

PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS: GUIDE FOR FRESHMAN APPLICANTS

Getting Started

This worksheet is designed to help UC freshman applicants start the writing process for the personal insight questions. Additional suggestions can be found on the UC's admissions website at ucal.us/personalquestions.

What are the Personal Insight Questions?

These questions are about getting to know you – your life experience, interests and accomplishments. Think of your responses as a conversation 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 have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to any 4 of the 8 questions.
- Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.
- Which questions you choose to answer is entirely 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 given equal consideration, which means there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.
- Responses should explore your life and your accomplishments. When sharing examples, explain why they are relevant to the person you are today. The majority of your response should be on the present and/or recent past.

How to use this worksheet:

Read the questions then work to write a draft for four personal insight questions. Make yourself the focus of each response.

Edit for content (facts about yourself) as the UC admissions reader is not looking at style or structure in your response.

Remember, there is not a right or wrong topic which you can share in a personal insight question response.

Lastly, the personal insight questions are numbered, not ranked.

The 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.

- Was there a time when you stepped up and took the role of leader in a group, team, family and/or work setting? Briefly describe the experience, then explore what that experience meant to you.
- How did you grow from that leadership experience? What, if any impact did that have in other places in your life?

Remember, we do not need a definition of leadership. We are not asking if you have a leadership role or title.

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.

- Give an example of your creativity (do not limit yourself by conventional definitions).
- Was there ever a problem where your imagination and intuition guided you to the solution? What was the problem, how did you arrive at a solution, what was the outcome?
- Do you have a creative passion? What have you gained from this passion that has affected other parts of your life or the life of those around you?

Remember, we do not have a definition of creativity nor do we need you to limit your own idea of creativity.

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

- List what you consider your talents or skills:

- Which one of these talents or skills is the most meaningful or important to you and why? Does the talent come naturally or have you worked hard to develop this talent or skill?

Remember, you may have always had this talent or skill but we hope you will focus your answer on the present or recent past when it relates to this talent or skill.

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

- Feel free to speak about an opportunity and/or a barrier. An opportunity could have come due to a barrier. Also, it is okay if you experience one and not the other.
- Are you engaged in educational or mentorship programs, or community-based organizations? Do you consider these opportunities? If so, what have you gained from the experience?
- Have you had to supplement your coursework online, at a community college/university or through another school?
- Are you in a magnet, academy or special curriculum at your school? Did you apply or were you pre-enroll in the special curriculum?

Remember, we do not compare students to one another. Your response could set context for the reader who is looking at the academic history section of your application.

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?

- Have you had a difficult experience in your life? How did you get through it? Who are you today because of that time in your life? What did you learn from the experience?
- If you're currently working your way through the challenge, what are you doing now and does that affect different aspects of your life?
- Ask yourself, "how did this challenge impact my ability to be a good student?"

(Question 5 continued)

Remember, while your challenge can be personal we are asking how it impacted your high school academic achievement.

6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

- Does this academic interest relate to activities or interest outside the classroom?
- Might the academic area tie in some way to your major or career path? If so, how and why is that important to you?
- What sparks your desire to learn?

Remember, we are not limiting you to traditional academic subjects or those in core academic areas.

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

- You saw a problem. What motivated you to act? What did you learn from your effort?
- Did you contribute to a positive change at your school or in your community? What steps have you taken to accomplish this? If you worked in a group you need to focus on your tasks, your role, and/or your responsibilities.

Remember, even small changes can have a big impact. Admissions readers cannot click on links or search for your accomplishment online. You need to explain your accomplishment without external factors.

8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

- Look at your transcript, resume and daily routine. Is there anything that you need to clarify, explain, or elaborate on which we won't find in another PIQ?
- What did we not ask in the application that reflects on who you are as a student inside and/or outside of the classroom?

Remember, UC does not review unsolicited supplemental information (transcripts, letters of recommendation or resumes). Think of this question as a chance to add context or clarification about what we will find in your application.