



Insights into the personal insight questions

CAP Forum
June 2016

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Content:

Insights on the new UC admission application questions will be shared

Attendees are encouraged to participate in the discussion from your perspective

Why, Who, What:

- Why did we change to the new questions?
- Who did we consult?
- What are the questions?
- What does UC expect from the answers?
- How can you help your students
- What resources are available to assist counselors and students?



Why did we change the questions?

- Prompts were last changed in 2008.
- Admission Directors were concerned about the existing prompts.
- Move to more direct questions – less guessing about what we want.
- Give students choice to select questions most relevant to them.
- Each question aligns to one or more of the comprehensive review criteria.





Who was consulted:

- High School & Community College Counselors
- UC Admissions Officers
- UC Faculty
- Students
- UC Administrators





What are the parameters:

- Applicants **choose** the questions they wish to answer.
 - Exception: Transfer students **must answer one** required question
- Maximum of 350 words **for each** response.
- All questions have **equal** value; there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.
- Students **cannot** answer more than 4 questions in total; **cannot** use additional comment box to answer more than four.

Questions for freshmen applicants

- **Select 4 questions from the list of 8.**



Freshman Comprehensive Review Factors

1. Academic GPA in all completed "a-g" courses, including additional points for completed UC-certified honors courses.
 2. Scores on the following tests: ACT or SAT.
 3. Number of, content of and performance in academic courses beyond the min "a-g" req.
 4. Number of and performance in UC-approved honors, AP, IB HL & transferable college courses.
 5. Identification by UC as ELC.
 6. Quality of senior-year program as measured by the type and number of academic courses in progress or planned.
 7. Quality of academic performance relative to the educational opportunities available in HS.
 8. Outstanding performance in one or more specific subject areas.
 9. Outstanding work in one or more special projects in any academic field of study.
 10. Recent, marked improvement in academic performance as demonstrated by academic GPA and the quality of coursework completed or in progress.
 11. Special talents, achievements and awards; special skills; special interests; experiences that demonstrate unusual promise for leadership; or other significant experiences or achievements that demonstrate the student's promise for contributing to the intellectual vitality of a campus.
 12. Completion of special projects undertaken in the context of HS curriculum or in conjunction with special school events, projects or programs.
 13. Academic accomplishments in light of your life experiences and special circumstances.
 14. Location of secondary school and residence.
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Freshman questions (select 4 of 8)

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.
2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

Freshman questions continued

5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?
6. Describe your favorite academic subject and explain how it has influenced you.
7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
8. What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?



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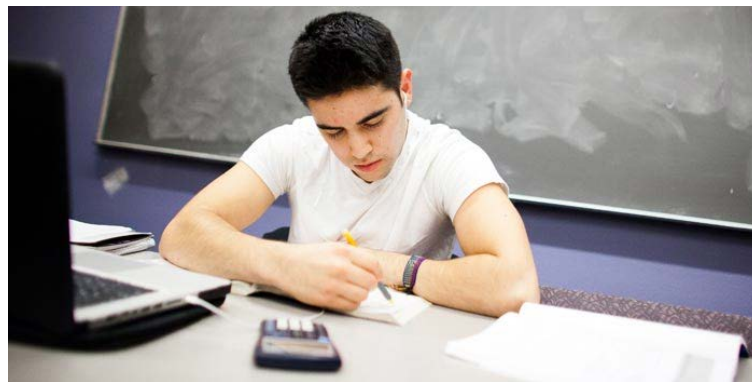
Transfer Comprehensive Review Factors

1. Completion of a specified pattern or number of courses that meet breadth or general education requirements.
2. Completion of a specified pattern or number of courses that provide continuity with upper division courses in the student's major.
3. Grade point average in all transferable courses.
4. Participation in academically selective honors courses or programs.
5. Special talents, achievements and awards in a particular field; special skills; special interests; experiences that demonstrate unusual promise for leadership; or other significant experiences or achievements that demonstrate promise for contributing to the intellectual vitality of a campus.
6. Completion of special projects undertaken in the context of college curriculum or in conjunction with special school events, projects or programs.
7. Academic accomplishments in light of life experiences and special circumstances.
8. Location of the college and residence.
9. Completion of an associate of arts or science degree for transfer (ADT) offered by a California community college.



Questions for transfer applicants

- **Required question:**
Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university.
- **Select 3 other questions from the list of 7.**





Transfer questions (select 3 of 7):

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.
2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

Transfer questions continued:

4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?
6. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
7. What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?



Keep in mind

- All questions have equal value.
- UC does not require an essay.
- New questions on the Fall 2017 admissions appl.





What does UC expect from the answers?

- Greater authenticity
- Maximize the student voice
- No more guessing about what we're asking
- More information about the student – who they are
- Most relevant information that best reflects individual circumstances.



A person wearing a metallic, reflective hood stands in a room with blue lighting. The floor is covered with several large, glowing circular patterns. Other similar hoods are suspended from the ceiling by thin rods. The overall atmosphere is futuristic and high-tech.

GETTING UNDER THE HOOD - HOW CAN YOU HELP



How can you help your students?

- Don't overly focus on style or structure.
Admissions does not grade on style – creativity, entertainment, or uniqueness – we only place value on content!
- Does the student make his/herself the focal point?
Are they using “I” and “my” statements?
- Is the student providing new information in a response?
Are they repeating themselves or actually adding depth or clarity to their application?



How can you help your students?

Freshmen Applicants:

- Remember that all freshman reviews are comprehensive. Admissions does not consider personal insight responses in a vacuum.

Transfer Applicants:

- So but not all transfer evaluations are comprehensive. Personal insight responses are not reviewed in a vacuum.
- Did the student answer the first question, as required? The response is critical in the review process.



Why it's not an essay

Show vs. Tell





Myths around the personal insight questions

So many website already have personal insight questions tips or best practices.

- “The four short essays will serve as your one personal statement”
- “All four (answers) should compliment each other to tell a story.”
- “Since there are four separate essays, consider taking more of a risk with at least one of the essays ... use a more creative writing style or approach.”
- “The best way to avoid a dull essay is to look for ways to ‘show’ about your point instead of just ‘tell’ about it.”

Myths around the personal insight questions

- “The four short essays will serve as your one personal statement” **FALSE**
- “All four (answers) should compliment each other to tell a story.” **FALSE**
- “Since there are four separate essays, consider taking more of a risk with at least one of the essays ... use a more creative writing style or approach.” **FALSE**
- “The best way to avoid a dull essay is to look for ways to ‘show’ about your point instead of just ‘tell’ about it.”
FALSE



Tips for staff

- Remove the word **essay** from your vocabulary.
- Read personal insight responses with a student's transcript and resume, know the whole picture.
- Encourage the student to stick to facts and think, "will a stranger understand me and the context of my situation?"
- Applications readers don't google things.
Students should be clear, avoiding acronyms & text talk.
- Admissions staff cannot make assumptions.
Analogies, metaphors, dialogue and creative writing is subjective.



Resources

- UC Admissions website: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/index.html>

From this page you will find:

Freshman questions & directions
Guide for Freshman Applicants (brainstorming worksheet)

Transfer questions & directions
Guide for Transfer Applicants (brainstorming worksheet)

FAQs about the personal insight questions

- Download the list of questions only, go to:
<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/transfer/index.html>

Recap



- 4 Questions (1 specifically required for transfers)
- 350 word maximum for each response
- All questions have equal value
- Students should select questions that are most relevant to them
- Greater student voice/less coaching and strategizing
- Questions and responses; not essays

Thank You!
Questions?

