

A Guide to UC's New Admissions Policies

Each November, many of the state's best students apply to enter the University of California (UC), which has nine undergraduate campuses. This student guide describes the new UC freshman admissions policies that will first affect the class entering in fall term 2012 (and applying in 2011). For more detailed information, talk to your high school counselor or administrator and visit www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergrad_adm/paths_to_adm/freshman2012/.

What high school courses does UC require?

To meet *minimum* admissions requirements, you must pass 15 one-year high school college-prep courses with at least a C grade:

- two years of history/social science—one year on the United States and one year on the world;
- four years of English;
- three years of math through at least Algebra II or Integrated Math III;
- two years of laboratory science, selected from biology, chemistry, or physics;
- two years of the same foreign language;
- one year of visual/performing arts (such as dance, drama, music, drawing); and
- one year of an academic elective chosen from the UC “a–g” list.

You must complete at least 11 of these “a–g” courses by the end of your junior year. Your high school counselor will have a list of your school's courses that meet UC requirements. Most high schools list their UC-approved courses at doorways.ucop.edu/list. Some students take courses such as

Algebra I or a foreign language in middle school and receive high school credit. And if you can demonstrate knowledge that is equivalent to two years of studying a language other than English, you may be able to waive the foreign language requirement.

Is taking 15 “a–g” courses enough?

Admitted students complete, on average, 23 yearlong, UC-approved academic courses. You may also boost your chances for admission to the campus of your choice by taking challenging courses, such as UC-approved honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and/or transferable college-level classes.

Which grades count in determining GPA?

The preliminary grade-point average includes grades earned in “a–g” courses taken during your sophomore and junior years. The GPA is based on a 4.0 scale (A=4, B=3, C=2). You may boost your GPA by taking up to eight semesters of UC-approved honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses (add 1 point for each A, B, or C semester grade so that A=5, B=4, C=3). You may also earn college credit for AP or IB courses if you do well on end-of-course exams.

A *minimum* GPA of 3.0 is required. For the most competitive campuses—including UC-Berkeley, UCLA, and UC-San Diego—many students earn GPAs near 4.0 or higher. UC campuses also consider your senior year grades and courses before granting final admittance.

What college entrance tests are required?

Admissions tests indicate your readiness for college-level work. UC requires *either*

- the ACT Assessment (English, math, science) plus the ACT Writing Test; *or*
- the SAT Reasoning Test (English, math, writing, but not science).

Beginning in fall term 2012, SAT Subject Tests in specific subjects will no longer be required. However, the tests will still be considered as part of the application for any student who takes them and chooses to submit the scores. And Subject Tests may be recommended for some majors at some campuses.

Most California high schools offer the ACT and SAT tests as well as the PSAT—a practice test given in October of your sophomore and junior years. Some high schools also offer preparation courses. In addition, bookstores, public libraries, and your school likely have SAT and ACT preparation guidebooks. You can also find help online for the SAT at testprep.cavhs.org. For help with test preparation and for information on test fee waivers, go to www.collegeboard.com/practice (SAT) and www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html (ACT). In 2010, the two ACT tests together cost \$79 and the SAT cost \$45.

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. (You can't use a math score from one test and an English score from a test taken at a different time.)

How and when do I apply?

Beginning in October, you can apply online at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergraduate.html.

The deadline for fall term applications is Nov. 30, and most campuses only accept applications in the fall. Check the website of the campus of your choice.

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With state cutbacks further limiting enrollment, UC encourages students to apply *early* and *broadly*. Students who apply to three or four campuses generally improve their chances of being admitted to at least one campus.

You need to fill out only one application for UC. But application fees are \$60 for *each* campus. Students can apply for an application fee waiver for up to four campuses through the online application.

Is anyone guaranteed admission to UC?

Beginning in fall term 2012, students who rank in the top 9% of their high school class at the

end of their junior year—based on their preliminary GPA—are guaranteed admission. But they must also keep up their grades during their senior year. Although these students have to take a college admissions test, no minimum score is required. Talk to your high school counselor to find out your ranking.

In addition, students who rank in the top 9% statewide based on UC's admissions index are guaranteed admission. The index weighs GPA and admissions test scores. Higher grades can offset lower test scores and vice versa. To determine your score and find out if you qualify for guaranteed admission,

go to www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergrad_adm/paths_to_adm/freshman2012/admissionsindex.html.

If you are in one of these groups, you are guaranteed admission to UC but not necessarily to your campus of choice. Together, UC estimates, about 10% of the state's high school graduates will be guaranteed admission.

UC admissions officials will also consider students with exceptionally high admissions test scores, but they are no longer guaranteed admission based solely on test scores.


In addition, UC officials will consider every application that meets the university's minimum admissions requirements. UC officials say they expect to admit another 2.5% of the state's graduating seniors through a "full review" process where officials look at broader criteria. For example, they will look for personal achievements, talents, or knowledge as well as leadership experiences and community involvement. They will consider accomplishments in light of the student's life experiences and special circumstances. What you write in your application essays can play a key role. This is where you can highlight your accomplishments.

Similarly, gaining admission to your campus of choice—particularly if it is a highly desired campus—is likely to be determined by more than your grades and admissions test scores.

Finally, UC campuses can allow a few students who do not meet the stated criteria but who demonstrate high potential for success to be "admitted by exception." See www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergrad_adm/paths_to_adm/exception.html.

What if I'm not admitted to UC?

You can attend a low-cost public community college and then transfer to UC. Visit www.cccco.edu/StudentSupport/tabid/925/Default.aspx and also download a guide on community colleges at www.edsource.org/pub_CCfirststep_11-09.html.

You may also want to apply to both UC and the four-year California State University (CSU). Visit www.csumentor and also download a student guide at www.edsource.org/pubio-guide-CSU-admissions.html. 

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

You can finance your education through academic or need-based scholarships and grants (which don't have to be repaid), loans, and work-study programs. Financial aid can help with certain college living expenses as well as fees. If you're not sure you're eligible, apply anyway. In general, it is good to apply well before the deadline, but not before January. All financial information is confidential.

Federal: Students from low-income families may qualify for Pell grants, and most students can qualify for federal loans. Visit studentaid.ed.gov for information in English and Spanish. The deadline to apply is June 30 for the following school year. You must fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), which is available at www.fafsa.ed.gov. The FAFSA asks for income tax information, but families who have not filed their returns before the financial aid deadline can give estimates and make needed changes later online. Students can also amend their application if a family's financial situation changes—for example, if a parent loses a job.

State: Students from low-income families can apply for Cal Grants. For information in English and Spanish, visit the California Student Aid Commission's website (www.calgrants.org). The deadline to apply is March 2 for the following school year. You need a FAFSA and a verified GPA. Make sure your high school submits the verified GPA by March 2.

UC: Indicate on your admissions application your interest in UC scholarships and also any personal characteristics that might help you qualify. UC's priority financial aid filing deadline is also March 2. Students risk losing all grant monies by missing that deadline. For an estimate of costs and links to resources, see www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/paying.html.

California Community Colleges: See www.icanaffordcollege.com.

Organizations supporting students who are under-represented in college:

- The United Negro College Fund at www.uncf.org.
- The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) at www.maldef.org. MALDEF also helps undocumented California high school graduates understand the requirements of Assembly Bill (AB) 540, which permits them to enroll in UC and pay the less costly state resident fee. High school counselors may also know about AB 540.
- The California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth at www.chafee.csac.ca.gov. Also see the Foster Care Ombudsman website at www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/college.html.

Other: Corporations, nonprofit groups, the military, and individuals offer scholarships based on a wide range of criteria. See www.finaid.org. You can also search the Internet, visit your local library, and talk to your high school counselor or administrator.