

Quality Enhancement Plan

(The Language Centre – abbreviated to ‘LC’)

(14.03.2023)

FOR COMPLETION BY QEU	
Date of Peer Review visit: 20-22/02/2018	Head of Unit: Zoe Williams
Link (interactive) to Panel Report published on QEU website	Date QEP considered by Quality Enhancement Committee: 23/03/2023

Item No	Panel Recommendation	Actions Planned ¹	Responsibility for Action ²	Resource Implications ³	Implementation Schedule ⁴	Effectiveness/Impact ⁵ To be completed as part of follow-up
1	The Panel recommends the immediate appointment of a full-time Head of the Language Centre. The University should ensure that the new Head of the Language Centre is a member of Academic Council.	Agreed. We presume the second sentence means ‘will sit at Academic Council’ rather than ‘recruited from’ same. The former is important for the new Head.	VP for L&T	F/T Salary	-Originally 1 April 2019 -Job advertisement (February 2019). -Official notice of appointment sent to all LC staff by VP L&T on 22 March 2019.	Director in post since May 2019 LC Director has not joined Academic Council, but the work of the Centre has

¹ May include actions planned within the unit or those that require interface with other parts of the university

² E.g. Head of School, School Manager, all staff, specific committees etc

³ Resources – the financial or human resources required to implement the recommendation

⁴ Interim milestone dates can be included here (e.g. within 6 months, within 12 months, within 3 years etc.)

⁵ To be completed as part of follow-up 12-15 months post publication of QEP - Recognising the need to reflect on the effectiveness of actions undertaken, and to what extent the actions have achieved their intended outcome

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					-New Director's commencement: 20 May 2019.	<p>been represented at Council by the Head of Function and by the LC Director and LC colleagues as guest speakers on several key occasions.</p> <p>Suggest this is reviewed in consultation with Head of Function.</p>
2	The Panel recommends that an urgent review of current contractual arrangements and staff recruitment procedures is undertaken by the Deputy President and Human Resources.	Agreed. Perhaps short 1-1 meetings with HR could be helpful, as part of this larger exercise.	Acting Director HR Director	Unclear Significant increase in staff costs, which need to be met through commercial growth	ASAP New director engaged with personnel and unions in June 2019 Following consultation with School of Languages and HR, a new designation of 'University Language Teacher' was approved by the University leadership team. Contracts were accordingly issued under a process of regularisation for a group of eight former part-time, 'temporary contract' staff. A new job description was created for all University Language Teachers which is specific to the operation of the Language Centre. At the same time, a new designation of 'Senior University Language Teacher'	<p>Meetings with HR have taken place.</p> <p>In addition, a strategic review of CLT structures was conducted end January 2019. Among the recommendations made was that teacher 'titles' are to be examined with a 'view to creating two positions (language teacher, and senior language teacher) with defined salary scales.</p> <p>All contractual issues were resolved in December 2019. Two Senior University Language Teacher (SULT) are now in post, and they are contributing to the</p>

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					(known as Head of-) was created.	strategic and operational management of the Centre
3	The Panel recommends the establishment of a Language Centre Board with representational membership and key external stakeholders to aid in the creation of a strategic vision.	Agreed	New Director	None	<p>Prior to the creation of a Language Centre Board, the following steps had to be taken</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management/strategy team to be created. 2. Initial Language Centre strategy to be written. 3. Review of LC's internal governance to be conducted. 4. Creation of formal internal quality assurance systems. 5. A review of LC approval processes for credit modules leading to identification of appropriate host for these 6. A national decision had to be taken as to whether LC sits under the code of practice for Language Centres or for HEIs. This is in reference to the International Education Mark, which will be a requirement for any provider in Ireland looking to recruit students from 	<p>Awaiting New Director</p> <p><i>Covid was a major disrupter for the LC. Not only did it delay the roll out of the new Accreditation/Quality Mark, the International Education Mark, but it also impacted the time available for development of internal quality assurance and the creation of stakeholder forums. The Language Sector was treated as a private sector provider during Covid and not a university provider and was not allowed in-person tuition for most of the period. The pivot to online and hybrid delivery models were outside our normal practice. For this reason. LC strategy was produced in response to Covid (Strategy 1) and to the recovery period (Strategic Refresh). The third iteration of the strategy will be written in consultation with external stakeholders</i></p> <p>There is now an effective management team with two academic managers (the SULTs) and two administrative leads (Centre Manager - also known as Head of Marketing - and Director). This body meets to review strategy monthly and represents the views of constituents.</p>

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					overseas. (QQI concluded HEI code in December 2022)	<p>QQI has agreed that LC quality assurance can be managed by the university.</p> <p>LC is now situated for second stage approval under ACE (Adult Continuing Education)</p> <p>LC has created and rolled out a new Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment draft policy which is adaptive to dual sectoral concerns.</p> <p>New committees are in operation and are providing quality assurances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Curriculum committee 1</u> (Credit Module sub-committee) 2. <u>Curriculum Committee 2</u> (Non-credit sub-committee) 3. <u>Academic Standards Committee</u> (First stage approval of changes to credit modules) <p>Internal verification of assessment takes place regularly</p>

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4	The Panel recommends that the University consider including the Language Centre in its action plan for delivery of the Strategic Plan, with a particular focus on internationalisation	Agreed; this is an excellent idea. However, with extra responsibilities should come extra resources.	New Director	None		<p>Awaiting New Director.</p> <p><i>Meanwhile, the Centre's internationalisation work is ongoing.</i></p> <p>The LC has not made the impact it would have hoped at this stage. The update to university strategy during Covid (The Strategic Pivot) removed the focus away from internationalisation and international recruitment. The latest strategy (Securing our Futures) refers to globalisation and global impact and although it references increased recruitment of international students it does not specify actions. An important driver for the creation of an international strategy in UCC will be the June start date of a newly created VP Global and the LC will be looking for an early audience with the postholder. The other key driver is the HE code for the IEM (International Education Mark) which will require UCC to create a</p>

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						language policy which will need input from the LC
5	The Panel recommends that the Finance Office works with the Language Centre to map the entire extent of the financial activity of the Centre. This should enable the new Head of the Language Centre to undertake a cost benefit analysis of all activity and to develop a sustainable business plan.	Income and expenditure are captured under Agresso and analysed by a financial analyst. Recompense for academic modules should be considered, perhaps in the form of FTEs.	New Director			<p>Financial Analyst has undertaken a 6-month review of LC</p> <p>The finances of the Centre are now fully mapped and decisions about activity are made in a principled way with reference to agreed costing mechanisms and to the academic and commercial aims of the Centre.</p> <p>The LC still has no recompense for work done pro bono in support of international students and staff, but this is now recognised by senior leadership and the finance teams. Again, the drivers mentioned above will engender a new stage of discussions around this issue. In the meantime, we have made the activity more effective and more efficient and can better demonstrate its impact?</p>

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6	The Panel recommends that the University considers the strategic positioning of the Language Centre within the University with specific reference to its location in the structure of the University. Potential locations could include Teaching and Learning and/or cognate academic units under a hybrid or shared model arrangement.	Being reinstated into CACSSS would have seemed more appropriate, but apparently the decision to move us to T & L has already been taken. T & L seems a good fit, at least for some of our services/programmes, and is run by a Vice-President.	VPL&T	None	October 2018	Moved to L&T October 2018 <i>The positioning under the OVPLT has enabled the Centre to develop its academic credibility and visibility through support from a VP but also by proximity to other specialist cross-college teaching teams</i>
7	The Panel recommends that the University works with the Language Centre to upgrade the inadequate physical resources (office & working spaces).	Important. The room situation is indeed dire and forms an impediment to suitable delivery of our existing programmes as well as to any future expansion.	VPL&T	Unknown	Going to Space Sub-Committee	NIL <i>The Centre now has adequate physical resources, having created a new teachers' staffroom and improved classrooms and environs. All staff now have a dedicated workspace and the equipment needed to work onsite and from home. Centre staff still do not have a kitchen although plans have been drawn up to convert the Language Centre Welfare and Student Engagement Officer room into a multi-function room, should this become a priority</i>

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8	The Panel recommends that a comprehensive staff development plan continues to be developed to ensure that all staff are supported in their continuing professional development. Further to this, the Panel recommends collaboration with relevant professional bodies such as the Association of University Language Centres (AULC) and the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CERCLES), and increased collaboration with BALEAP which supports the professional development of those involved in learning, teaching, scholarship and research in English for Academic Purposes.	<p>Agreed. However, there are already many opportunities for CPD within UCC free of charge, and externally (with expenses paid by UCC). The crux is for staff who are already very busy to find the time to attend these and to implement the innovative ideas gained from such CPD.</p> <p>The Erasmus exchange is an excellent opportunity for staff to visit Language Centres in other Erasmus universities.</p> <p>Attending international conferences (IATEFL, Online Educa etc.) is very valuable.</p> <p>The regular in-house CPD sessions for teaching staff are both popular and successful.</p>	Acting Director and New Director	<p>None</p> <p>Expenses paid</p> <p>Expenses paid</p> <p>Admin payments made to attendees</p>	Ongoing	<p>Continuous progress on all fronts</p> <p><i>A broad range of professional enhancement activities are now led by a Language Centre CPD team. A budget is allocated and managed by one of the SULTS. CPD is taken to include: a schedule of regular peer-led sessions; peer observation scheme; tech buddy support; reading circle; external training and conferences. All staff take part in UCC's Personal Development Reviews, and their aims are fed anonymously into the planning for CPD and training along with the Centre's strategic aims</i></p>
9	The Panel recommends that the Language Centre take immediate steps to ensure the parity of the staff experience, including but not limited to, securing UCC email addresses for all staff members and ensuring equal access to all rooms.	Some progress has already been made in this regard, for example inclusion of all staff in staff meetings, UCC email addresses for all. Access to rooms is unrestricted except to those containing safes and confidential material, as well of course as to personal office spaces.	Acting Director	None	Completed	Completed
10	The Panel recommends that the new Head of the Language Centre work with staff to create a vision and	Yes, but achieving consensus may be difficult. The strategy must be supported by UCC, not least in the provision of additional resources where needed.	New Director And	If name change is to be considered there will be	Not Yet <i>Mission, vision and values statements were agreed in</i>	Awaiting New Director. LC suggests consideration of 'UCC Language Centre

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	strategy for the Language Centre. The name of the Centre and the clarification of its mission should be considered in this process.		Head of Marketing	cost implications with rebranding	<p>consultation with staff in 2019 and were then comprehensively reviewed in 2022.</p> <p>We decided not to rename as the cost and potential impact to a 25-year-old identity were felt to be too great. We instead redefined our visual identity within the suite of colours and identifiers provided by UCC branding. The lack of the word 'English' was only felt to be problematic for UCC audiences and it was decided to use our mission statement as a tag line to our name: <i>Helping you to reach your learning, teaching and communication goals through English'</i></p>	<p>(EFL/ESOL)' if name change is to be effected.</p> <p>The staff-led articulation of what we do and why, has been invaluable in helping us to develop and to navigate some of the challenges of the last few years.</p> <p>Recognition of our function is not considered an issue</p>
11	The Panel recommends that measures are taken to increase visibility both internally and externally. Internally, there should be a focus on signage and brand identity.	Agreed. It would be beneficial if a strong and recognisable UCC Language Centre logo could be created.	New Director And Head of Marketing	PR and Advertising outlay ongoing	<p>February 2019 HofM had correspondence with B&E re inclusion of LC on Totem Pole Signage for ORB</p> <p>ORB totem pole now includes signage for the the LC with a signature colour of sky blue. This colour is repeated on the woodwork of all LC doors and the Reception window.</p>	<p>Campaigns ongoing to raise visibility internally and externally</p> <p>The Centre is now easier to navigate and will improve further when the signage has been renewed</p>

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					<p>Signage for the social spaces in the Centre is currently in draft form</p> <p>See above note about visual identity</p>	
12	<p>The Panel recommends that the new Head of the Language Centre should collaborate with the International Office with a view to sharing and developing a marketing strategy for Language Centre courses and building on cooperation with the International Office regarding the recruitment process.</p>	<p>Agreed, but there has been considerable success in the marketing endeavours of the Language Centre which have been undertaken independently, and this approach should not be overlooked.</p> <p>While there are, of course, considerable advantages to co-operating on marketing and recruiting operations with the IO (International Office), there may be limited opportunities to directly connect with appropriate and relevant parties in target areas, as the Language Centre would not be the main focus of the IO's recruiting objectives.</p> <p>Immediately IO and Admissions could facilitate the dissemination of information about the new Pre-Masters/PhD Pathway, and the new Pre-sessional course, both of which we are starting this summer.</p> <p>Until we have more rooms and more staff, there is limited room for further marketing for courses during the academic year, in contrast to those in the Summer School.</p>	<p>New Director And Head of Marketing</p>	<p>Nil(€)-Minimal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Director and Centre Manager worked intensively with the IEO in the roll out of the pre-sessional courses in summer 2020 and key academic colleagues provided expertise around online assessments during Covid. This cooperation during an intense period laid the foundation for ongoing collaborative work</p> <p>Specific programmes such as the pre-sessionals and the International Master's Pathway have involved cooperation with the IEO, admissions teams and the central and college-based recruiters. The LC has several representatives on the Recruitment Committee, which meet once a month.</p> <p>The Global Strategy Group has not sat in recent years and if this or an alternative</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Good cooperation exists between the IEO and the LC, with the LC being regularly called upon to provide language expertise.</p> <p>There is still a systemic disconnect however caused by the designation of the LC as a purely income-generating area as opposed to being a service provider for the university.</p> <p>The LC for instance was not included in the written submission by the IEO to the Institutional Review panel, although the LC Director was invited to join the panel interviews.</p>

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					forum is created under the management of the VP Global, the LC should request representation	
13	The Panel recommends that the Language Centre work with IT Services to source appropriate systems software for registering and tracking students.	Agreed. This is critically needed as we continue to expand, especially in view of GPDR.	Director and Centre Administrator	Unknown	Unknown (for all encompassing package) <i>The UCC Academy performed a full review for the LC on processes and system needs. This review was delayed until the new CRM UCC Apply was fully implemented and it was possible to see whether it would fit the purpose of the LC. Unfortunately, it won't, and we are currently in the procurement process to find a suitable alternative.</i>	Centre Administrator arranged presentation to admin staff by PaytoStudy/TransferMate as possible interim measure for processing payments from students and agents, recording details, issuing receipts and facilitating refunds and commission payments. <i>Transfermate is being used for payment and manual processes used for the registration of LC students</i> <i>Procurement process is underway, and we have confidence in being able to identify a fit for purpose platform for registering and tracking students</i>
14	The Panel recommends that administrative processes be reviewed, drawing on insights from LEAN practices and approaches.	Agreed, after the installation of suitable software (as above).	All Staff	Staff time	<i>A LEAN practitioner was invited in to provide initial training the senior administrative team, but the Covid pandemic meant that practice changed suddenly</i>	Retention Schedule adopted. Implementation began March 2019 (streamlining paper and soft copy records)

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					<p>and dramatically, and it was not possible to progress this.</p> <p>We called in the UCC Academy for support, and they mapped our processes prior to the purchase of a new system in line with good practice</p>	<p>Covid lockdowns necessitated a shift to paperless processes and these improvements have been continued now back on campus</p> <p>Please see section 13 also</p>
15	<p>The Panel recommends that the Language Centre works to increase visibility, create new linkages and develop existing linkages with areas such as Teaching and Learning, Adult Continuing Education, the Alumni Office and the International Office.</p>	<p>Agreed, provided we have resources in place. The Skills Centre is also a potential partner.</p>	<p>Acting Director Head of Marketing New Director</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Ongoing and now that we are in OVPTL regular management meetings include ACE, CPD etc.</p> <p>Discussion around the cross-over between Skills Centre and Language Centre services is ongoing</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>And see above re IO</p> <p>Productive relationships have been formed across the institution.</p> <p>Please see earlier comments – the LC works collegiately with others in the office and has a working relationship with the IEO and the GSO.</p> <p>The Centre is gaining traction with the Colleges, schools and programmes, particularly following the launch of the International Master’s Pathway and the staff training offe</p> <p>The Skills Centre is an active partner</p> <p>The LC has begun to work with the Alumni Office to</p>


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						<i>build data on previous LC students</i>
16	The Panel recommends greater co-ordination with central offices providing pastoral resources that are under-utilised by the Language Centre (for example, the Admissions Office and the Student Experience Office).	Agreed	New Director Head of Marketing Full-time Course Co-ordinator	None	Ongoing	HofM/Full-time Course Co-ordinator investigating peer support for 2019/20 academic year for incoming LC full-time students. <i>The LC appointed a Student Engagement Officer from its administrative team to assist students in accessing the supports available to them on campus. This has enhanced our offer, although as LC students do not pay a capitation fee, there is sometimes resistance from other offices to provide the full range of supports available to UCC degree students. This is not an issue usually as we work to manage student expectations</i>
17	The Panel recommends working closely with the Library and exploring the resources available for staff and students.	We have already had two excellent workshops provided by Library staff. There is merit for this exercise to be repeated and it could also be extended, for example, to cover the areas of plagiarism, Turnitin and Endnote. Developing library resources for Language Centre students should also be explored.	Acting Director New Director	None	Done	Teachers collaborating with library Details of resources available to full-time students publicised. Tours and access for incoming groups arranged.


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18	The Panel recommends further development of new modules and programmes, the new pre-Masters is one such commendable example. The Panel also recommends that the Centre considers further developing modules in English for Academic and Specific Purposes/English for Speakers of Other Languages, which could potentially contribute to many current UCC programmes.	<p>The Curriculum Committee which was set up in 2010 but met only a few times, should be re-established.</p> <p>This is a key growth area, of vital importance to UCC generally and to the Language Centre. Designing, promoting, administering and supervising such courses requires considerable staff hours (i.e. non-teaching hours), as does collaboration with the many stakeholders in UCC. This workload must be planned sustainably</p>	New Director	Staff time	Not yet completed	<p>Growth in new programmes for incoming groups, including those in collaboration with CACSSS and L&T.</p> <p>New summer Teacher Training Refresher Course launched 27 March 2019.</p> <p>Expansion of existing Academic English Courses ongoing.</p> <p><i>The pre-master's did not recruit as it was priced too high for a language programme. It was formally disbanded in 2021.</i></p> <p><i>The LC continues to innovate and has become particularly agile in this since the Covid disruption.</i></p> <p><i>Please see section 3 for more information about how we manage our academic development</i></p>
19	The Panel recommends that the introduction of foundation programmes be considered subject to adequate resourcing.	Agreed on both points.	New Director		<i>A stakeholder consultation was conducted in 2021 as to the viability of launching undergraduate or postgraduate foundation programmes. The review</i>	<i>The new Higher Diploma in Academic Discourse and Skills is a Level 8 academic and language masters pathway programme for international students. This</i>

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					<p>concluded that the University/Language Centre did not have the capacity to create an undergraduate pathway without significant investment and the employment of specialist staff to deliver at Level 5/6.</p> <p>For this reason, the postgraduate pathway was prioritised and taken through approval at the end of 2022.</p>	<p>programme is recruiting to a pilot year 23-24. The landscape in Ireland is still changing post-Covid and at present UCC is looking to broaden the number of established external pathway providers it accepts.</p> <p>Once the LC has tested its capacity to develop pathways, it may review its position on undergraduate pathways, but this will be dependent on the strategic direction of international recruitment at the time.</p>
20	<p>The Panel recommends collaboration with the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) unit internally and encourages the Language Centre team to explore the possibility of offering the non-credit bearing evening courses as part of the CPD suite of programmes.</p>	<p>The Language Centre already advertises all programmes via the UCC network. Additional weight might attach to part-time ESP courses for staff as part of the CPD suite of programmes.</p>	New Director		<p>To be actioned</p> <p>The LC was an initial supporter of Canvas Catalog, the external facing course platform run by CPD</p>	<p>Awaiting New Director</p> <p>Canvas Catalog has proved challenging to navigate and of limited value to the teacher and students as MS Teams is a more adaptable platform and better user experience. There is also a per-user cost to its use. However, we remain engaged with the platform for certain activity</p>

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21	<p>The Panel recommends that, should the Centre consider re-introducing the IELTS Testing Centre, a cost-benefit analysis is to be carried out in advance.</p>	<p>-Team discussion and undertaking of a full cost-benefit analysis</p> <p>The re-introduction of the IELTS Testing Centre would only be vital if Cork did not have an IELTS examination centre, which it currently has.</p> <p>Opinion in the Language Centre is divided on this recommendation. Some people are much in favour of re-instating us as an IELTS examination centre, on the grounds that IELTS is a leading international test for admission to third level study, and our being an IELTS exam centre is a good marketing tool.</p> <p>Others are against it, on the grounds that the Language Centre is an academic service department of UCC and this should remain its primary focus. Moreover, we have a chronic lack of resources, both in terms of staff and rooms, to administer IELTS exams: if we had extra financial resources they might be better spent on extra teachers and administrative staff to better serve our increasing numbers of students.</p> <p>Then restrictions on teachers would have to be considered: <i>"After becoming an examiner you will still be able to teach IELTS, but you will not be able to give IELTS bands to any of your students' work, examine your own students or use the fact that you are an examiner as a promotional message to attract IELTS students"</i>. https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teach-ielts/ielts-teaching-faq</p>	<p>New Director</p> <p>(The then Acting Director was against it)</p>	<p>Very costly</p> <p>Perhaps money better spent on investment in resources including additional teachers and support staff</p>	<p>Teaching staff investigating alternatives whilst awaiting decision on this.</p> <p><i>There is no strong business case to be made to open a second IELTS testing centre in Cork. Once we had ceded our original operation to a local independent provider, we effectively allowed them to take over the market.</i></p> <p><i>We undertook a similar review of our Cambridge exam Centre during the Covid period and afterwards when the landscape for testing had changed and there was a predominance of cheaper online tests. The Cambridge Centre was not profitable in the full trading year 18-19.</i></p> <p><i>At the same time, we were able to go into partnership with a mobile testing provider of IELTS to ensure that the test can take place on UCC campus, albeit in a limited capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Due to the regularisation of staff contracts, a special derogation had to be sought from the Head of HR to allow staff to potentially work as</i></p>	<p><i>The Centre is not currently running any exam business, except for those managed by an external provider.</i></p> <p><i>Strategically, the Centre has better articulated its value as a university provider to prospective students and the value of its own assessments are being developed and quality assured. Future planning with other university providers as part of a national working group suggests that this is the direction of the sector and that a link to the Irish Register of Qualifications may be established in the future</i></p>

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		However, we all agreed that a full cost-benefit analysis would need to be undertaken in advance of any decision on this matter.			examiners and invigilators for either IELTS or Cambridge, and this came with significant restrictions. In the past the part-time teachers had supplemented their incomes with examining work, and this was no longer possible to the same extent.	

For completion by Unit		
Head of Unit: Director Zoe Williams	Signature: 	Date: 14.03 2023

Head of College/Functional Area: Paul McSweeney	Signature: 	Date: 14.03 2023
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