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NEW ENGINEERING

POWERING EDUCATION : ENRICHING LIVES

Vocational and applied progression to Higher Education and FE-HE Collaboration

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UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL
...championing higher level vocational learning

Background

- Review by Professor Joy Carter, UVAC Chair, for BIS HE Minister Rt Hon David Lammy MP
- BIS – Higher Ambitions The Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy – November 2009
- BIS – Skills for Growth – The National Skills Strategy – November 2009
- UK CES Sponsored Review of Vocational Progression in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- The Conservatives *'Create a clearer pathway from vocational routes into further and higher education.'*

Coverage of BIS Review

- Definitions of Vocational & Applied Learning and Higher Education
- Analysis of Existing Progression Routes
- Rationale for Progression
- Demand for Vocational Progression
- The Development and Delivery of Level 3 Vocational Qualifications and Programmes
- HE Admissions and Vocational Learners
- HE Programme Design and Delivery
- Funding
- Information, Advice and Guidance
- Measurement and Evaluation
- Additional Roles and Responsibilities

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What We Mean by Vocational Learning and Higher Education

Interim Recommendation – In the development of vocational progression, policy focus should be on progression to any higher level learning programme (e.g. Foundation degrees, honours degrees, HE certificates and diplomas, HNDs/HNCs, new technical qualifications at level 4, higher level NVQs, other higher level qualifications awarded by awarding bodies regulated by Ofqual and recognised professional qualifications) including 'bite-size', accumulative progression through accredited units, based on the best interests of the vocational learner and where appropriate their employer.

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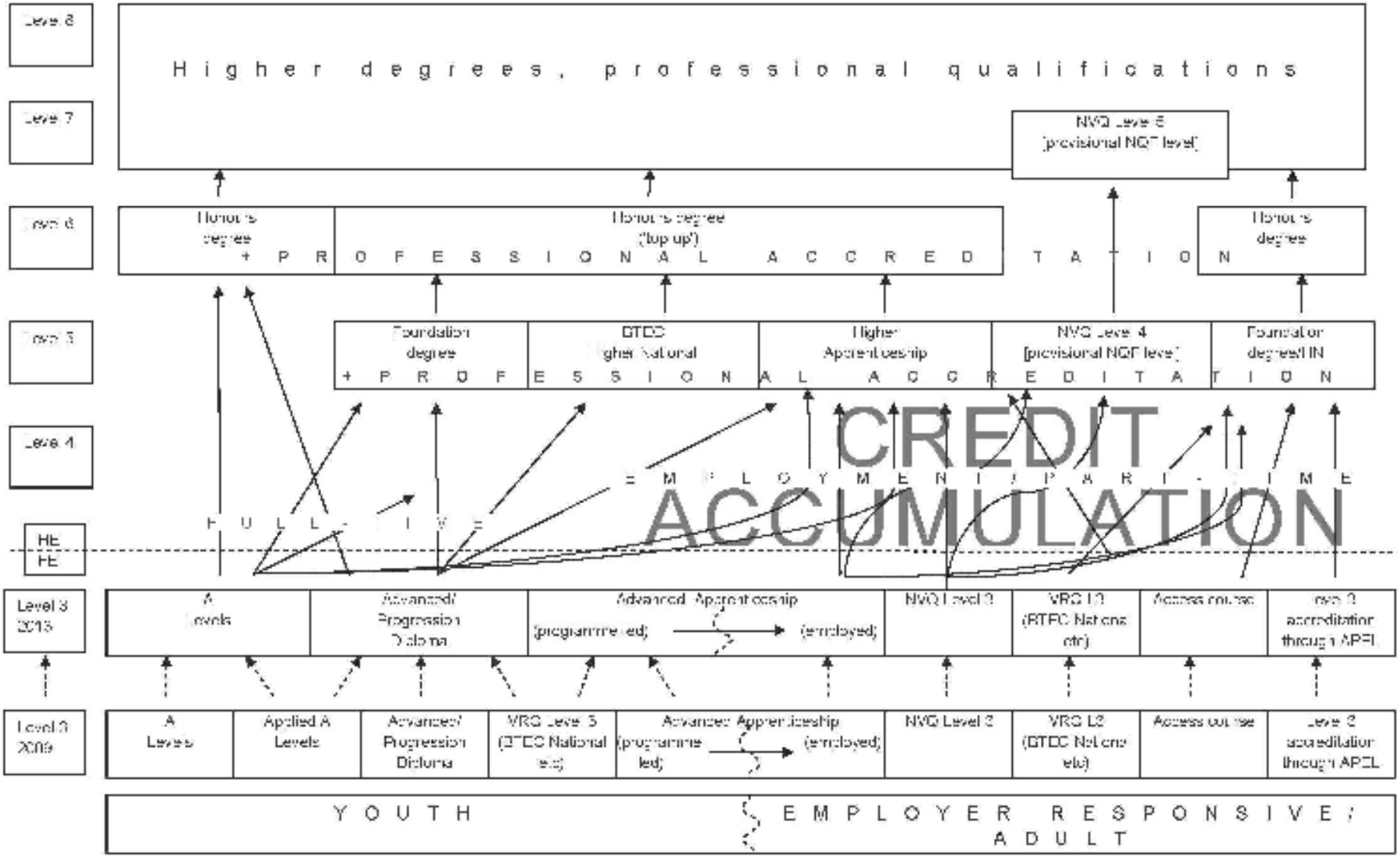
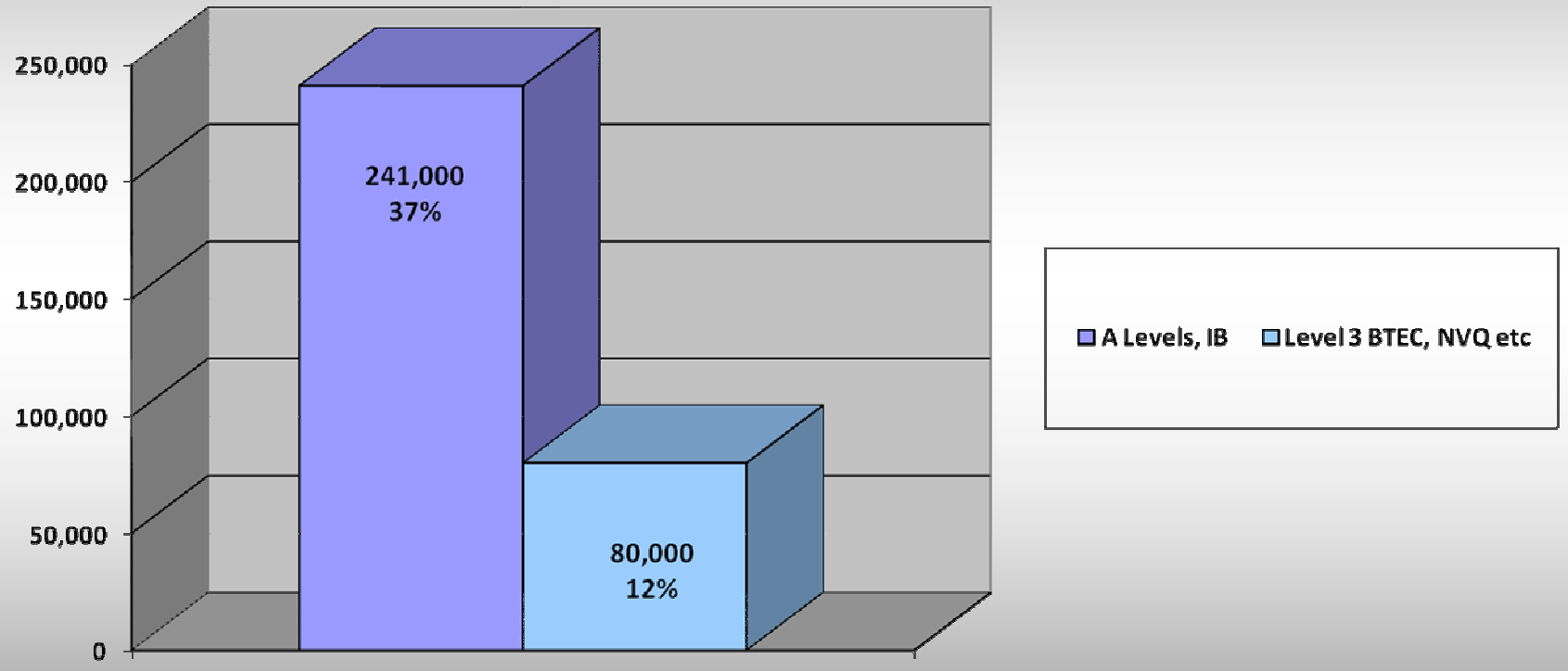
Progression Routes



The Number of Vocational Learners – 19 year-olds

Level 3 achievements of 19 year-olds in England, 2008



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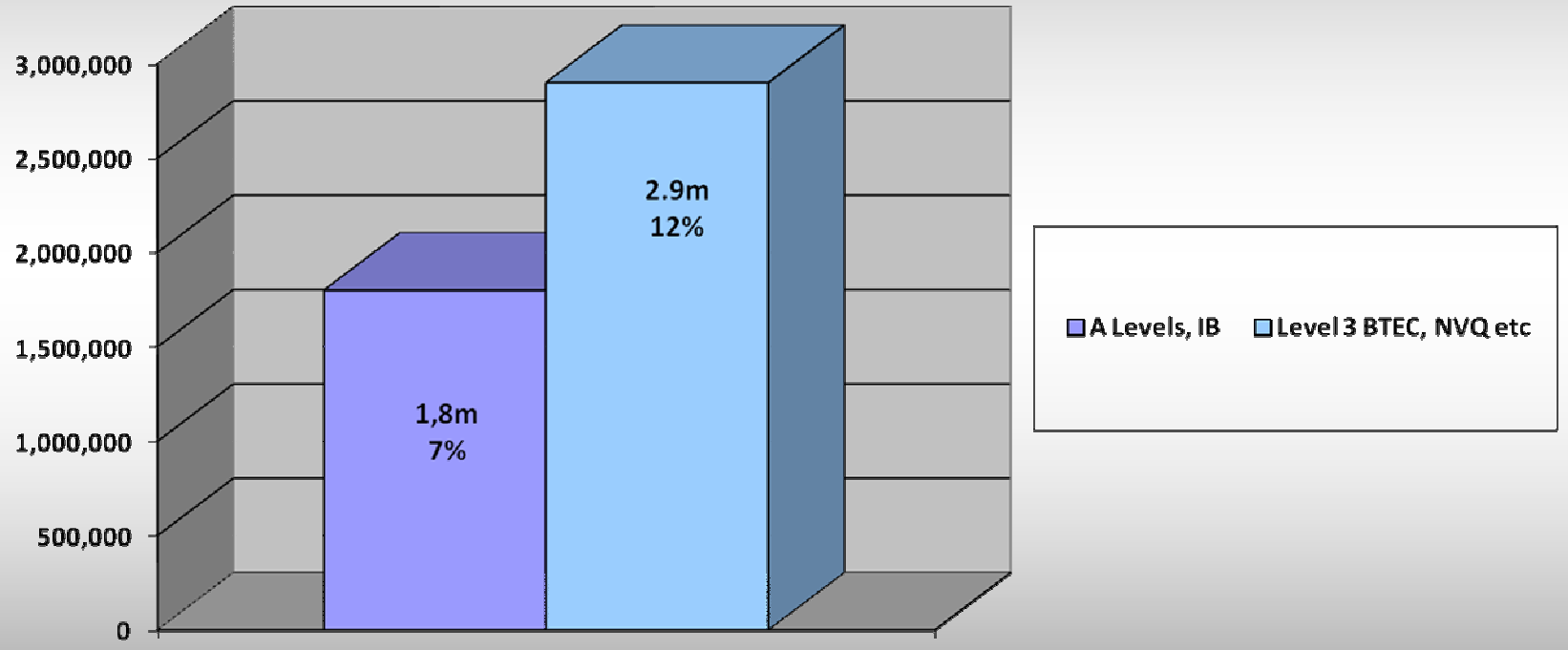
The Number of Vocational Learners – Adults

English workforce with Level 3 as highest qualification, 2006



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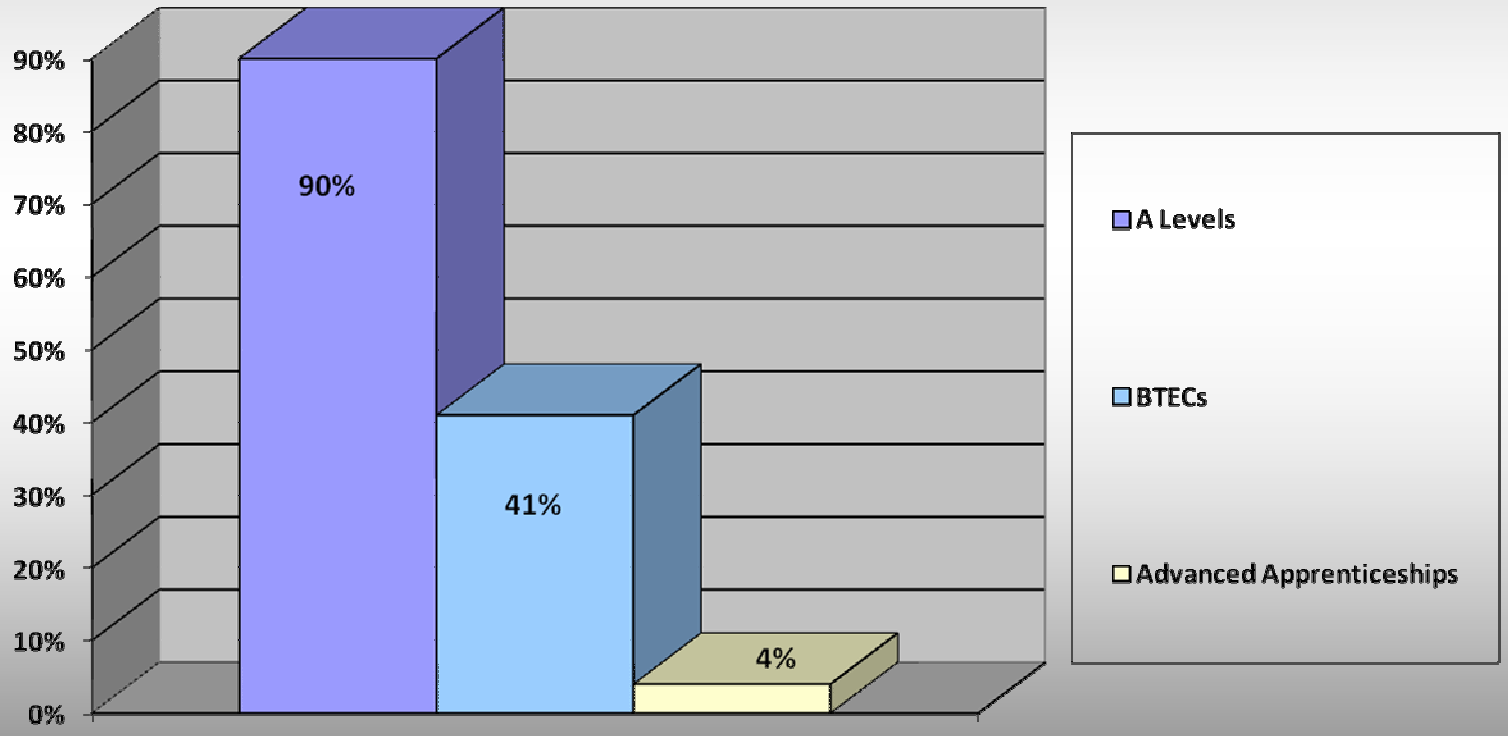
Actual Vocational Progression to HE

Percentage of A Level and Vocational Learners in England progressing to HE



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The Role of Different Parts of the HE Sector and FE

Students with vocational qualifications are admitted largely to post 92 universities and FE colleges.

Why would a 'selecting' university with high demand from A level learners with high UCAS points want to recruit vocational learners, particularly during a period of high demand for places?

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The Rationale for Progression

Isolated Examples despite the 'system'?

'Running the Apprenticeship in conjunction with the foundation degree seems like the ideal route for us… it is fantastic to be able to take 16 & 17 year olds with good grades into the organisation, then in four years' time have them graduate still working for us, having developed so much. Compare that with graduates straight from university. They will probably have a three-year head start.' - **Aircraft IT Systems Company**

'I decided to progress from the Advanced Apprenticeship to a foundation degree as the IT industry seem to employ people with degrees and experience. I thought this was a great opportunity for me to gain both.' **– Former IT Advanced Apprentice**

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The Rationale for Progression

- **Skills needs** – By 2017 47% of all UK employment will be in managerial, senior official, professional and technical occupations. Leitch emphasises the need to raise the proportion of the UK workforce qualified to level 4 and above.
- **Employability** – Wage returns offer a significant incentive for progressing to level 4 – particularly for women.
- **Social mobility** – More than twice as many young people from lower socio-economic groups choose vocational routes as do young people with parents in professional occupations.

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The Development and Delivery of Level 3 Vocational Qualifications and Programmes

- Fitness of purpose for progression to HE?
- Perception of vocational and applied qualifications as for the less able and therefore less suitable for HE entry.
- Little HE involvement in the development of level 3 vocational programmes.
- Suitability of some programmes as platforms for progression e.g. NVQs and Apprenticeships.
- A risk of ‘academicising’ curriculum and content?
- A need for more opportunities and flexibility to support seamless and natural progression?

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HE Admissions and Vocational Learners

'We must win the hearts and minds of universities – vocational qualifications should have equal billing to academic qualifications.' – National Partner

Admissions entry criteria for vocational HE programmes are often dominated by A levels, followed by applied qualifications and BTECs, with NVQs often relegated (or not even included) to the bottom of a seemingly hierarchical list as 'other qualifications'. Apprenticeships are often not mentioned.

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‘HE’ Programme Design and Delivery

- Vocational learners are often used to learning in different ways.
- Patchy use of AP(E)L.
- Predominately large programmes.
- Slowness of validation processes.
- Insufficiently flexible HE provision; infrastructures geared to traditional, young, full-time entrants.
- An increasing proportion of vocational learners are employees – HEIs will need to meet employer as well as individual needs.
- Employers want different forms of provision, short accredited HE courses, work-based, delivered flexibly, with flexible start and completion dates and assessment systems based on the demonstration of competence.

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Funding

Part-time funding is essential for vocational progression – but part-time funding is *'scandalously unfair'* – (Policy Exchange) and a *'form of discrimination'* – (Select Committee on Innovation, Universities and Skills).

The anomalous position of Non-Prescribed Higher Education.

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Funding

Interim Recommendation – Government should ensure the HE funding methodology is reviewed and that any future funding system supports part-time learning more effectively and reflects more fully the additional costs of part-time learning. The review should also consider how bite sized chunks of learning are delivered on the basis of learner and employer need and the leverage of employer funding and employer role as purchaser of such learning.

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Information, Advice and Guidance

Regardless of the actual number of individuals progressing to HE, the ability to outline and demonstrate clear progression routes demonstrates the value of vocational qualifications to teachers, parents and careers advisors.

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So what's the Message for FE?

- Flexible smaller employer focused higher level programmes?
- Link into local skills needs and social mobility.
- The expertise and experience in this area?
- An opportunity or challenge for FE?
- BUT what of the barriers?

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Next Steps

Publication of BIS Sponsored Review

To contribute to UK CES Study

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