

# **2019-2020 ACADEMIC GUIDE**



**THE NORTH AMERICAN  
REFORMED SEMINARY**

# **CONTENTS**

<b>Welcome</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Mission</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our History</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Distinctives</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Confessional Commitment</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Government</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Accreditation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Educational Outcomes</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Student Conduct</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Admission Policies</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Academic Policies</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Support TNARS</b>	<b>16</b>

## Welcome



The mission and vision of The North American Reformed Seminary is one of the most honorable and remarkable educational endeavors attempted by the Reformed community. Through TNARS, students are able to obtain a Reformed seminary education unhindered by debt, location, or schedule. Our challenging curriculum coupled with pastoral mentoring provides the student with the theological foundation and ministry skills needed for effective ministry.

TNARS desires theological education to be restored to its rightful place: the local church. Ministry preparation is, after all, a part of the church's discipleship task! TNARS seeks to serve the local church by providing an academic platform pastors can use in the training of their members for ministry and in the training of men called to the work of the gospel ministry.

Our vision is to help prepare a new generation of Reformed pastors who are passionate for the glory of God, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the equipping of the saints for ministry.

If you share these goals, I invite you to prayerfully consider becoming a part of the TNARS community as a student, mentor, or friend. TNARS recognizes that online distance education is not for everyone, but for many it will prove to be an incredible blessing. We would love to be able to serve you in your preparation to serve our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

For the cause of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John H. McDonald".

John H. McDonald  
Director of the Seminary

## Our Mission

The mission of The North American Reformed Seminary is to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ by strengthening His Church through free online Reformed seminary education.

We seek to glorify God by:

- Providing online seminary education completely free of charge so that students are equipped for ministry unhindered by debt, location, or schedule
- Promoting a Reformed understanding of Scripture and of the Christian life
- Encouraging evangelistic endeavor and passion for worldwide gospel transformation

## Our History

The North American Reformed Seminary began as part of a free educational endeavor known as *The North American Theological Society*. Although the Society claimed adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, it was later discovered that a form of modalism was not only tolerated but actively promoted within the Society. While an attempt was made by the seminary administration to assert and defend the orthodox view of the Trinity, the result was meager. Accordingly, the governing board of the seminary determined to immediately separate the seminary from the Society. The seminary soon found a new home under the umbrella of the *Coram Deo Study Center* based in Flagstaff, Arizona. Inspired by the L'Abri Institute, the Center was founded by Dr. William Bauerle in 2007.

The seminary was officially designated *The North American Reformed Seminary* in January 2008 and pursued state exemption with the postsecondary commissioning board of Arizona. Listed among its founders were: Casey Leach, Steven Veach, Lawrence Bray, N.E. Barry Hofstetter, Wilbur Pickering, and Bill Bauerle. These men served as the original academic mentors for the seminary as well as the oversight committee.

The formative vision of The North American Reformed Seminary was to offer Reformed seminary education completely free of charge via an online platform. Even textbooks were to remain free of charge. There was great concern among the founders over the rising cost of seminary education; it was believed that finances should never be an obstacle to fulfilling a call to the gospel ministry. Through TNARS, men could obtain a Reformed seminary level education unhindered by debt, location, or schedule. Without the need to uproot families and accrue crushing debt, men were free to follow ministry opportunities previously not possible.

From the outset, the seminary placed a strong emphasis on the spiritual development of students. The role of the mentor and the fellowship found within a local church body were considered vital and indispensable. Academics joined with piety was the true goal. Closely related, the seminary wished to produce "pastor-scholars" rather than theological academicians.

As a completely free seminary, accreditation was never considered a real possibility, and the seminary has always been careful to maintain its full academic freedom as a Christian institution. In 2014, The North American Reformed Seminary became an affiliate member of the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries (ARTS). In this way, TNARS is able to affordably participate in the promotion of high academic standards and to do so from within a Reformed theological context.

## Distinctives

We believe that the Church is the God-ordained institution for educating its members. Though seminaries have replaced this function of the Church for some time now, we seek to adhere to the biblical principle of Church-centered education. Because of this TNARS does not view itself as a separate institution from the local church, but rather as a resource for the local church to use in equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). TNARS does not desire to supplant, but rather to work alongside local church leadership by providing curriculum and educational support for equipping their members. Our design is to keep local church leadership involved in the training process of the student. While we might be able to provide a high level seminary education, we cannot provide the avenues for servant-hood that come from being involved in the local church covenant community.

## Confessional Commitment

The North American Reformed Seminary is committed to the **Westminster Standards** (1788 American Revision) as being a proper interpretation of Scripture. The Standards thus serve as the seminary's official Statement of Faith.

**TNARS Student Statement of Faith:** The seminary does not require students to affirm the Westminster Standards. However, all students are required to affirm the following basic statement of faith:

- I believe the Bible is the written word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible is the revelation of God's truth and is infallible and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice.
- I believe in the Holy Trinity. There is one God, who exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- I believe that all are sinners and that we can do nothing to save ourselves, but must rely on God's mercy.
- I believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who through His perfect life and sacrificial death atoned for the sins of all who trust in Him alone for salvation.
- I believe that God is gracious and faithful to His people.
- I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells God's people and gives them the strength and wisdom to trust Christ and follow Him.
- I believe that Jesus will return, bodily and visibly, to judge all mankind and to receive His people to Himself.
- I believe that those who are Christ's enter into Heaven and its eternal joys upon death.

- I believe that those who are not Christ's enter into Hell and its eternal punishments upon death.
- I believe that all aspects of a Christian's life is to be lived to the glory of God under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- I believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two sacraments/ordinances that the Church is required to administer.
- I believe that the offices of Elder and Deacon are the two offices that have continued in the Church, while other offices such as Apostle and Prophet have ceased.

## Government

The North American Reformed Seminary is governed by its Oversight Board. The Oversight board consists of pastor-scholars representative of a broad range of Reformed Theological thought. The Director of the Seminary serves as chief administrative officer and moderates the activities of the Board.

## Accreditation

The North American Reformed Seminary is an unaccredited institution that is exempt\* from state regulation because of the religious nature of our programs. We do not plan to ever seek regional accreditation. Instead of seeking approval from outside organizations we believe in the biblical principle of "by their fruits you shall know them." Therefore, we intend to garner a good reputation by the graduates that we produce.

The North American Reformed Seminary is an Affiliate institution of the **Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries**. As such, it participates in and contributes to collegial and professional development activities of the Association, and is committed to the quality of education ARTS promotes. Affiliate status does not, however, constitute, imply, or presume ARTS accredited status at present or in the future.

Though we do not have regional accreditation, we are well recognized as a solid Reformed seminary as can be seen on our "Recognition" page.

We are recognized by the Evangelical Reformed Council on Academics (not an accrediting agency).

*\*South Carolina Code of Laws, Nonpublic Postsecondary Institution License Act, Section 59-58-30(4) does not require licensure of The North American Reformed Seminary as it is an "institution whose sole purpose is religious or theological training."*

## Educational Outcomes

### Educational Expectations:

Every TNARS student will:

#### **1.0 Show a commitment to live for Christ and serve His Church**

- 1.1. Practice spiritual disciplines of grace
- 1.2. Develop self-awareness of being an active member in the Body of Christ
- 1.3. Accept correction and guidance through mentoring
- 1.4. Understand the importance of and practice biblical evangelism
- 1.5. Grow in servant-leadership as modeled in Scripture
- 1.6. Lead others into spiritual growth

#### **2.0 Develop a deep understanding of and appreciation for Reformed theology**

- 2.1 Properly exegete biblical texts within the context of the analogy of faith
- 2.2 Present Reformed theological positions as well as any personal differences to them, using the Word of God in defending such positions
- 2.3 Analyze, synthesize, and engage the culture (both secular and ecclesiastical) from a Reformed theological perspective

#### **3.0 Be able to rightly divide the Word of God**

- 3.1 Study the Word of God within the proper context (history, authorship, etc.)
- 3.2 Rightly preach the Word of God using grammatical-historical exegesis
- 3.3 Read the original languages of Scripture to develop a fuller understanding of Scripture (M.Div. and above)

### Academic Expectations:

1. Clear expression of complicated topics
2. Close and critical reading of texts
3. Critical reflection
4. Integrity
5. Research competency

## Student Conduct

Students are expected to strive in all things to conduct themselves as mature believers. Biblical ethics should control our words and our actions, both public and private. In today's advanced technological environment our words can include texting, emails, social networking, and blogging - in addition to our speech. Exemplary piety is especially required of those who are preparing themselves for the gospel ministry. Students should be respectful of mentors, seminary staff, and other students. The seminary reserves the right to dismiss any student whose conduct is found to be unsatisfactory on the basis of spiritual or moral principles found in the Scriptures. The student is allowed to appeal the dismissal according to the student appeals policy.

## **Admission Policies**

Applicants are admitted into our degree programs if they meet the specified qualifications, including an approved mentor. Applicants whose applications have remained in process over six months may be asked to submit a new application. Applicants should not begin any coursework until an official acceptance notification is received containing a student identification number.

### **Program admission qualifications:**

To apply to the ATS program, you must possess a high school diploma or GED. To apply to the BTS program, you must hold an associate degree or equivalent. To apply to the B.Div program, you must be over 30 years of age and possess a high school diploma or GED. To apply to the MTS or M.Div programs, you must hold a bachelor level degree or equivalent. In order to apply to the D.Min program, you must possess an M.Div degree with 3 years of pastoral experience subsequent to conferring of M.Div degree. To apply to the Th.D program, you must possess a Master's level degree in a related discipline of theological study consisting of a minimum of 60 academic credit hours with at least 12 credit hours of Biblical language courses (if languages were not included in applicant's master's program, applicant will need to complete BS500 and BS501 as part of the doctoral program). The B.Div. program, M.Div. program, and all doctoral programs are restricted to male applicants only.

### **Required Transcripts:**

The ATS program requires submission of a copy of your high school diploma or GED. The BTS, MTS, M.Div., and all Doctoral programs require submission of OFFICIAL undergraduate and graduate transcripts which must be sent directly to TNARS by postal mail or eScrip-Safe from the sending institution. Applications will not be processed until these documents are received.

### **Church Membership:**

TNARS requires all students to be communing members in good standing in a local church (or members of presbytery without censure). There are NO exceptions to this policy. Those not yet a member of a local church (or presbytery) will need to postpone their application. TNARS believes the local church to be God's instrument for the discipleship and progressive sanctification of His people. Our programs are designed to be completed within the context of the local church. Applications will not be considered until an applicant's home church situation is settled such that a letter of recommendation from a local church officer can be provided without issue. Each applicant must have their pastor or church officer submit a Letter of Recommendation. The letter must be sent directly from the church officer to the seminary via email (info@tnars.net) or postal mail. The recommendation should appear on official church letterhead and contain the pastor/officer's contact information.



## **Mentor Candidates:**

The seminary no longer provides institutional mentors. All new TNARS students are required to provide their own mentor who must be presented and approved by the seminary administration as part of the application process. Mentor applicants must meet the following qualifications in order to be considered for approval by the seminary administration: (1). Full subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith (only minor exceptions to the Confession will be considered; mentor applicants who can at least subscribe to the London Baptist Confession of 1689 or the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order 1658 will be considered on the condition that the mentor applicant is willing to sign an affirmation stating their exceptions to the WCF and affirming that as a mentor of this seminary the teaching of the WCF will be respectfully and faithfully represented, allowing the student to make his own determination regarding the doctrine(s) in question), (2). Master's degree in a theological discipline to mentor ATS students; M.Div., Th.M., or Doctoral degree in a theological discipline if mentoring BTS, B.Div., MTS, or M.Div. students; Doctoral degree in a theological discipline if mentoring doctoral students. The mentor does not have to reside in a location near you as long as you can maintain regular phone and email contact.

## **English Proficiency / TOEFL:**

The demonstration of English proficiency is required of all applicants for whom English is not their native language.

Applicants demonstrate their proficiency in English by submitting a satisfactory score on the [EF Standard English Test \(EFSET\) Certificate Plus assessment test](#). This is a free online assessment test that will take approximately 2 hours to complete. Only the Certificate Plus assessment test is accepted. Students must score a minimum of 70 to be considered for acceptance into any program.

The seminary also recognizes and accepts the *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)* assessment test taken within two years of the date of application. Only internet-based (iBT) exam results are accepted. Students must score a minimum of 95 to be considered for acceptance into any program. For reporting purposes our school code is **B330**.

The seminary also recognizes and accepts the *International English Language Testing System (IELTS)* assessment test taken within two years of the date of application. A minimum score of 7.0 is required.

## **Dual Enrollment:**

Out of respect for the seminary, your mentor, and other academic institutions, the seminary does not permit students to enroll in other academic programs at other academic institutions or seminaries while enrolled as a student at TNARS. Our degree programs require determined effort and focus, and the administration has found that dual enrollment often results in the neglect of our free program. TNARS students must first withdraw from the seminary before enrolling in other academic pursuits. Violation of this dual enrollment policy may result in expulsion from the seminary. Applicants required or compensated by their employer to pursue continuing education are exempt from this policy in so far as their enrollment relates directly to their employment status.

**Acceptance Notification:**

An applicant is not to begin any coursework until he or she receives an official acceptance notification which includes the new student's official student identification number. Coursework completed before acceptance will not be honored. The seminary requires students to be under the direct oversight of an approved mentor at all times.

**Probation:**

Student applicants who possess less than a 2.5 GPA may be considered for admission on a probationary status. Students admitted on probation will not be evaluated for change of status until the student has successfully completed two courses. If the student successfully completes the two courses and maintains a minimum 2.5 GPA, the probation will be automatically lifted. The Administration may recommend dismissal if the student achieves less than a 2.5 GPA. Students dismissed from a program cannot reapply for enrollment until a period of one year has transpired.

**Transfer Credit:**

Students can transfer equivalent course credits from other institutions at the discretion of TNARS Administration and in accordance with the specified transfer limits noted on the degree program qualifications. Only credits from equivalent courses completed with a final letter grade of B will be considered for transfer. Transfer credits are generally accepted when ONE of the following is true:

1. Institution is regionally accredited
2. Institution is accredited by one of the following: ARTS, TRACS, ATS, ABHE
3. Unaccredited institution whose credits are transferrable to an accredited institution
4. Unaccredited institution whose graduates are permitted to undergo examination for ordination in an established denomination

**Program Time Limits:**

There are no specified time limits for completing a degree program provided that the student is evincing effort to complete assignments and maintaining monthly mentor contact. Mentors are encouraged to develop a plan of completion in collaboration with the student and should provide loving accountability with regard to the completion of course work.

## Academic Policies

### Definition of "Credit Hour":

The following serve as the seminary's approved general standards for defining an academic credit hour:

Undergraduate programs:

- 15 hours of classroom lecture per credit hour
- 150 pages of assigned reading per credit hour

Graduate programs:

- 15 hours of classroom lecture per credit hour
- 300 pages of assigned reading per credit hour

Doctoral programs:

- 15 hours of classroom lecture per credit hour
- 600 pages of assigned reading per credit hour

### Course Revisions:

To ensure academic quality, the seminary may revise courses as deemed necessary by the administration. Additional material/assignments may be included, or certain materials replaced. Changes made to courses already completed by the student will not be binding. However, changes made to uncompleted courses will be binding upon the student. Students should reference the course assignments directly from the degree program pages presented on our website to ensure compliance with applicable revisions.

### Course Order

Courses are presented in suggested order, however mentors are free to alter the course order as desired. Courses that require a prerequisite must be taken in order. Course assignments cannot be altered or substituted in any way by mentor or student.

### Course Assignments

It is recommended that students complete the lecture assignments first and then begin completion of reading assignments. Research papers should always be the last assignment completed. Note: course assignments are not to be altered or any substitutions made.

### Submission of Course Assignments:

All assignments submitted must be saved in PDF format. Mentors are encouraged to use the most current Adobe Acrobat Reader (free downloadable software program) as this program allows one to comment, highlight, and make notes on the pdf document.

Assignments ready for submission should be appropriately named so that they are easily recognized by the mentor. Students should save lecture outline/notes for each course in a single document although each lecture should begin on its own page and include in bold the title of the lecture and name of lecturer at the top of the beginning page. Students should save chapter summaries for an individual book in one document although each summary should begin on its own page and include in bold the book title and chapter number.

All submitted assignments must be prefaced with a title page featuring the following information:

- Student's Full Name
- Student ID (this is assigned at enrollment)
- Class Number
- Assignment Title (Lectures, Chapter Summaries, Research Paper, etc.)
- Date

Visit <http://www.tnars.net/assignment-examples.html> to view an example of the title page.

**Students are required to keep a copy of all work that they submit.** If an assignment that has been submitted is lost, the student will be required to provide a replacement. If the student does not have a copy of their work, it will be presumed that the work was not completed.

### **Grading Standards:**

When an assignment is completed a numeric grade will be issued by the student's mentor based upon the guidelines below. When all assignments for a course have been completed the mentor will calculate the numeric average and assign a final letter grade for the course. The mentor will maintain a record of all grades with special emphasis upon the final course letter grade. This record will be submitted to the seminary administration for review and approval once a student completes the program. The administration will use this record to create an official seminary transcript.

A course assignment's grade is weighted as follows:

#### **Content – 85%**

- Both outline, paper, and bibliography have been submitted (as applicable)
- Clear statement of purpose
- Appropriate methodology
- Good use of sources, including but not limited to the assigned text
- Good presentation of data demonstrating comprehension, critical evaluation, and synthesis of course material
- Sound analysis of and interaction with the assigned text
- Appropriate conclusions

#### *General guidelines for evaluating paper content:*

- Thoroughness – 35%*
- Clarity – 25%*
- Literary style – 25%*
- Originality – 10%*
- Grammar – 5%*

**Format – 5%**

Written assignments must follow current MLA formatting. **Thesis and Dissertation work must follow current Turabian formatting.**

- Text (Appropriate typeface and size, margins, spacing, etc.)
- Documentation (citations, footnotes or endnotes, bibliography)
- Format (title page, outline/table of contents, tables, figures, etc.)

**Paper Defense – 10%**

- Ability to defend paper based on the mentor's interaction with it
- Answering questions that the mentor has put forth after reading the paper
- Interacting on more specific terms in any area that the mentor considers necessary

Final Course Letter Grade based upon Numeric Average:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>90-100</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>4.00</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>80-89</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.00</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>70-79</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>2.00</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>60-69</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>0-59</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>0.00</b>

The lowest passing grade that will receive credit for a course is a C. While an individual course may receive credit for a "C" grade, the student must maintain a 2.5 GPA overall. If a student falls under the 2.5 GPA the mentor should notify the seminary administration. The student will be placed on academic probation. If the student does not make academic progress in the following course, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Students receiving a failing grade for any assignment must consult with their mentor and make the necessary corrections. The corrected work must then be resubmitted and obtain a passing grade before the student may progress to the next course.

The mentor will grade each set of assignments. For example, if a course has lectures, chapter summaries for one book, a book summary, and a research paper, then the mentor would issue four (4) numerical grades which would average into one final letter grade for the course. If the course above required chapter summaries for two books, then there would be an additional numerical grade bringing the total to five (5) numerical grades averaging into one final letter grade for the course.

**Continuation in Program:**

Graduation implies the school's affirmation of a student's continuing growth in spiritual maturity as well as growth in theological knowledge and competence. Items which might be cause for dismissal, or which could prevent graduation, include:

1. Failure to maintain a 2.5 GPA.
2. Demonstrating social, emotional, or spiritual problems which are not being addressed constructively.
3. Demonstrating moral or ethical behavior which raises concerns about readiness for ministry.
4. Failure to contact mentor on a monthly basis.
5. In the event of the resignation or loss of a mentor, failing to provide a new mentor for approval within six months of the resignation/loss.

**Withdrawal:**

Students who wish to withdraw from the seminary must inform their mentor and the seminary administration in writing. Students cannot reapply to the seminary for a 1-year period following withdrawal.

**Plagiarism:**

Writing assignments involve more than simply parroting the ideas of other people. Students are expected to interact with the information and ideas in such a way that demonstrates they are not simply learning what to think, but also how to think critically in a theological field. All sources used in research papers must be cited. **Plagiarism in any form is prohibited.** You must not use other people's ideas or words without proper acknowledgment, copy other people's words/work as one's own, or falsify the results of study. Plagiarism is a violation of the Ninth Commandment and is also viewed as a serious academic offense. **Students who violate this policy will be expelled from the seminary and the expulsion will be reflected on the student's transcript accordingly.**

**Monthly Mentor Contact:**

**Students are required to contact their mentor each month via email or phone to report on progress, even if no progress is made during that particular month. Students who miss three consecutive monthly contacts will be dismissed from enrollment at TNARS.** Should a mentor become incapable of fulfilling his mentoring responsibilities or request to be dismissed from these responsibilities, the student must immediately postpone study and present a new mentor candidate for approval. Studies may resume after the new mentor candidate is approved.

**Student Records /Transcripts:**

The student's mentor maintains a record of progress toward the completion of the particular degree program. The mentor will submit this record to the seminary administration when a student completes the program and this information will be used to create an official TNARS transcript. The student's transcript is provided by the TNARS administration, and is kept on file in the school records. This transcript constitutes the official record of the student's seminary education. Official transcript copies are available upon written request and will be sent via postal mail directly from the seminary to the receiving institution. Student copies are also available upon written request and will be sent to the student via email.

**Comprehensive Examinations:**

Undergraduate and graduate students will complete a comprehensive final examination after the completion of their degree program. Students agree not to disclose or discuss the content of the examinations with others.

**Student Complaints and Appeals Process:**

Students who would like to petition policies, requirements, or acts of the seminary may do so in writing specifically addressed to the Oversight Board. The Board will review the petition and make a determination. The determination of the Board is considered final.

**Graduation Requirements:**

Candidates for graduation must show evidence of true Christian character and receive the recommendation of their mentor. All prescribed courses within the student's program must be completed satisfactorily, the graded thesis/dissertation must be reviewed and approved by the seminary administration, and the student must pass the required comprehensive examination (if applicable). Graduation dates each year are as follows: the third Friday of May (Spring graduation), the First Friday of August (Summer graduation), and the third Friday of December (Fall graduation).

**Placement:**

The seminary provides a listing of ministry opportunities on our website under "Resources".

**Student/Mentor Discussion Forum:**

All current students, mentors, and administrators are encouraged to join the TNARS discussion forum. Visit <http://www.tnars.net/student-discussion-forum.html> to request approval. Please include your full name and official TNARS identification number in the message section of the request form.

**Facebook:**

Students and mentors are encouraged to join our Facebook group to participate in theological discussion and receive important updates pertinent to the TNARS community. There are also helpful articles and free books posted there on a regular basis. To join our Facebook group, visit the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TNARS/>

## **Support TNARS**

The goal of The North American Reformed Seminary is to offer free Reformed seminary education, but in order to do this there are obviously some costs involved. Our affiliate status with ARTS, the cost of maintaining and hosting our website, printing and mailing transcripts and diplomas, etc., all contribute to the total cost of providing a free seminary education. Students are invited to support the work of TNARS by making financial contributions if financially able. No amount is too small, and every donation is greatly appreciated! As a religious school receiving less than \$5,000 in donations per year, TNARS is allowed to operate as a 501c3 entity making contributions tax-deductible.

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The seminary reserves the right to make revisions to the Academic Guide at any time.**

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