UBC CERTIFICATE IN

BIOMEDICAL VISUALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION
PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Contact Us

UBC CERTIFICATE IN BIOMEDICAL VISUALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

Extended Learning

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REGISTRATION AND STUDENT SERVICES

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We acknowledge that the UBC Vancouver campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

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Program Overview

The UBC Certificate in Biomedical Visualization and Communication is an integrated skills program that blends scientific knowledge, critical thinking, co-creativity, teamwork, and communication skills built on empathy and active listening. It's one of only a handful of programs in North America that provides the skills needed for this emerging field. It's also the first program of its kind on the West Coast.

A unique aspect of the curriculum is a focus on diversity and inclusivity in biomedical communications. Throughout the program, students learn how to recognize and address the needs of diverse communities, including Indigenous, racialized and other groups that face barriers to healthcare information.

ABOUT THE HIVE (HACKSPACE FOR INNOVATION AND VISUALIZATION IN EDUCATION)

The HIVE is a multidisciplinary hackspace for innovation and visualization. Launched by Dr. Claudia Krebs, an instructor and advisor for the certificate program, the HIVE leverages the potential of emerging media to improve the educational experience for all health professions students at UBC and around the world. The space is built on the power of collaboration and fosters an inclusive environment where students, faculty and staff build teams to disrupt and modernize learning. Teams create media using 2D, 3D and Extended Reality (XR) technologies that can be used in all learning environments.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR DIGITAL MEDIA

The Centre for Digital Media was created through a unique partnership of four leading academic institutions—University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Emily Carr University of Art + Design and British Columbia Institute of Technology—and leaders from the digital media industry. The Master of Digital Media was developed to meet industry needs and prepare students for high-level roles in new and expanding digital media markets.

ABOUT UBC EXTENDED LEARNING

We believe that learning is a continuous, lifelong endeavour. Education—at any stage of life—should be flexible, innovative and accessible. We work with UBC faculties to create and deliver programs that meet the career and personal needs of our communities, including alumni, current UBC students and learners of all ages. Together, we provide outstanding learning opportunities, bringing UBC excellence in academics, teaching and research to the communities we serve, and strengthening UBC's contribution to society, industry and government.

Program Format and Curriculum

FORMAT, LENGTH AND CURRICULUM

The program is 100% online, and consists of three 12-week courses and one capstone project course, all offered over one calendar year. Students take two courses in term 1 and one course in term 2, and the final project in term 3. There is a total of 60 hours of online learning in each of terms 1 and 2.

Each of the three courses is delivered by modules, released weekly, and include online lectures, readings, videos, exercises and assignments. Students attend two live virtual classes or workshops a week in terms 1 and 2. Classes are held from 4pm to 6pm Pacific (Vancouver) Time.

The capstone course is a collaborative team project in which students participate in daily online working group sessions and scrums, and a weekly video check-in with their instructor and client partner. Virtual group project presentations take place at the end of the term.

Throughout the year, there will also be optional online peer critiques and professional workshops where students are introduced to various traditional and digital media techniques used in biomedical visualization projects. These will be held once per week from 4pm to 6pm Pacific Time during the terms as well as during term breaks if needed.

Topics may include Intro to Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and After Effects; 3D modelling and animation in Blender; watercolour painting; and Intro to Figma. Please note that while technical skills will be introduced in these optional workshops, technical skills are not the focus of live virtual classes. It is up to students to practice the skills they are interested in developing on their own time or in homework assignments that allow for choice of medium.

Students can expect to spend 15 hours or more per week completing the online modules and assignments, reflecting on their learning, visual journalling, participating in live virtual classes and virtual workshops or anatomy labs (in Foundations of Human Structure and Function) and online group discussions. Each module must be completed in full before progressing to the next module.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

FOUNDATIONS IN BIOMEDICAL VISUALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION: SEEING, LISTENING, COMMUNICATING

Biomedical concepts can be incredibly complex and difficult to communicate. Yet, our survival depends on at least some of us understanding and conveying the intricacies of how the human body works, how disease spreads or how to perform surgery.

The power of sharing and disseminating information and of storytelling within healthcare is foundational to shaping the patient experience.

In this course, you learn how to communicate biomedical concepts clearly and effectively to a range of diverse audiences, from students to patients to health professionals. Focus on:

- analyzing how people retain information and learn
- developing strategies to make information relevant and memorable
- practising and honing your skills in active, empathetic and respectful listening and communicating
- cultivating your visual sense for best conveying complex information for a target audience.

Throughout the course, you collaborate with the instructional team to explore:

- the essential tools of visual biomedical communications for diverse audiences that are culturally appropriate and trauma informed
- visual modalities for collaborative problem solving in a biomedical setting
- responsible and meaningful communication and facilitation techniques to build understanding and trust between clients, audience and you
- retrieving and analyzing the appropriate use of source materials, including principles of copyright, in order to create accurate, ethical and accessible visual communication
- the various needs of diverse communities, including Indigenous, racialized and other groups that face barriers to healthcare information, and how to develop appropriate and effective materials to meet these needs
- the paramount need for inclusive, empathetic and anti-racist, anti-oppressive approaches to allow for effective human-centered communication.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Ways of Knowing

Week 2: Listening & Sharing Stories

Week 3: Making Marks: Introduction to Visual Communication

Week 4: Mediums & Design Thinking

Week 5: Design Fundamentals

Week 6: Changemaking in Biomedical Visualization and Communication

Week 7: Ethics in Biomedical Visualization

Week 8: Trust & Truth

Week 9: Information Sourcing

Week 10: Diversity, Empathy, and Vulnerability in Biomedical Design

Week 11: Comics & Health

Week 12: Tying It All Together

MANAGING CREATIVITY

The objective of this course is to support teams of individuals to nurture, manage and direct their creative impulses that emerge from collaborating in order to create work for others.

Students work and play together, and in the process:

- develop collaborative habits to improve communication, listening and adaptability
- assimilate tools to strategically manage their work within a team-based context
- stretch beyond their own creative boundaries using a variety of improvised activities
- integrate tools, projects and approaches they learn from other courses toward their own creative processes
- deepen self-awareness of their own creative process and those of others
- learn to always think of who they are creating for by applying tools from user experience design traditions.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Tools to Jumpstart Collaboration with Others

Week 2: Collaborating Visually

Week 3: Understanding Creativity in Collaborative Design

Week 4: Practise Listening and Responding

Week 5: Unpacking the Design Brief : Thinking About the User Experience

Week 6: Improving Team Culture at a Distance

Week 7: The Art and Craft of Iterative Prototyping

Week 8: Identifying Problems and Proposing Solutions for Users

Week 9: Task Distribution, Prioritization and Scoping

Week 10: Gaps, Pivots and Bad Ideas

Week 11: Tools to Improve Team Presentations

Week 12: The Importance of Retrospectives in Agile

FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

The goal of this course is not only for you to understand the human body, but to build a rich biomedical vocabulary that you can use confidently with your audience. Using a virtual 3D anatomy tool pioneered by instructor Dr. Claudia Krebs and her team, and Faculty of Medicine biomedical education materials, you review the anatomical structures and physiological principles of the major body systems.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

• understand the basic structures and functions of the human body

• use medical language comfortably and confidently that's adapted for your audience

• conduct research online, critically evaluate biomedical and anatomical facts, and disseminate medical information from a place of understanding and confidence

• apply design and user experience (UX) principles in both visual and communication assignments.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction to Human Anatomy and Embryology

Week 2: Foundations of Physiology – Cell Biology, Histology, and Homeostasis

Week 3: Central Nervous System and Pain

Week 4: Abdomen 1 - Anatomical Overview

Week 5: Abdomen 2 - Foundations of Digestion, Metabolism, and Weight Stigma

Week 6: Thorax 1 - Circulatory System

Week 7: Thorax 2 - Respiratory System

Week 8: Renal System and Fluid Balance

Week 9: Pelvis and Perineum

Week 10: Upper Limb

Week 11: Lower Limb

Week 12: Head and Neck

FINAL GROUP PROJECT

The capstone project of the UBC Certificate in Biomedical Visualization and Communication integrates and applies the skills, processes and learnings you acquired in Foundations - Seeing, Listening, Communicating, Foundations of Human Structure and Function, and Managing Creativity.

The project consists of creating a design proposal and prototype for a true-to-life client partner with a biomedical visualization and communication need. It offers you an opportunity to collaborate with the greater community, including organizations external to UBC, clinical partners and researchers.

Students complete a project as a team using the communication and interpersonal tools they have gained the previous two terms. Each group is responsible for creating and managing their own workflow and setting weekly goals, and to determine the media and the design best suited for the delivery of a clear prototype using engaging visualization and a communication strategy.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- access and use the social and visual communication tools needed to excel as a biomedical communicator
- work effectively in teams as serial collaborators.

The course deliverable is a project proposal and prototype. These are assessed with a rubric that evaluates how each group is able to integrate and apply the knowledge acquired in the preceding three courses.

Deliverables include:

- final project design documentation
  - project goals and objectives
  - research methods
  - project journey journal and ideation
  - prototype iterations
  - final product design and instructions
- prototype – this can be either a "paper prototype" or a minimally viable product (MVP)

- final team presentation – the team can choose which media to use for this
- peer review to assess the collaboration and management of group creativity.

Throughout the term, students attend virtual workshops designed to supplement their knowledge and skills required for their project. These may include:

- user experience (UX)
- Adobe® Creative Suite, including Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign
- portfolio development and personal website building
- supplementary lectures in biomedical concepts

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction to the Project

Weeks 2–11: Team Project Work and Weekly Check-ins with Instructor and Client Partner

Week 12: Final Project Presentation and Reflection

CHANGES TO CURRICULUM

The learning objectives, subject areas, topics, instructors and assignments that make up the certificate may change over time to reflect the needs of program participants, new work in the field of biomedical visualization and communication, and the best use of university resources.

The program may also change in duration, number of instructional hours, or requirements for completion. As the curriculum changes, the total cost of the program may also change to reflect the actual costs of program delivery.

In the event of major program changes, you will be notified of options for completing the program, either under up-to-date or older requirements.

INSTRUCTORS

Our instructors include specialists, educators and innovators in biomedical visualization and communication, interactive and human-centered design, creative collaboration, journalism, and graphic and visual arts. All hold master's degrees or higher, and are experienced in adult education.

PAIGE BLUMER, MS, is a biomedical visualization specialist at the Hackspace for Innovation and Visualization in Education (HIVE), curating online and virtual educational materials for UBC's medical and health professional undergraduate programs.

As a kinesiology student, she noticed the lack of visuals in science and medical education. Her experiences inspired Paige to obtain her certificate in Art Fundamentals from Sheridan College. In 2013, she worked as a junior medical illustrator with the McGill University Health Centre Patient Education Office, creating visual patient education materials that empowered patients to manage their health and recovery upon discharge from the hospital.

She is a graduate of the Master of Biomedical Visualization program from the University of Illinois at Chicago. As a student, she researched adverse childhood experiences. For her master's thesis, she created a website called AcesMadeVisible, which aims to teach young healthcare professionals about the physiological toll childhood trauma has on the brain and body.

KATHRYN GRETSINGER, MJ, is an associate professor at the UBC School of Journalism, Writing and Media where she teaches a range of journalism courses, including Integrated (Digital) Journalism, Global Reporting and Reporting in Indigenous Communities. She collaborates with professionals, faculty and students at the UBC Emerging Media Lab.

Kathryn has helped create award-winning audio and digital work at the local and national level in Canada. She's a recipient of the UBC Killam Teaching Prize, and was named one of North America's top innovative journalism educators in 2018.

She works as a coach and trainer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and is working on a joint Canada and USA journalistic collaboration on mental health issues.

DR. CLAUDIA KREBS, MD, PhD, has been teaching neuroanatomy and gross anatomy to MD undergraduates, biomedical engineering students and allied health professions at UBC for more than a decade.

At UBC, she has worked on integrating technology and novel visual approaches in the classroom. She's particularly interested in the integration of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), as well as examining the impact of AR and VR on student learning.

In 2017, Dr. Krebs created the HIVE (Hackspace for Innovation and Visualization in Education), a multidisciplinary space for innovation in biomedical education. The HIVE team has created educational Extended Reality (XR) apps, such as the HoloBrain and the Pocket Pelvis, that have been adapted as learning resources.

Together with UBC colleagues, she has published a neuroscience textbook with a set of accompanying flashcards that's used in classrooms around the world. With anatomy educators from across UBC and from partner universities, she's creating open educational resources for neuroscience and anatomy for the global community, including videos, e-books and interactive web materials. All of these materials are available on two websites she curates, www.neuroanatomy.ca and www.clinicalanatomy.ca.

Dr. Krebs has received numerous teaching awards, including the 2018 Killam Teaching Prize.

SARAH LEAVITT, MFA, has developed and taught undergraduate and graduate comics classes for the UBC Creative Writing program since 2012. Sarah's interests include memoir comics, comics about health issues, formal experimentation in comics, and the benefits of studying and creating comics for all students, from dedicated cartoonists to those who use comics as a tool for brainstorming and problem solving.

She is the author of the graphic memoir *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother, and Me*, which has been published in Canada, the US, the UK, Germany, France and Korea, and was a finalist for the Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize in 2010. Her memoir is part of the curricula in health and literature courses from Canada to the UK to India, and is considered an essential text in the growing genres of graphic medicine and comics and health. *Tangles* has been included in a number of exhibitions, notably at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum and the National Library of Medicine, and is being developed as a feature-length animation.

Sarah is working on her next project, a series of watercolour comics about grief and loss. More of her work can be found at sarahleavitt.com and on Instagram at @sarah_leav.

BAILEY (Bee) LO, BSc, is a learning experience designer and member of the Hackspace for Innovation and Visualization in Education (HIVE). Her career started out in pursuit of becoming a healthcare provider, training as a paramedic and later studying midwifery at UBC. She formally transitioned to education in 2021 and began applying her experience as a health professions student to the design of learning experiences for students in medical, midwifery, and BMVC.

Bee began the UBC Master of Educational Technology (MET) program in 2022, and is expected to graduate in 2024. The MET program reinforced her passion for designing engaging, equitable, and inclusive biomedical learning experiences for students of all backgrounds. Her teaching and learning philosophy is based on a failure-positive and prototyping mindset, and she believes that learning should be hands-on and mistakes should be expected and celebrated.

Dr. OLUSEGUN (Segun) OYEDELE, MD, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Teaching, in the UBC Department of Cellular and Physiological Sciences, and the Assistant Dean of the UBC Southern Medical Program (SMP at the UBC Okanagan campus in Kelowna, BC.

Over the past decade, he has taught Anatomy and all its subdisciplines to pre-clerkship students of the UBC MD Undergraduate Program. His research focuses on medical education, particularly on small group learning pedagogies, and on how case-based learning equips medical students for clinical decision making during clerkship and beyond.

DR. PATRICK PENNEFATHER, PhD, is an assistant professor at UBC Theatre and Film, co-appointed at the Master of Digital Media (MDM) Program, and a faculty in residence at UBC's Emerging Media Lab. Patrick teaches improvisation and sound design across media and collaborates on the design and research of mixed reality (MR) prototypes.

He has mentored multi-disciplinary teams co-constructing scalable digital prototypes with more than 50 companies and organizations. He regularly investigates the user experience of MR experiences, composes for a variety of media, and consults dance and theatre makers in extending the reality of their physical stages.

Patrick has facilitated workshops internationally, and has co-published in a variety of journals within the fields of Extended Reality (XR), Virtual Reality, MR and Agile application development. In the field of medicine, he has co-published a paper with Dr. Claudia Krebs exploring the role of XR in visualizations for use in medical education.

ANTHONY SARACO, BEng, MSc, completed both his undergraduate degree in chemical & biological engineering and his graduate degree in medical sciences at McMaster University. He has taught anatomy at multiple levels to students of various disciplines and commenced his PhD in interdisciplinary studies in 2022 at UBC. His research focuses on utilizing student-centred pedagogical theories to enhance post-secondary anatomy and physiology education for biomedical engineering students.

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WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS AND TIME COMMITMENT

The certificate is demanding, but very rewarding. It is designed to be a part-time program for working professionals, offering flexibility along with weekly commitments and deadlines. Students can expect to set aside a minimum of 15 hours per week to complete all coursework.

Students are required to attend a synchronous Orientation session over Zoom prior to starting courses. This Orientation session will cover program expectations, assessment methods, and recommendations for how to be successful in the program.

The first two terms consist of weekly virtual classes and online modules that include activities such as reading, watching videos and online lectures, online discussion forums, written and sketchbook reflections, and individual and group assignments. During the capstone project, students can expect to participate in daily working group sessions and scrums, and a mandatory weekly video check-in with their instructor and client partner. Virtual group project presentations will take place at the end of the term.

In order to meet deadlines and commitments, we ask that students not be without computer access for more than three days during a term.

STUDENT COLLABORATION IN THE PROGRAM

This program is primarily a collaborative one. While there are opportunities to develop your skills individually, a core goal of this program is to prepare students to collaborate in multidisciplinary creative teams. A significant portion of assignments and live virtual class activities are team-based, and require a commitment from all students to engage in the creative collaboration process.

The composition of each cohort is intentionally diverse, with a mix of professionals who have worked in different industries and health professions, as well as students entering directly from undergraduate and graduate programs. As such, students are expected to be at differing levels of experience in design, art, science, and research.

To be successful in the BMVC certificate program, students must be willing to respectfully collaborate with any of their classmates regularly throughout the program, and engage in team-based activities.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

The program focuses on formative assessments with a complete/incomplete final grade for individual courses. Students are assessed on weekly course assignments, self-reflections, participation in the real-time classes, and on their contributions to discussion boards. The BMVC program uses a unique Skills Passport rubric to provide students with individualized feedback and mentorship on the following: communication, visualization, workflow and iterative design, and research skills.

For group work, students may be required to assess team members' contributions. The final project is assessed by how each group is able to integrate and apply the knowledge acquired in the preceding three courses.

GRADUATION CRITERIA

Students must successfully complete the program requirements, and final project presentation.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

In order to participate in the Biomedical Visualization and Communication program, students need to have access to a computer, an email account and the internet. Students may wish to use a digital pen and tablet, although these are not required to participate in the program.

Students are provided with access to UBC's online learning application Canvas. See Canvas technology requirements and the student's guide to Canvas for more information.

You will be provided with a version of Adobe® Creative Suite if you do not own an edition. Please visit Adobe Creative Cloud for the system requirements to run Adobe applications.

CORE COMPUTER SKILLS

Although many students will develop new computer skills, and learn the basics of some software applications through the BMVC certificate program's learn-as-you-go model, the development of these skills is not our core focus.

Rather, our focus is to train you on effective techniques for team collaboration and project development in a biomedical communications context.

As such, the BMVC certificate requires core competencies to participate in the live virtual classes, group projects and assignments. These include:

- Experience using Zoom or similar video conferencing software that uses a camera and microphone

- A willingness to learn new software applications (e.g., Adobe Creative Cloud, Miro, Blender, audio/video editing software, etc.)

- A desire to explore your capabilities, engage in self-guided learning to fill skills gaps, and apply new technical skills to assignments and class activities.

Admission Requirements

The program is open to applicants of all nationalities, regardless of residency or citizenship status in Canada. We recommend applicants who live outside of Canada live in a time zone in which they can ensure they can join live online discussions and video chats to facilitate group work.

To accommodate learners from a variety of backgrounds, admission requirements for the UBC Certificate in Biomedical Visualization and Communication are broad. You must:

- have a minimum of two years' post-secondary education
- be motivated to enrol in this program by relevant professional or personal experience or interest.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Your online application must include:

1. A letter of intent (maximum 500 words): You should outline your motivation and interests for pursuing the program, your current experience, what you feel you will gain from the program, what strengths you bring and how the program contributes to your future personal and/or professional goals.

2. A copy (official or unofficial) of your diploma, degree or certificate.

To ensure you can participate fully in the program, you'll need to read, write and speak comfortably in English. While you don't need to prove English language proficiency, we recommend a minimum of an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.0, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) internet-based score of 80, or equivalent.

COURSE REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT

When you submit your application and pay the application fee, you will receive an email to confirm we've received your application and that it's complete. If you are accepted into the program, you will receive an email with instructions on how to pay your non-refundable deposit. The deposit must be paid within 10 business days to secure a place in the program.

The balance of tuition fees are due in two installments. Please refer to the website for installment dates. To continue to ensure your seat in the program, your payments must be made promptly.

In the event that you are unable to complete the program for whatever reason, tuition fees are non-refundable.

All fees are in Canadian dollars and are subject to change. Fees may be paid by Visa®, Mastercard®, cash, money order or certified cheque.

The program fee includes all courses, Adobe software, access to the UBC Library OpenAthens digital content, and a welcome package of art supplies.

Program Policies

ENROLMENT

Meeting minimum requirements does not ensure admission to the certificate program. Admission to this program is competitive and available seats are limited. Before applying to the program, we would be happy to discuss your eligibility, prior experience and the relevance of the program to your goals. Please contact us at +1 604 822 1444 or by email at info.exl@ubc.ca.

LOCATION OF PROGRAM

This program is 100% online.

WITHDRAWAL AND CANCELLATION POLICIES

Many of our expenses are incurred within the two-week period before the certificate begins. Our cancellation policy reflects the fact that we can recover few of these expenses in the event of late cancellations. UBC Extended Learning may sometimes cancel certificates due to insufficient enrolment or other reasons. If this occurs, a full refund is processed and sent to you automatically. UBC Extended Learning does not guarantee that a particular certificate will be offered at a particular time.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM BEFORE THE PROGRAM START DATE

You may withdraw from the program up to seven business days prior to the program start date but should notify UBC Extended Learning in writing of the reasons for the withdrawal. Tuition fees are 100% refundable, less the non-refundable deposit. If you withdraw within seven business days of the program start date, the deposit and tuition fees are non-refundable.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM AFTER THE PROGRAM START DATE

If you withdraw from the certificate program after the start date of the first course, please notify the program staff in writing of the reasons for the withdrawal. **Tuition fees are non-refundable.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

UBC is committed to academic integrity and takes academic misconduct seriously. Penalties for cheating, plagiarizing or other academic misconduct may include dismissal from the program or course with a failing grade and no refund of fees. Read more about UBC's policy.

DISABILITY-RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Should you require disability-related accommodations for your course, please contact us six weeks before the certificate start date or as earliest as possible. UBC works to create an inclusive learning environment in which all students can achieve success. Any student with diverse needs requiring additional services or support, please contact the UBC Centre for Accessibility.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

UBC fosters positive learning environments that respect the diversity of individuals and apply standards in keeping with appropriate conduct in professional workplaces. Students are expected to adhere to professional standards of behaviour. In particular, the ability to work respectfully in a team environment and with other students, instructors and staff is essential. UBC reserves the right to require a student to withdraw from a program at any time for unsatisfactory professional conduct. In such cases, there will be no refund of tuition.

USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Participants must abide by the UBC Responsible Use of Information Technology guidelines.

Administration

PROGRAM STAFF

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