

UC Personal Insight Questions



What are the Personal Insight Questions? These questions are about getting to know you better — your life experience, interests, ambitions and inspirations. Think of it as your interview with the admissions office. Be open. Be reflective. Find your individual voice and express it. While this section of the application is just one part we consider when making our admission decision, it helps provide context for the rest of your application.

The Basics

- You will need to answer 4 questions total: One question is required, and you must also answer 3 out of 7 additional questions.
- Responses to each question should be between 250-350 words.
- Which three questions you choose to answer of the seven are up to you: But you should select questions that are most relevant to your experience and that best reflect your individual circumstances.
- All questions are equal: All questions are given equal consideration in the application review process, which means there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.

Transfer Questions & Brainstorm Exercises

Required Question:

Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university.

Suggestions for the Required Question:

- How did your interest in your major develop? Do you have any experience related to your major outside the classroom — such as volunteer work, internships and employment, or participation in student organizations and activities? If you haven't had experience in the field, consider including experience in the classroom. This may include working with faculty or doing research projects.
- If you're applying to multiple campuses with a different major at each campus, think about approaching the topic from a broader perspective, or find a common thread among the majors you've chosen.

Additional Questions: *You will also need to answer any three of the following seven questions.*

1) Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.

Suggestions for Question #1:

- A leadership role can mean more than just a title. It can mean being a mentor to others, acting as the person in charge of a specific task, or taking lead role in organizing an event or project. Think about your accomplishments and what you learned from the experience. What were your responsibilities?
- Did you lead a team? How did your experience change your perspective on leading others? Did you help to resolve an important dispute at your school, church in your community or an organization? And your leadership role doesn't necessarily have to be limited to school activities. For example, do you help out or take care of your family?

2) Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

Suggestions for Question #2:

- What does creativity mean to you? Do you have a creative skill that is important to you? What have you been able to do with that skill?
- Was there ever a problem where your imagination and intuition guided you to the solution? What are the steps you took to solve the problem?
- How does your creativity influence your decisions inside or outside the classroom? Does your creativity relate to your major or a future career?
- Do you have a passion for music, theater, visual art, dance, etc.? What have you gained from it that has affected other parts of your life?

3) What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

Suggestions for Question #3:

- If there's a talent or skill that you're proud of, this is the time to share it. You don't necessarily have to be recognized or have received awards for your talent (although if you did and you want to talk about it, feel free to do so). Why is this talent or skill meaningful to you?
- Does the talent come naturally or have you worked hard to develop this skill or talent? Does your talent or skill allow you opportunities in or outside the classroom? If so, what are they and how do they fit into your schedule?

4) Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

Suggestions for Question #4:

Feel free to speak about either an opportunity or a barrier. It's OK if you've experienced one and not the other.

- **Educational Opportunities:** An educational opportunity can be anything that has added value to your educational experience and better prepared you for college. For example, participation in an honors or academic enrichment program, or enrollment in an academy that is geared toward an occupation or a major, or taking advanced courses that interest you — just to name a few. How did you take what you learned and apply it to your schoolwork or other aspects of your life?
- **Educational Barriers:** Have you faced any barriers or challenges related to school and/or your schoolwork? How did you overcome or strive to overcome them? What personal characteristics or skills did you call on to overcome this challenge? How did overcoming this barrier help shape who you are today?

5) Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

Suggestions for Question #5:

- A challenge could be personal, or something you have faced in your community or school. Why was the challenge significant to you? This is a good opportunity to talk about any obstacles you've faced and what you've learned from the experience. Did you have support from someone else or did you handle it alone?
- If you're currently working your way through a challenge, what are you doing now, and does that affect different aspects of your life? For example, ask yourself, "How has my life changed at home, at my school, with my friends or with my family?"

6) What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

Suggestions for Question #6:

- Think of community as a term that can encompass a group, team or a place – like your college, hometown, or home. You can define community as you see fit, just make sure you talk about your role in that community. Was there a problem that you wanted to fix in your community?
- Why were you inspired to act? What did you learn from your effort? How did your actions benefit others, the wider community or both? Did you work alone or with others to initiate change in your community?

7) Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

Suggestions for Question #7:

- If there's anything you want us to know about you, but didn't find a question or place in the application to tell us, now's your chance. What have you not shared with us that will highlight a skill, talent, challenge or opportunity that you think will help us know you better?
- From your point of view, what do you feel makes you an excellent choice for UC? Don't be afraid to brag a little.

Next Steps: As you filled out the worksheet, were there any topics that seemed particularly interesting? You might consider answering those questions as part of your application. But the choice is yours! Take your time in selecting which questions to answer and how to answer them. Remember, the personal insight questions are just that—personal. The important thing is expressing who you are, what matters to you and what you want to share with the UC.

Suggestions for Answering the Personal Insight Questions

Answer the question. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. They are about you and your life thus far. Take time and think about each suggestion before you start writing. Use details and examples to make your point. Use your words strategically; is there a reason behind your example? Write to add context and depth, not to fill space.

Give yourself time to edit. Start writing then go back and review the word count, content, and overall message. You may not have space to tell us everything so make your words count.

Be you. Remember to talk about yourself so that we can get to know your personality, talents, accomplishments and potential to succeed at the UC campus.

Use your own voice. Your answers should reflect your own ideas and be written by you alone, but others — instructors, counselors, advisors, family and friends — can offer valuable suggestions. Use plenty of "I" and "my" statements in your responses.

Stick to one topic per response. Present your information and ideas in a focused, thoughtful manner. Making a list of accomplishments, activities, awards, or work will lessen the impact of your words. Expand on a topic by using examples and facts for maximum impact to an Admissions reader.

Proofread and edit. Although you will not be evaluated on grammar, spelling or sentence structure, you should proofread your work and make sure your writing is clear. Grammatical and spelling errors can be distracting to the reader and get in the way of what you're trying to communicate.

Brainstorm Topics. When you are answering the Personal Insight Questions consider including:

- Personal triumphs or challenges—If you decide to talk about a challenge or triumph, do not forget to explain what you learned from the experience.
- Leadership opportunities—We value leadership at many levels (e.g. family, school, or community).
- Experiences outside the classroom—Consider experiences that have made an impact on your life (e.g., travels, church/temple, work, youth groups, or your family).
- Disabilities—If you are living with a disability, feel free to talk about it in the context of your ability to succeed.
- Culture—If your culture has influenced who you are, talk about it. Let it add to the picture we form of you.

Stay focused. Avoid common mistakes such as:

- Inappropriate use of humor.
- Creative writing (poems, scene setting, or clichés).
- Quotations—We want to know your thoughts and words, not someone else's.
- Generalities—Stick to facts and specifics you want us to know about yourself.
- Repetition—Do not talk about the same topic in each response. Give us new information we cannot find in other sections of the application.
- Lists of accomplishments or activities.
- Philosophy—Do describe your world in facts and examples. Don't ask questions without answers.
- Don't be campus specific. You're talking to all the UC campuses in your response.

Need More Information?

Please visit the following UC website:

<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/applying-as-a-transfer/personal-insight-questions.html>