

FAQs Regarding SPRING Application

First Edition (2025.9.8)

【The Revision of the SPRING Program Policy】

Q1: I have heard various news regarding the revision of the SPRING program policy, but will that new policy be applied starting with the 2026 applications?

(<https://www.jst.go.jp/report/2025/250709.html>)

A: Yes, the policy will change starting with the 2026 applications. Support for Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) for international students under the new policy will be as follows.

- ① AY2026 will provide Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) support (current policy)
- ② AY2027 and beyond will NOT provide Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) support (new policy)

We will announce the specific requirements and support details under the new policy on Doshisha University website and in this Q&A collection as soon as the details are finalized.

Q2: Could you clarify the definition of “international student” for this Project?

A: We are currently checking the specific criteria for “international students.” As soon as the specific criteria are released by the government, we will announce them on Doshisha University website and in this Q&A collection.

Q3: I am an international student. If I am selected as a SPRING student through the 2026 application process, will I be able to continue receiving Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) in AY2027 and beyond? Is it possible that the Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) will no longer be provided from AY2027 onward?

A: For international students selected as a SPRING Student in AY2026, the following applies:

- ① AY2026 will provide Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) support (current policy)
- ② AY2027 and beyond will NOT provide Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) support (new policy)

Q4: Will international students who were accepted into the SPRING project before

AY2025 also lose the Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) support from AY2027 onward?

A: No, the international students selected for this project before AY2025 will continue to receive Research Allowance during the standard period of study.

Q5: Will support for Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) for international students be discontinued after AY2027?

A: It is scheduled that the international students selected for this project in AY2026 or later will no longer receive Research Allowance (equivalent to living expenses) support in AY2027 and beyond.

I. [Eligibility and Loss of Eligibility]

Q I-1: Is eligibility affected by nationality?

A: No, there is no nationality requirement.

Q I-2: Are international students eligible to apply?

A: Yes, they are, but they must satisfy "5. Eligibility" in the Application Guidelines.

Q I-3: Are working adults also eligible to apply?

A: For applicants who have been admitted through the working adult entrance examination, you may apply unless you fall under any other exclusion criteria listed in "5. Eligibility" of the Application Guidelines (such as "those who receive more than ¥2,400,000 as salary, executive compensation or other stable income from affiliated organizations).

Q I-4: Is there an age limit?

A: No, there is not.

Q I-5: I currently earn income through part time work. In that case, can I apply?

A: There are no income requirements at the time of application. In addition, income from part-time work (RA, TA, etc.) is not considered "stable income," so you can continue to do it after becoming a SPRING student. However, the Project expects you to concentrate on your research by providing Research Allowance and to devote as much time as possible to research activities. Note that part-time work does not exempt Spring students from fulfilling the obligations required by this project, such as attending various programs.

Q1-6: After being selected as a SPRING Student, will I be able to work as a TA or RA?

A: Same as the answer to Q1-5.

Q1-7: What does “(2)⑥ Those who are not eligible for support under this project” in “5. Eligibility” refer to?

A: If you are receiving support that overlaps with the support provided by this project, you will not be eligible. If you are worried about overlapping support, please contact the SPRING Management Office before applying.

Q1-8: I plan to enter a doctoral program, but the entrance examination for the graduate school I intend to enroll in has not yet been held. Does this mean I cannot apply unless I have already passed the exam?

A: You are still eligible to apply even if the entrance examination has not yet been completed. However, please note that you need to meet the “5. Eligibility” requirement as of April 1st, 2026 (the start date for support).

Q1-9: I had stable income exceeding ¥2,400,000 in AY2025, but that income is expected to end from AY2026 onward. In this case, can I still apply?

A: Yes, you may apply. Please note that if you receive stable annual income exceeding ¥2,400,000 during the SPRING support period, you will be required to decline the support.

Q1-10: Under what circumstances would a student lose their eligibility for SPRING support?

A: In addition to cases where the applicant no longer meets the requirements listed under “Eligibility,” the following situations may also result in the loss of status as a SPRING student.

- (1) If the student takes a leave of absence during the support period
- (2) If the student withdraws or otherwise loses their enrollment status at Doshisha University
- (3) If the student is subject to disciplinary action under the university’s regulations on student conduct
- (4) If the student is found to have committed research misconduct, as determined under Doshisha University’s regulations on handling such cases
- (5) If the SPRING committee determines, based on the student’s fulfillment of project obligations, that the student is no longer suitable to receive support

Q1-11: I am planning to study abroad during the SPRING support period. If I take a leave of absence for that purpose, will I lose my eligibility as a SPRING student?

A: If a SPRING student takes a leave of absence for any reason, they will lose their eligibility as a SPRING student.

Q1-12: If I lose my eligibility as a SPRING student due to taking a leave of absence for study abroad during the support period, will the support resume after I return and re-enroll?

A: No, it will not. Since the student has lost their eligibility as a SPRING student, the support will not resume. However, this does not prevent you from reapplying for future calls for applications, provided you meet the eligibility requirements.

2. 【Application Process】

2.1 <General>

Q2-1-1: May I fill out the application in English?

A: Yes, you may. Please submit your application using the English version of the application form in the Application Guidelines on our website.

Q2-1-2: I made an error in the application form and would like to replace it. What should I do?

A: You may not revise or resubmit your application for any reason after it has been submitted. Before submitting your application, please check the following: Are there any errors in the entries? Are there any attachments missing? Are there any errors in the attached documents?

Q2-1-3: I have no changes to my application, but I would like to submit an additional file, because I made a mistake when attaching the file. What should I do?

A: You may not revise or resubmit your application for any reason after it has been submitted. Before submitting your application, please check the following: Are there any errors in the entries? Are there any attachments missing? Are there any errors in the attached documents?

2.2 <Statement of Purpose & Research Proposal>

Q2-2-1: What kind of research do you expect to be ‘challenging and interdisciplinary research’?

A: We envision research that aims to tackle social issues, pioneer new fields, and engage in global practice—transcending differences in values and worldviews, as well as

existing frameworks such as graduate schools and labs.

Q2-2-2:I am an international student. I plan to return to my home country to become a researcher after completing my graduate studies. Can I receive support under this project?

A: This project aims to develop highly specialized professionals who will maintain a passion for research, become leaders in advanced science and technology, and create innovation in future Japan, ethically and conscientiously respecting individual dignity and humanity. Therefore, whether you are an international student or not, if it is clear that you will not contribute to the creation of science, technology and innovation in Japan in the future, you will not be eligible for support. However, you will be eligible if you are going to work in Japanese academia or industry after completing your graduate studies. This is an important point in the application form, so international students in particular should try to describe how you plan to contribute to this.

Q2-2-3:What specific information should I include in my overseas activity plan?

A: First, please clarify the global position of your research. Then, please describe what kind of overseas activities are necessary to develop and deepen your research. For example, if you need new technology or know-how, you can plan to visit laboratories at overseas research institutes to hold discussions with overseas researchers or conduct joint experiments at overseas research institutes. In addition, you can plan to attend international conferences and workshops held overseas to have the opportunity to discuss with researchers, gain new ideas for your research, and develop these ideas into collaborative research.

Q2-2-4:Does the overseas activity plan require an actual visit to a foreign country?

A: In principle, SPRING students are required to travel abroad. The Project expects you to actually go to the local area and take part in overseas internships, study abroad programs, and international exchange programs.

Q2-2-5:What should I do if it is difficult to carry out my overseas activities due to a pandemic or other reason?

A: If you are unable to travel abroad due to circumstances such as the pandemic, it may be possible to attend the online instead. In that case, please consult with the Management Team individually after selection. Please prepare the "Statement of Purpose and Research Proposal" on the assumption that you will be able to carry out overseas activities.

Q2-2-6:How long should I plan for my overseas activities?

A: There are no particular rules. Please make use of overseas activity expenses (up to ¥400,000), research expenses, research allowance, etc. to create a highly feasible plan.

Please note that in the case of long-term overseas activities, it may not be possible to conduct them while remaining enrolled, due to course registration and other academic requirements. If you take a leave of absence to carry out overseas activities, you will lose your eligibility as a SPRING student. Therefore, you must plan your overseas activities within the scope that allows you to remain enrolled, as determined by your graduate school.

Furthermore, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts in various parts of the world, please note that overseas travel often requires prescribed procedures in advance within your graduate school.

Therefore, when planning and implementing your overseas activities, regardless of the length of the overseas activity, please consult thoroughly in advance with your supervisor and your affiliated graduate school.

Q2-2-7: I am an international student. Will research in my home country be recognized as an overseas activity plan?

A: One of the purpose of overseas activities is to cultivate global perspective through understanding other people and different cultures. As a general rule, activities are expected to be conducted outside of your home country. However, circumstances may differ depending on your research field and topic, so please consult the Management Team.

Q2-2-8: Can I include overseas study plans after the fourth year of my doctoral program? Also, will plans after the fourth year of my doctoral program be eligible for overseas activity expenses?

A: Support is available for plans up to the third year. In addition, even if long-term enrollment is approved, support is only available within the standard period of study (1st to 3rd years of doctoral course, 3rd to 5th years of integrated doctoral course), so overseas study abroad beyond that will not be covered by the overseas activity expenses.

Q2-2-9: There is a possibility that the research plan described in my application may change after being accepted into the SPRING project. Is this acceptable?

A: Yes, it is acceptable if the plan changes as your research progresses. Please write your research plan as of the time of application. However, if the research theme itself undergoes a significant change, you must obtain approval through the prescribed 'Research Theme Change' procedure in order to continue receiving support from the

Project."

Q2-2-10: I would like to know the reviewers' areas of expertise when preparing the application (Research Proposal).

A: The selection committee members are selected from both faculty members of this university and external experts, with consideration given to balance between the humanities and sciences. They may not necessarily be specialists in the applicant's specific research field. Therefore, please make sure to present your content in a way that is understandable to researchers from different disciplines when preparing your application (Research Proposal).

Q2-2-11: Is it acceptable to change the default font settings in the prescribed application form, as long as the font size is at least 10.5 points?"

A: Yes, you may modify the font settings.

Q2-2-12: Are the application documents reviewed in color, or are black-and-white printed versions used?"

A: The document screening will be conducted using the submitted PDF file as is.

2.3<Recommendation Letter from Academic Advisor>

Q2-3-1: I am currently affiliated with another institution (not Doshisha University), and plan to enter the doctoral course at Doshisha University from April 1st, 2026. In this case, which supervisor should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

A: Please obtain a recommendation letter from your academic supervisor as of April 1st, 2026. Please reach out in advance to the faculty member from whom you wish to receive guidance after enrollment and ensure that they fully understand the purpose of this project as well as your research plan after admission. Once this is done, please obtain a recommendation letter from them and submit it.

Q2-3-2: Why is it necessary to submit a letter of recommendation from my academic advisor?"

A: If selected, you will be expected to engage in both your own research and career development as a researcher (refer to 「6. Obligations」). To ensure a balance between research and career development after selection, please obtain and submit a recommendation letter from your academic advisor.

Q2-3-3: When I enter a doctoral program, my graduate school or department may change

as well as my academic advisor. In this case, which advisor should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

A: Please obtain a recommendation letter from your academic advisor as of April 1st, 2026.

Q2-3-4: I am currently affiliated with another institution (not Doshisha University), and plan to enter the doctoral program at Doshisha University from April 1st, 2026. In this case, which advisor should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

A: Please obtain a recommendation letter from your academic advisor as of April 1st, 2026.

Q2-3-5: Regarding the recommendation letter from my academic advisor, it is stated that a handwritten signature should be obtained and submitted as a PDF file. Is an electronic signature acceptable? Or is it necessary to obtain a handwritten signature, convert it to PDF, and submit it?

A: Please obtain a handwritten signature from your academic advisor and convert the document into a PDF file before submitting it. Electronic signatures are not accepted.

Q2-3-6: Regarding the letter of recommendation from my academic advisor, does this mean that I should take a photo of the signed document or scan it, then convert it into a PDF file for upload? Or is it necessary to apply an electronic signature directly to a PDF file?"

A: Please obtain a handwritten signature on recommendation letter and convert it into a PDF file for upload. There is no need to apply an electronic signature directly to the PDF file.

2.4<Copy of Official Scores of English Proficiency>

Q2-4-1: Why is it necessary to submit an official English Proficiency test score?

A: Because a certain level of English proficiency is required to participate in various programs after acceptance, it is set as a requirement at the time of application. The submitted score is used to confirm that the applicant has sufficient English ability to successfully take part in the programs after being selected.

Q2-4-2: If I do not have a test score within the designated period, can I submit an older score instead?

A: Please submit a test score taken within the period specified in the application guidelines. Scores taken outside of this period will not be accepted.

Q2-4-3: I am a native English speaker from an English-speaking country and therefore,

I meet the exemption criteria for submitting an official English proficiency score. However, the application form requires an attachment in that section, and I am unable to proceed with the submission. Could you please advise me on how to complete the application?

A: If you are exempted from submitting the Official Scores of English Proficiency, please complete the “Notification of Exemption from Submission of Certificate of English proficiency” form and submit it.

Q2-4-4: What should I write on the “Notification of Exemption from Submission of Certificate of English Proficiency” form?

A: Please provide objective and verifiable information to support the exemption from submitting an official English language proficiency score such as the fact that you are from a country where English is the native language, or you have completed higher education (undergraduate or graduate level) at a university or institution where English is the primary language of instruction (for instance, provide the institution web link).

2.5<The Result of the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships>

Q2-5-1: Although applications are accepted even if the applicant has no prior experience applying for the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships, does the fact that no additional points are awarded based on the JSPS DC screening results essentially mean that such applicants are unlikely to be selected?

A: If the applicant has no prior application history for the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships, or if they have applied but do not submit the screening result (copy of the result), no additional points will be awarded based on the JSPS DC score. Therefore, compared to applicants who have their application history and submit screening results, such applicants will be at a significant disadvantage. Although it is still possible to be selected based on the results of the document and interview screenings, the situation remains extremely disadvantageous. For this reason, we strongly recommend that applicants apply for the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships and submit the screening result (copy of the result).

3. 【Screening】

Q3-1: Does the content of a recommendation letter from an academic advisor affect the screening process?

A: The recommendation letter follows a prescribed format and does not influence the

selection process. If selected, you will be expected to engage in both your own research and career development as a researcher (refer to 「6. Obligations」). To ensure a balance between research and career development after selection, we ask that you obtain and submit a recommendation letter from your academic advisor.

Q3-2: For the submission of an Official Score of English Proficiency, does the score affect the screening process (e.g., does a higher score result in additional points)?

A: The submitted score is used to confirm that the applicant has sufficient English ability to successfully take part in various programs. The score itself does not result in additional points.

Q3-3: I understand that the selection will be conducted through a comprehensive evaluation based on the “Review Result of JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships” (hereinafter referred to as “JSPS T-Score”), “Document Screening” and “Interview Screening,” but what is the weighting ratio (point allocation) for each evaluation component?

A: The specific weighting ratios are not disclosed; however, each component is evaluated comprehensively with equal importance.

Q3-4: Could you provide details on how the T-score from the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships screening results is used to award additional points during the evaluation process?

A: The specific method of awarding additional points is not disclosed.

Q3-5: Can I take the interview online? What should I do if I can't attend the interview in person?

A: The interview is scheduled to be a face-to-face interview at Imadegawa campus. There are no plans to conduct them online. We will announce the schedule in advance, so please make the necessary arrangements to attend in person. If you are unable to attend the interview, you will not be given a score for the interview.

Q3-6: Can I take the interview in English?

A: Yes, both the presentation and Q&A may be conducted in English.

Q3-7: Can I bring presentation materials for the interview on a USB memory stick or similar device on the day?

A: You have to submit your presentation materials in advance and cannot replace after submission, as well replace on the day of the interview, so please submit the completed version by the deadline. As stated in the Application Guidelines, there is not enough

time between the announcement to interview candidates and the deadline for submitting presentation materials, so we recommend that you start preparing your presentation materials as soon as possible.

4. 【Obligations】

Q4-1 :What happens if I fail to meet my obligations?

A:Applicants are selected on the condition that they will fulfill the required obligations.

In cases where the level of fulfillment is deemed inadequate, the Management Office will issue a request for improvement. Failure to fulfill these obligations without showing any improvement may result in disqualification from the SPRING project and you may be required to return any research allowance or other support you have already received. Some programs already have date sets. For others, we will announce the date as soon as possible, so please adjust your schedule and participate. Considering the possibility of scheduling challenges, we strongly encourage you to participate in the required activities in a timely and well-planned manner, preferably in the early stages of the support period.

Q4-2:Why do you have obligations even after the support period ends?

A : SPRING students are required to cooperate with follow-up surveys after the completion of their doctoral program and to update their information in JGRAD even after the support period has ended. This project is implemented with the support of the “Next-Generation Researchers Challenging Research (SPRING)” program by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST). JST requires universities to conduct follow-up surveys on the career paths of program graduates for over ten years. Therefore, SPRING students are obligated to notify us of any changes to their contact information, even after the support period has ended.

Q4-3:Is it mandatory for SPRING students to apply for the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships every year?

A:Starting from the AY2026 application cycle, SPRING students are required to apply for the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships every year. In particular, for those aiming for a career in academia, having been selected as a JSPS Research Fellow is considered a valuable achievement. We strongly encourage active and consistent applications to the JSPS DC program.

Q4-4:If I get selected for the JSPS DC Research Fellowship but wish to continue receiving support from the SPRING project, may I decline the JSPS DC Research

Fellowship? In that case, will I still be required to apply for the JSPS DC Research Fellowships again in the following year?

A: If you are selected as a JSPS Research Fellow, it is expected that you will decline SPRING support and pursue your research under the JSPS fellowship, as the JSPS program offers greater financial support both in terms of research encouragement funding (equivalent to living expenses) and research grants. However, depending on the availability of program slots, you may still be able to participate in certain SPRING support programs. If you wish to do so, please consult with the SPRING Management Office.

Q4-5: Does submitting a paper written in English to an international journal fulfill the overseas activity requirement set by this program?

A: Submitting an English-language paper to an international journal does not fulfill the overseas activity requirement set by this program. However, we strongly encourage students to actively pursue publication in international journals as part of their academic and professional development. To support this, the Project offers assistance with article processing charges (APCs) for open-access journals and provides support for international research outreach.

5. [Research Allowance, etc.]

Q5-1: Are Research Allowance subject to taxation?

A: Yes, Research Allowance is treated as miscellaneous income and is subject to income and local taxes. You will need to file a tax return yourself. Research Expenses (including Competitive Research Expenses) and Overseas Activity Expenses are managed by the university, so they are not considered miscellaneous income (they are not included in tax returns).

Q5-2: Can I manage my Research Expenses myself? Are there any restrictions on how I can use them? Also, can I carry them over to the next academic year and use them in conjunction with next year's Research Expenses to purchase expensive equipment?

A: The Research Expenses will be managed by Doshisha University (in other words, SPRING students will not be paid directly). You will need to follow the University's research funding rules to execute them. At the beginning of each academic year, you have to prepare a research expenses plan for the effective and planned use of Research Expenses and execute it based on your plan. As a rule, you cannot carry them over to the next academic year, so please create an effective plan for using them within the current academic year.

Q5-3: Will the use of Research Expenses be limited to overseas activities?

A: No, it is not limited to overseas activities. You may also use them as an expense necessary for general research activities, such as purchase of experimental materials and research resources, travel expenses for domestic conferences and field surveys, license fees for analytical software, etc.

6. 【Programs】

Q6-1: Could you tell us more about the overseas activities of this project, and the support and efforts being made to cultivate global perspective?

A: Applicants are expected to develop their own overseas activity plan at the time of application, and to implement it in a concrete and timely manner after being selected. We would like you to plan and utilize the resources of Doshisha University and the graduate school you belong to, the network of laboratories and academic advisors, and various programs outside the university according to the characteristics of your research field. When implementing it, the doctoral career coordinator will provide opportunities for individual consultations and interviews, and will consult with you as a mentor. We also offer various training programs to enhance research skills, such as English presentation workshops and academic writing courses. Please take advantage of these opportunities to develop your abilities.

Q6-2: I have heard from past SPRING students that overseas activity expenses are only allocated on a competitive basis. Overseas activities are required for SPRING students, but if I don't have an allocation of overseas activity expenses, do I have to do overseas activities at my own expense?

A: In 2024, it was allocated on a competitive basis, but in 2025, we have secured overseas activity expenses for all SPRING students who are planning to participate in overseas activities. If you have submitted an overseas activity plan at the beginning of the academic year, you will be eligible to receive the overseas activity expenses for that year. However, if your plan does not meet the purpose of the overseas activity expenses, we will ask you to review your plan. If you have no plans of overseas activities in the relevant academic year or your plan is extremely difficult to carry out, you will not be allocated overseas activity expenses.

Q6-3: Is there any support for improving English language skills?

A: At this time, we are not planning to provide support to improve English language ability itself as we assume that you already possess the necessary English proficiency to

participate in various programs (refer to Q2-4-1). However, we are planning to provide training for improving presentation skills in English, etc. As stated in the application guidelines, some programs require English proficiency to participate. If you feel uncertain about your language skills, please take the initiative to improve them on your own.

7. 【Accelerating Challenging and Interdisciplinary Research Expenses】

Q7-1: It is said that in addition to the ¥400,000 in research expenses provided to SPRING students per year, approximately half of the SPRING students who wish to get additional research expenses will be allocated up to ¥300,000 per student as accelerating challenging and interdisciplinary research expenses (competitive funds within the Project). How will these be allocated?

A: After you have been selected as SPRING students, we will start applications for additional research funding within the Project. Please propose an unconstrained, challenging, and interdisciplinary research plan. Applicants will be required to give a presentation to the faculty members involved in the management of this project, including the Project Supervisor, and to all SPRING students. Even if you do not apply, we expect you to attend the presentations given by applicants in order to further develop your own research by gaining new insights and ideas from other research themes. Details will be notified after the adoption.

Please note that the number of support for this program (the total amount of additional research funds to be allocated) is determined based on the balance with other support programs, such as overseas activities, so the acceptance rate will vary from year to year.

Q7-2: If I am selected as a Project Student, do I have to apply for the Accelerating Challenging and Interdisciplinary Research Expenses (competitive funds within the project)?

A: No, you should only apply if you wish to receive additional research funding. It is up to each SPRING student to decide whether to apply. This is a good opportunity to ask yourself how you can develop your research with additional research expenses, so we hope you will consider applying. In addition, regardless of whether you decide to apply, we strongly encourage you to attend the presentation sessions, as they provide opportunities to encounter research from diverse fields and gain fresh perspectives.

Q7-3: The Project expects us to participate in joint research with companies, but do I have to find companies on my own?

A: It is expected that the activities in this project will develop into collaborative research with companies etc. Collaborative research will be carried out in coordination with the supervising professors.

8. 【Others】

Q8-1: What is the difference between this project and the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships?

A: The JSPS Research Fellowships is a program operated by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). Under this program, outstanding doctoral students enrolled in Japanese graduate schools who wish to devote themselves to research at their home institutions are selected as 'Research Fellows - DC (DC1, DC2, etc.)' and are provided with research grants. It is expected that fellows will concentrate on their research under the guidance of their academic advisors. For those aiming for a career in academia, being selected is generally regarded as a mark of distinction. On the other hand, students supported by this SPRING project are expected to thrive across a wide range of career paths beyond academia. To support this, we offer various programs designed to help them prepare for diverse professional opportunities

Even after being selected as SPRING students, many students have gone on to successfully selected for the JSPS Doctoral Course (DC) Research Fellowships. We look forward to seeing your continued growth and advancement as a researcher through your involvement in this project.

Q8-2: I am thinking of applying for the SPRING project in the next academic year (2027), but what will the application schedule be like?

A: The SPRING program is scheduled for policy revision (<https://www.jst.go.jp/report/2025/250709.html>), and specific details have yet to be determined. When applications open, information will be provided on the university website, so please check for updates there.

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