

A Guide to UC Admissions Policies

Each November many of the state's best high school students apply to enter the University of California (UC) system, which has nine undergraduate campuses across the state. The California Master Plan for Higher Education provides that UC accept the top 12.5% of high school graduating seniors statewide who qualify for admission based on an eligibility formula that includes grades in specific courses and admissions test scores.

This student/parent guide describes UC admissions policies generally. For detailed information on what to do to be eligible for admission to UC, students should talk to their high school counselor or the administrator in charge of helping students get into college. You can also go to www.ucop.edu/pathways. In addition, see www.californiacolleges.edu for information on all colleges and universities in California.

Some students who are UC-bound choose to go to a low-cost community college first. UC gives *first priority* to students transferring from a community college. For more information, see EdSource's guides on community colleges at www.edsource.org.

What high school courses does UC require?

To meet *minimum* eligibility requirements, students must pass (with at least a C) 15 one-year courses, referred to as the “a–g” college-prep sequence:

- two years of history/social science—one year on the United States and one year on the world;
- four years of English language arts;
- three years of math through *at least* Algebra II or Integrated Math III (four years recommended);
- two years of laboratory science in two of three disciplines: biology, chemistry, and physics (three years recommended);
- two years of the same foreign language (three years recommended);
- one year of visual/performing arts; and
- one year of an elective from one of the above subjects.

Students must take at least seven of these “a–g” courses during their junior and senior years. Your high school counselor will have a list of your school's courses that meet UC requirements. Most high schools list their approved courses on the web at: www.ucop.edu/doorways/list

Some students take one or more of these courses—such as Algebra I, Geometry, or a foreign language—in middle school and receive high school credit, often by passing a proficiency exam.

The “a–g” college-prep courses are the *minimum* requirement. To be competitive in the UC system, it is good to take as many as four years each of English, math, social science, laboratory science, and foreign language.

UC admissions officers know what courses are available in your high school. They're more impressed by students who are successful in challenging courses than those who take easier courses to boost their grade-point averages.

Which grades count in determining grade-point average for UC eligibility?

For the eligibility formula, *only* the grades a student earns in the “a–g” courses taken during their sophomore and junior years count toward the grade-point average (GPA). The GPA is based on a 4.0 scale (A=4). Add one extra point for each A, B, or C grade from up to four approved honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or transferable college courses. (Thus an A in an honors course would equal five points.) Many campuses will grant college credit for AP or IB courses if you do well on an end-of-course exam.

Beginning in fall 2007, a *minimum* GPA of 3.0 is required to be eligible for UC. (Prior to fall 2007, a GPA of *at least* 2.8 is needed.) For the most competitive campuses, such as UC–Berkeley, UCLA, or UC–San Diego, many students earn GPAs near 4.0 (or higher by taking honors courses).

UC campuses also consider a student's senior year grades and courses before granting final admittance, and all freshmen year “a–g” courses must be completed with a grade of C or higher.

What admissions tests are required?

UC requires either:

- the ACT Assessment plus the new ACT Writing Test; *or*
- the new SAT, which is sometimes referred to as the SAT-R. (The “R” stands for “reasoning.”) It replaces the SAT I.

In addition, students must complete two SAT Subject Tests (formerly called SAT IIs) in two different subject areas: history/social science, literature, Mathematics II, laboratory science, or language other than English. It is best to take the specific Subject Tests as soon as you have finished the high school course in that subject. (A Subject Test is sometimes referred to as an SAT-S.)

For more information on UC's admission testing requirements, see: www.ucop.edu/pathways/ucnotes/march05/newsI.html

The new SAT has 2400 total possible points and is divided into three sections—writing, critical reading, and mathematics—which each count for a third of the exam. It includes a student-written essay and topics from Algebra II (or Integrated Math III).

Most high schools offer the SAT. Some offer preparation courses. You can go online for sample test questions at www.collegeboard.com or, for the ACT, at www.actstudent.org. You can also take the new PSAT, which is offered in October of your sophomore and junior years, as a practice test for the SAT. Books that help you prepare for admissions tests are sold in bookstores and are available in public libraries. Your school library, counseling department, or College/Career Center may also have them. Or go to a free, interactive website at: <http://testprep.cavhs.org>

If you don't do well the first time you take an admissions exam, you can take it again. The university will use the highest scores from a single testing administration. (In other words, you can't use a math score from one test and a reading score from a test taken at a different time.)

How does UC determine my eligibility?

UC has an eligibility index based on “a–g” course grades plus admissions test scores. For the class of 2006, the SAT and Subject Test scores will be weighted equally. The weighting system could change for the class of 2007 after UC officials evaluate how well it worked in 2006. The new UC eligibility index will be available at www.ucop.edu/pathways in late spring 2005.

Once you are accepted to a UC campus, you will have to take placement tests in English and math (unless your SAT or ACT scores reach a certain level). These placement tests determine which level of courses you are ready for. If the tests show you are not yet ready for college-level work, you will be placed in a remedial class that offers no credit.

Are grades and admissions test scores all that matter?

If students meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the index and complete their application (which includes responding to three personal statement questions), they are eligible to enter the UC system; but they are not guaranteed the campus of their choice. Each campus has its own selection criteria, which usually include more than the minimum test and grade requirements.

Some UC campuses are very selective. Your chances for admission to a campus you are interested in increase significantly when you apply to several campuses. Although you use only one application form for the whole system, you must include \$55 per campus. If you have access to the Internet, UC wants you to apply online. If application fees are a concern, apply for a fee waiver, which is built in when you apply online.

If you are eligible but not selected for admission to one of the campuses of your choice, your application may be placed in the UC referral pool where you are given a chance to enroll at another UC campus that has space.

All campus admissions officials rely on a “comprehensive review” process of eligible students that considers academic performance, personal achievements, and passion and growth in specific areas of their life, such as art, music, or science. They look at knowledge of foreign languages, leadership, and community involvement. Special projects, academic accomplishments in light of the student’s life experiences and special circumstances, and the location of the student’s secondary school and home are considered. In addition, individual universities try to accept students with a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and accomplishments.

What you write (in response to the personal statement questions) about who you are and what you have accomplished plays a key role in comprehensive review. You need to take great care in writing your responses and seek feedback from teachers, counselors, and parents before submitting the application.

There is extra help for some students

Some organizations focus on helping students who are underrepresented in college:

- The California Student Aid Commission, www.csac.ca.gov, provides financial aid to low-income students.
- The United Negro College Fund, www.uncf.org, helps African Americans.
- The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), www.maldef.org, aids Latinos. MALDEF also helps recent immigrants understand the requirements of Assembly Bill (AB) 540, which permits undocumented high school graduates to enroll in UC and pay the state resident fee. High school counselors or other administrators may also know about AB 540.

Are there any exceptions to these criteria?

There are two additional paths to UC eligibility:

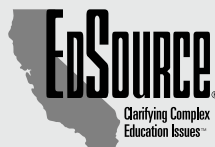
Eligibility in the Local Context: Under this program, the top 4% of students (based on grades) in the graduating class of every high school are eligible for UC if they complete all 15 of the “a–g” college-prep courses with at least a C and take the SAT and two Subject Tests. (By the end of their junior year, they must have successfully completed at least 11 of those courses, including one history/social science, three English, three math, one laboratory science, one foreign language, and two other “a–g” courses.) UC notifies students who appear to be eligible for this program at the beginning of their senior year. Under Eligibility in the Local Context, students are admitted to a specific campus, though not necessarily their campus of choice.

Eligibility by Examination Alone: If students achieve a high enough score on the SAT (or the ACT tests) *plus* two SAT Subject Tests, they are eligible to enter the UC system. Information on requirements for this program will be available in September 2005. (See www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions.)

Students cannot qualify by examination alone if they have completed 12 or more units of transferable coursework at another college after high school, or if they have taken transferable college courses in any subject covered by the SAT Subject Tests.

What if I can’t afford to go to college?

There are many ways students can finance a college education, including academic or need-based scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs. If you need help, go to www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions and click on “Paying for UC.” You can go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov> and www.fafsa.ed.gov or call 1-800-4-FED-AID for help filling out applications for federal aid. Corporations, nonprofit groups, and individuals offer scholarships based on a wide-range of criteria. For more information on financial aid, go to www.fafsa.org. Or do a search yourself on the Internet and in your local library. You can also talk to the counselor or Career/College Center at your high school. ☐



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