

# Study on Quality Assurance Mechanism for Studying in China under the New Pattern of Education Opening-Up to the Outside World

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## Abstract

The 20th CPC National Congress put education, science and technology, and talent work in a more important position, and at the same time stressed the need to enhance the dissemination and influence of Chinese civilisation. While the education of students studying in China, as an important part of the training of talents in higher education, is of great significance in strengthening the communication and understanding between China and the world. In the post epidemic era, China's education has entered the stage of high quality development. President Xi Jinping, talking about education, has mentioned the need to "create a more internationally competitive study abroad education, and build China into a major global study abroad centre and a study abroad destination for the world's outstanding young people". This paper starts from clarifying the background and significance of the quality assurance mechanism of studying in China, analysing the current situation and problems of the quality assurance mechanism of studying in China, and then researching the strategy of the quality assurance mechanism of studying in China in a three-step strategy, aiming to ensure the healthy and long-term development of study abroad education from quality control before enrolment, quality assurance after enrolment, and continuous tracking and attention from the perspective of development. In addition, the reform and practice of high-quality cultivation mode for international students are guaranteed at four levels—student level, teaching level, management level and service level, and guided by the concept of total quality management of "all-member, all-process, all-round and multi-methods". The reform and practice of high-quality cultivation mode for international students is guided by the concept of total quality management, which is "whole-person, whole-process, omni-directional and multi-method".

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## Keywords

Education Opening-Up to the Outside World, International Students Studying in China, Quality Assurance Mechanisms

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## 1. Introduction

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has insisted on unwaveringly opening up to the outside world, continuously creating a new pattern of opening up to the outside world in education, comprehensively upgrading the level of international cooperation and exchanges in education, and forming a more all-rounded, broader, multilevel and more proactive opening up of education to the outside world, thus enhancing the international influence and affinity of Chinese education. The report of the 20th CPC National Congress put forward the requirement of “promoting high-level opening up to the outside world” and made strategic deployment. Opening up of education to the outside world is an important part of opening up to the outside world, and plays an important role in promoting the high-quality development of education, enhancing the international influence of China’s education. International students in China happen to be a powerful force for telling the story of China and carrying out civil diplomacy, and they are an important target for realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making special contributions to the building of a community of human destiny. However, the current international environment is complicated, with the impact of the epidemic, the global economy needs a certain cycle to recover, and the competition for international students from various countries will be more intense. In addition, the contradiction between the lagging development of education for studying in China and the social demand of China’s rapid development is becoming more and more prominent (Yin & Zhang, 2021), so it is imperative to improve the quality of studying in China, and we must take active countermeasures, and how to “turn crisis into opportunity” is to test our wisdom and abilities.

## 2. Background and Significance of the Quality Assurance Mechanism for Studying in China

### 2.1. Status and Trends of Opening-Up of Education to the Outside World in the Context of Globalisation

The opening up of education to the outside world is an important initiative that has helped China’s rapid development over the past 40 years, an inevitable choice in response to the integration and development of economic globalisation, social informatisation and cultural diversification in the world, and a key condition for serving the strategy of strengthening the country through education in the new era. In the process of economic globalisation, the competition among countries is fundamentally the competition of education, science and

technology, and talent, and accelerating the cultivation of high-quality scientific and technological talents with an international outlook is an inevitable requirement to enhance China's international competitiveness. However, there is still a certain distance between China's educational capacity and level compared with that of top foreign universities. Therefore, China's opening up strategy for education in 2016 to focus on the deployment of the CPC Central Committee General Office of the State Council General Office of the State Council issued "Opinions on Doing a Good Job of Opening Up Education to the World in the New Era", requiring adherence to the expansion of opening up and strengthening of China's education. In 2020, Ministry of Education and eight other departments issued "Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening of Education to the Outside World in the New Era", to strengthen cooperation and communication in the field of education with other countries, to form a more proactive opening of education to the outside world.

## **2.2. The Significance and Value of Quality Assurance Mechanism for Studying in China**

Since the reform and opening up, China's education for studying in China has seen remarkable development, with international students from 195 countries and regions enrolled in the 2020-2021 academic year, and the proportion of students in academic education reaching 76%, an increase of 35 per cent compared with that of 2012; it has carried out educational cooperation and exchanges with 181 diplomatic relations, and has signed agreements on mutual recognition of academic degrees with 58 countries and regions. However, many colleges and universities have long been pursuing the expansion of the scale and quantity of international students in China one-sidedly, neglecting the construction of quality, and the development of education for studying in China is still imperfect. There are also some problems in education quality and management, such as the quality of student sources in some institutions needs to be improved urgently, and the process management is not strict enough.

In stepping into the stage of connotative development, it has become an urgent need to establish a quality assurance and evaluation system for studying abroad that meets China's national conditions. Humanities exchanges, educational openness and cooperation are effective ways to promote people-to-people communication, enhance mutual understanding and achieve win-win situation. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the strategy of quality assurance mechanism for international students studying in China to ensure the healthy and long-term development of education for them.

## **3. Current Situation and Problems of the Quality Assurance Mechanism for Studying in China**

### **3.1. Establishment and Development of Quality Assurance Mechanism for Studying in China**

China is stepping into the stage of connotative development, and it has become

an urgent need to establish a quality assurance mechanism for studying in China in line with China's national conditions. 1993, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Outline of China's Educational Reform and Development", which made it clear that the current education field should be opened to the outside world and international exchange and cooperation as the main path to expansion and upgrading, and that a corresponding cooperation mechanism should be established to cultivate international high-quality intellectual resources through the enhancement of enrollment management and inter-school exchanges. "The Circular of the State Council Approving the Ministry of Education's 2003-2007 Action Plan for the Revitalisation of Education" which was issued in 2004, made detailed reforms in the areas of enrolment, education management, teaching quality and government scholarships for education exchanges, and sought to build a distinctive brand of study abroad. In 2016, the General Office of the State Council proposed a sound quality assurance mechanism as an effective way to promote the bilateral and multilateral agreements on mutual recognition of academic degrees. In 2018, the Ministry of Education issued "The Quality Standards for Higher Education for International Students (for Trial Implementation)", which mentioned that convergence meant to promote the convergence of teaching, service and management for students across the university, and also explicitly required universities across the country to put the education of international students under the university-wide education quality assurance system, achieve a uniform standard teaching management and assessment system, and provide equal and consistent. At the same time, universities were explicitly required to put the education of international students under the education quality assurance system of the whole university, achieve a unified teaching management and assessment system, and provide equal and consistent teaching resources and management services. In 2019, the Ministry of Education clearly proposed in "China Education Modernisation 2035" to implement the Study in China Programme, establish and improve the quality assurance mechanism for international students studying in China, and comprehensively improve the quality. To change the "quantitative change" of pursuing the scale of development, and realise the "qualitative change" of improving quality and increasing efficiency, it is necessary to implement the comprehensive quality management of education for international students studying in China. It must be implemented in the "all-member, all-process, all-round, multi-method" comprehensive quality management of education.

### **3.2. Problems and Challenges of Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Studying in China**

Firstly, the quality of international students is not strictly controlled at the entrance gate before enrolment. The entrance threshold of international students largely determines the quality and level of international students. However, at present, colleges and universities in China pay more attention to economic benefits than educational quality, and they implement the system of "application re-

view” for international students applying for studying in China. They are only required to provide their high school results, HSK Chinese proficiency, recommendation letters, award certificates and other certificates, but they lack the necessary links such as qualification review, corresponding entrance examinations or tests, and the establishment of a unified entrance assessment system, which can't ensure that the admission standards for international students in China meet the regulations, i.e., they do not have clear measures to promote the enrolment, resulting in unsatisfactory quality of student sources and a single country structure, which seriously affects the connotative development of international students in China (Cheng & Kong, 2022).

Secondly, there are also certain deficiencies in the quality assurance after enrolment. 1) At the student level, some international students lack certain basic knowledge of teaching and research. They do not have sufficient scientific research ability, and some of them even do not know how to operate and use laboratory instruments and equipment. In addition, due to cross-cultural barriers, international students cannot adapt to the teaching mode of Chinese classroom in a short period of time, they not only have to overcome the psychological resistance to the teaching mode of China, but also have to understand and digest the obscure knowledge points, so the quality of classroom learning is poor. 2) At the teaching level, the teachers of some universities do not have a high degree of recognition of the work of education for international students studying in China, and the teachers of the universities that have carried out education for international students studying in China are generally not sufficient, with a lack of foreign teachers, as well as a lack of domestic teachers who have the ability of bilingual teaching. The internationalisation of the teaching staff in most of the universities in China is still unable to satisfy the demand for internationalised teachers of international students who have multiplied in number, which has restricted the development of a teaching mode that is suitable for international students. And at present, the cultivation programme and curriculum system of some universities in China are not adapted to the development of international students' education, and they lack the awareness of guiding the Chinese culture and behavioral norms for international students. The teaching content lacks internationality, innovation and modernity. 3) At the management level, the management of international students at present mostly stays in a single-control mode, which is separated from other departments of colleges and universities, in terms of the enrollment of international students, students' registration, students' daily life, the arrangement of the teaching curriculum, the rewards and punishments for the students, the issuance of residence permits, and the students' after-school activities. The other departments have less interaction with Faculty of International Education, which leads to the fact that international students cannot be well integrated into the circle of Chinese students and there is a lack of convergent management. However, international students come from diverse sources, with different cultures and living habits, so the unified management rules and regulations of Chinese universities are not friendly to them.

4) At the service level, some universities have adopted outsourcing of services and have even recruited temporary staff to be in charge of the life management, who have not gone through the systematic training and formal procedures of assessment, and have a low sense of service and poor quality. These managers do not have systematic training and formal procedure assessment and they are prone to shirking their responsibilities and working inefficiently, which has led to international students complaining about the lack of effective guarantee for their living services.

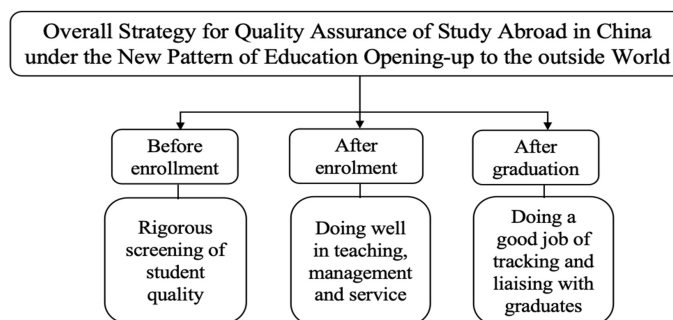
Finally, the follow-up management of international students after graduation is not enough. They do not have a strong overall awareness of the tracking management of international students, focusing only on the recruitment of international students. Many colleges and universities have activated the alumni management system a long time ago, but most of them are tracking and managing the graduates from their own countries, and there is a lack of tracking and management system for the graduates who have studied in China. In addition, there is a lack of specialised management institutions, and the staffing and management processes have not kept up with the development of international student education (Dong, 2017). The information on Overseas Chinese University graduates collected by various departments of universities cannot be exchanged in time with the international student management organisations, and the information exchange is inefficient, and the collection of information on Overseas Chinese University graduates is intertwined and of little practical value, resulting in the poor exchange of information between Overseas Chinese University graduates and the universities and the lack of frequent and substantive contact, which makes it difficult to contact these graduates after graduation, and makes it difficult for them to contact each other. It is difficult to track and manage the graduates who have come to study in China, and the work efficiency of tracking and managing the graduates who have come to study in China is low, and it is more difficult to track and manage the graduates who have come to study in China.

#### **4. Strategic Research on Quality Assurance Mechanism of Studying in China**

This paper explores ways to improve the quality and level of education for international students from the perspective of three stages of cultivating students: strict screening of the quality of the student before enrolment, guaranteeing the teaching, management, services after enrolment, and continuous tracking and liaison after graduation, as shown in **Figure 1**.

##### **4.1. Rigorous Screening of the Quality of Students before Enrolment**

Firstly, colleges and universities should actively explore new ways of active enrolment, change the situation of passively accepting international students, co-ordinate domestic and foreign resources, and lay out a global enrolment network.



**Figure 1.** Overall quality assurance strategy for studying in China.

They should actively liaise with enterprises and institutions, and actively explore ways of joint cultivation of them, expansion of overseas projects, recommendation of excellent students, construction of educational platforms, declaration of foreign aid projects and cooperation.

Secondly, colleges and universities should raise the threshold of admission, improve the admission standard, according to the quality standard of “strict entry”, they can carry out preparatory education for the students who have been recruited, screen the students who have qualified grades for normal enrolment, or jointly cultivate outstanding students in the high school stage in the big countries of origin to recommend enrolment in advance to promote the construction of high-quality student enrolment bases.

Finally, colleges and universities should improve the way of entrance examination. In addition to focusing on the applicant’s current degree, Chinese language level, etc., the applicant should also be assessed in terms of their innovative ability and academic development potential, screening out outstanding talents suitable for various scientific research fields, and comprehensively improving the quality from the admission gate.

#### **4.2. Doing Well in Teaching, Management and Service after Enrolment**

##### 1) Student level

Firstly, before coming to China, international students should make good preparations for studying in China, learn about China’s culture and education system in advance, and study the basics in advance so as to better adapt to study. They should also define their learning goals and personal development goals during their study in China, such as improving their language skills, studying Chinese culture in depth, and enhancing professional knowledge.

Secondly, international students should actively interact with teachers and classmates during the study abroad period, and seek support and help for study. They should also participate in academic and cultural activities organised by the school to broaden their knowledge and finish coursework and exams carefully to ensure good academic performance. In addition, they should actively participate in academic seminars and project practice to improve academic and practical

skills and take the initiative to strengthen communication with Chinese students and other international students to improve language and cross-cultural communication skills in practice. During the period of study, they should strive for internships or practical projects to accumulate working experience and prepare for future career development.

Finally, after the completion of the study abroad period, summarise and reflect on the study abroad experience, they should summarise their learning achievements and gains, plan for future development and maintain effective communication with teachers and classmates to form a positive feedback.

### 2) Teaching level

Firstly, colleges and universities in China should innovate the education mode. Increase students' participation in classroom and cultivate their critical thinking and innovation ability. "Classroom + Chinese culture" and various hands-on education modes are used to let them experience Chinese culture and the charm of multi-dimensional classroom teaching. Interactive teaching methods are used to provide equal opportunities to communicate with Chinese students and teachers (Zhang et al., 2023). Taking into account the personal characteristics and preference changes of international students, the cross-cultural management teaching gradually overcomes the conflicts between different cultures, realises the communication and integration of different cultures, and finds the balance of teaching on the basis of respecting the cultural differences.

Secondly, colleges and universities should establish a teaching method that combines theory and practice with each other. The introduction of immersion teaching stimulates international students' knowledge of personal ability and self-efficacy, and promotes students' active exploration of learning. In the teaching process, we need to create the closest real-life practice scenarios for them, and carry out the learning process of mutual construction of theoretical knowledge. The theoretical knowledge that has been mastered is applied to the real scenarios for testing, and the international students' understanding of the theoretical knowledge is further deepened and extended through practice. Exploratory teaching methods are used to guide them to get more participation in teaching, and to improve the comprehensive practical ability of students to actively explore knowledge and apply knowledge.

Finally, high-level teaching team should be built, the teaching qualification, professional level, foreign language ability and cross-cultural ability requirements of teachers should be clarified, and the training of knowledge and skills of the teaching team should be continuously strengthened, and so on. Colleges and universities should accelerate the introduction of teachers with international level, promote the qualification certification of foreign teachers, and push China's education for studying abroad to achieve high-quality and connotative development at an early date.

### 3) Management Level

Firstly, colleges and universities should establish a sound management system



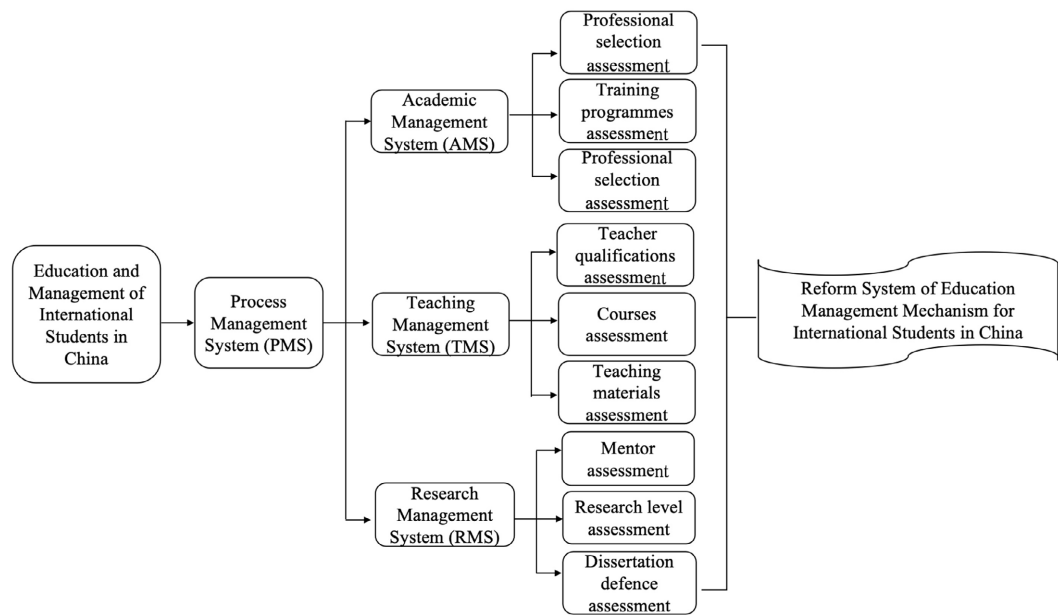
for international student education, introduce a process management system, and set up a reform system for the management mechanism of education for international students in China (**Figure 2**). In addition, they also need to actively absorb the management experience of foreign students in foreign colleges and universities and gradually converge with the international standards (Xing & Lu, 2012). They should also continue to preserve and carry forward the excellent traditional culture of China and take the initiative to give humanistic care to foreign students from the perspective of the national conditions of China and the actual situation of education of foreign students studying in China, which is also an important means of safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of foreign students in China and the social order.

Secondly, the administration should conduct regular academic data analyses of international students studying in China, which can provide a better understanding of the learning situation and needs of them, and provide more targeted educational services and support for them. This information is not only used as a supplement to the academic analyses conducted by the Academic Affairs Office, but is also passed on to teachers and other relevant personnel through on-campus sharing, so as to help the relevant personnel better understand the learning situation and characteristics of international students, and provide them with better educational management services. In this way, schools can better meet the educational needs of international students, improve their learning experience and satisfaction.

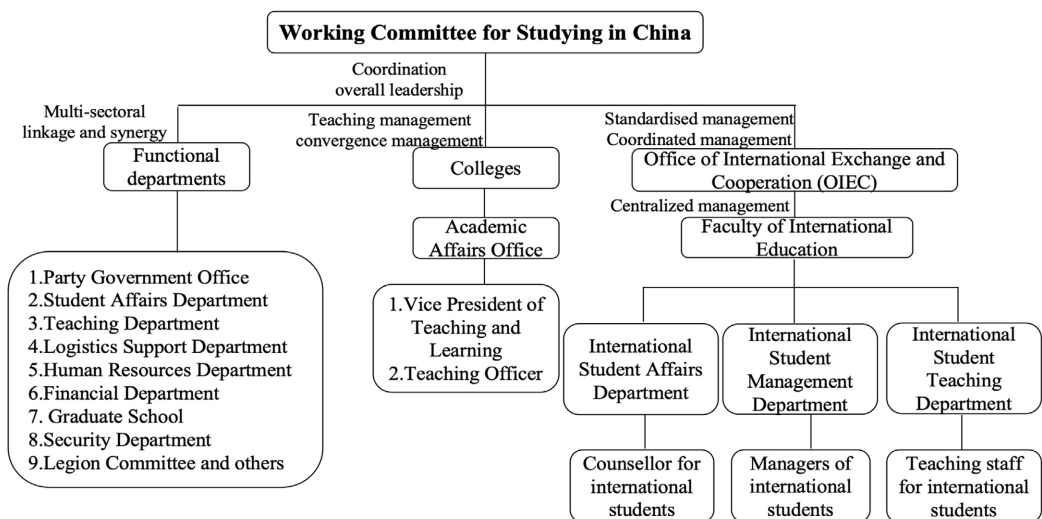
Finally, colleges and universities should refine the division of responsibilities among management departments and improve the management level (Liu, 2022). An effective communication and coordination mechanism is established between the management and service personnel of multiple departments (**Figure 3**), so as to open up communication channels and try to meet the reasonable and individual needs of international students. In addition, in order to solve the problems of language and communication barriers of the service personnel, it is necessary to set up an advanced international student management team as the basis for the development of them (Chen, 2021). Colleges and universities should limit the academic qualifications and foreign language levels when recruiting international student management personnel, and should also regularly conduct relevant vocational training after joining the job, arrange for them to undergo professional further training, and provide language training courses and other services, so that the comprehensive quality can be improved.

#### 4) Service level

Firstly, all departments should cooperate to create an internationalised campus cultural environment. As the scale of international student education in China is expanding, an internationalised campus cultural environment is an effective means to enhance the international competitiveness, and to bring the universities into line with the international community. In addition, Colleges and universities should fully implement learning management services, life management services, cultural integration management services, psychological



**Figure 2.** Reform system of education management mechanism for international students in China.



**Figure 3.** Organizational chart for international students studying in China.

counselling, medical services and other aspects.

Secondly, strengthen the service consciousness of management personnel. No matter teachers, administrative staff or logistic staff, they should firmly establish the service concept of “student-oriented” in the process of serving international students. They should grasp the thought dynamics of international students, understand what they need, like, think and care about, and take corresponding service countermeasures accordingly. In addition, the service personnel should ensure the timeliness and accuracy of the service.

Finally, they should balance the relationship between being a “nanny” or a “mentor”. With the expansion of the scale of international students, “nanny” can no longer be effectively implemented. Therefore, Schools are encouraged to ar-

range “mentors” in study and life service for international students, who can help them provide guidance and assistance in adaptation to life, culture, study and growth. It is different from the parental management of asking for warmth, but seeks for new development on the basis of inheritance, and becomes a new generation of innovative mentors who can solve students’ problems, find out their dynamics, guide their learning, and lead their growth.

### **4.3. Doing Well in Following Up and Liaising of International Students after Graduation**

Firstly, colleges and universities should cultivate the awareness of tracking management of international graduates, which is not only for those who have already left the university, but also for those who are still in the university, and make preparations for the tracking management of graduation in advance. And they should establish and improve the management organisations of international students, reasonably increase the number of special staff, and improve the ability of tracking and management of international students.

Secondly, the management department of international students can make use of information technology to do special tracking management for graduates of different nationalities and majors. The management department should separately set up information databases to manage and make use of the resources of international students’ alumni and carry out alumni work smoothly. Besides, they should collect and maintain the contact information of international students in China systematically, actively use the Internet and other information technology means to contact international student alumni, and regularly track the flow and employment status of these graduates.

Finally, colleges and universities can make use of social media to maintain long-term online communication and interaction with international student alumni, so as to densely weave the international student alumni network and make it convenient for each international student alumni. Social media can also introduce the recent situation of their alma mater and China to the international student alumni, care about their career development, enhance the feelings of international student alumni towards their alma mater, and increase the cohesion among international student alumni.

## **5. Conclusion**

Strengthening the management of international student education in colleges and universities under the new pattern of opening up of education to the outside world is not only an inherent requirement for the development of China’s education, but also an important content of China’s opening-up strategy. In the future, colleges and universities should implement the “three-step” strategy, and carry out reform and innovation from quality control of international students sources before enrolment, to the protection of international students’ study and life in school, to the tracking and liaison with international alumni after graduation, so as to build a four-pronged education management system of “students,

teaching, management and service”, and to form a certain feedback mechanism to continuously improve and optimise the quality assurance mechanism for international students studying in China, so as to promote the sustainable development, to cultivate a large number of high-quality talents for countries all over the world, and to provide important human resources support for the construction of the “Double First Class”, and to enhance the international quality of China’s higher education.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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