

Quick Guide for Undocumented Students Applying to the UC

Application opens August 1. Submit between October 1 and December 2, 2024 at apply.universityofcalifornia.edu

Using This Guide



This quick guide is intended to support undocumented first-time freshmen and transfer students applying to the University of California campuses for the fall. Please use this guide alongside the UC Undergraduate Admissions webpages for [Applying as a First-Year](#) or [Applying as a Transfer](#).

Getting Started



Visit the [UC Application page](#). You will be asked to create an account to fill out the application. Once you've made your account, select "**Fall Quarter/Semester 2025**" as the term when you will start college. For the application level,

- Choose "Freshman" if you (1) are currently in high school, (2) graduated from high school but never enrolled in a regular term at a college or university, OR (3) have taken college courses during high school including the summer after graduation.
- Choose "Transfer" if you (1) completed high school, (2) earned college credit, OR (3) enrolled in a regular session at a college or university.
 - Indicate what type of transfer applicant you are based on the number of units you've completed at your community college(s) or previous institution. Transfers are accepted as junior-level applicants and must complete at least 60 semester (90 quarter) units of UC-transferable credit.





REMEMBER: You do not need to complete your online application all at once. You can save your work and return to it anytime during the application filing period. You can also choose to have the questions emailed to you by clicking "Email me the questions" at the bottom of the Welcome page.

UC Application Notes for Undocumented Students



The UC application consists of several sections, each giving undocumented students the chance to share their academic history and life experiences.

The application is composed of the following sections:

 About You	 Campuses & Majors	 Academic History	 Test Scores
 Activities & Awards	 Scholarships & Programs	 Personal Insight	

In this section, you will be asked to provide some information about you and your family. Here are some key points:

Citizenship & Residency

- **Country of citizenship:** Choose “no selection.” This will allow you to skip questions regarding residency and visa status not applicable to undocumented students, including those with DACA.
- **Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN):**
 - If you have DACA, enter the Social Security number assigned to you.
 - If you have an ITIN, you may enter this number instead of a Social Security number.
 - If you have neither an SSN nor an ITIN, you may answer “no.” A “no” response will not affect your admission chances nor your eligibility for state financial aid through the [CA Dream Act Application \(CADAA\)](#).
- **California residency for admissions purposes:** Undocumented students who meet specific requirements can claim CA residency for admissions purposes regardless of their immigration status. There are different admissions criteria for students residing in CA and out-of-state. These questions will help determine how your residency will be assessed.
 - **Graduation from a CA high school:** Indicate if you have or will graduate from a CA high school.
 - If yes, indicate if you have attended a CA school for three or more years during grades K-12.
 - If no,
 - For both first-time and transfer applicants, indicate if you currently live in CA and resided there your whole life. If you choose no, provide the dates you’ve lived in the state.
 - For transfer applicants ONLY, indicate if you have attended a combination of CA high school, adult school, and/or community college for the equivalent of at least three years.

IMPORTANT: Make sure to use the same SSN or ITIN you provided in your CADAA. You may opt out and not include your SSN or ITIN since this isn’t a required question, but including this number will help match your UC application and CADAA.

Your Household

For first-year applicants:

Indicate who lives with you in your permanent address, such as parents, stepparents, or legal guardians. If you choose “Other,” you’ll be asked who looks after you. Your permanent address refers to your family residence.

- Enter the income earned by your parent(s)/legal guardian(s). For the number of people supported by your family’s income:
 - If you live with one or more parents AND they file U.S. taxes, this number will be the number of people claimed as “dependents” on U.S. tax returns.
 - If you live with one or more parents AND they do not file U.S. taxes, this number will be the number of people (including yourself or relatives) who receive more than half of their financial support. This may include siblings or relatives who receive financial support but do not live with you.
- All students must provide parent/legal guardian information unless they meet certain requirements. If you’re unable to provide this information, talk to your school counselor as soon as possible. You may be eligible to be identified as an “unaccompanied youth” or “independent student.” These individuals are not required to provide parent financial information when completing the application or filling out the CADAA.

For transfer applicants:

If you indicated that you’re over 24 years old, are married, have children, OR are a U.S. military veteran, in the “Your Background” section, you will be asked if you live by yourself or with family members.

- Enter your total income and how many people (including any parents, children, or other relatives) are

financially supported by your income.

If none of the above apply to you, indicate who lives with you at your permanent address, such as parents, stepparents, or legal guardians.

- Enter the income earned by your parent(s)/legal guardian(s). For the number of people supported by your family's income:
 - If you live with one or more parents AND they file U.S. taxes, this number will be the number of people claimed as "dependents" on U.S. tax returns.
 - If you live with one or more parents AND they do not file U.S. taxes, this number will be the number of people (including you) who receive more than half of their financial support. This may include siblings or relatives who receive financial support but do not live with you.

IMPORTANT: Even though these questions are optional, **make sure to complete them to be considered for an application fee waiver** and other campus programs you may be eligible for. Eligible students can receive a fee waiver that covers up to four (4) UC campuses.

Income reported in the UC application will also not impact the financial aid you may receive from the CADAA.

Statement of Legal Residence

This section is used to determine your Residency Classification for UC tuition purposes. Undocumented students (including those with DACA) can be classified as California residents for tuition purposes under AB 540, allowing them to pay resident fees. It is important to answer this section accurately to be assessed properly by the campuses you're applying to. To see if you qualify, check the [AB 540 eligibility requirements](#).

- Evaluation for California residency for tuition purposes: Choose "yes."
- If you believe you meet eligibility for AB 540, select the following answers to the questions below:
 - Physical presence in CA for the last 3 years: Choose "yes."
 - Attendance & graduation from CA High School: Choose "yes," if applicable.
 - Current or planned immigration status in the U.S.: This section will be filled in as "Other" since you answered "No selection" as your country of citizenship in the previous section.
 - Establishment of a permanent home in CA for the past 366 days or more: Select "yes."
 - Freshmen applicants and transfer students born after 12/31/2001 will be asked questions about their parents:
 - Parents' physical presence in CA for the past 3 years: Select "yes."
 - Parents' citizenship status: Select "unknown."
- Read and acknowledge the statements verifying the accuracy of your statements and recognizing that you may be asked to submit additional documents to the UC Residency office.
- For the Special Circumstances, Nonresident Supplemental Tuition Exemptions, and Tuition Waivers question, check "I believe that I qualify for an [AB 540 nonresident supplemental tuition exemption](#) based on the number of years I have attended school in California."

NOTE: AB 540 requirements now include attendance and degree(s) earned from CA adult schools and community colleges. Check the [AB 540 Quick Guide](#) to learn more. Those who meet AB 540 requirements may also be eligible to receive state financial aid through the CA Dream Act. [Read more here.](#)

CAMPUSES & MAJORS

In this section, you will choose your UC campuses and majors. Here are some key points:

Choosing Campuses

Indicate which campuses you'd like to apply to.

- If you entered your family size and income in the “About You” section, this question will show you if you qualify for fee waivers. Undocumented students who are or will be eligible for AB 540 can receive up to four (4) application [fee waivers](#). If you apply to more than four (4) campuses, each additional one will cost \$80.

Choosing Majors

Indicate which major you’d like to apply to. As you choose, consider the following:

- All UC campuses allow you to select an alternate major. If a campus is not able to offer you a place in your primary major, they may consider you for your alternate major.
 - For transfer students:
 - While UCLA does let you list alternate majors, only [Transfer Alliance Program \(TAP\)](#) students applying to the College of Letters & Science will be considered for one.
 - Applicants must complete all required lower-division major preparation courses for alternate majors as well.
- Freshmen applicants may select “Undeclared” as a major. This is a good option if you know your general area of interest but not your specific field. For example, a student might select “Undeclared Life Sciences” instead of “Biology.”
- Transfer students cannot apply as undeclared or undecided. Explore different major options by talking to your school counselor or using tools like the [UC-recommended Transfer Major Explorer](#).
- Some majors will ask for supplemental materials. These are common for those part of “specialty schools” within the UC (such as UCLA’s School of Theater, Film, and Television and School of Arts & Architecture). This will be indicated on the application itself, and you’ll be provided with instructions on how to submit them.

NOTE: If you are unsure of your major, read through the descriptions of the different majors – like [these ones for UC Merced](#) and [UC Berkeley](#) – and see what matches your interests.

UC San Diego also asks applicants to rank 8 colleges based on their interests. Learn more about each college [here](#).



ACADEMIC HISTORY

In this section, you will enter information about your academic coursework and grades.

If you are a first-time freshman applicant, you will share:

- High-school-level classes you took in 7th or 8th grade in (i) math or (ii) a language other than English,
- High schools attended with A-G courses taken and grades earned, and
- Any college attended with courses taken and grades earned.

Be sure to include any summer coursework you have completed or plan to complete. You can find your school’s A-G-approved course list [here](#).

If you are a transfer applicant, you will enter information about:

- Last high school attended and the diploma or certificate earned, if applicable,
- College(s) attended with courses taken, grades earned, and degree complete, and
- Minimum transfer requirements.

If you have used the [UC Transfer Admission Planner \(TAP\)](#), you can transfer information over by logging into your account. Be sure that all information has been transferred correctly onto your application.

Consider this key point:

Additional Information

If you would like to provide additional context about your academic history, this is the space to do so. This can include:

- Restrictions that limited the number of Honors, AP, or college-level courses you could enroll in,
- Explanations of low grades,
- Gaps in your education,
- Limited resources at your school that affected your learning experience or opportunities,
- Any health, social, or emotional issues that impacted your academic performance, OR
- Any legal issues or obstacles related to your immigration status or those of family members that affected your academic experience.

Be sure to limit your answer to 550 characters. Information shared here will be kept confidential and used only for admissions purposes or to connect you to relevant services or benefits.

TEST SCORES

In this section, you will enter information about your standardized test scores. Here are some key points:

AP & IB Exams

Indicate if you have any AP & IB exams to report, including what scores you earned. Planned exams for freshmen applicants — those scheduled for the end of senior year of high school — should also be listed.

NOTE: The [UC system's standardized test policy](#) has been “test blind” for California freshman applicants since Fall 2022. Students are no longer required to submit SAT or ACT scores, and the page to include them is no longer part of the application.

English Language Proficiency Tests & International Exams

Indicate if you have these additional tests to report, including what scores you received. Again, planned exams should also be included.

ACTIVITIES & AWARDS

In this section, you will enter information about how you spend or have spent your time outside of school. That includes anything you spend a significant amount of time doing. These questions will help provide context on your daily life during high school. Here are some key points:

Adding Activities & Awards

Choose the category for your activity or award. You can list up to 20 activities and awards with a 350-character limit for each description.

Activities can include educational preparation programs, extracurriculars, other coursework, volunteer/community service, and work experience.

- For each item, you will be asked to describe the award or activity, when you earned or participated in it, and how involved you were. Be sure to highlight any leadership roles you played in your description.
- Activities can be defined broadly. Family or parental responsibilities, involvement with church or cultural activities, summer classes/programs, and internships/fellowships are just some examples of what can be listed in this section. All activities are valued equally, so be sure to include all that you participated in.
- For freshmen applicants, you may list previous activities you are no longer involved in as long as they were during high school.
- For transfer students, focus on activities and awards from your time at your current community college or university. If space allows, you may also include any involvement or accomplishments from your high school.

REMEMBER: Be sure to focus on you! A good activity description (1) highlights what you did and (2) explains why it matters to you or others. Use [this word bank](#) to find ways to best represent your activities and awards.

§ SCHOLARSHIPS & PROGRAMS

In this section, you have the opportunity to indicate your interest in scholarship opportunities and additional support. Here are some key points:

Applying for Scholarships

Indicate which scholarship category applies to you. All UC applicants — including undocumented students — are eligible to apply for scholarships. Undocumented and transfer students are considered for specific types of scholarships. You can apply to them by choosing these and other relevant categories. Take your time in reviewing all the categories to be considered for as many scholarships applicable to you.

Support Programs

Check the box if you are interested in participating in the [Educational Opportunity Program \(EOP\)](#) or [UC Foster Youth Programs](#). If you check off the box for EOP, you will be asked to write a statement about why you are interested (240 characters maximum).

- Campuses that don't offer EOP do provide similar support through other on-campus programs listed below:
 - [UC Irvine's Student Success Initiatives](#)
 - [UCLA's Academic Advancement Program](#)
 - [UC Merced's Fiat Lux Scholars Program](#)
 - [UC Riverside's Academic Resource Center](#)
 - [UC San Diego's Office of Academic Support and Instruction Support \(OASIS\)](#)

NOTE: Each UC campus also offers programs specifically for [undocumented students](#) and [transfer students](#). You do not need to do anything in the UC application to indicate your interest. Rather, the program may reach out to you or you can contact them after you are admitted.

You do not need to apply to these programs through the UC application. Instead, you may take advantage of these resources by visiting these offices after you arrive on campus. Connecting with these programs can help you get your questions answered, build community, and learn about resources as a new student.

PERSONAL INSIGHT

In this section, you have the chance to write about your academic interests, personal qualities, and life experiences. You must respond to any 4 of the 8 [personal insight questions](#). **For transfer students, one question is required, but you can choose the other three.** Each prompt is weighed equally with no preference given to a specific question.

This section provides context about your environment, experiences, and achievements. Remember, you always get to decide what to share and what not to share, and you do not need to write about any details that make you uncomfortable or that feel too personal. Be sure to limit your responses to 350 words each.

Here are some tips for writing this section:

Writing About Immigration Status

You are in no way required to disclose your immigration status. However, if you would like to discuss the effect of your (or a family member's) immigration status on your education or experiences, you should feel free to do that. Any information shared will only be used for admission purposes or to connect you to relevant educational opportunities or services.

Figuring Out Which Personal Insight Question Prompts to Answer

You only get to answer 4 of the [Personal Insight Question \(PIQ\) prompts](#) (with one being required for transfer applicants), so your goal is to choose the ones that give the most complete picture of your interests, qualities, and experiences. Remember, your responses will only add value to your application, not harm it. Some things to write about include:

- **Major Preparation:** 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 (*required for transfer students only*).

- This is the required question that all transfer applicants must complete. Think about how your life experiences, including your immigration story, have influenced your pursuit of your intended major. You can write about how your background has sparked your interest in this subject or how you've explored your major inside the classroom or in your community. If you're applying to different majors at each campus, consider writing more generally about your interest in that specific field.

- **Service to Others**

- Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.
 - If your or a family member's undocumented status has required you to take on additional responsibilities at home, such as translating documents, providing child care, etc., consider responding to this prompt to show how you have helped your family.
- What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
 - If your identities or experiences have led you to be more involved with a school club or community organization — such as student government or a group advocating for immigrants or first-generation students — then you might pick this question so you can show how your background has shaped your desire to help others.

- **Creativity**

- 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.
 - This prompt is an option to show creativity in art, problem-solving, or any other area. For example, if your life experiences have affected how you express yourself through art or music, this question might make sense for you. You may also consider this prompt if your background has encouraged your creativity and helped you solve certain problems.

- **Academic Achievement**

- Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
 - If you benefitted from an educational program that better prepared you for college or influenced your interest in a specific topic, consider choosing this prompt. You may also answer this if you have overcome challenges that have driven you to be a more committed learner and leader.
- 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?
 - If your undocumented status or other life experiences have impacted your academic or personal achievement, consider answering this prompt to show how you managed to succeed in the face of obstacles. You can describe how these challenges have inspired you to commit deeply to succeed.
- Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom (*only available to freshmen applicants*).
 - If your experience as a student has led you toward a certain academic interest, such as arts, sciences, or humanities, consider answering this prompt to explain how your interest originated and how you have pursued it so far. For most students, these questions are also a good way to explain your choice of major from the "Campuses & Majors" section.

- **Personal Qualities**

- What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
 - This prompt is a good option to describe personality traits that have helped you succeed so far. If your background or experiences have led you to develop a personal characteristic you are especially proud of, you may consider answering this question.

- 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?
 - This question is a good way to explain how your life experiences (including your undocumented status) have shaped who you are today. If your background has influenced your perspective on law, society, community, or people in general, then you can respond to this prompt to talk about why this perspective would benefit others.

Brainstorming what to include for each PIQ

Because Personal Insight Questions require more thoughtful responses, it's a good idea to create drafts of your statements that you can edit and refine outside of the application. Consider using the UC's [PIQ Guide for Freshmen Applicants](#) or [PIQ Guide for Transfer Applicants](#) and [Immigrants Rising's Building Your Scholarship or Fellowship Essay](#) to gather and organize your thoughts. When drafting your responses, make sure to focus on yourself, your experiences, and your accomplishments. The application reader should get a good idea of who YOU are.

Taking Advantage of the "Additional Comments" Section

If you feel like your Personal Insight Question responses and the rest of your UC application leave out something important about you, then you should use the "additional comments" section to provide that information. This can include situations that led to poor academic performance or gaps in your education, the impact of local events like wildfires on available opportunities, or additional responsibilities that affected the number of formal extracurriculars you participated in.

Remember, this section shouldn't be treated as an additional PIQ, and should only be used to fill in any gaps in your story you didn't get the chance to share.

Submitting Your Application



After you have completed your application, click "Review & submit." You might find it convenient to click the "Print version" button so you can view a PDF of your application. Here are some key points to consider:

Before you click the "Start submission" button, be sure to review your application and correct any errors.

If you did not qualify for fee waivers or if you are applying to more than four (4) UC campuses, you will have to pay the application fee of \$80 per application. You can pay online by credit card or by sending a check or money order by mail. Remember that undocumented students who meet [AB 540 eligibility](#) can qualify to receive up to four (4) fee waivers.

Submit your application no later than **December 2, 2024**.

After you have submitted your application, you will see a confirmation page and receive an email with your UC Application ID number. Use this ID number to access admissions decisions and relevant student portals. If a UC campus requests additional information, be sure to respond promptly, and ask your school counselor if you have any questions.

Freshman applicants, you should be aware of the important deadlines listed [here](#).

Transfer applicants, you will also be required to provide a [Transfer Academic Update](#) with final grades from the previous term and a list of planned coursework by **January 31, 2025**. Keep an eye on other important deadlines listed [here](#).

NOTE: Consider submitting your application 2-3 days before the deadline to avoid technical difficulties.

This resource was created by Jonathan Perkins, founder of Marion's Promise, and Madeleine Villanueva of Immigrants Rising. Marion's Promise provides mentorship and scholarship support for first-generation, low-income students in California.

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Immigrants Rising helps you make decisions based on your potential, not your perceived limits. Visit our website so you can see what's possible: immigrantsrising.org. For inquiries regarding this resource, please contact Madeleine Villanueva, Interim Director of Higher Education, at madeleine@immigrantsrising.org. Revised 10/2024.