

Undergraduate Admissions

Freshman Admissions

A total of 193,873 students applied for freshman admission to the University of California for fall 2015, an overall increase of 5.8 percent over fall 2014 and the 11th consecutive year in which UC reported an increase in applications. All nine undergraduate campuses saw gains, ranging from 5.3 percent at San Diego and Santa Barbara to 14.1 percent at Merced. In 2014, 42.5 percent of admitted students were first-generation college students, 37.4 percent had low family incomes, and 21 percent were from low (1–4) Academic Performance Index schools.

Admissions Requirements

Master Plan: Adopted by the state in 1960, the California Master Plan for Higher Education identifies specific roles for each of the public higher education systems. Consistent with the Master Plan, UC seeks to enroll students from the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of California high school graduates.

Minimum Universitywide Requirements: High school graduates seeking admission to UC must first make themselves admissible to the University as a whole by completing 15 college-preparatory courses (referred to as the “**a-g**” **courses**), earning at least a 3.0 GPA in those courses (3.4 for nonresidents), and taking a standardized examination. The 15 courses are:

- a. History/social science - 2 years
- b. English - 4 years
- c. Mathematics - 3 years
- d. Laboratory science - 2 years
- e. Language other than English - 2 years
- f. Visual and performing arts - 1 year
- g. College-preparatory elective - 1 year

California resident applicants will be guaranteed admission to the UC system, although not necessarily to a campus, term, or major to which they applied, if they:

- Rank in the top 9 percent of all high school graduates statewide, according to the UC admission index that combines grades in “a-g” courses and standardized test scores (**Eligibility in the Statewide Context**); or
- Rank in the top 9 percent of their high school graduating class as determined by UC (**Eligibility in the Local Context, or ELC**).

Students who meet the minimum requirements for admission but are not eligible under the two paths listed above still receive a comprehensive review of their application by all UC campuses to which they apply (**Entitled to Review, or ETR**).

Review of Applications

Students apply to one or more UC campuses via a single, centralized application process. Each campus individually reviews applications and makes admissions decisions consistent with UC’s **comprehensive review policy**.

- **Comprehensive Review:** UC campuses receive more qualified applicants than they can admit, so campuses select students whose qualifications surpass minimum requirements. Campuses evaluate students’ academic achievements in light of the opportunities available to them as well as their demonstrated capacity to contribute to the vitality and intellectual life at UC. UC’s comprehensive review policy ensures that a broad range of factors beyond GPA and test scores are considered in the evaluation of each applicant.

14 Comprehensive Review Factors for Freshman Applicants

- GPA in “a-g” courses
- Scores on the ACT Plus Writing or the SAT Reasoning Test
- Number of “a-g” courses beyond the minimum
- Number of and performance in honors, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate courses
- Eligible in the Local Context (ELC) status
- Quality of senior year program
- Performance in context of available opportunities
- Performance in one or more subject areas
- Outstanding work on a special project
- Recent improvement in academic performance
- Special talents, achievements, and awards
- Completion of special projects undertaken in context of high school curriculum or special school events
- Academic accomplishments in context of life experiences and special circumstances
- Location of secondary school or residence

- Individualized Evaluation in Context: Each individual’s achievements — academic and otherwise — are evaluated against the range of opportunities available to him or her. Recognizing that not all of California’s students have access to the same resources, UC gives weight to achievement in the context of challenges students have overcome. This includes not only personal circumstances but the resources available in each student’s high school. Students are evaluated against their own peers with similar circumstances.

Transfer Admissions

In addition to freshman admission, the Master Plan delineates a specific pathway for students attending a California Community College (CCC) who wish to transfer and earn a baccalaureate degree. More than 90 percent of UC’s transfer students come from the state’s 112 CCCs.

As a highly selective research institution, UC asks prospective CCC applicants to complete a rigorous set of lower-division general education and major preparatory courses prior to transfer (minimum 60 semester units). In practice, however, meeting the minimum transfer criteria will not make a student competitive for admission. Increasingly, campuses select students who have completed courses that prepare them for their intended major at the University.

Transfer applications are reviewed using UC’s **transfer comprehensive review policy**. Similar to the freshman review, campuses evaluate students’ academic achievements in light of the opportunities available using eight academic and non-academic factors. In 2013, UC added completion of an Associate Degree for Transfer at a CCC as one of the comprehensive review factors.