



Comprehensive review

The Regents of the University of California have approved a modified selection process for freshman admissions that will lead to a more thorough and complete review of the qualifications a student presents when applying to one of UC's undergraduate campuses.

Called "comprehensive review," the process will continue to ensure the admission of highly qualified students by allowing UC campuses to consider the broad variety of academic and personal qualifications that all students present on the application. It replaces the previous "two-tiered" process in which each campus was required to admit 50-75 percent of its freshman class solely on the basis of certain academic factors.

Overview of the admissions process

Eligibility: Becoming "UC-eligible" guarantees a student a spot somewhere in the UC system, though not necessarily at the campus of choice. Students can achieve "Eligibility in the Statewide Context" based on their high school grades in UC-required courses and their grades on standardized tests. A numerical index identifies the test scores required at each grade point average, and vice versa, to achieve statewide eligibility. A second path, "Eligibility in the Local Context," grants UC eligibility to students in the top 4 percent of their own high school class, based on grades in UC-required courses.

Previous "two-tiered" selection process: Prior to comprehensive review, individual UC campuses admitted students from the pool of UC-eligible applicants in a "two-tiered" selection process. Specific criteria varied by campus, but systemwide policy required that 50-75 percent of the incoming class be admitted on the basis of certain "academic" criteria alone. These criteria could include grades, test scores, outstanding work in a particular subject area, completion of additional college preparatory courses, and other academic factors. The balance of the class was admitted on the basis of these academic factors plus "supplemental" factors such as special talents, unusual leadership or intellectual qualities, academic accomplishments in the face of disadvantaged circumstances, and other factors listed below.

This two-tiered selection process had been part of UC's undergraduate admissions policy and guidelines since the 1960s, though the specific proportions of the class admitted in each tier varied over time and by campus. The two-tiered process was formalized as a Regental policy by SP-1, the 1995 resolution that also banned consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions. The Regents rescinded SP-1 in May 2001 (though Proposition 209 continues to prohibit race-based preference in admissions), but the two-tiered structure was still contained in the university's undergraduate admissions policy.

Admissions under comprehensive review

The comprehensive review process, similar to that used by many of the nation's most selective public and private universities, was approved by the UC Board of Regents on a 15-4 vote in November 2001 after being approved by the Assembly of the Academic Senate, the representative body of the UC faculty, on a 42-0 vote. It takes effect for the class applying for freshman admission for fall 2002, though students do not need to approach the application process any differently than before.

Applicants admitted under comprehensive review will continue to be high-achieving students, admitted from the currently defined "UC-eligible" pool that identifies the top 12.5 percent of the statewide graduating high school class based on traditional academic criteria. Also, the 14 criteria (listed below) that campuses currently use to select students from the UC-eligible pool will not change. However, the two tiers, which previously constrained the use of those selection criteria, have now disappeared.

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Now, freshman applicants to UC campuses will be evaluated on the basis of a single, comprehensive set of selection criteria, “using multiple measures of achievement and promise, while considering the context in which each student has demonstrated academic accomplishment,” according to the policy.

Comprehensive review means that students’ records will be analyzed not only for their grades and test scores – important baseline indicators of academic potential – but also for additional evidence of such qualities as motivation, leadership, intellectual curiosity, and initiative. These qualities play an important role in student success in an academic environment as rigorous and challenging as that of UC, and they can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, through a variety of achievements and experiences. Consideration of these factors has long been part of the admissions process at many of the nation’s most selective universities.

“We expect comprehensive review to enhance our campuses’ ability to select each year a class of thoroughly qualified students who demonstrate the promise to make great contributions to the university community and to the larger society beyond,” said UC President Richard C. Atkinson. “We believe this policy sends a strong signal that UC is looking for students who have achieved at high levels and, in doing so, have challenged themselves to the greatest extent possible.”

The Regents endorsed comprehensive review with the understanding that the board will receive an annual report on the effects of the new process and that comprehensive review “shall be used fairly, shall not use racial preferences of any kind, and shall comply with Proposition 209.”

More information about comprehensive review is available at <http://www.ucop.edu/news/cr/>

The campus selection criteria

Below are the criteria that UC campuses may use to select a freshman class from the pool of UC-eligible students. These selection criteria remain the same under comprehensive review. However, all applicants can now be evaluated on the basis of all criteria, as opposed to the previous policy in which 50-75 percent of the entering class was admitted on the basis of the academic criteria alone.

The academic criteria are:

1. High school grade point average in UC-required courses
2. Standardized test scores
3. Number of, content of, and performance in academic courses completed beyond the university’s minimum eligibility requirements
4. Number of, and performance in, honors and AP courses
5. Being identified as “eligible in the local context” by ranking in the top 4 percent of the high school class, as determined by the university’s academic criteria
6. Quality of the senior year program, as measured by the type and number of academic courses in progress or planned
7. Quality of academic performance relative to educational opportunities available in the applicant’s school
8. Outstanding performance in one or more academic subject areas
9. Outstanding work in one or more special projects in any academic field
10. Recent marked improvement in academic performance

The supplemental criteria are:

11. Special talents, achievements, and awards in a particular field, or experiences that demonstrate unusual promise for leadership or ability to contribute to the intellectual vitality of the campus
12. Completion of special projects that offer significant evidence of an applicant’s special effort and determination or that may indicate special suitability to an academic program on a specific campus
13. Academic accomplishments in light of an applicant’s life experiences and special circumstances, such as disabilities, low family income, first generation to attend college, need to work, disadvantaged social or educational environment, difficult personal and family situations or circumstances, refugee status or veteran status
14. Location of the applicant’s secondary school and residence, to provide for geographic diversity in the student population and to account for the wide variety of educational environments existing in California