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Chapter 1. Introduction

This document describes the Firebird wire protocol. Most of the information was obtained by studying the Firebird source code and implementing the wire protocol in the Firebird .NET provider and Jaybird (Firebird JDBC driver).

The protocol is described in the form of the message sent by the client and received from the server. The described protocol is Firebird/Interbase protocol version 10. Earlier (Interbase) versions of the protocol are not in scope for this document. Changes in later protocol versions are described in notes below the description of the relevant version 10 message (currently only version 11 is partially described).

This document is not complete. It is advisable to consult the Interbase 6.0 API Guide for additional information on subjects like parsing the status vector, information request items, and the meaning of operations.

Unless otherwise indicated, a client request must be flushed to the server for processing. For some operations the flush can be deferred, so it is sent together with a different operation. Versions 11 and higher of the wire protocol explicitly support (or even require) deferring of operations, including deferring the read of the response.
Chapter 2. Responses

The wire protocol has a limited set of responses. Some operations have a specific response, which is described together with the operation. Most operations however use one (or more) of the responses described in this section. The meaning and content depend on the operation that initiated the response.

2.1. Generic response

Int32
Operation code

If operation equals op_response:

Int32
Object handle

Int64
Object ID

Buffer
Data (meaning depends on the operation).

Byte[]
Status vector

Information about parsing the status vector can be found in the Interbase 6.0 API Guide in the documentation set. It might also be advantageous to look at the sources of the Firebird .NET provider or Jaybird.

2.2. SQL response

Int32
Operation code

If operation equals op_sql_response:

Int32
Message count

Buffer
Response data (meaning depends on the operation).

2.3. Fetch response
If operation equals `op_fetch_response`:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int32 Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A value of 0 is the success value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of cursor is indicated with a non-zero status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A status with value of 100 means that there are no more rows.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data rows are not in a buffer as described in Data types, but as a sequence of data rows, see Reading row data.

### 2.4. Slice response

If operation equals `op_slice`:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int32 Slice length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slice length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slice length</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buffer  
Slice data
Chapter 3. Databases

3.1. Attach

Attachments to a database are done in two steps, first identification (connect) to the server, then attachment to a database.

3.1.1. Identification

Performs the initial handshake and protocol selection.

**Client**

- Int32 Operation code (op_connect)
- Int32 Operation code (op_attach)
- Int32 Version (CONNECT_VERSION2)
- Int32 Architecture type (e.g. arch_generic = 1).

**String**

- Database path or alias

**Int32**

- Count of protocol versions understood (e.g. 1)

**Buffer**

- User identification

- The next block of data declares the protocol(s) that the client is willing or able to support. It should be sent as many times as protocols are supported (and specified as Count of protocol versions understood), values depend on the protocol.

- Int32 Protocol version (PROTOCOL_VERSION10)

- Int32 Architecture type (e.g. arch_generic = 1)

- Int32 Minimum type (e.g. ptype_rpc = 2)
Int32
    Maximum type (e.g. ptype_batch_send = 3)

Int32
    Preference weight (e.g. 2)

**Server**

Int32
    Operation code

If operation equals op_accept:

Int32
    Protocol version number accepted by server

Int32
    Architecture for protocol

Int32
    Minimum type

### 3.1.2. Attachment

Attaches to a database.

**Client**

Int32
    Operation code (op_attach)

Int32
    Database object id (0)

String
    Database path or alias

Buffer
    Database parameter buffer

*Table 1. Example of parameters sent in the DPB*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>isc_dpb_version1</td>
<td>Version (must be first item!)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isc_dpb_dummy_packet_interval</td>
<td>Dummy packet interval</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isc_dpb_sql_dialect</td>
<td>SQL dialect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.2. Detach

Detaches from the database. After detach the connection is still open, to disconnect use Disconnect (op_disconnect).

**Client**

- **Int32**
  - Operation code (op_detach)

**Server**

**Generic response**

### 3.3. Create

Create a database. Create is similar to Attachment (op_attach).

**Client**

- **Int32**
  - Operation code (op_create)

- **Int32**
  - Database object id (0)

- **String**
  - Database path

- **Buffer**
  - Database parameter buffer
3.4. Drop

Drops the currently attached database.

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_drop_database)

Int32

Database handle

Server

Generic response

3.5. Database information request

Requests database or server information.

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_info_database)

Int32

Database handle

Int32

Incarnation of object (0)

Buffer

Requested information items

Int32

Length of buffer available for receiving response (too small may lead to receiving a truncated buffer, which necessitates requesting information again).

The buffer in the response is sized to the actual length of the response (upto the declared available length), so specifying a larger than necessary size does not inflate the response on the wire.

Server

Generic response — where Data holds the requested information.
3.6. Disconnect

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_disconnect)

No response, remote socket close.
Chapter 4. Transactions

4.1. Start transaction

Starts a transaction with the transaction options specified in the transaction parameter buffer.

**Client**

Int32
- Operation code (op_transaction)

Int32
- Database handle

Buffer
- Transaction parameter buffer

**Server**

Generic response — where Object handle is the new transaction handle.

4.2. Commit transaction

Commits an active or prepared transaction.

**Client**

Int32
- Operation code (op_commit)

Int32
- Transaction handle

**Server**

Generic response

4.3. Rollback transaction

Rolls back an active or prepared transaction.

**Client**

Int32
- Operation code (op_rollback)
4.4. **Commit retaining**

Commits an active or prepared transaction, retaining the transaction context.

**Client**

Int32

Transaction handle

**Server**

Generic response

4.5. **Rollback retaining**

Rolls back an active or prepared transaction, retaining the transaction context.

**Client**

Int32

Operation code (op_rollback_retaining)

Int32

Transaction handle

**Server**

Generic response

4.6. **Prepare**

Performs the first stage of a two-phase commit. After prepare, a transaction is *in-limbo* until committed or rolled back.

4.6.1. **Simple prepare**
**4.6.2. Prepare with message**

Associates a message (byte data) with the prepared transaction. This information is stored in RDB$TRANSACTIONS and can be used for recovery purposes.

**Client**

Int32
   Operation code (op_prepare)

Int32
   Transaction handle

**Server**

**Generic response**

**4.7. Transaction information request**

This is similar to Database information request.

**Client**

Int32
   Operation code (op_transaction_info)

Int32
   Database handle

Int32
   Incarnation of object (0)

Buffer
   Requested information items
Int32

Length of buffer available for receiving response (too small may lead to receiving truncated buffer).

**Generic response** — where *Data* holds the requested information.
Chapter 5. Statements

5.1. Allocate

Allocates a statement handle on the server.

**Client**

Int32

Operation code (op_allocate_statement)

Int32

Database handle

**Server**

Generic response — where Object handle is the allocated statement handle.

5.1.1. Deviations for protocol version 11

An allocate can only be sent together with a Prepare operation.

5.2. Free

Frees resources held by the statement.

**Client**

Int32

Operation code (op_free_statement)

Int32

Statement handle

Int32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DSQL_close</td>
<td>Closes the cursor opened after statement execute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSQL_drop</td>
<td>Releases the statement handle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Server**

Generic response

5.2.1. Deviations for protocol version 11

Request flushing and response processing must be deferred.
5.3. Prepare

Client

Int32
   Operation code (op_prepare_statement)

Int32
   Transaction handle

Int32
   Statement handle

Int32
   SQL dialect

String
   Statement to be prepared

Buffer
   Describe and describe bind information items

Example of requested information items
   • isc_info_sql_select
   • isc_info_sql_describe_vars
   • isc_info_sql_sqlda_seq
   • isc_info_sql_type
   • isc_info_sql_sub_type
   • isc_info_sql_length
   • isc_info_sql_scale
   • isc_info_sql_field
   • isc_info_sql_relation

Int32
   Target buffer length (32768)

Server

Generic response — where Data holds the statement description (matching the requested information items)

5.3.1. Deviations for protocol version 11

The statement handle can no longer be allocated separately. The initial Allocate operation must be sent together with the first prepare operation. When allocating and preparing together, the value of
the statement handle of the `prepare` must be 0xFFFF (invalid object handle). The responses must be processed in order: first `allocate` response, then `prepare` response.

Once a statement handle has been allocated, it can be reused by sending a `prepare` with the obtained statement handle.

### 5.4. Describe

Describe of output parameters of a query is done using the statement information request message

*Example of requested information items*

- `isc_info_sql_select`
- `isc_info_sql_describe_vars`
- `isc_info_sql_sqlda_seq`
- `isc_info_sql_type`
- `isc_info_sql_sub_type`
- `isc_info_sql_length`
- `isc_info_sql_scale`
- `isc_info_sql_field`
- `isc_info_sql_relation`

### 5.5. Describe bind (input parameters)

Describe of input parameters of a query is done using the statement information request message

*Example of requested information items*

- `isc_info_sql_select`
- `isc_info_sql_describe_vars`
- `isc_info_sql_sqlda_seq`
- `isc_info_sql_type`
- `isc_info_sql_sub_type`
- `isc_info_sql_length`
- `isc_info_sql_scale`
- `isc_info_sql_field`
- `isc_info_sql_relation`

### 5.6. Execute

**Client**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>op_execute</td>
<td>DDL and DML statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>op_execute2</td>
<td>Stored procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Int32  
Operation code

Int32  
Statement handle

Int32  
Transaction handle

If the statement has input parameters:

Buffer  
Parameters in BLR format

Int32  
Message number (0) ??

Int32  
Number of messages (1) ??

Buffer  
Parameter values

If not statement has no input parameters:

Buffer  
Empty (length only 0)

Int32  
Message number (0) ??

Int32  
Number of messages (0) ??

If the statement is a stored procedure and there are output parameters:

Buffer  
Output parameters in BLR format

Int32  
Output message number (0) ??
Server

Int32

Operation code

If operation equals op_sql_response:

SQL response

if not:

Generic response

5.7. Rows affected by query execution

Obtain the rows affected by a query is done using the statement information request message

List of requested information items

• isc_info_sql_records

5.8. Fetch

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_fetch)

Int32

Statement handle

Buffer

Output parameters in BLR format

Int32

Message number

Int32

Message count/Fetch size (200)

Server

Int32

Operation code

If operation equals op_fetch_response:

Fetch response.

If not:
5.9. Set cursor name

**Client**

Int32
- Operation code (op_set_cursor)

Int32
- Statement handle

String
- Cursor name (null terminated)

Int32
- Cursor type (0).

![⚠️](Image)
- Reserved for future use

**Server**

Generic response

5.10. Information request

This is similar to Database information request.

**Client**

Int32
- Operation code (op_info_sql)

Int32
- Statement handle

Int32
- Incarnation of object (0)

Buffer
- Requested information items

Int32
- Requested information items buffer length

**Server**

Generic response — where Data holds the requested information.
Information about how to parse the information buffer sent by the Firebird server can be found in the Interbase 6.0 documentation set.
# Chapter 6. Blobs

## 6.1. Create/Open

### Client

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int32</th>
<th>Operation code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operation code</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Operation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>op_create_blob</td>
<td>Creates a new blob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>op_create_blob2</td>
<td>Creates a new blob with a blob parameter buffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>op_open_blob</td>
<td>Opens an existing blob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>op_open_blob2</td>
<td>Opens an existing blob with a blob parameter buffer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Buffer**

- Blob parameter buffer (not allowed with op_create_blob and op_open_blob, required with op_create_blob2 and op_open_blob2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int32</th>
<th>Transaction handle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int64</th>
<th>Blob ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Server**

**Generic response** — where:

- **Object handle** is the blob handle
- **Object id** is the blob id (only for op_create_blob / op_create_blob2, garbage for op_open_blob / op_open_blob2)

## 6.2. Get segment

### Client

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int32</th>
<th>Operation code (op_get_segment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int32</th>
<th>Blob handle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Int32 | Segment length (max length = 32768) |
6.3. Put segment

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_batch_segments)

Int32
  Blob handle

Buffer
  Blob Segments

Server

Generic response — where Data is the blob segment.

6.4. Seek

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_seek_blob)

Int32
  Blob handle

Int32
  Seek mode (0)

Int32
  Offset

Server

Generic response — where Object handle is the current position.

6.5. Cancel

Cancels and invalidates the blob handle. If this was a newly created blob, the blob is disposed.
**Client**

Int32

Operation code (op_cancel_blob)

Int32

Blob handle

**Server**

*Generic response* — no useful information in response

6.5.1. Deviations for protocol version 11

Request flushing and response processing must be deferred.

### 6.6. Close

Closes and invalidates the blob handle.

**Client**

Int32

Operation code (op_close_blob)

Int32

Blob handle

**Server**

*Generic response* — no useful information in response

6.6.1. Deviations for protocol version 11

Request flushing and response processing must be deferred.
Chapter 7. Arrays

7.1. Get slice

**Client**

Int32
   Operation code (op_get_slice)

Int32
   Transaction handle

Int64
   Array handle

Int32
   Slice length

Buffer
   Slice descriptor (SDL)

String
   Slice parameters (Always an empty string)

Buffer
   Slice (Always empty)

**Server**

**Slice response**

7.2. Put slice

**Client**

Int32
   Operation code (op_put_slice)

Int32
   Transaction handle

Int64
   Array handle (0)

Int32
   Slice length
Buffer
   Slice descriptor (SDL)

String
   Slice parameters (Always an empty string)

Int32
   Slice length

Buffer
   Slice data

Server

Generic response — where Object id is the array handle.
Chapter 8. Batches

Statement batches were introduced in protocol v16 (Firebird 4.0).

8.1. Create

Client

Int32
Operation code (op_batch_create)

Int32
Statement handle

Buffer
BLR format of batch messages

Int32
Message length

Buffer
Batch parameters buffer

Server

Generic response

8.2. Send messages

Client

Int32
Operation code (op_batch_msg)

Int32
Statement handle

Int32
Number of messages

Buffer
Batched values (formatted message repeats 'Number of messages' times)

Server

Generic response
### 8.3. Execute batch

**Client**

Int32
- Operation code (op_batch_exec)

Int32
- Statement handle

Int32
- Transaction handle

**Server**

Int32
- Operation code

If operation equals op_batch_cs:

**Batch completion state**

Int32
- Statement handle

Int32
- Total records count

Int32
- Number of update counters (records updated per each message)

Int32
- Number of per-message error blocks (message number in batch and status vector of an error processing it)

Int32
- Number of simplified per-message error blocks (message number in batch without status vector)

**Buffer**

Update counters (records updated per each message), array of Int32, length is equal to "Number of update counters" field in packet.

**Buffer**

Detailed info about errors in batch (for each error server sends number of message (Int32) and status vector in standard way (exactly like in op_response). Number of such pairs is equal to "Number of per-message error blocks" field in packet.
Buffer

Simplified error blocks (for each error server sends number of message (Int32) w/o status vector). Used when too many errors took place. Number of elements is equal to "Number of simplified per-message error blocks" field in packet.

Otherwise:

Generic response

8.4. Release batch

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_batch_rls)

Int32

Statement handle

Server

Generic response

8.5. Cancel batch

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_batch_cancel)

Int32

Statement handle

Server

Generic response

8.6. Sync batch

Introduced in v17 (Firebird 4.0.2).

Client

Int32

Operation code (op_batch_sync)
8.7. Set default blob parameters

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_batch_set_bpb)

Int32
  Statement handle

Buffer
  Default BLOB parameters buffer

Server

Generic response

8.8. Register existing blob

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_batch_regblob)

Int32
  Statement handle

Int64
  Existing BLOB ID

Int64
  Batch temporal BLOB ID

Server

Generic response

8.9. Stream of BLOB data

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_batch_blob_stream)
Int32
  Statement handle

Buffer
  BLOB stream

  This stream is a sequence of blob records. Each blob record contains:

  Int32
    Record length

    The following three fields are called BLOB header

  Int64
    Batch temporal BLOB ID

  Int32
    BLOB size

  Int32
    BLOB parameters buffer size

Buffer

  BLOB parameters buffer

Buffer

  BLOB data (length - BLOB size bytes)

  BLOB headers and records in a stream need not match, i.e. one record may contain many BLOBs and BLOB may stretch from one record to next.

Server

Generic response
Chapter 9. Services

9.1. Attach

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_service_attach)

Int32
  Database object ID (0)

String
  Service name
    For local connections: service_mgr
    For remote connections: hostname:service_mgr

Buffer
  Service parameter buffer

Server

Generic response — where Object handle is the services manager attachment handle.

9.2. Detach

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_service_detach)

Int32
  Services manager attachment handle

Server

Generic response

9.3. Start

Client

Int32
  Operation code (op_service_start)


```plaintext
Server
Generic response

9.4. Query service

Client
Int32
Operation code (op_service_info)

Int32
Services manager attachment handle

Int32
Incarnation of object (0)

Buffer
Services parameter buffer

Buffer
Requested information items

Int32
Requested information items buffer length

Server
Generic response — where Data contains the requested information.
Chapter 10. Events

10.1. Connection request

Client

Int32
Operation code (op_connect_request)

Int32
Connection type (P_REQ_async)

Int32
Partner identification (0)

Server

Int32
Attachment handle

Int16
Port number

- This is part of the sockaddr_in structure.
- It is not in XDR format

Int16
Socket family

- This is part of the sockaddr_in structure.
- It is not in XDR format

Byte[4]
IP Address

- This is part of the sockaddr_in structure.
- It is not in XDR format

Byte[8]
Zeroes

- This is part of the sockaddr_in structure.
- It is not in XDR format
Chapter 10. Events

10.2. Queue events

Client

Int32
Operation code (op_que_events)

Int32
Database handle

Buffer
Events parameter buffer

Int32
Ast function address

Int32
Ast parameters function address

Int32
Local event id

Server

Generic response — where Object handle holds the remote event id.

10.3. Cancel events

Client

Int32
Operation code (op_cancel_events)

Int32
Database handle

Int32
Local event id

Server

Generic response
Chapter 11. Reading row data

TODO: Processing row data
Appendix A: External Data Representation (XDR)

The Firebird wire protocol uses XDR for exchange messages between client and server.
Appendix B: Data types

Int32
   Integer 32-bits

Int64
   Integer 64-bits

Buffer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int32</td>
<td>Length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byte[]</td>
<td>Buffer data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Byte[]
   An array of bytes

String
   A text string (*Read/Written as a buffer*)
# Appendix C: Revision history

## Revision History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>31 May 2004</td>
<td>First draft for review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>02 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Fixed issues reported by Paul Vinkenoog.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>03 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Added new subsections to the Statements section.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>05 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Fixed issues reported by Paul Vinkenoog.</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>06 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Fixed issues reported by Paul Vinkenoog.</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>07 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Added events system documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>16 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Modified document ID to wireprotocol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>17 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Added two new segmented lists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>18 Jun 2004</td>
<td>• Improved segmentedlist usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Fixed rendering of important tags.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>19 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Changed rendering of important tags using Paul Vinkenoog fix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>20 Jun 2004</td>
<td>• Added new segmentedlist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>20 Jun 2004</td>
<td>• Updated Statements.Prepare documentation.</td>
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<td>• Updated Statements.Execute documentation.</td>
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<td>• Updated Blobs.GetSegment documentation.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Updated Blobs.Seek documentation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>21 Jun 2004</td>
<td>Updated services information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>13 Sep 2014</td>
<td>Updated and expanded protocol information</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>04 Aug 2020</td>
<td>Conversion to AsciiDoc, minor copy-editing</td>
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<tr>
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<td>26 Dec 2021</td>
<td>Document batch execution</td>
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