
UC application 101

Setting the context for first-year applicants

September 2024

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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



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**.

“Are you busy on friday?”

me:

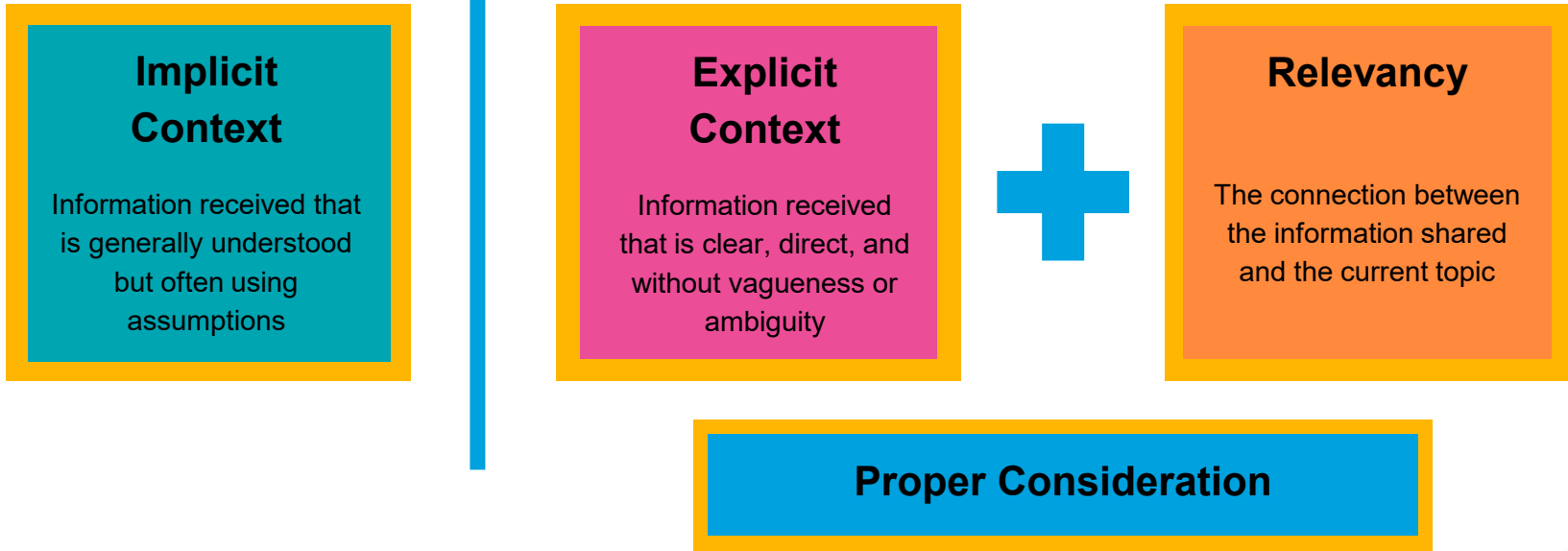


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Implicit versus explicit context



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

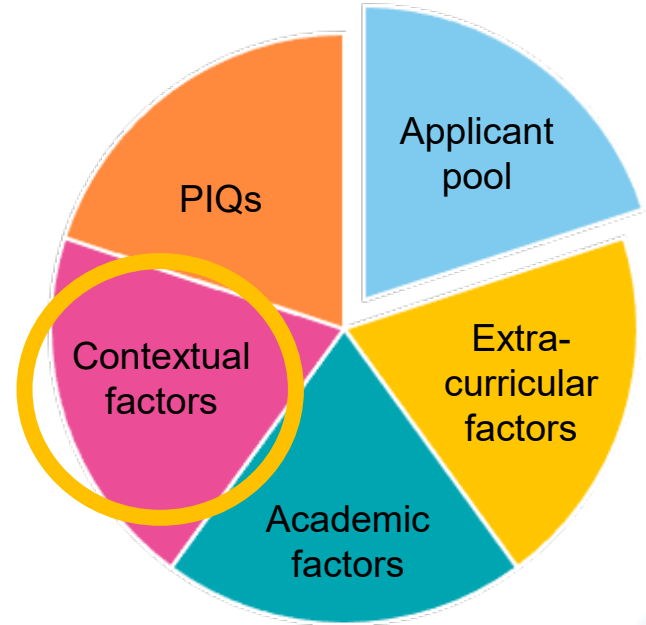
Why does context matter?

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.



About you

Setting the Scene

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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

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

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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

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

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

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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

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.)

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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?

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.

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



Academic history

Building the framework

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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*

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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

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

Test scores

Taking advantage of additional factors

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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

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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

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.

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

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✓ -- 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:

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

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> 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

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

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

Why are you interested in EOP? *

240 characters remaining

[UC Foster Youth 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

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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.



CONTEXT MATTERS

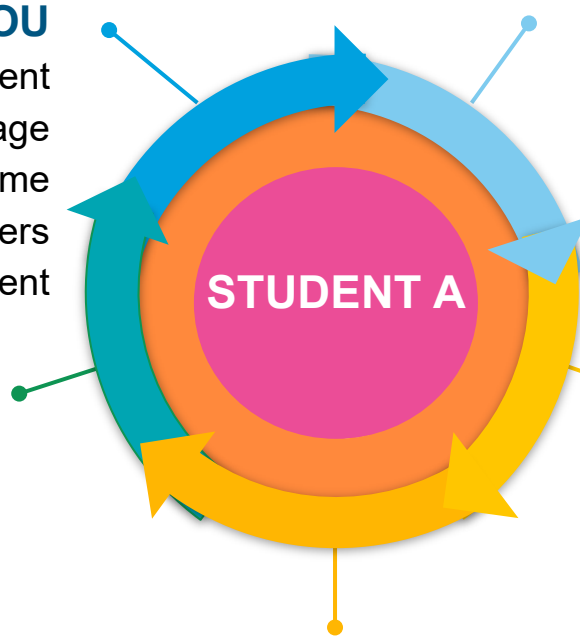
Summary of case study

ABOUT YOU

- 1st generation student
- English as a 2nd language
- \$30K household income
- 4 household members
- U.S. citizen | CA resident

PERSONAL INSIGHT

- Shared experiences, challenges, achievements with explicit context
 - Demonstrated motivation, promise, commitment, social engagement



CAMPUSES & MAJORS

- Application fee waiver
- Biological science interest

ACADEMICS / TEST SCORES

- Exceeded a-g requirements
- Dual enrollment courses
- 3.95 UC GPA
- 4 AP Exams
- Qualifies for ELC

ACTIVITIES & AWARDS

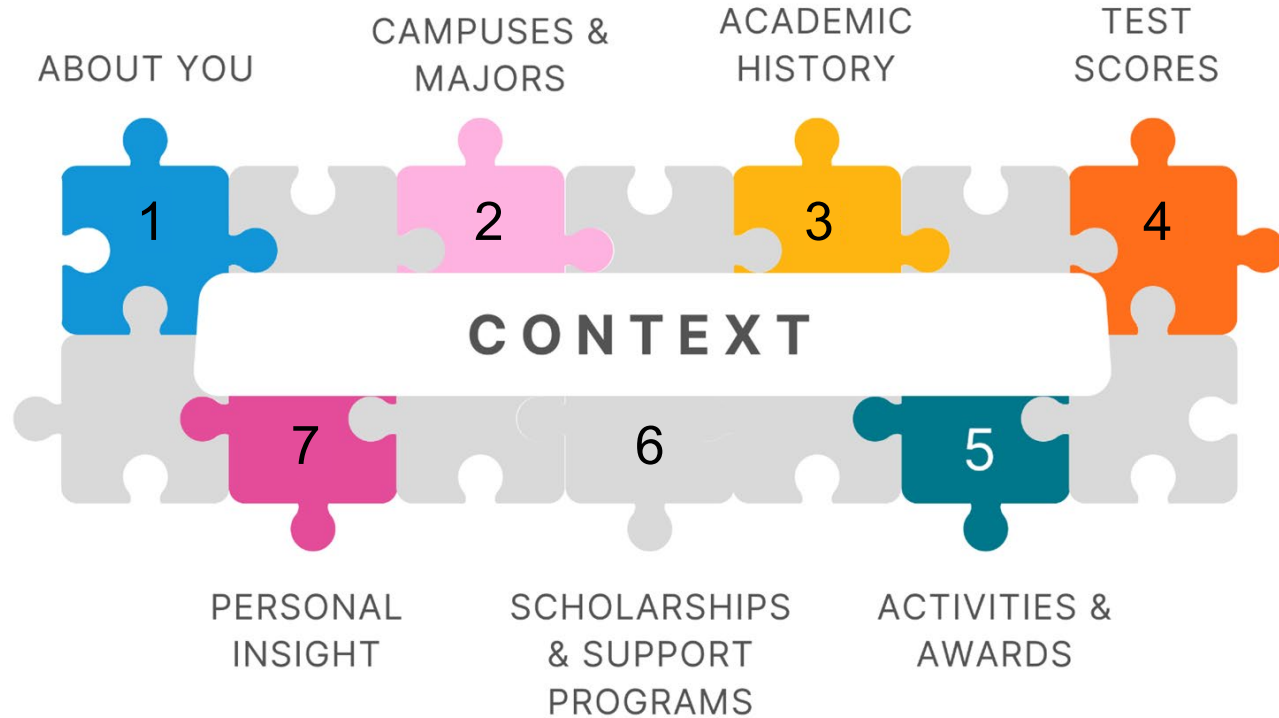
- Softball (3 years)
- High school leadership (ASB, etc)
- Internships & summer programs

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Setting context in the UC application



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



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Questions?

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