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# Admission 101 — First-year basics

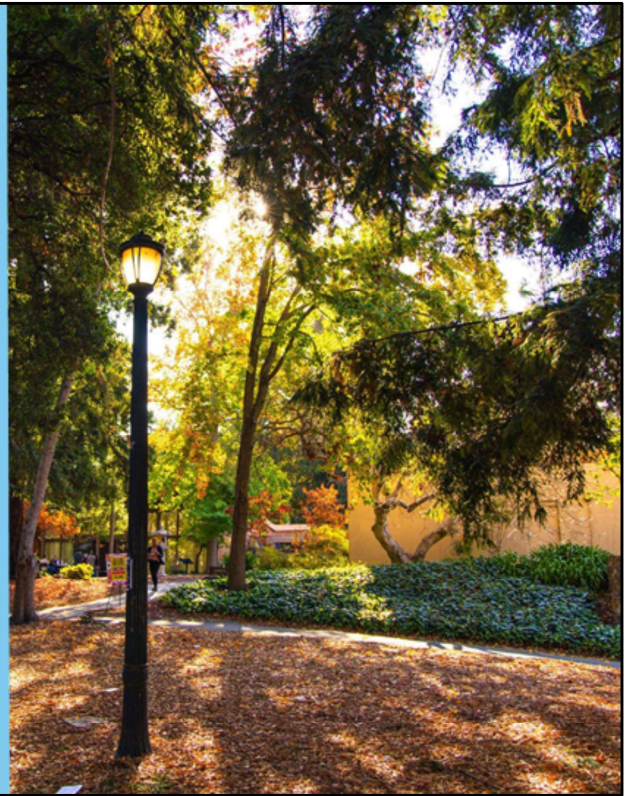
September 2025

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
**COUNSELOR**  
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## Agenda

- Introductions
- Definition of a first-year student
- A-G requirements
- UC GPA
- Comprehensive Review
- UC application timeline
- Resources

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## Defining “first-year”

### Who IS a first-year applicant?

- A first-year applicant is a student who has graduated from (or is still in) high school and not enrolled in a regular (non-summer) term at any college or university following graduation.
- A student who attends a college or university the summer term immediately after high school graduation is a first-year applicant.
- A student who completes college/university courses while in high school (ex. dual enrollment or online college courses) is a first-year applicant.

### Who is NOT a first-year applicant?

- A student who graduates high school and enrolls in a regular term (fall or spring) in a college or university.



Let's start by defining what a first-year applicant means. A first-year applicant is a student who has graduated from (or is still in) high school and who has **not** enrolled in a regular non-summer term at any college or university following graduation.

Let's go over some examples:

1. A student who attends a college or university the summer term immediately after high school graduation? Do we think this is a first-year applicant? Yes!
2. A student who completes college or university courses while in high school such as a dual enrollment student? First-year applicant? Yes!
3. Lastly, a student who graduates high school and enrolls in a college or university during the fall term? No, this student would be considered a transfer student.

Note: The UC definition of a transfer student is a student who has enrolled in college or university coursework in a regular session (fall, winter or spring) after high school graduation. However, the campuses have made an exception to this definition for high school students who graduate mid-year. These students **are** permitted to enroll in college coursework in the spring term and retain their first-year application status. This exception only applies to students who intend to enroll at UC the following fall. They won't be held to transfer admission requirements.

## General admission requirements

### **Complete 15 A-G courses**

- 11 of them by the end of junior year

### **Earn a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or better**

- No grade lower than a C
- 3.4 GPA for nonresidents



General admissions requirements for UC as follows:

1. Complete 15 A-G courses (11 of them by end of junior year)
2. Earn a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or better (3.4 if you're a nonresident) in these courses with no grade lower than a C.

## A-G requirements



## A - History/Social Science

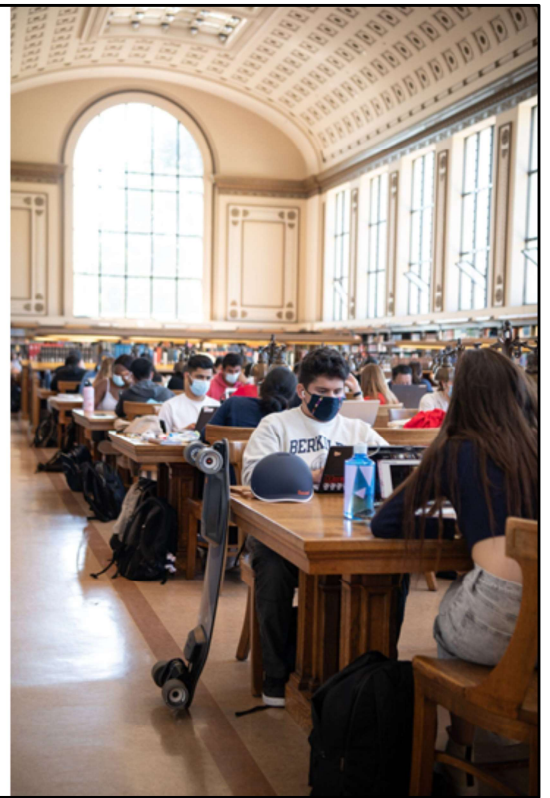
**Requirement:** 2 years

**What it includes:**

- One year of **world history**, cultures, or historical geography
- One year of **U.S. history** or one semester of U.S. history and one semester of American government or civics



Refer to QRG on  
page 11



Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

## **B - English**

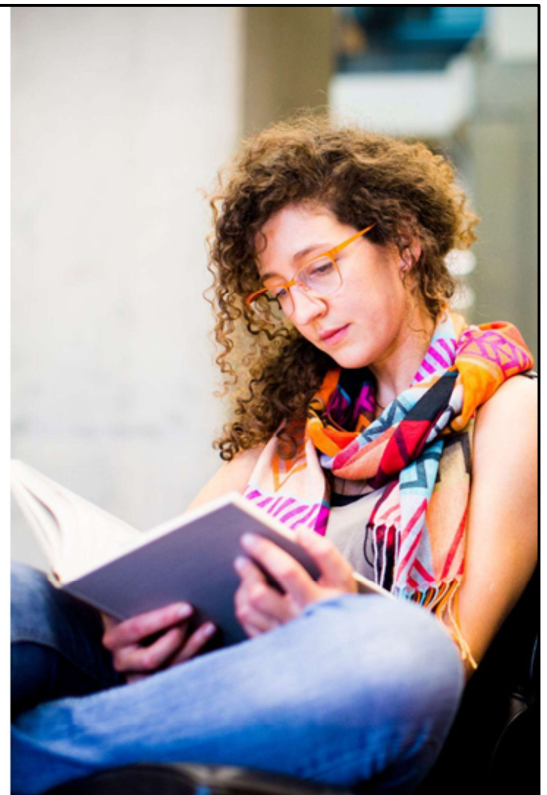
**Requirement:** 4 years

**What it includes:**

- College-preparatory composition and literature courses in English
- Courses should emphasize **reading, writing, listening, and speaking** in English.



Refer to QRG on  
page 11



Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

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**For the B area,** courses should emphasize **reading, writing, listening, and speaking** in English. Students must complete **four years of college-preparatory English**, integrating reading of classic and modern literature, writing of structured and reflective compositions, and practice in listening and speaking.

### **ESL/ELD Courses and A-G Eligibility:**

**Note:** ESL/ELD (English Language Development) courses may be used to satisfy the Area B requirement **only if** they are equivalent in content, rigor, and expectations to college-preparatory English courses for native speakers and have been **approved as such in the A-G course list**. Basic or remedial ESL courses that focus primarily on language acquisition **do not** meet Area B requirements.

- Only one year of an approved ESL/ELD course can be used to meet the four-year requirement.

## C - Mathematics

**Requirement:** 3 years required, 4 years recommended

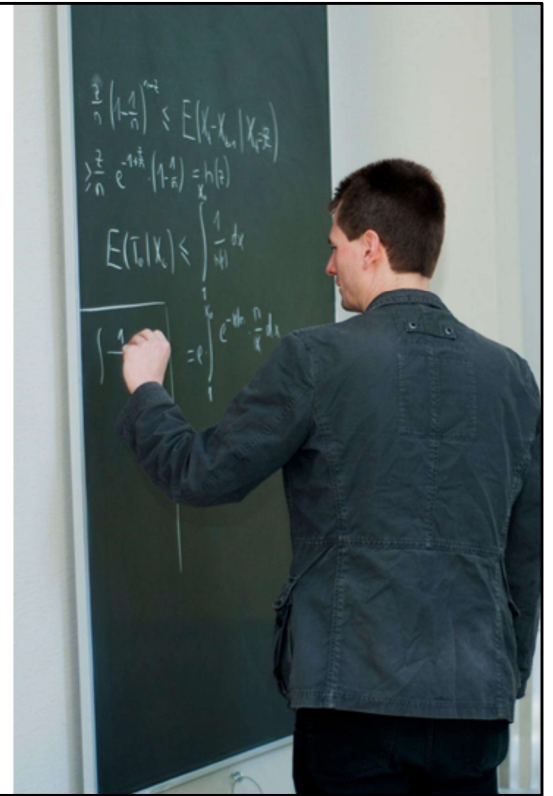
**What it includes:**

- Must cover topics in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry
  - Algebra I-Geometry-Algebra II OR
  - Math 1-Math 2-Math 3

*\*7th and 8th math coursework is accepted*



Refer to QRG on  
page 12



Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

**Note:**

- Geometry is a required course if a student is on a single-subject math curriculum
- 7th and 8th grade coursework is acceptable

## D - Science

**Requirement:** 2 years required, 3 years recommended

**What it includes:**

- Must include two of the three foundational subjects: **Biology**, **Chemistry**, and **Physics**



Refer to QRG on  
page 12



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## **E- Language Other than English (LOTE)**

**Requirement:** 2 years (4 semesters) of the same language required, *3 years recommended*

### **What it includes:**

- Emphasis on speaking, understanding, reading, and writing

**Students are expected to reach the second level of instruction.**

***\*7th and 8th LOTE coursework is accepted***



Refer to QRG on  
page 13



Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

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## **F - Visual and Performing Arts**

**Requirement:** 1 year (2 semesters in the same discipline)

**What it includes:**

- Must be a year-long course (or two semesters) in dance, music, theater, or visual arts
- Courses may be repeated as necessary for credit



Refer to QRG on  
page 13



Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

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## **G - College-preparatory elective**

**Requirement:** 1 year (2 semesters)

**What it includes:**

- Additional course from any A-F category or other approved college-preparatory electives



Refer to QRG on  
page 14



Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

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**Example Courses:**

- Psychology
- Sociology
- Economics
- Computer Science
- AP Human Geography
- Speech/Debate
- Additional year of science, math, or a foreign language, etc.

## UC A-G course list

The screenshot shows the UC A-G Course List website. At the top, the title "UC A-G course list" is displayed. Below it, the main header area is split into two sections. The left section, titled "A-G COURSE LIST", features logos for the University of California and CSU The California State University, with the text "Brought to you by". The right section, titled "What can we help you find?", includes radio buttons for "Institutions" (selected) and "Courses", a search bar labeled "School Name or College Board Code" with a magnifying glass icon, and a "Filters" button with a right arrow. Below the header, a navigation bar shows "Biology Honors" with a gold star icon, "Biology / Life Sciences", and "Classroom-based" with a building icon. Three blue callout boxes are overlaid on the page: "A gold star indicates the course is UC Honors approved" (pointing to the star), "Course discipline" (pointing to the "Biology / Life Sciences" link), and "Learning environment the course is offered in." (pointing to the "Classroom-based" link). A QR code is located in the bottom right corner. In the bottom left corner, the "UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COUNSELOR CONFERENCE" logo is visible.

A-G Course List allows you and your students to find UC A-G approved coursework at any CA high school for every school year they are enrolled.

Course discipline section includes helpful things like LOTE level, disciplines such as biological sciences for science coursework

View CA high school course lists at <https://hs-articulation.ucop.edu/agcourselist> or follow QR code

## Guidelines for middle school coursework used to satisfy A-G requirements

1. Only **math** and **LOTE** coursework can be met with 7th and 8th grade coursework
2. No coursework prior to 7th grade is accepted (regardless of the level)
3. These courses are expected to be high-school level, but we don't require them to be included on the high school transcript



Refer to QRG on  
page 17

Math and language other than English courses taken in 7th and 8th grade can fulfill part or all of the Area C (Math) and E (LOTE) subject requirements. No other subject area can be met with coursework completed while in middle school.

- *Exception: High school courses completed in the summer before ninth grade may meet A-G requirements, provided the courses are reported on the high school transcript with credits and letter grades. These courses should be reported in the ninth-grade academic year in the UC application.*

Coursework completed prior to 7<sup>th</sup> grade cannot be used to satisfy Area C or E, regardless of the course or level.


# Additional ways to meet A-G

## **AP or IB Examinations**

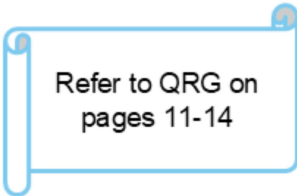
- 3, 4 or 5 on select AP exams
- 5, 6, or 7 on select IB HL exams

## **College coursework**

- C or better in a UC-transferable course of 3 or more semester units



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Refer to QRG on  
pages 11-14

- 3, 4 or 5 on select AP exams
- 5, 6, or 7 on select IB HL exams

- C or better in a UC-transferable course of 3 or more semester units

Refer to QRG on  
pages 11-14



[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

## Repeat A-G courses

### When can courses be repeated?

- Students can repeat each A-G course in which a D or F grade was earned as many times as needed until a passing grade is earned.
- The passing grade will replace the original grade in the GPA if the repeat is completed by the summer following 11th grade. Grades are not averaged.
- Non-honors courses cannot be used to repeat UC-approved honors, AP, or IB courses.
- College-level courses that are UC transferable can be used to repeat UC-approved honors, AP and IB courses.



### Repeating Courses to Meet A–G Requirements

To fulfill the A–G requirements, students must complete all required courses with a grade of C or better. If a student earns a D or F, they may repeat the course as many times as needed, provided the curriculum remains the same.

When a course is repeated in 10th or 11th grade, the new grade will replace the original grade in the UC GPA calculation. However, students are still required to report both the original and the repeated course on the UC application.

A few important reminders:

- +/- grades are not considered for high school coursework. A C- is viewed as a C which is a passing grade.
- A non-honors course cannot be used to replace an honors course grade.
- College-level courses (including UC-transferable courses) may be used to repeat UC-approved honors, AP, or IB courses.

## Validation

### What is validation?

- Students successfully completes advance work in a sequential area of knowledge, demonstrating competency of lower-level coursework. **Math** (Area C) and **LOTE** (Area E) are the only areas where validation is allowed.

### Two types of validation:

- Validation of a **subject** omission validates a lower-level course even if the lower-level course was not completed.
- Validation of a **deficient** grade: validation of a D or F grade in a lower-level course after completion of a higher-level course with a C grade or better.



Refer to QRG on  
pages 20-23

Please note, we are *not* going into a lot of depth on validation today. Please review the recording of the Admission 201 session for more in-depth information on this topic, as well as the Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions.

Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

## Honors-level high school courses

To encourage students to undertake more challenging work at the advanced secondary level, UC has assigned extra weight to grades received in honors-level high school courses.

### **The following are designated Honors courses:**

- AP (Advanced Placement)
- IB (International Baccalaureate)
- Transferable college courses
- UC-approved Honors courses (California only)



Refer to QRG on  
page 17

### **Honors-Level Coursework and UC GPA**

Designated AP, IB, and transferable college courses are considered honors-level and are eligible for weighted GPA credit in the UC admissions process. Additionally, school-created honors courses may also be considered honors-level if they are comparable in workload and rigor to AP, IB, or introductory college-level courses in the same subject and **approved on a CA high school's A-G course list**.

For non-California high schools: UC only applies GPA weighting to AP, IB, and UC-transferable college courses. In general, school-designated honors courses are not granted weighted GPA credit by UC, even if they are labeled as honors by the high school.

Note: A maximum of 8 semesters of extra honors point can be added to the UC GPA calculation, with no more than 4 semester points for 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

UC GPA



## UC GPA requirement

### UC GPA minimum requirement

- California residents: **3.0**
- Nonresidents: **3.4**

**Students should aim to exceed this minimum requirement to be a competitive applicant.**



The minimum UC GPA is a **weighted and capped GPA**:

- Up to 8 semesters of extra points are added for passed AP, IB, college-level or UC-approved honors courses, with no more than 4 points for 10<sup>th</sup> grade coursework

Campuses may choose to use a **weighted and uncapped GPA** and/or **unweighted GPA** for selection purposes.

## Calculating the UC GPA

### 1. Convert grades to grade points

**A= 4 points | B= 3 points | C= 2 points | D= 1 point | F= 0 points**

- +/- are not used in high school coursework but they are used in college courses if the university awards them.
- Give an extra point for each semester of UC-approved honors, AP, IB or CL course. Maximum of 8 semester points, between 10th and 11th grades only.

### 2. Add up all the points

### 3. Divide total points by the number of letter grades counted



Refer to QRG on  
pages 19-20

Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions:

[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

# Comprehensive review



## What is comprehensive review...Context is key

### Academics

- GPA
- Rigor of curriculum (including senior year)
- ELC status
- AP/IB exam credit

### Activities & accomplishments

- Awards & honors
- Leadership ability
- Intellectual curiosity
- Consistent and sustained involvement in EC & community service
- Special program participation (EOP, MESA, Upward Bound, etc.)

### Context

- Consideration of family income, education level, and socio-economic
- School environment, including availability of academic opportunities and resources

<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/applying-as-a-first-year/how-applications-are-reviewed.html>

The UC undergraduate admission process does not discriminate against, or provide preferential treatment to, any individual on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin, consistent with federal and state law.

## Academic factors

- Grade-point average (GPA)
- Courses completed/planned beyond minimum A-G requirements
- Approved honors, AP, IB, university courses
- Eligibility in the local context (ELC)
- Quality of senior-year program of study
- Academic opportunities in secondary schools
- Outstanding performance in academic subject areas

**No SAT/ACT  
considered!**



### **How are SAT and ACT scores used in admissions?**

SAT and ACT scores are not considered when making admission decisions or award scholarships. Scores may be used as an alternative method of fulfilling minimum requirements or for course placement after enrollment. SAT and/or ACT scores can only be added in the UC application *after* it has been submitted.

## Non-academic factors

- Achievements in special projects
- Special talents, achievements, and awards
- Participation in educational preparation programs
- Academic accomplishment within life experiences
- Geographic location

### Related sections in the UC application....

- About you
- Activities & awards
- Personal Insight Questions
- Additional comments








Now that we went over the Comprehensive Review factors, let's talk about the different sections of the UC application students can showcase some of the non-academic factors.

- **About You** - This section covers important information about the student. Students have the option to include information such as first-gen or dependent of a U.S. military veteran
- **Activities & Awards** - This section students can include activities or awards that they have achieved at their school, in their community
- **Personal Insight Questions** - This section allows students to share their story in their own words
- **Additional Comments** - Another section on the UC application where students can share any other information they wish for us to know.

To learn more on how to leverage non-academic factors of the application, please attend our other application sessions.

**Note:** Again, The UC undergraduate admission process does not discriminate against, or provide preferential treatment to, any individual on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin, consistent with federal and state law. We wish to remind everyone that each PIQ answer will continue to be reviewed in the same manner as before. Students should continue to share their experiences, set context to their accomplishments and provide insight into their individual circumstances. Writing in their own voice about their own personal experience continues to be encouraged in the PIQs.

## Consistent for all UC campuses

-  Applications are given multiple reads and are not read by committee.
-  Every applicant will receive an individualized review of their application.
-  Readers are thoroughly trained.
-  Selection of students will vary from campus to campus.
-  Each campus uses comprehensive review differently.



While the Comprehensive Review points are the same for the whole system, the review process varies slightly from campus to campus. However, at each campus, these factors remain the same:

- Each submitted application is not read by a committee, but rather given multiple reads
- Every application will have an individual review of their application - meaning that we are not comparing students and applicants are read in the context of their environment
- The readers are thoroughly trained by each respective UC campus
- As we talked about previously, selection of students will vary from campus to campus due to things such as enrollment goals and campus size
- All campuses utilize the 13 different Comprehensive Review factors, however they use them differently - Some campuses use holistic review approaches where no factor is weighed more than others, while other campuses may weight certain factors. It is important to check with each respective campus if you are interested to learn more.

## ELC & Statewide guarantee

### Statewide guarantee

- Recognizes top 9% of **California high school graduates**
- Determined by the total number of A-G courses completed in high school and the calculated UC GPA

### Local guarantee (ELC)

- Recognizes top 9% of high school graduates from **participating high schools**
- ELC-eligible students are those that have earned a calculated GPA that exceeds the school's benchmark GPA

- Both programs provide guaranteed admission to the UC *system*
- Eligibility is determined automatically upon application to UC



UC is committed to ensuring enrollment opportunities for all qualified California high school graduates.

The Statewide Index will continue to identify California-resident students in the top 9 percent of California high school graduates and offer these students a guaranteed space at a UC campus, if space is available. This means that if a student who falls within the top 9% statewide applies to one or more UC campuses and is not admitted to any, they will be offered a spot at another campus if and where there is space available. This does **not** guarantee an applicant admission to a campus of their choosing.

More information on the Statewide Guarantee, including what information is factored into the formula can be found at <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/first-year-requirements/california-residents/statewide-guarantee/>

Another program for qualified California residents is ELC, or Eligibility in the Local Context. Similar to the statewide guarantee, ELC offers students who are in the top 9% of their *high school class* an opportunity to attend UC. Admission will be offered to a campus where and when there is space in the case that an ELC-designated applicant is denied from all UC campuses to which they apply.

### ELC Eligibility for Students:

- The ELC program ensures that academically talented and deserving California resident students from all over the state have the opportunity to join us at UC.
- ELC status adds value to the application and is one of the factors considered when applications are reviewed, but it is not the only factor.
- ELC students not admitted to any of their campus choices are offered a spot at a UC campus that has space, if the minimum requirements are met.

- As an applicant from California, your application will be automatically screened for ELC eligibility when you apply. There's no extra paperwork.
- After submitting your application, you can return to the My UC Application page to see whether or not you have been designated as being in the top 9 percent of your class.

### **How to qualify for ELC?**

- California resident whose high school participates in our ELC program.
- Applicants must have a 3.0 GPA or better in a specific set of UC-approved coursework completed in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Applicants enter coursework and grades in the UC application and the application will compare their GPA to the historic top GPA for their school. If the applicant meets or exceeds that GPA, they will be designated ELC and we will add a note to their application.
- Applications are automatically screened for ELC eligibility when submitted.
- After application submission, applicants can return to their My UC Application to see whether they have been designated as being in the top 9 percent of their class.

How does UC calculate a school's historic or benchmark GPA?

- UC uses transcripts that your school has submitted for the top 15 percent of your high school's junior class, after final junior year grades are entered.
- Based on transcripts from the previous two years, UC establishes a benchmark, GPA representing the expected GPA for the top 9 percent of the students from your school.
- Schools are periodically asked to submit transcripts so that we can monitor and adjust benchmark GPAs.

More on ELC: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/first-year-requirements/california-residents/local-guarantee-elc.html>

### **ELC Program Eligibility for Schools:**

- Most California public high schools and many private schools participate in the ELC program.
- To participate, a school must be located in California, have a College Board school code, and have a full list of UC-approved courses for the most recent academic year.
- Eligible schools participating in the ELC program are asked by UC to provide student contact information and are responsible for obtaining parental authorization.
- For information about joining the program, email [elc@ucop.edu](mailto:elc@ucop.edu). New participation requests and transcripts must be received no later than June 30 for the fall admission application cycle (first-year enrollment for the following year's fall term).



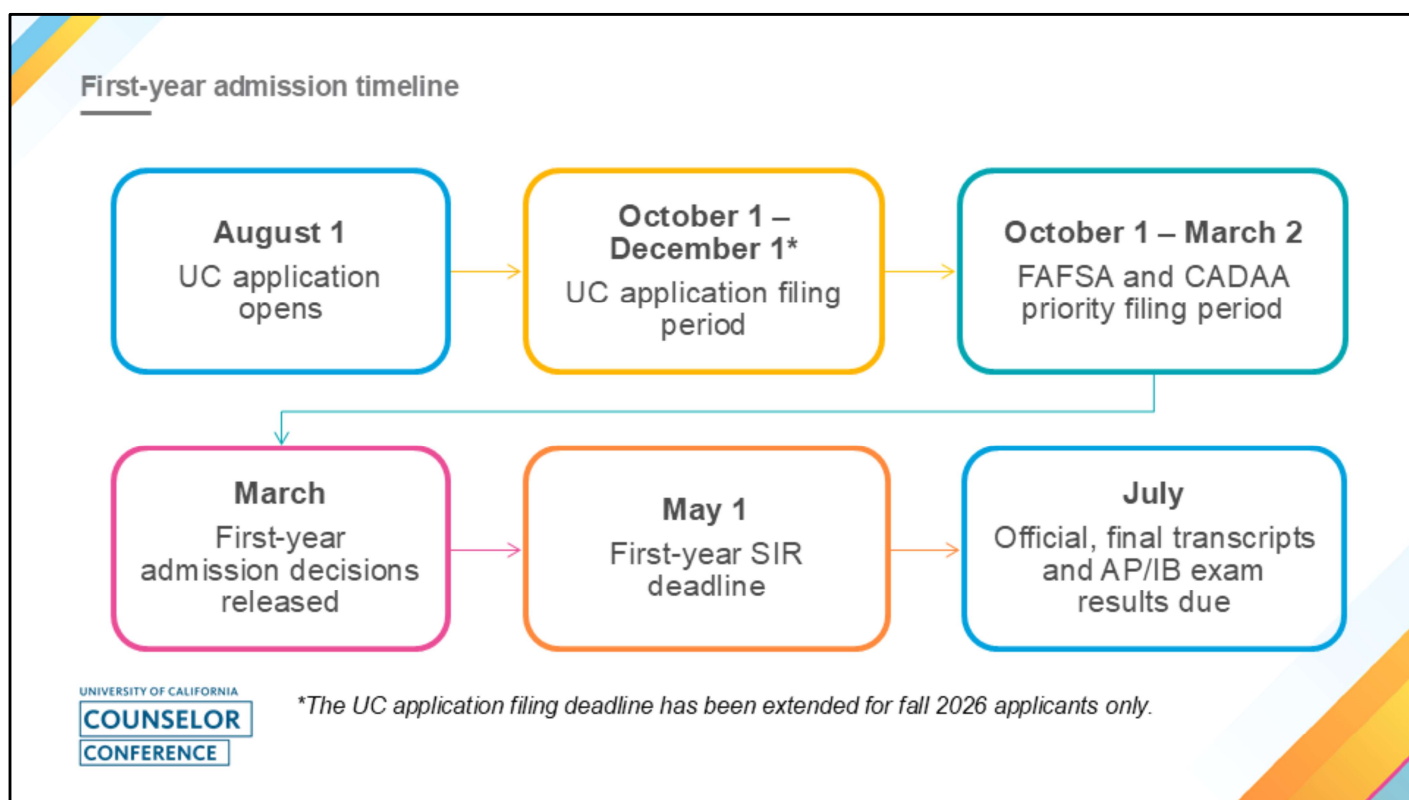
## First-year admissions timeline

## UC application

### **One application. Nine UC campuses**

- Apply to multiple UC campuses
- \$80 application fee per campus (\$95 for international applicants)
- Application fee waiver for up to 4 campuses available
- No letters of recommendation
- No interviews
- No transcripts submissions when applying, submit transcripts after admitted





The UC application and admission process is a year-long cycle.

**August 1:** The UC application opens. Students can begin to craft each part of their application. Remember, since UC does not use letters of recommendation, interviews, or portfolios unless required for admission to a specific major, the UC application is the only way for students to present and advocate for themselves. Some campus majors do require supplemental materials, such as Nursing, or some fine arts majors. Students should speak with the campuses they're interested in for information on applications for those majors. The UC application will also indicate whether a supplemental application or materials are required.

**October 1 – December 1:** UC students can submit applications beginning October 1. **The deadline has been extended to December 1 for Fall 2026 applicants** given the timing of the Thanksgiving holiday. The typical deadline is November 30. Applicants are not considered on a first-come, first-serve basis, so applicants should take their time in filling out the application thoroughly before submitting.

Important: Once submitted, applicants can update very little in the UC application. Students should ensure their UC application is accurate and complete before submission.

**October 1 – March 2:** All students should submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or a California Dream Act Application (CADAA). The majority of students at UC receive financial aid and scholarships. We'll cover that in more detail later in this presentation. Campuses use information from the FAFSA and CADAA for both admission and scholarships. The FAFSA for the fall 2026 admission cycle is anticipated to become available on October 1.

**March:** First-year admission decisions are released throughout the month of March. Campuses do not all release decisions on the same day, but will have all first-year decisions released by March 31.

**May 1:** This is the deadline for students to submit the Statement of Intent to Register (SIR). Students must submit the SIR by that date in order to ensure a place on campus in the fall. Students may only SIR to one UC campus.

**July:** Campuses use self-reported information to admit students, so UC does not require (nor want) students to submit any transcripts when they apply for admission. Instead, UC will ask for official transcripts only from admitted students who have submitted their SIR by May 1. Official transcripts for all institutions attended are due July 1, with AP/IB exam results due by July 15.

A photograph of a group of students walking up a wide set of brick stairs outdoors. In the foreground, a young man with sunglasses and a black jacket is walking down the stairs. To his right, a young man with a blue backpack is walking up. In the background, several other students are visible, some walking up and some down the stairs. The scene is bright and sunny.

## Resources

## Counselor resources

### UC Counselors website



### 2025 Quick Reference Guide



### A-G course lists



- UC Counselors website: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/>
- 2025 Quick Reference Guide: [https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)
- A-G course list: <https://hs-articulation.ucop.edu/agcourselist>

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# Thank you

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