch date.

As with full-time, it's also important to ensure optimum accuracy at the submission deadline and changes should be made no later than at the point of application launch.

For your Postgraduate Masters and Doctoral courses, tolerances are the same at 15% and 5% respectively. Your courses must be submitted two weeks before our Postgraduate launch date, and again, avoid making any changes after this point.

Let's move on now to look at the course validation exercise that we undertake as you submit your courses.

Before adding a course, you must make sure that all eligibility criteria are met.

Only if you are an OfS registered provider are you able to access CMS to add courses.

You must only add a course that leads to a recognised qualification and at least 50% of the teaching and learning must be delivered within a UK university or college. Tuition fees and fee loans must be paid direct to a UK bank account and can only be charged the regulated amount.

Course years could not exceed 12 calendar months, and each one must be scheduled over three terms. Full-time courses must provide an average of 21 hours of self and guided learning hours over a minimum of 24 weeks, and you must be able to define credit values for all your courses.

For courses two years or more, full-time students must attend the university, college or other teaching location for at least eight weeks in the final year.

As you can see from our service standards, accuracy is key to ensuring student entitlement is correctly assessed.

As you are submitting your courses, our CMS team are reviewing this data. They are looking for anything that looks like an anomaly. This could include inconsistencies or significant changes in course information from the data collected in previous years, or perhaps where it doesn't comply with our guidance and the policy regulations, or course eligibility.

If they find anything that requires further clarification from yourselves, they will add this to a course tracker and send it to your CMS named contacts to review. As such, we ask you to ensure your contact details on the CMS tab within the maintain contact page within SIS and on your provider profile page in CMS are up to date and regularly reviewed.

It might not be that this information is wrong, but rather that we need you to double check it and let the CMS team know whether it's correct or not.

Initial emails will be sent from the Courses Service Management mailbox, and we really need your assistance to respond to these requests, so please review and update these trackers as quickly as possible and send them back to the team with any necessary amendments as required.

We cannot allow courses to go live with inaccurate data or a question mark over the integrity of its data. So, if we have not had a response from you, the team will set your courses to 'No Students' ahead of application launch to avoid this awarding incorrect funding to your students.

The Teamwork through course validation is an ongoing basis as your courses are being uploaded, therefore, your trackers will be updated regularly.

It's a working document. So that your aim is to identify a potential issue and flag it up to you before you continue to add further courses to save you administration time in the long run.

To put our need for validation into perspective, you can see on this slide that there are over 99,000 courses on the database, so it's a huge undertaking to review and validate all these courses.

We saw a noted improvement in the academic year 2023-24 error rates. We just wanted to thank you for all your continued efforts. However, for the 2024-25 academic year, more errors were recorded, and these were predominantly relating to bank holiday dates being input incorrectly.

This reiterates just how much we need your support in firstly, striving for right first-time accuracy, and secondly, having spotted any anomalies, your help in getting these resolved.

Now, as we mentioned, we come out to you in a staggered approach to gather your course information.

We can now give you an idea of when to expect this to happen.

We did touch on this on the academic timeline earlier in the presentation, so just a reminder of the expected dates and the deadlines we'll need you to work to. We have made some minor amendments so that the deadlines now reflect the requirement to have your courses on CMS ahead of the application launch.

We will be coming out to you within the next week or so to let you know you can commence submitting your full-time Undergraduate courses for all domiciles as well as your Scottish Postgraduate courses.

We don't have exact dates yet, but plan to open part-time collection mid-February, with Northern Ireland part-time courses possibly being a bit later, around mid-March, around the same time as your Postgraduate course collection.

The duties and responsibilities of HEFCW have transferred to the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research as of the 1st August 2024, and from now will be known as Medr.

For those approved fee cap providers with automatic Welsh designation, please be mindful that this designation doesn't extend to any franchised provision. Therefore, if you wish to offer these courses to Welsh domiciled students, you must seek specific course designation from Medr in advance of adding the courses to CMS.



We will now take the opportunity to provide you with an update on the policy changes for academic year 2025-26 and specifically, the changes to tuition fee charges ahead of course collection.

Maximum tuition fees for Undergraduate students starting or continuing full-time and part-time courses at approved fee cap providers in 2025-26 academic year will be increased by 3.1%. Currently applicable to English students only, and we await confirmation from the other devolved authorities as to their plans. We ask that you don't add your courses to CMS until we confirm the fee plans and the best practice approach.

In some cases, for continuing students or where offers have already been made for a 2025 entry, course fees cannot be increased. Providers are able to raise fees by inflation if this ability is set out clearly in Terms and Conditions and it is linked to an objective outlined in their Access and Participation Plan.

Now, we thought it might be a good opportunity to remind you of the rollover process.

As we discussed in course validation, we cannot stress enough how important it is to make sure all your courses are eligible and that the information is accurate.

Please make sure you only add courses that are designated for support. Ultimately, whilst we do undertake validation to assist you, it is your responsibility as the provider to make sure that the course is eligible for student support, meets policy regulations, and that you have added all the required attributes.

These attributes are used to determine funding entitlement for students. So, it's important to make sure they are indicated on the course where applicable.

To begin with, it's important to note that you don't have to start from scratch each year. Any open, saved courses that are already on CMS at the end of academic year 2024-25 will automatically appear on the new tab for academic year 2025-26.

You will see these listed on the new tab as 'unsaved', and you will have to review and work on each of these individually to update the information.

As you do so, the course totals will change, so you will always be able to see how many unsaved courses you still need to review.

The good news is you don't have to update all of the information for each course, as for example, once you've entered and saved the term dates for your first course submission, these new term dates will pre-populate on the next course you start to work on. The only exception to this will be if the start month of the course you are rolling over doesn't match that of the previous course you were working on.

The good news is you don't have to update all of the information for each course, as for example, once you've entered and saved the term dates for your first course submission, these new term dates will pre-populate on the next course you start to work on. The only exception to this will be if the start month of the course you are rolling over doesn't match that of the previous course you were working on.

So, it's a good idea and best practice to 'batch' your courses together based on course start date before commencing this exercise and work through them in this order to save you a bit of time.

Students will only be able to see courses that have been saved and are open on CMS when they are making their application. Also, a recent change to our systems means that going forward, they will no longer be able to see any course that has been set to 'No Students'.

For any course that you're not running in the academic year 2025-26, you should leave these courses as unsaved.

Additional validation, when you are attempting to close a course, will prevent courses being closed which still have students attached to them.

If there are any students approved on the course you're trying to close, in the current or previous academic year, CMS will not allow you to close the course. We are still seeing attempts to close courses. In many cases, this was multiple attempts to close the course, with some of you not realising that the course would automatically reopen, if it had student applications attached.

CMS will also pend the closure for 30 minutes and check to see if there are any student applications from the current or previous year before allowing the closure. And if need be, it will reopen the course too.

Due to the growing number of new courses being created and number of locations being used within our Courses Management Service, we have looked at an option which allows us to generate more course codes and location IDs from the academic year 2025-26 onwards.

These changes will come into effect in mid-November on CMS.

You can find the revised documentation on the HE Gateway homepage under the section for Technical Specifications for both SIS and CMS.

If you have any Scottish students, there are some files that SAAS and HEPs exchange that include the SLC course code. These will need to be updated also and please contact the email address on screen if you're unsure.

We will now move on to look at term dates and the importance of right first-time accuracy. Changes to term dates are problematic and so we ask that you avoid making changes where possible.



Term dates not only drive the student payment dates for maintenance support but also can affect the amount of entitlement, so it's extremely important that these are captured accurately.

We appreciate that many of you only work with two semesters however, for the purposes of ensuring student finance is administered in line with Student Support Regulations we still do require three terms.

When working out your three terms you must make sure that you tie in with your scheduled holiday breaks and only take into account actual teaching weeks. For example, when your students are attending lectures, undertaking coursework or taking exams, and trying to mirror these study patterns as closely as possible.

The academic year has four season starts: Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer.

As you will see from the screen, each season start has specific parameters which determine the earliest a term can start.

This was one of the most common errors that we picked up last year, so it's a good idea to refresh yourself with this guidance before entering your course submission.

Through course validation, we identified quite a few areas which generated a lot of queries and thought it would be worth highlighting what to watch out for.

Firstly, when adding freshers into your term dates. This should only be where there is some form of active engagement with the student, usually classed as an induction week. Examples of this would be tutor meetings, induction sessions, timetabling and lectures.

Make sure you take any holiday periods out of the overall duration of your courses.

Often, Easter breaks are tricky, particularly with the regulations around an Autumn start term 3 commencing no earlier than the 1st of April.

Exam periods can be included in your teaching weeks, but don't include the time waiting on results or for any external resits.

Using bank holidays and weekend dates caused the highest error rate in previous years. We do realise that there will be certain courses that might have to start at the weekend, and that's absolutely fine, but most courses won't. In this case, it skews your student payment dates as SLC do not make transfers on non-working days.

And lastly, you need to be aware that courses that are longer than 30 weeks and three days attract additional funding for students.

So far, we have given you an overview of the fundamentals of rolling over your courses and your obligations.

Now, we are going to have a look at some of the specific areas that you need to be aware of that can cause issues if information is captured incorrectly and share some best practice and key information with you.

I'd now like to hand you over to Sam.

Sam Stokell

Thanks Bev, that was really interesting.

As we move to look at the specific areas you need to be aware of, we're going to start with long courses.

There is a calculator on CMS that automatically works out the length of your courses and if you enter dates which exceed 30 weeks and three days, it will present you with a message to alert you to this and ask you to confirm that this course is a 'long course' and that you are happy to proceed on this basis.

Like long courses, there is now an alert for weekend term dates. When you enter term dates that start on a weekend, you will be presented with an alert to ask you to confirm that this course does start on a weekend, and you will then be allowed to continue to add your course details.

We highlighted earlier, the importance of correctly applying attributes to your courses, as these are all assessing factors that need to be considered and can impact on a student's entitlement.

Remember to indicate which year a placement applies to and adjust the fees for that year which are often lower too.

Placement indicators can be added to multiple years if needs be.

Distance learning students only receive tuition fee loan support, so it is really important that this is flagged up to us with the indicator.

We have found quite a few instances where Providers have listed 'distance learning' in the course title but haven't flagged it in the attributes so this doesn't get picked up correctly by Assessors. Students may receive maintenance funding, which they are not entitled to which, when rectified, will put them into overpayment and can cause them unnecessary distress and worry.

There are also a series of different attributes to cater for the Allied Health Professions.

As support varies, depending on the course and the level of NHS support available, it is important to identify these for Assessors so they can accurately calculate the student's entitlement.

Just one point to remember here too, is not to use the NHS Bursary attribute at the same time as Medicine Dentistry. We know that these students do receive NHS funding for certain years of their course, but this is picked up when you flag the Medicine Dentistry attribute, so you don't need both.

Please also ensure that courses are correctly updated to reflect where students have the option to intercalate and achieve more than one qualification. This attribute relates only to undergraduate courses.

Lastly, HTQ attributes must also be added to IFATE approved courses only as appropriate. We must stress the importance of contacting us if you forget to add the flag prior to saving the course, as we will be able to quickly update this to make sure students are correctly assessed.

The available course years functionality gives you flexibility to offer your courses to particular groups of students.

So, for example, if you want to offer a new course and don't want to run the risk of continuing students applying to this in error, you can ensure that this is only visible on the application to new students by setting all years other than year one to 'No Students'.

This also works the same way for phasing out courses and is the preferred alternative to closing a course too. Closing courses impacts all years of that course so could affect previous years reassessments and once closed, cannot be reopened.

You will need to indicate on your courses each of the locations you offer delivery of that course. This could be different campus locations or maybe when you work in partnership with a franchise provider.

Before you can add these locations to a course itself, you will need to ensure they have been set up under the locations tab on CMS.

When adding your locations, you will be asked to provide a postcode, and this helps us to determine the additional London funding element for students. Likewise, it is important that you notify us of any location address changes, especially where the uplift element is impacted and student reassessments are necessary.

Once the locations have been set up, you will be able to select the relevant locations when creating your course.



Unfortunately, at this point in time, you cannot add or delete a location from a course once it is active so please bear that in mind that you will need to create a new version of the course to cater for the correct locations.

Franchise arrangements are used when a lead provider, the franchisor, enters into an agreement with another provider, the franchisee.

Under this agreement, the franchisee will deliver a course on behalf of the lead provider. The franchisee may deliver all or part of a programme that the franchisor or the lead provider, approves and owns.

The lead provider keeps overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance. The lead provider must add the course on CMS. Students will apply for funding at the lead provider and all tuition fee loan payments will be made to the lead provider.

Going forward for any new franchise partnership arrangements, we'll organise a meeting with you and the franchisee to outline the service standard requirements and ensure that there is a general understanding of dependencies and accountability.

The franchise location indicator is an enhancement made to CMS which gives HEPs the opportunity to manage their locations with franchisees.

Any campus that HEP has will now have an additional column with the indicator. This will allow you to decide which campuses other HEPs can see when adding their franchise locations to CMS.

Only locations that have 'yes' ticked will be able to be seen by other providers when searching for franchise locations.

The indicator can be edited by the HEP at the point of creating the location, or at any time by unticking the franchise location box. We would expect only locations where active franchise partners are using the campus to be ticked.

Validation within CMS will alert if the indicator is being changed to no but the location is being used elsewhere. We would expect the HEP to contact their franchise partner and/or SLC if there was a concern about the location being used incorrectly.

When adding a new course, you will see a drop-down list showing you all the available qualification types. Please make sure to select the relevant qualification.

There are a couple of qualifications in particular we wanted to highlight to you as these have caused quite a lot of confusion.

Firstly, you will see there are several different education qualifications.

The Postgraduate ITT with QTS qualification must only be used by School Centred Initial Teacher Training Providers.

All other providers should select one of the options shown on the screen as most appropriate.

Secondly, English domiciled students studying a pre-registered full-time, in attendance, Level 7 Allied Health Professional course that is at least two years long are now entitled to Undergraduate support.

All these English domiciled students are classed as Undergraduates. You will need to ensure you only set the course up at Undergraduate level of study, not Postgraduate.

When we come out to you for Full-Time Undergraduate course collection, you will be able to add these at the same time. Look for the qualification type, Postgraduate Healthcare in the drop-down box.

But remember, this does not apply to your students from the other domiciles, who you will still need to apply as Postgraduate students.

Academic year 2025-26 will see the introduction of new lower-level fee limits for 'classroom-based' foundation years, with a maximum fee limit of £5,760.

The term 'classroom-based' refers to subjects currently in OfS Group D. The course content is taught in a classroom setting and does not include laboratory, studio or fieldwork elements.

Courses to which this lower fee limit applies will be determined in reference to the list of HECoS codes under the CAH 03, Common Aggregated Hierarchy 3, specifications.

All other foundation years will continue to be charged at the higher-fee foundation year study limit, which has a maximum fee limit of £9,535.

Undergraduate with an integrated foundation year can be assigned multiple HECoS codes, up to a maximum of five.

Where a course with an integrated foundation year has been assigned multiple HECoS codes, which are a combination of both lower-fee and higher fee, the lower fee cap of £5,760 should be applied. This is if more than 50% are lower-fee subject HECoS codes.

Now, we will move on to look at Higher Technical Qualifications.

Higher Technical Qualifications, HTQs, are eligible for student finance support. Volumes are increasing year on year with 115 providers offering 759 HTQ courses in academic year 2024-25. These are Level 4 or 5 qualifications approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, or IFATE.

English students may be entitled to Part-Time Maintenance Loans for these courses. You must add the HTQ attribute so we can assess them correctly.



Another area that you will need to review and update each year is your Fees.

Your Provider Fee Cap is set by the relevant designatory authority, and a limit is set for both Full-Time and Part-Time courses. You cannot amend this, nor can you add course fees higher than this at any time.

However, you can and must amend the fees downwards, if needs be, where policy regulations limit the amount you are entitled to. This can be the case with final year caps and certain placement / study abroad courses.

CMS captures your Fee Cap, which is presented to students on their online application form. If you charge fees higher than the fee cap, it is your responsibility to inform the student of the variation in fees being charged.

There may also be instances where you as a Provider offer the course at a lower fee, maybe for year zero or Foundation Years, or where an internal decision has been taken and you can alter the fee for the course, or a specific year of the course as required.

When amending the fees, it will apply to all students on this course or course year. So, in cases where you are making an exception or an adjustment to a fee which you have only agreed with a specific student remember, these will need to be adjusted via a fee CoC, not via CMS.

Students who already hold an ELQ from previous study can still qualify for Maintenance loan for courses that lead to qualification as an architect.

Part 2 courses can qualify for Undergraduate funding rather than Postgraduate funding, provided the student's study on Part 1 and Part 2 meets the definition of single course.

A course leads to qualification where completion of the course leads to registration with the Architects Registration Board or ARB.

In terms of the current process, SLC will check that the Part 1 or 2 course appears on the ARB list.

If the Part 1 course appears on this list, the SLC would assess a student for a Maintenance Loan under ELQ exemption.

If both Part 1 and Part 2 appear on this list, SLC will assess the student as being on a single course of architecture study.

Existing ARB accreditation for all currently accredited Part 1 courses has been extended until 31 December 2027. However, from academic year 2025-26, any new Part 1 courses must have the relevant Architecture HECoS codes attached for it to be considered exempt of ELQ rules. ARB will continue to accredit Part 2 courses and maintain a list of those on their website.

ARB require providers to only accept entry onto a Part 2 Masters of Architecture course where the student has already completed an Undergraduate course in architecture. Only students with a previous Undergraduate degree course in Architecture will be treated as a single course.

Where a student progresses from an Undergraduate degree in a non-architecture subject to a Part 2 Masters of Architecture course that leads to qualification as an architect, the student's programme of study will not be a single course.

As such, students will qualify for Postgraduate funding instead for part two.

Next, we are going to look at where there are differences for your part-time Undergraduate students and how to upload this information on CMS.

Before you upload a part-time course, you might be asking what constitutes a part-time course.

As a general rule, a full-time course normally requires students to study for at least 24 weeks. Full definitions are on the Practitioner's website and by process of elimination, if the course does not meet the guidelines of a full-time course then it is considered to be a part-time course.

To be eligible for part-time tuition fee funding, a student must be studying at a minimum intensity of 25%.

The course duration is captured on CMS as the Full-Time Equivalent, so think about the length of the full-time course and set it up on CMS like this. For example, if the student is studying a four-year degree, they have up to 16 years support but to show this on CMS as a four-year full-time equivalent duration, you do not need to enter the number of years that the student is planning to study part-time.

As a guide, the table displayed illustrates the most common durations for full-time courses. This should help you when entering your part-time courses.

When it comes to maintenance loan and grant support for part-time students, the assessment is based on their intensity of study, so we need to work out the number of credits the student is studying.

However, we pick this up from their application form. For the purposes of entering the credits on CMS, we actually need to know the number of credits for the entire course. So for example, if you have a three-year degree, this is normally 360 credits.

Please don't enter the number of credits for an individual year of study or that you expect any particular student to be studying in that year part-time.

Now, let's move on to Postgraduate Masters courses.

Postgraduate Masters courses need to be added to CMS differently, depending upon the domicile and the relevant policy regulations.

English and Welsh students need only apply once for funding for the duration of their studies and will receive a loan as a contribution towards their costs. There is no fee loan available for Providers.

English and Welsh Postgraduate courses can be added together on CMS for full-time courses, but we will need separate English and Welsh versions for part-time master's courses and we'll explain the reason for this shortly.

Scottish Postgraduate courses attract a partial tuition fee loan and a partial living cost loan. You may remember that Scottish Postgraduate courses used to be added as Undergraduate level of funding. However, please remember these must now be added as Postgraduate.

The Northern Irish Postgraduate Support Package is a tuition fee loan only product.

When you select the England Wales radio button during the initial course setup, the designation is automatically selected for both domiciles. Please check the policy regulations before saving a course to ensure this works for your specific course.

As we have said, the Postgraduate loan is payable to the student, so the term dates drive the payment dates for their three instalments of each year of study.

We realise that a lot of these full-time courses run for less than two years. So to cater for this, we have amended the drop-down duration to months. This gives you the flexibility to accurately reflect your course duration.

In cases where year two of study is a shorter period, you should still set three terms split evenly across that period. So, for example, a 15-month course only leaves three months to be studied in year two, so you could have three 'one-month' terms.

From the student's perspective, they would still receive 50% of their funding in year one and 50% split across three payments in the remaining three months of study in year two.

You also have the option to add up to 12 intakes for each course, again to give you flexibility in offering various start dates to suit your students.

However, remember that once you have added intakes and the course has been saved, they cannot be amended so you won't be able to delete or add any further intakes. This may result in you having to create new courses as required.



The qualification is quite straightforward. You only have to indicate whether the student is studying a taught or research Masters.

Duration is more complicated.

Full-time is treated the same for both England and Wales. The duration of an eligible course can be either one or up to two years long.

However, as we said earlier, for part-time courses, due to the differing policy regulations, you will have to add these courses on CMS separately.

For English domiciled students, the part-time duration is treated in the same way as that of your part-time Undergraduate courses, the duration is captured as the full-time equivalent. You only need to think about the equivalent full-time course that you offer and enter the duration as either one or two years full-time equivalent.

However, for Welsh students, the duration is the number of years the student is actually studying part-time, so there is no requirement for a full-time equivalent.

For example, in this case, a student studying the equivalent of a one-year full-time course would be allowed two years to study this part-time, so enter this as two years duration, no full-time equivalent.

Something else that comes up each year. Our CMS team picked up some errors where Providers offered a full-time version of a course, but also added a part-time course over three years duration with no full-time equivalent. This is in breach of policy regulations and all students on these courses were made ineligible for funding and the courses had to be closed. Please note, you cannot offer this option if you have a full-time version of the course.

Finishing off Postgraduate Masters for England and Wales, we want to share some best practice.

It's important to remember that even though a student only applies once at the start of their studies for funding.

To receive payments each year, we need to have the student linked to an open, active course. You must ensure that you roll over the course each year to keep it active. We have seen a large number of courses that have not been saved, moving into 2024-25, which means our CMS team have had to contact providers to advise that students will not get paid until this happens.

Do not close a course. Even if you are planning to send a withdrawal for the only student remaining on that course, the course needs to remain open for SLC to action the CoC.

The best practice to ensure that no new students apply to a course that you no longer wish to offer is to set the available course years to 'No Students'. Any students currently linked to that course will still continue to receive funding so it will not impact them at all.

As mentioned, the NI Postgraduate loans policy differs as the loan is a tuition fee payable to Providers.

It also has a wider selection in terms of qualification options as both Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas are also eligible.

Course duration can be up to three years, either full or part-time.

The main difference though, when uploading a course, is that we do require you to enter the Fees for the course. There is a loan of up to £6,500 available per course, over the duration of the full course, and this has to be paid to you, the Provider, based on confirmation of attendance each year.

Also, whilst this impacts your students, please remember this is not an apply once product like England and Wales so your students will have to make a new application for each year of study.

From academic year 2024-25, the same funding package is available for NI students studying in ROI. For those ROI providers, you will need to convert the course fee from Euros into Pounds Sterling when entering courses into CMS. Exchange rates will be confirmed in due course.

Postgraduate funding for Scottish students is available for Postgraduate Diplomas as well as research or taught Postgraduate Masters courses.

In terms of duration, a Postgraduate Diploma would be studied over one year and part-time can be either two years or three years.

For Postgraduate Masters, either research or taught, a full-time course can be studied over one or two years and part-time can be studied over two, three or four years.

Postgraduate support is extended to courses at validated private providers throughout the UK.

In terms of Fees, enter the full course fee amount and if your course is more than one year in duration, split your fees equally across all years of the course.

We can now look at Postgraduate Doctoral courses in a bit more detail.

These are only available in England and Wales, and when setting them up on CMS, you will find it is very similar to what you have to do for Masters courses.



One of the biggest issues we found during course validation was the use of generic titles, such as PhD. Please don't do this, as it causes problems linking the student application. In fact, the policy regulations are very specific about this too, and the importance of having dedicated courses set up.

There is only one qualification type that you need to select, regardless of study methods. The main difference is the duration, as eligible courses must be between three and eight years in length.

You will find more information on the policy criteria to determine this course length on your CMS guidance, should you need it.

When we spoke earlier about the Service Standards, we reiterated the importance of submitting your courses within the specified deadlines, but also the need for 100% accuracy before the application launch dates.

We know that you will be striving to meet these standards. However, realistically, we appreciate that mistakes happen, and even with our validation, that these errors might not always be picked up.

With the implications that this can have on students' entitlement, we need you to be aware of the correct process to rectify these and notify us as soon as possible.

In addition, we also know that sometimes internal decisions are made at institution level, which affect the course information you have already provided, and amendments may be required.

Not all information can be edited once the course is live on our system and it also varies, depending on the product type and domicile, so you will find further guidance on editing courses on our website.

The main areas you will most likely need to change and can edit yourselves are course name, fees and term dates. Although with term dates, please note you cannot amend the start month of a course. You must, in the first instance, before any changes are made, contact SLC.

Whilst course name changes themselves don't impact on the student assessment or entitlement, and are not classed as errors, it is worth highlighting that this year to date, there have been over 9,000 course name changes. This is 6% lower than last year, but these are end of year course changes that would affect students.

This is an example of late internal decision making that creates extra work for you and SLC. Please try to only amend course names if it is absolutely vital.

It is best practice to have a discussion with your Account Manager, particularly if you are planning to make major changes or if large volumes of courses are affected.

Whatever changes you make, please ensure you complete a change log and email our Practitioners Team so they can have any affected students reassessed.

We have spent some time looking at the key information you need to be aware of and pointers to look out for, to add or update your courses each year successfully.

Now, let's look at what you need to do, should you have to amend your course details.

Where possible, all course changes should be made at least two weeks before the launch of the student application cycle, to ensure that entitlement is correct ahead of confirmation of registration or attendance. Otherwise, it creates an unnecessary distraction for students and may impact their overall experience.

From now on, for changes that you are planning post launch, you must contact us beforehand using the SSIN queries email address, and you will be asked to complete a separate form for review. We will review and consider the rationale for the change before coming back to you to agree on, for example, the best way to handle communications with students or any similar best practice advice.

We are nearing the end of our webinar presentation now, so before we turn to questions from the audience, we wanted to leave you with some helpful contacts.

You will find guidance documents for CMS, as well as all other services on our HEP Services website at the address shown on the screen now.

You can contact our Partner Support Desk colleagues either by telephone or email and they will be happy to assist you.

And lastly, of course, please don't hesitate to get in touch with your Regional HEP Account Manager at any time should you wish to discuss any concerns or issues you may have. We are here to help you.

I'll now hand back to Paul to introduce the Q&A.

Paul Smith

Well, that completes the briefing session for the Course Management Service for the coming year. I appreciate there's lots of detail, lots of content that we've gone through, and we will be making the slide deck available after the webinar. We may make some tweaks to some of the content to reflect a lot of the questions that have come up. So, we'll put those onto the HEP Services portal, but we'll let people know so you know when to access the information that we've given out this time.

I will just give you an update on the course's launch timetable. So, we're expecting to have final policy decisions confirmed in around, well, in the next three weeks. And concurrent to that, we will be making the system changes we need to to reflect the increase in the fee rates. If we can get those done week commencing the 16th of December, we aim to launch the Course Collection Service then. If it falls a bit later than that, we will consider whether we continue with launch in December or perhaps more likely, we will defer the launch to the week commencing the 6th of January. And that's merely to reflect the fact that we need to have sufficient capacity and resources, and people available to help with any advice and support.

So, that's the course's launch timetable. There might be some questions on that, but I hope that answers all those questions, and we might just skip over those in a minute.

So, now it is time for the question and answer session, and if there's any questions that relate to individual student circumstances or relate to the Student Information Service or bursaries, we'll probably not have time to cover those this time, we'll focus more on the core questions around the Course Management Service. Otherwise, we will take the questions in the order in which they've been submitted as much as possible.

And I guess the first question, thank you, Sean. I think your question covers a lot of people's queries in this general area. The question, 'as an English provider, can we charge the increased £9,535 tuition fee rate for continuing students?'

So there's a couple of things to consider.

And you'll need to take account of what your Access and Participation Plan says, if you have one. And also whether the information and advice, and guidance you've given out to students covers Terms and Conditions which give you the scope to increase fee rates in line with inflation. So you'll have to look carefully at your IHE and I would expect legal advice within the university or college will be involved in determining whether you feel you're free to increase rates for new and returners at the same time. But technically you're free to do so and with a course system that will enable that to be the case.

Sam Stokell

Okay, thanks Paul.

So, the next question that we have is from Ailsa. And Ailsa is asking, 'We are a Scottish college with a course that legitimately starts on a bank holiday Monday, do we need to change the date?'

No, in short Ailsa, you don't. As this is a legitimate teaching day, there's no requirement whatsoever for you to have to change the date. We have validation that you'll be aware of, following the webinar that we carry out. And a lot of our validation around bank holiday dates is where they aren't teaching dates, but in your example here, no, there's no requirement to change that.

Bev McDonald

Thanks, Sam.

Well, the next question is from Karen. And we have had a lot of questions actually regarding the change in the number of digits with course codes. And this is what Karen's come to us with. 'Will existing course codes be changed to 11 digits?'

No Karen, the existing course codes won't change. It's only when you add any new courses that they'll have the increased number of digits and they'll be kind of a phased in approach really, moving to seven, eight, nine, up to the maximum of the new amount of 11 digits. We do have some information available on our website. It includes the updated technical spec, so if you do need more information and you do need to visit that, it'll be on our website for you.

Paul Smith

Okay, and the next question.

'We are a Scottish with some Welsh students. Do the new fee limits apply to you?'

Thanks, Catherine. Yes, so the Scottish Government have confirmed that universities in Scotland will be able to increase the maximum rate of tuition fee to £9535 in the rest of the UK and the Welsh Government have confirmed that Student Finance Wales students will be supported up to that new maximum fee loan, so that those Welsh students won't need to pay any of their fee upfront.

Sam Stokell

Okay, the next question we have is from Debbie, and Debbie's asking how much of a course can be delivered online before it counts as distance learning?

So this is probably quite a common question that we get asked, whether we're out doing sort of training sessions, one-to-one account reviews. And the answer Debbie, is really it comes down to what attendance the student is having on that course. So, if it's just very occasional attendance, for example, once a month, that would qualify then as distance learning. However, if a student is attending more occasionally, once a week, we will class that as an in-attendance course. But again, like Bev said, there's an awful lot of guidance on our HEP website, should you need to refer to that as well when adding a new course as distance learning.

Bev McDonald

Okay, our next question then is from Helen. And Helen has asked, 'what measures are SLC going to take to validate our course data regarding all of these changes to tuition fees? And will SLC provide a list of HECoS codes that are considered classroom based, or do we just have to figure that out for ourselves?'

Please don't worry, Helen, we certainly won't need you to figure all that out yourselves. Our CMS team are already working on updates to the system, making sure that we've got the necessary changes in place when we do get the final announcements from the other devolved authorities to make sure that everything is ready for you to be able to upload your courses. The CMS team are already multi-skilled in all of the different validation that they need to undertake with the new fee rates, that will all be incorporated into the validation process. So please don't worry about that. And your second point in regards to the HECoS codes, we have got a published list from DfE of those HECoS codes, those that are now moving to attract that classroom-based lower fee, and that is all available on our website. And of course, if you need some direction to where that is, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us. I hope that reassures you, Helen.

Paul Smith

The next question is from Melanie. It's about LLE. 'So, has the tech spec for LLE been sent out? And if not, do we have an update of when we can this?'

So, I think I mentioned earlier, there is time for the new government to consider the details of the LLE policy. And we are working on the system design concurrent to policy decisions being made I don't think we'll be in a position to issue specifications out until spring next year. So, we intend around about that time, to give a service definition for the courses service and that will outline the rules about what makes a course eligible for support.

We'll make that as comprehensive as possible, and the intention then is that course designers and curriculum managers can work with support staff to make sure that the courses that are introduced into the curriculum will attract student finance under LLE. The technical spec will come as soon as possible after that. So, all at this stage I could suggest is that we do know the new data items that we're planning to gather as part of the course collection service, that we can assess students entitlement and we can make those available. It's certainly worth a Provider checking that the information requirements we need for that are available within the institution systems and so that they can then be provided into CMS when we start course collection under LLE.

Sam Stokell

Okay, thanks, Paul.

So the next question we have is from Helen. 'Does recent fee increase announced for Undergraduate tuition fees apply to Postgraduate Healthcare which are funded through Undergraduate funding?'

Thanks, Helen. In short, the answer is yes. Because these courses attract the Undergraduate package of funding, they are eligible for the increased tuition fee amount.

Bev McDonald

Okay, so the next question then we have from Sarah is, 'as a Welsh provider, can we add courses to CMS with Welsh language titles?'

Really good question, Sarah. Well, within CMS, there is a limitation on the special characters, really, with some of the language, the Welsh language, which does limit that slightly. So, what we would ask is if you could only add those courses with those language titles for those specific courses that you only do teach in Welsh. If you do need any more information on that, you can contact our Welsh Account Manager who will be able to give you some more guidance.

Sam Stokell

Okay, so the next question we have is from Joanne. And Joanne is asking, 'Can my franchise partners upload their courses to CMS directly?'

Okay, another great question, Joanne. Franchise partners, we get asked a lot of questions around the process for this. In answer to this one, the answer is no. It is the lead provider's responsibility to upload the courses onto CMS. So, whilst the franchise partner is responsible for confirming academic calendar and term dates, it's the lead provider who would upload all of that information onto CMS for the purposes of the student to then apply.

Bev McDonald

Thanks, Sam.

So someone here, Michelle, actually, is just asking us to recap on what we mentioned about available course years and leaving courses unsaved. So, 'did you say that if you were not running a course any longer, you should leave unsaved or set to no students?'

Really good question. So if you're using the teach out or phasing out a course, we would always recommend that you use the available course years function. So, setting those to new students other than the years that you are having those continuing students still on. If it's completely finished running, no longer any students needing to apply, then absolutely, just leave the courses unsaved. As we mentioned in the webinar, we really want you to avoid using that closed course function. So, it's either use the available course years to phase it out, no longer run it at all, or just leave it unsaved.

Paul Smith

The next question, 'do we need to add another course with the new fee if we have some students who have already accepted a place on our course at the previous fee?'

So, this is obviously a question relating to your approach and if you've got the scope to effectively re-offer because your original offer had a condition about subject to rate of inflationary increases on your fee rates. So again, consult with the relevant people within the organisation to see what scope there is. There are some consequences on having different fee rates for different students studying exactly the same programme. Technically, yes, if you've got enough students who've already made offers and may have accepted and you want to retain those offers at the rate of £9250, it would be better if there's enough students to then set up a different course that you have any more offers coming in at £9535 rather than £9250. But you would need to sort of make that really clear to your students. I suppose if it was one offer had been made to one student, you might be able to just have the new course at £9535 and tell that particular student that they need to apply for a fee loan up to £9250. But that's not a great student experience. I probably wouldn't recommend that, and you'd have to be really careful about downstream consequences of that.

Sam Stokell

Okay, so the next question is from Ashley and Ashley's asking, 'When creating a new franchise location, you mentioned a meeting needs to go ahead with SLC, the university and the franchise provider. Does the university contact their Account Manager to set this meeting up?'

Yes, that's absolutely right, Ashley. So, where you enter into a new franchise agreement with a franchise provider, we do like to come out and deliver a session between yourselves as the lead provider, your franchise partner and SLC, just to sort of set some expectations, go through our service standards, which I'm sure the majority of you on the webinar are aware of. And you're absolutely right, you would contact your Account Manager to arrange this.

Bev McDonald

Okay, the next question we have is from Nora. Nora has asked, 'Please can you confirm that the available course years are only viewable to students on the application facility when made available in CMS and not marked as no students?'

So just to explain the available course years, if you set a particular year of a course to no students, then when the student goes to apply, they go online to make the application, that course year won't be visible to them. They won't see it set as no students. That's just what you would see in CMS. It would just clearly be that the student wouldn't be able to see that course or see that course year when they make their application.

Sam Stokell

Okay, thanks Bev.

So the next one is from Helen and Helen is asking, 'Will we have to manually update all the standard undergrad fees of £9535 or will this be pre-populated?'

So for those of you that are familiar with CMS, you will be aware that we don't have a bulk upload facility. And this is all due to data integrity and getting those course details right first time. So yes, you're absolutely right, you will have to manually update all of those fees as appropriate.

Bev McDonald

Thanks, Sam.

So we have a question from Amy. This is actually a really good question, Amy. 'We're a practitioner qualification provider and we're opening a clinic in London and a clinic in Northwich. Does this need capturing somewhere?'

Well, thanks, Amy, it absolutely does need capturing somewhere. It's so important that we are able to establish whether this would be a location, so a new campus location, or whether this would be a new franchise partner, so franchise provision. So, the first thing I would say is you're absolutely asking the right questions, how do we need to capture this? You will need to determine whether that is a new campus location or whether you have entered a new franchise partner, a new franchise agreement. What I would suggest doing is contacting your Account Manager, explaining the process to them that you're currently going through, and they will be able to give you accurate advice on how that needs to be set up. And if it does end up going down to be the franchise route, that's when we will be back in touch to offer that further meeting, that further guidance and that further training with you. So next port of call, have a chat with your Account Manager.

Paul Smith

And the next question is from Sarah. 'As the course collection launch date is delayed compared to previous years, will we have an additional time to collect the information and submit?

So, yes. Thanks, Sarah. I think we like the idea of a date to aim for for planning purposes. So, we might still ask, can you strive to get your courses in by the end of January? And we need to allow for time for the validation and checking of the data if we had any queries. But in the literal sense, there's more time because the application system for students to apply for funding is not going to be in February, we're aiming for March. So, we will have more time overall. But as much as possible, if we could aim for course submission before the end of January, I think that's still sensible for planning purposes because it will give us time for the sort of interaction and validation that we might find useful.

Sam Stokell

So the next question, I think Paul kind of alluded to what you've just talked through then, which is from Kelsey. 'Please can you assure us that we'll be getting an extension as we don't seem to have much time to collect data?'

So as Paul mentioned then, ideally, we will still aim for you to have as much of the data onto CMS by the end of January. But again, just a bit of a best practice plea from us, referring back to some of the key information we talked through in the webinar. If you don't have details confirmed by that point, you don't add generic term dates to the system that you then need to retrospectively change, which will then drive reassessments. But more details will come out regarding course collection.

Bev McDonald

Thanks, Sam.

So Laura has asked, 'If we're opening a new campus building close to an existing one, do we have to set it up as a new site?'

Good question, Laura. And there's probably some further information that we need to gather from you in regards to this new campus building. So would the new campus building be an additional campus, albeit close to an existing one? So, if it was to be a new campus and therefore a new location, then that would obviously need to be set up as a separate location, a new location on CMS. With you saying that you're opening a new campus building quite close to an existing one, we need to check whether you mean that the existing campus is no longer going to be in place, and the new one that you're building is replacing that as such, so that is just becoming your new main campus. If that was the case, that would be slightly different. So again, probably after this, contact your Account Manager just to explain that in a little bit more detail, just so we know which one it is, whether it be completely replacing your main campus or an additional campus, and then we'll be able to take it from there.

Sam Stokell

Okay, thanks Bev.

The next question is from Malcolm, and Malcolm's asking, 'we have several courses that are closed on CMS, some set up in error. I would like to cleanse these from the system. Is there any way of archiving or removing them?'

So, I think, Malcolm, as we talked through in the webinar, there are some checks that we need to do in terms of your closed courses. So, it would probably be worth having a chat with your Account Manager so we can liaise with the CMS team and just make sure that before any of them were moved to permanently closed, there are no students attached to them. So, yeah, have a chat with your Account Manager and we can take that further.

Bev McDonald

Thanks, Sam.

Claire has asked, 'For condensed years of study, when are the fee liability points and when are payments made, i.e. if the year is Jan to July, when would the HEP get paid?'

So, a good one, Claire, probably a little bit more complex that we'll need to discuss directly with you, depending on your course setup. So, when we talk about a condensed year of study, I'm going to use the example here of when your final year of a course is condensed, you'll know from the webinar and from using CMS previously, that we do have to have three sets of term dates.

And you'll have seen through the webinar those restrictions on the earliest that a term can start. Obviously when we get to a final year, and that is a condensed year of study, you can condense those term dates down into that period of study. Your liability points as such, would still by the first day of each of those terms. So, if you have condensed those, your liability points and when your attendance work list would open for you to confirm attendance would still lie on that first date of each term and those payments would still follow in the usual payment run. We do have a really handy chart, a table as such, for those different seasonal starts and some guidance on condensed years and how it's best to group those term dates together and from there you'll be able to see how that leads on to your liability points and when those payments would fall. Again, all included on the HEP website. And as I say, that table's really, really handy. If you need any help identifying where that is, just give your Account Manager a shout.

Paul Smith

Okay, the next question. 'Please, can you advise if fees are going up for all providers, even small ones?'

So, the maximum fee rates, I mean, we tend to quote £9535 for convenience. But yes, if you haven't got an access participation plan or if depending on your TEF rating as well. So, the other values of £9,000, £6165 and £6,000 and then all the part-time and accelerated degree equivalents will all go up, and that's the maximum you can charge. If you're a provider that has historically not charged their maximum, it's entirely up to you whether you increase and by how much and whether you move to the maximum or not. But you will obviously need to consider the delta between your lower fee rate and what others are charging in your plans. But the system would allow that for you. So, we are expecting a lot of individual discussions with providers on these types of areas.

We're nearly out of time. We've got time for just one final question, please, and then we'll need to move to wrap up.

Bev McDonald

Okay, so we have our final question, and that is from Darren. Thank you, Darren. 'Is it right that the changes to the SLC course code in CMS will not go live until the work on the change of fee cap has been completed? And this is what I've been told as part of the SIS User Group.'

Well, you'll have heard it firsthand, Darren, if it's definitely come from the SIS User Group.

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of work has already been ongoing and is being considered in relation to, of course, the new fee cap and the new updates. The work with the SLC course codes and the changes in terms of the number of digits, that is going forward from the 2025-26 academic year and is part of the work that is being prepared by the CMS team. So, once we go live, as I say, Paul gave you an indication of when we're looking for that to happen, once all of this work has been complete, that's when you'll start to see the changes.

Paul Smith

Okay, thank you very much.

And I'm afraid that's all we've got time for now. But we appreciate you spending time with us. As I said earlier, we will be making the slide decks available on the HEP Services Portal very shortly. We will give you more information about the course launch date as well, and we'll follow up with any specific guidance we have.

So, I appreciate a lot is going on. Watch this space and when we go into Course Collection, if there's any room for doubt, please feel free to contact your account manager or the Support Desk because we're very keen to sort of resolve any queries as we start to track the collection of courses going into next year.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope to see you soon.

Goodbye.



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