

# PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS: A UC MERCED GUIDE FOR TRANSFER APPLICANTS



## Getting Started

This guide is designed to help transfer applicants start the writing process for the personal insight questions in the undergraduate admissions application. Additional hints and suggestions can be found on UC's admissions website at [ucal.us/personalquestions](https://ucal.us/personalquestions).

## 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

There is one required question you must answer. You will also need to answer 3 out of 7 additional questions. Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.

Which three questions you choose to answer of the seven is up to you. 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 exercise

As a transfer applicant, you'll need to answer the following 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.**

### Here are some questions to help you get started:

How have classroom experiences shaped your interest in your major? What experiences outside of the classroom have helped develop this interest? What other influences (culture, community, family, etc.) have steered you toward this major? How is your intended major tied to your long-term goals?

## Additional questions

You'll 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.**

How do you define a "leader"? List three words that you think describe what a leader is. Do any of these words apply to you? How? Is there a time in your life when you displayed any of these traits?

**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.**

Can you think of a time your viewpoint was unique compared to others? What was the issue or problem from your perspective? Now think of the same situation from the perspective of another person who was there with you. How was your approach different from that other person's?

Was there ever a problem where your imagination and intuition guided you to the solution?

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?

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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 three of your talents or skills. Were these talents or skills the same a few years ago? What changed? What improved? Which one of the three talents or skills you listed is the most meaningful or important to you and why? Does the talent come naturally or have you worked hard to develop this skill or talent?

### 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 either an opportunity or a barrier. It's OK if you've experienced one and not the other.

#### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

List any programs or additional classes that have better prepared you for college. How did you find out about these programs or classes? 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? List three personal characteristics or skills you used to overcome this challenge.

### 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? What did you learn going through this experience? 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?

Did you contribute to a positive change in your school or in your community? What steps have you taken to accomplish this? Remember, even small changes can have a big impact. Why were you inspired to act? What did you learn from your effort?

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

From your point of view, what do you feel makes you an excellent choice for UC? Don't be afraid to brag a little. Here are a few ideas to help you get started.

- *What do you value in your life/What's important to you?*
- *What are you passionate about?*
- *When you attend UC, what are you most looking forward to?*

Does anything overlap? Is there anything you want to expand on?

### Next steps

As you reviewed this guide, 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.

For more information, visit our website at:  
[ucal.us/personalquestions](http://ucal.us/personalquestions).

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