
UC application 101

Setting the context for first-year applicants

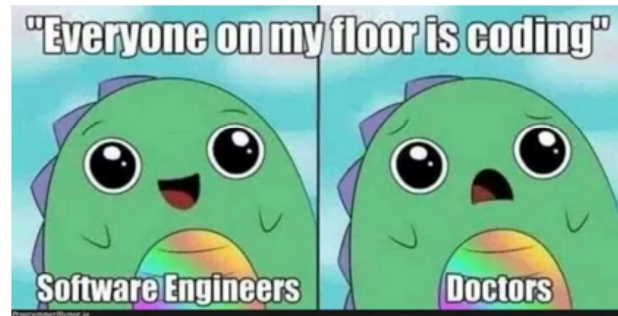
September 2024



Setting the context for first-year applicants

OVERVIEW

- Defining context
- Comprehensive review
- UC application and context
- Case study summary
- Why context matters



SESSION GOALS

- Share how students may 1) provide clear context for the application reader; 2) highlight their accomplishments in light of their experiences and 3) explain what opportunities were (or were not) available to them

This presentation will not focus on a step-by-step tutorial on navigating each section of the UC application. Instead, it will highlight and analyze the seven sections of the UC application using a contextual-lens that will hopefully add some insight into what factors may or may not be considered in the UC application review process; share how first-year applicants can share their academic and personal context in the UC Application; provide helpful tips on how students can provide explicit contextual information for the application reader, highlight in the UC Application their accomplishments and; explain what opportunities were (or were not) available to them.

Supplemental Resource: [F25 Presenting Yourself on the UC Application \(First-year\)](#) - Provides more in depth information about the UC application sections.

How would you define 'context'?

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Defining context and the UC application

CONTEXT IS THE...

- Environment
- Background
- Circumstances
- Conditions
- Connection
- Viewpoint
- Relevancy

CONTEXTUALIZATION

When something is contextualized, it is placed in an **appropriate setting** and given **proper consideration**.

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“Are you busy on friday?”

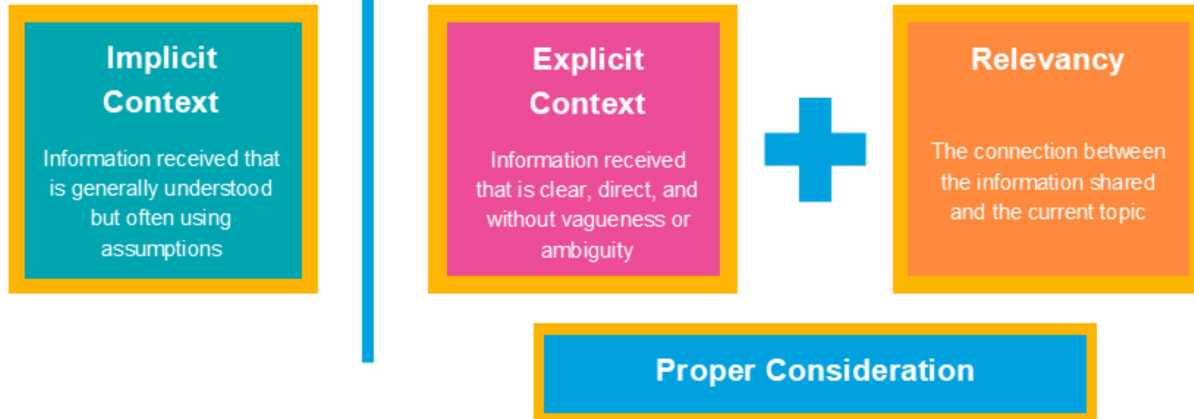
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[Merriam-Webster defines context](#) as: “the 1) parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light on its meaning; and 2) the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs”

Fun Fact: “In its earliest uses (documented in the 15th century), context meant “the weaving together of words in language.” In Latin, contexere “to weave or join together.” (Merriam-Webster) Context now most commonly refers to the environment or setting in which something (whether words or events) exists. Something is contextualized, when it is placed in an appropriate setting, one in which it may be properly considered.” (Merriam-Webster)

Implicit versus explicit context



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Implicit context is often information that is generally understood but often understood using implications or assumptions. Application readers are trained not to assume a student's background, environment, or the context of their circumstances, advantages or disadvantages.

Explicit context describes something that is very clear, direct, and without vagueness or ambiguity. The applicant should provide explicit context (clear, direct, and relevant information) and relevant examples of their environment, background, circumstances, conditions, connection, the viewpoint to help readers give proper consideration when reviewing their UC application.

Comprehensive review

1. GPA in A-G courses
2. Number, content, and performance of A-G courses beyond the minimum
3. Number and performance in UC-approved honors and AP courses
4. Eligibility in the local context (ELC)
5. Quality of senior year
6. Quality of academic performance relative to educational opportunities available
7. Outstanding performance in 1 or more subject areas
8. Outstanding work in special projects
9. Recent improvement in academic performance
10. Special talents, achievements, awards or special skills, experiences that demonstrate promise for leadership, significant experiences that demonstrate student's promise to contribute to the intellectual vitality of a campus
11. Completion of special projects, events, or programs
12. Academic accomplishments in light of experiences and special circumstances, including but not limited to disabilities, low family income, first generation, need to work, disadvantaged environment, difficult family or personal situations, refugee or veteran status
13. Location of secondary school and residence



Comprehensive review is the evaluation factors that UC campus may utilize in the application review process - [13 holistic review factors](#). The evaluation process and specific weight (if any) given to each factor can differ from campus to campus and year to year.

Context is key and is a cornerstone of UC's comprehensive review process. Every student is considered in the context of their own environment which includes but is not limited to, school, family, and geographic region. For the application reader to have a better understanding of the applicant, students should provide context when discussing their roles, responsibilities, and educational journey. The 13 comprehensive review factors are all relative to what opportunities were (or were not) available to the applicant and the applicant should provide us with that context to help us better understand those opportunities or potential barriers that hindered those academic or nonacademic opportunities.

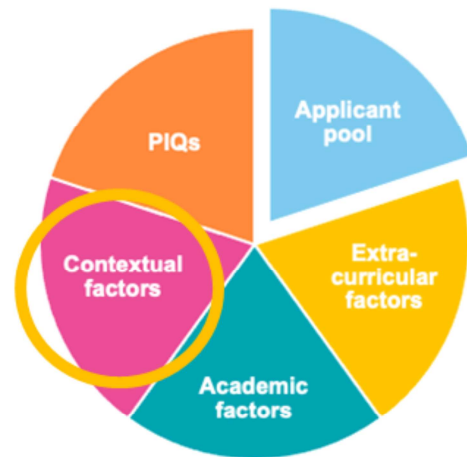
Why does context matter?

UC APPLICATION SECTIONS

- About you
- Campuses & majors
- Academic history
- Test scores
- Activities & awards
- Scholarships & support programs
- Personal insight

WHY DOES CONTEXT MATTER?

Context provides background information that helps to provide a full picture of circumstances.



There are seven sections in the UC Application: about you, campuses & majors, academic history, test scores, activities & awards, scholarships & support programs, and personal insight. As students work through each section, they have the opportunity to build upon their story or add potential value to their application using context. Context matters because the more information provided by the applicant, the more complete or comprehensive their story will be to the application reader.

We encourage students and hope that you also encourage them to share as much information about themselves as they feel comfortable with. The UC application review is an additive process meaning all of the information students share in the UC application will either be seen as neutral or positive. We do not penalize students for what they've shared, but information that they *do not* share or forget to share might be a missed opportunity in helping to inform the reader of the students' achievements, challenges, and overall circumstances.

About you

Setting the Scene



The 'About you' section includes: Personal information, Contact information, Citizenship & residency, Demographics, Background, Household, Parent information, and Statement of legal residence

The 'About you' section of the application helps to set the scene of the students' background and environment. Just like the preface of a book the About you section helps to set the tone or scene of the book. It might provide background information that will later inform the book reader of the main character's background and circumstances.

The section provides contextual clues or implicit context about students' environment and their background and throughout the additional sections of the application, students can further expand upon the information that they've shared in the about you section with explicit or detailed contextual information.

Residency for admission

Residency for admission purposes

- If the student has attended a California school for three or more years during grades K-12, they are a California resident for admission purposes
- California residency for admission purposes determines minimum eligibility requirements, fee waiver, and selection
 - Comprehensive review factor #13: *Location of secondary school and residence*



Citizenship & residency

Country of citizenship	United States
Social security no / ITIN	
Are you an enrolled member of an American Indian or Alaska Native tribe (U.S.)?	No
By the time you attend UC, will you have graduated from a California high school?	Yes
By the time you attend UC, will you have attended a California school for three or more years during grades K through 12?	Yes

There are two separate conversations when discussing residency. Residency for **admission** versus residency for **tuition**. Residency for admission is to determine UC admission minimum eligibility and selection and fee waiver eligibility.

[Residency for Admission](#): A student is considered a resident for admission purposes if he or she can answer yes to any of the following questions:

- Have you attended high school in California for at least three years during grades 9-12 and will graduate or have graduated from a California high school?
- Have you lived in California for the last 12 months?
- If you're under 18, does your parent or legal guardian live in California?
- Is your parent, legal guardian, spouse or registered domestic partner an employee of the University of California or a UC-affiliated national laboratory?

Note: Non-immigrants (students on a foreign/non-immigrant visa) are not eligible for California resident status for admission purposes.

Being classified as a California resident for admission purposes allows an applicant to be consider for admission using a lower minimum GPA than is applied to nonresidents.

Residency for tuition

Residency for tuition purposes

- Residency for tuition determines tuition, fees, and financial aid options (SLR questionnaire)
- Applicants must indicate if they would like to be evaluated for residency through the SLR
- Undocumented students who qualify for AB 540 receive a nonresident tuition exemption
- Residency status is typically determined by the Office of the Registrar
- Residency for tuition has no bearing on admission



Citizenship & residency

Country of citizenship United States

Statement of Legal Residence

Would you like to be evaluated for California residency for tuition purposes?

Have you been physically present in California for the last 3 years?

Have you and your parents established California as your permanent home for the past 366 days or more?

Special Circumstances, Nonresident Supplemental Tuition Exemptions, and Tuition Waivers

Residency status will determine a student's tuition and campus fees, and federal and state aid options. This determination is based on the applicants' responses to the Statement of Legal Residence questionnaire. In order to be evaluated for CA residency, the applicant must select 'Yes' to the first SLR prompt, indicating that they would like to be evaluated for CA residency for tuition purposes.

Undocumented students who qualify for AB 540 may be eligible for in state tuition. Undocumented applicants should select 'No Selection' as their Country of Citizenship and select YES to the SLR CA residency for tuition purposes evaluation prompt. Residency for fee purposes is typically determined by the Office of the Registrar on the campus where the student enrolls and not by the Admissions office and unlike residency for admission purposes, a student's residency classification for tuition purposes will have no bearing on their admission selection.

Learn more about the [California residency requirements for tuition](#).

Citizenship & residency

Special Circumstances

- Refugee citizenship status or tribal enrollment in a federally recognized American Indian or Alaska Native tribe may be considered
 - Comprehensive review factor #12: *Academic accomplishments in light of experiences and special circumstances*



Citizenship & residency

Country of citizenship Albania

Your citizenship status Refugee

By the time you attend UC, will you have graduated from a California high school? Yes

By the time you attend UC, will you have attended a California school for three or more years during grades K through 12? Yes

Citizenship & residency

Country of citizenship United States

Are you an enrolled member of an American Indian or Alaska Native tribe (U.S.)? Yes

Tribal Membership Federally recognized tribe

During the comprehensive review of students' application, campuses may give consideration to refugee students or students that are part of a federally recognized [American Indian or Alaska Native tribe](#). This is part of the comprehensive review factor #12 that takes into consideration students' special circumstances that include (but not limited to) disabilities, low family income, first generation, need to work, disadvantaged environment, difficult family or personal situations, refugee or veteran status.


Demographics

Demographics

- Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender questions are asked but not used in admissions decisions (CA Proposition 209)

Your background

- English as a primary or secondary language
- Foster care or ward of the court
- U.S. Veteran or service member



What language did you learn to speak first?*

Language *

-- select --

Please tell us more about yourself

Check all that apply to you: *

- I am married or in a civil union/registered domestic partnership ⓘ
- I have children
- I've been in foster care or am a ward of the court in the United States
- When I attend UC, I will be a current or former member of the U.S. military
- None of the above apply to me

Are you a dependent of a U.S. military veteran or service member? ⓘ

No Yes

▼ About you

Personal information

Contact information

Citizenship & residency

Demographics

Your background

The 'About you' section of the application will ask about the students demographics. While questions about race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender are asked in the UC application, they are not used for admission consideration but for statistical reporting purposes. As a California public government institution we are required to report this data to the state. Since 1996, when Prop 209 passed, California state entities have been since banned from using race, ethnicity, or sex as factors in our admission processes.

In the 'Your background' subsection, we will ask students to provide information regarding their background such as their linguistic background or if they are or have been in foster care or a ward of the state and/or if they are a current or former member of the military (which won't be the case for the majority of the first-year applicants). All of these special circumstances go back to comprehensive review #12 that takes into consideration disadvantaged environments and difficulty personal and family circumstances.

This section will add contextual clues for the application reader regarding an applicant's background and will later provide additional context surrounding the students academic accomplishments in light of their experiences and circumstances. The student may also expand or provide that explicit context to share more detailed information about these circumstances through their PIQs, Activities & Awards, and additional comments sections.

Household and parent information

Household

- This section adds context to the applicants' current living situation
- Parents or guardians income earned
 - Must be added for fee waiver consideration

Parent information

- Parent's employment status
- Parent or guardian education level
 - Parents or guardians education levels determine first-generation status (neither parent or guardian received a four-year degree.)



Your household

Who lives with you at your permanent home address?

What was the total income earned for year 2023 by the parents or legal guardians listed above?

How many people were supported by this income?

Parent information

Parent 1

What is this parent's relationship to you?

Is this parent living?

What is this parent's highest level of education?

What is this parent's current job status?

The 'Household' and 'Parent information' subsections will shed light on potential financial and familial support available at home for the student. The 'Household' subsection may help the application reader understand the applicants' current living situation and how many parents' or legal guardians reside at the house. This section will also ask about the total income earned by the household and how many people were supported by that income.

In order for CA resident and domestic applications to be considered for the UC application fee waiver, they must input their household income and household size (see Slide 16 - Campuses & majors for more information about application fee waivers).

The application will ask for parent or guardian information including their job status and education level. The education level of both parents or guardians will determine if the student is designated as a first-generation college student. The UC defines first generation as neither parents or guardians receiving a four-year degree.

Case study

Student “A” identifies as Latinx/e and a U.S. citizen residing in San Bernardino, California. Their household income is \$30K with four individuals supported by this income. The first language they learned to speak was Spanish and both of their parents did not finish high school.



After reading the case study, think about what factors might a UC application reader consider when reviewing this student’s application.

Each UC campus may consider comprehensive review factor #12 (academic accomplishments in light of experiences and special circumstances, including but not limited to disabilities, low family income, first generation, need to work, disadvantaged environment, difficult family or personal situations, refugee or veteran status) and comprehensive review factor #13 (location of secondary school and residence)

UC campuses cannot consider and do not view race and/or ethnicity in the application review process.

Campuses and majors

Identifying the focus

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Campus & majors

Campus & major selection

- Major selection may provide context for students' academic interest
- Campuses are not ranked and preferences are not considered
- When available, alternate majors are recommended for students applying to selective majors

Fee waiver eligibility

- This section shows fee waiver eligibility





You've qualified for a UC application fee waiver!
You can apply to 4 campuses for free.

If you apply to more than 4 campuses, each additional campus will cost \$80, which you'll pay once you submit your application.

YOUR ESTIMATED COST: \$160

In this section, students will select the campuses and majors to apply for admission. Students do not rank campuses and preferences are not considered. Campus and major selection is a selection factor that frequently gets overlooked. The applicant pool for each major and the campuses enrollment targets will determine the selectivity of that campus and/or major.

Major selection may provide further context of students' academic interests and may build upon themes outlined in their academic history, activities, test exams, and PIQs. It is strongly recommended for applicants to select an alternate major if they are applying to a selective major as their primary or first choice major. It should be noted that UCLA does not allow for alternate majors in the fall 2025 application, so students will need to be mindful of the policies for alternate majors at each campus.

This section will show if a student is eligible for a fee waiver based on their responses in the "About You" household and parent information subsections. UC will waive application fees for up to four campuses for qualified students who would otherwise be unable to apply for admission. The fee waiver program is for United States citizens, permanent residents, and applicants eligible for AB540 benefits. Fee waivers can't be applied to more than four campuses, regardless of their source (e.g. UC, CollegeBoard/SAT). If applicants apply to more than four, they will need to pay \$80 for each additional choice.

Academic history

Building the framework



The 'Academic History' section is the student's opportunity to build the framework for their academic accomplishments.

Supplemental Resources:

- [F25 Presenting Yourself on the UC Application \(First-year\)](#) - Provides more in depth information about the UC application sections.
- UC Application 201: Leveling up the Academic History section - Advanced topics on the academic history section (e.g., LOTE validation rules, out-of-state coursework, mixed records, English proficiency and online courses).

Academic history

Schools attended

- Provides context to the educational opportunities
- Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) & Statewide Guarantee

Coursework

- Exposure to available course offerings
- Achievement in completed courses (UC GPA)
- Course types (AP, IB, honors, college level)
- Academic accomplishments within school offerings (ELC)
 - Comprehensive review factor #4*

v Academic history

Introduction ✓

7th & 8th grade ✓

High schools ✓

9th grade

10th grade

11th grade


12th grade ✓

Colleges attended in high school

College courses taken in high school

Additional information

Review



In the Academic History section, students will be required to input all schools they have attended. This will help provide context to what educational opportunities they had access to, in reference to a couple of the [comprehensive review factors](#) (e.g., #6 & #13). We will also see if the student’s school qualifies for [Eligibility in the Local Context](#), also known as ELC, and the Statewide Guarantee, which references another comprehensive review factor. The ELC program ensures that academically talented and deserving [California resident](#) students from all over the state have the opportunity to join us at a UC.

Students will also be self-reporting all their coursework, in which application readers will refer to UC comprehensive review factors #1-9, which are primarily the academic focused factors. This will include things such as the quality of the student’s coursework. Application readers will also be able to determine how much of the student’s weighted coursework is considered within the context of school offerings. It is very important for students to be taking advantage of the educational opportunities within their school and to also take advantage of challenging themselves academically. The main question application readers will be asking when reviewing this section is “Did the student take advantage of the academic opportunities that were available to them?”

Additional academic information

Additional information

- Opportunity to share contextual information related to a student's academic performance

Examples

- Personal, school, or environmental factors
- Breaks in attendance
- Changes in school/class curriculum
- Limitations to the number of available honors courses
- Non-traditional or other grading system

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▼ Academic history

Introduction	✓
7th & 8th grade	✓
High schools	✓
9th grade	
10th grade	
11th grade	
12th grade	✓
Colleges attended in high school	
College courses taken in high school	
Additional information	
Review	

There will also be an “Additional Information” subsection within their Academic History, where students will be able to share any contextual information related to their academic performance or educational/environmental advantages or disadvantages. Please keep in mind, there is a 550-character limit for those additional comments.

A few examples of things students can write about in the Additional Information section includes personal or environmental factor breaks in attendance, changes in their curriculum or context behind any additional curriculum, limits to the amount of honors or AP courses available, or even non-traditional grading systems. If you have any students that are non-resident or international, they can also input information about potentially not having access to honors-level courses at their school and/or the language of instruction at their school.

Test scores

Taking advantage of additional factors




Test scores

UC is test-free

- UC does not consider SAT or ACT for admission or scholarships but can be used for ELP and placement purposes

Reporting exam scores

- Reporting non-passing scores is OK
- UC does not share test scores
- Exam scores can be updated after submission



AP exams

IB exams

English language proficiency test

International exams

Application status

Submitted application

Fall quarter/semester 2025

Update ACT & SAT tests

Update SAT subject tests

Update English language proficiency test

Update IB exams

Update AP exams

Update international exams

Update release authorization

View how your application is reviewed

The UC System is test free when it comes to admission and scholarship allocations and will be test-free for the foreseeable future. If your students took the SAT or ACT, we will NOT review those test scores when reviewing applications. SAT and/or ACT can be used for English Language Proficiency or placement purposes, if applicable.

Students will also be self-reporting all of their test scores. Only students who need to demonstrate English language proficiency should report SAT or ACT scores here, if applicable. Please keep in mind that students who need to demonstrate English language proficiency MUST submit English proficiency exams by the end of December of their final year of high school/secondary school. Any students who wish to report standardized test scores for the purpose of meeting the Area B (English) subject requirement or for placement purposes after enrollment at UC will report those scores after applying. Please note that the UCs do NOT share test scores. Students will then submit all their official scores directly to the campus where they intend to enroll.

The UC application review is an additive process. So reporting a non-passing exam score is absolutely OKAY as it demonstrates taking advantage of educational opportunities. Any exam score can be updated or submitted post-application deadline.

Case study

Student “A” selected six UC campuses to apply to as a biology major and received an application fee waiver. They exceeded the A-G course requirements in multiple subject areas, successfully completed 11 semester honor-level courses including five dual enrollment courses. Their high school limited AP courses in junior year. They are ranked in the top 5% of their high school. They also passed three AP exams of the four taken.



There are several factors in which the student has set the scene contextually for their academics. UCs may consider comprehensive review factor #6 (quality of academic performance relative to educational opportunities available) and #4 (ELC).

Please note: This is not an evaluation of whether or not the student would ultimately be admitted to any particular campus, but rather how admissions readers might consider the context embedded in this academic information.

Activities & awards

Showcasing engagement

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Activities & awards

Quality over quantity

- 20 activity & award spaces and six categories
- Readers are looking for quality not quantity
- List is not ranked

Showcasing engagement

- Opportunity to describe roles, responsibilities, accomplishments, impact, persistence, dedication, and service
- Non-traditional involvement should be considered
- Important to include contextual details

✓ -- select --

Award or honor

Educational preparation program

Extracurricular activity

Other coursework

Volunteer / Community service

Work experience


Briefly describe the program. *

When did you participate in the program? *

How much time did you spend in the program? *

Hours spent per week:

Weeks spent per year:



All extracurriculars are valued equally, whether that be sports, clubs, volunteering work, part-time jobs, and any special talents. Students will have the opportunity to add up to 20 activities in 6 different categories. These activities and awards will be numbered but ranked in any way.

Application readers are looking for quality not quantity. It is important for students to be inputting experiences that demonstrate commitment, responsibility, leadership, and genuine interest. We want to see how engaged students are and their extent of social engagement, and the potential to make significant contributions to the University of California. These are the types of things students should be highlighting in their description for each activity or award they input.

Students should also provide examples of any non-traditional involvements or commitments, such as caring for siblings or elders, unpaid work experience, or translating for their families. They should detail how they have utilized their time, or if they perhaps did not have the opportunity to participate in school or community activities. Students should add in context and details in the descriptions. For example, if the student received a 5th place award out of 500 students, the reader will be able to see that for the specific award that the student was chosen out of 500 students. This add context that help provide a full picture of the student's achievements.

Scholarships & support programs

Supporting success

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Scholarships

UC scholarships

- 10 categories
- Criteria to award scholarships to students with specific backgrounds, academic interests, or career objectives
- There are no limits to criteria selected
- FAFSA or CADAA applications should be filed to be considered for aid
- This section will not impact admission or be considered in the application review



- > Academic major or interest
- > Affiliation with group, program or organization
- > Ancestry and descendants
- > Career plans
- > Ethnicity, national origin or religion
- > Extracurricular activities & work experience
- > Family circumstances and relationships
- > Health / disabilities
- > School or geographic affiliation
- > Transfer students

The Scholarships & support programs section will not impact admission decisions but is intended to support student success post-admission. In this section, scholarship categories will appear and your students should select all scholarship categories that apply to them. Categories will be based on specific backgrounds, academic interests, or career objectives. Again, there are no limits to the criteria that your students select. If your students want to be considered for financial aid, we encourage them to submit a [FAFSA](#) or [CADAA](#) application. Please keep in mind that only the scholarships that are available at the campuses your student selected will be displayed.

Support programs

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

- For first-generation students and/or from low-income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds
- Available to CA residents and American Indians from any state
- 240 character limit to describe EOP interest

UC Foster Youth Programs

- For current and former foster youth in the U.S. and/or students who have experienced homelessness or incarceration



[Educational Opportunity Program \(EOP\)](#)

Why are you interested in EOP? *

240 characters remaining

[UC Foster Youth Programs](#)

Students will have the opportunity to show interest in two UC support programs: the Education Opportunity Program and the UC Foster Youth Programs.

While the [Education Opportunity Program \(EOP\)](#) name may change from campus to campus, their support remains focused on the student. Overall, EOP provides student support through mentorship, academic programs, financial assistance, counseling, academic advising, and other campus support services to those who are first-generation college students, and/or from low-income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. EOP serves students from all ethnic backgrounds and is open only to California residents and to American Indians from any state. Students will only have 240 characters to describe their interest in the program

The [UC Foster Youth Programs](#) are for students who are current or former foster youth in the United States and/or students who have experienced homelessness or incarceration. The UCs are committed to helping students to successfully transition to university life and offer a variety of support through the Guardian Scholars, Renaissance Scholars, Hope Scholars, and other similar programs.

Personal insight questions (PIQs)

Providing the full picture

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Personal insight questions

Providing the full picture

- PIQs provide the opportunity for readers to get to know background, interests, achievements, and challenges
- This is where students can further expand and provide new information
- AI is a tool – it cannot showcase personality or students' unique voice

Additional comments

- Opportunity to address items not previously discussed in the application
- Not a place for a 5th PIQ



The [Personal Insight Questions](#) (PIQs) are the writing portion of the application, but they are not essays! They are not essays. Students will only be able to *answer* 4 out of the 8 total questions, and there will be a 350-word max limit on each response. All questions hold equal value so there is no preference in answering one over the other. The PIQs are important because they provide students the opportunity to further build upon their circumstances by responding to the questions that best reflect their most relevant experiences during high school. Therefore, we encourage students to think of their responses as formal interviews on paper. With that said, application readers are not looking for the most perfect writing style, we simply just want to learn more about the student.

When it comes to the writing process students will want to utilize things such as artificial intelligence (AI) or ChatGPT, we want to inform you all that those are tools that your student can use. However, we do not recommend students use them to write their entire PIQ responses. UCs will check for plagiarism and AI cannot showcase the unique circumstances of your student.

The additional comments section after the PIQs can be used to explain any unique contextual factors or circumstances that give the reader additional context about the student, their application, and their accomplishments. Examples could be changes in extracurriculars - such as if a sports program was cut, or changes in circumstances - such as changes in family and how that affected them. This is not a place for a 5th PIQ. Please remember, that UCs do not accept any additional material unless specifically requested (only in limited cases; major-specific) and we do not conduct interviews with applicants. This is a student's opportunity to share those important details that the admission reader may not otherwise be familiar with.

Case study

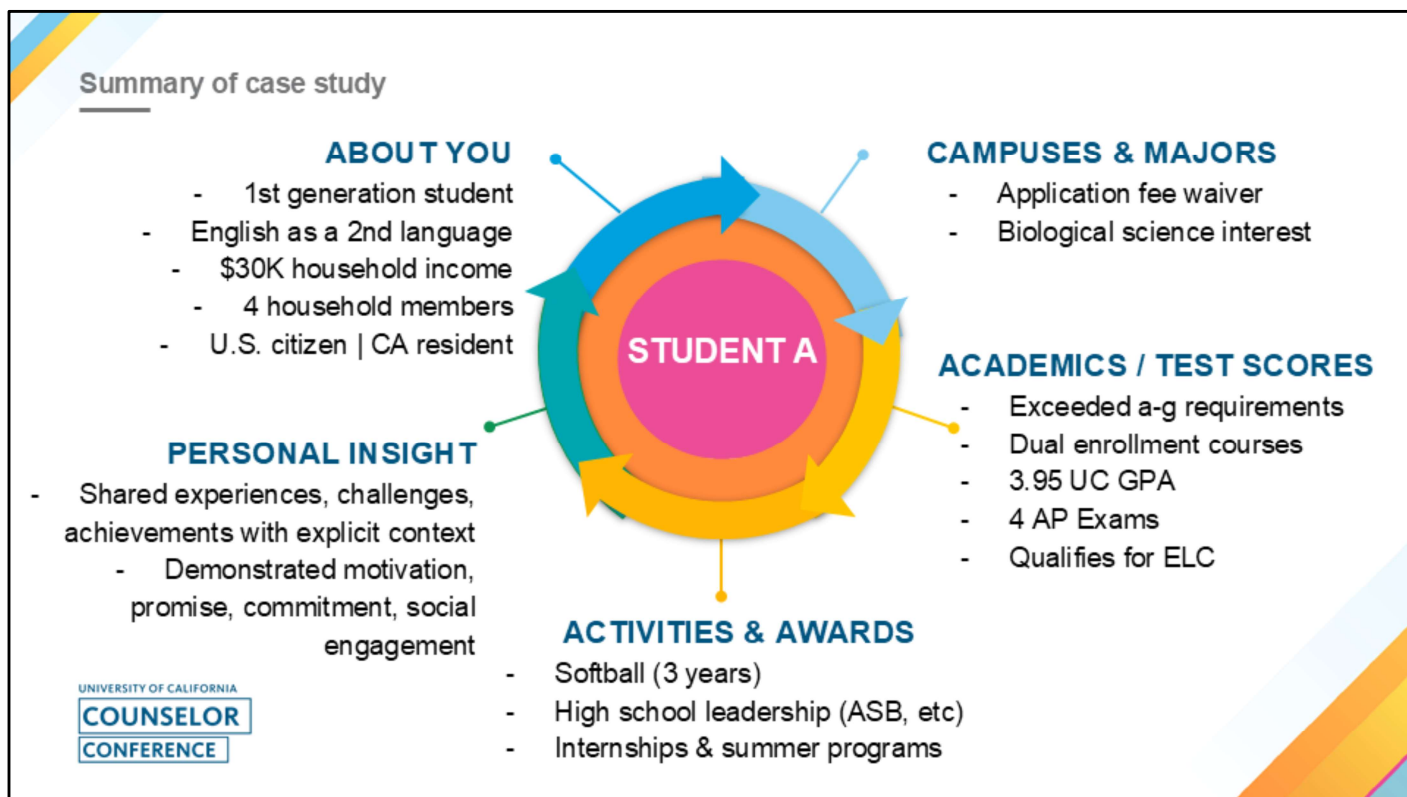
Student “A” pursued internships at their local hospital and participated in formal academic programs during multiple summers. They participated in softball for three years in high school and demonstrated significant leadership and service experience through the MESA College Prep Program, ASB leadership for two years, and founded the Latinx STEM Club. Student A shared multiple experiences that demonstrated perseverance and commitment.

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There are several factors in which the student has showcased commitment, progression, and leadership in their activities outside of the classroom. Student A showcases commitment and progression in several activities. They have completed internships and formal academic programs in multiple summers, and they have also been involved in softball for three years. They have also shown their leadership experience through their involvement in ASB, the MESA College Prep Program, and being the founder of the Latinx STEM Club. This student provided the reader with a more contextual and holistic understanding of their involvement.



CONTEXT MATTERS



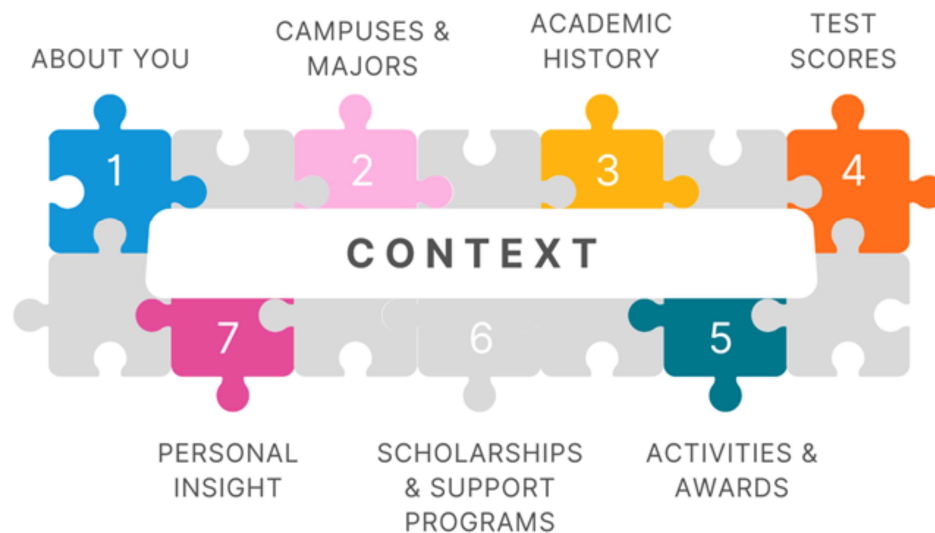
A summary of the case study findings of Student A:

- In the About You section of the UC application we learn that Student A is a 1st generation student who learned English as their 2nd language, are a part of a household that has an annual income of \$30k and they are a U.S. citizen residing in California. Some information shared in the about you section would be considered implicit context this would be information that the application reader receives but is potentially assumed such as having a \$30k annual income with four individuals supported by that income in California might imply that the student is facing some hardships, perhaps financially, personally or emotionally. Ultimately, the application reader can make assumptions about the students circumstances, but we won't know if the student is indeed experiencing those challenges. It is up to the student to provide that explicit context elsewhere in the application.
- In the campuses and majors section, student A qualifies for an application fee waiver which is an indicator that they are coming from a low-income household and may be experiencing difficult circumstances. The student also has applied to biological science as a major. Their academic interest may also be implied in the Academic History and Test Scores section of the application based on their course selection in high school and exams completed. If the student is strongly interested in their intended major, they may choose to provide that explicit context in the application through their PIQs or the 'Additional comments' section in the application.

- Student A exceeded their minimum a-g requirements, completed dual enrollment courses and AP exams with a qualifying score, and qualifies for [Eligibility in the Local Context](#) meaning they took advantage of the academic opportunities available to them at their high school. The student has also demonstrated commitment by engaging in a sport for 3 years in high school, leadership in their participation in the Associated Student Body, founding the Latinx STEM club, and being involved in internships, college readiness programs.
- In their Personal Insight questions, they expanded on the implicit context they shared in the about you, campuses & majors, academic history, test scores, and activities & awards sections of the application by providing specific details or explicit context about their challenges and achievements. Through their PIQs and throughout their application they have demonstrated motivation, promise, commitment, and social engagement which helps inform the reader of the ways in which Student A may positively contribute to a UC campus.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of whether or not the student would ultimately be admitted to any particular campus, but rather, how admissions readers might be considering the context shared in the student's application.

Setting context in the UC application



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Students should be thinking about each section of the application being a puzzle piece. Sections 1-6 and 7 are all connected together to hopefully help the application reader view the full picture and explicit context helps the application reader connect all of those puzzle pieces together. Each section of the UC application (excluding 'Scholarships & support programs') is utilized in the admission review process to better understand the student's experiences, interests, and accomplishments within the context of the opportunities available and challenges they may have experienced.

Resources

UC Counselor Resource Library

2024 Quick Reference Guide

Presenting yourself on the UC application: First-year applicants

Virtual UC High School Counselor Conference

First-year admission 101: Admission basics

First-year admission 201: A deep dive

UC application 201: Leveling up the Academic History section



Resources:

- [UC Resources Library](#)
- [Presenting yourself in the UC application: First-year applicants](#)
- [Quick Reference Guide to UC Admissions](#)

Questions?

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