

UC Personal Insight Questions

TIPS & STRATEGIES





OVERVIEW

- How to start
- Mechanics of the Personal Insight Questions
- Transfer Students Questions
- The purpose of the Personal Insight Questions
- Tips and Strategies
- Common Mistakes
- Links to help you get started



What does UC expect to learn from the answers?

Format gives applicants a greater say in the kind of information they want to share.

- Students can express who they are and what matters to them not only in how they respond to the questions, but also through the questions they choose to answer.
- Option over which questions to answer gives students greater flexibility and control by selecting questions that are most relevant to their experiences and that best reflect their individual circumstances.
- Questions provide students with better direction and focus on topics that are important to campuses. Each question aligns to one or more of the comprehensive review factors.



MECHANICS



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- Transfer students must answer **one required** question then choose 3 additional questions out of 7.
 - Maximum of 350 words for each response; words above maximum will be truncated in the application.
 - Students cannot answer additional questions.
 - All questions have equal value; there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.



MECHANICS ...continued

- Do not compose your responses in the application; use another text editing program (MS Word, GoogleDocs, etc.) then copy and paste into the application.
- Make sure it pastes correctly; Proofread
- If your word count differs, edit to meet the word limit in the UC application
- Be wary of relying on Spellcheck!



What are the Transfer Questions:

- 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.

- This question is mandatory because preparation for the major is critical in the transfer admission selection process.
- Select 3 other questions from the list of 7.



What are the other Transfer 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.
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.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

What are the other Transfer Questions? (continued..)

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?
6. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
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 University of California.





The Personal Insight Questions help...

- Applicants fill in the gaps to explain unusual circumstances and provide a more complete picture of themselves.
- Admission personnel get to know the student as an individual.
- The reader will understand the student's interests, achievement, opportunities and challenges faced while achieving academic and personal success.

Avoid Common Mistakes..

- Do not speak to only one UC campus
- Avoid Quotations
- Avoid generalities
- Repetition – Do not repeat what is already in the application
- Avoid acronyms
- Do not ask philosophical questions
- Be sure to answer the question being asked
- Rambling unfocused thoughts
- Writing more about an inspirational person than yourself (e.g. mother, favorite teacher, etc.)





Tips & Strategies



- Start Early
- Select questions that are most relevant to your experiences and best reflect your individual preference/circumstances.
- Write in a natural style; avoid being overly humorous, self-deprecating or glorifying
- Use "I" Statements
- Proofread and Edit
- Avoid Clichés and Trite statements
- Solicit feedback
- Do not use the "Additional Comments" section for another response

Editing is part of the Writing process

- Seek advise/feedback **EARLY** on!!!
- However, this is YOUR responses. You get to decide which feedback to take based on what would make your PIQ responses the most effective and impactful
- Recommend three type of editors:
 - Someone who knows you
 - Someone who doesn't know you at all
 - Someone who writes well (grammar, spelling, syntax, etc.)
- Sample essays: the good and the bad.
- Highlight in your responses where you have directly answered the question

Personal Insight Questions- Case Studies

UCLA

Provided and shared by Santiago Bernal (CCCP)



Case Studies

- Review each of them and decide what works and what doesn't work in each of them
- In case study 1 & 2: which one is more effective?
- In case study 3 & 4: which one is more effective?

Case Study #1

I sincerely believe the course of my life has led me to my major. Once I had realized that sociology was something I have always been interested in, I involved myself in activities related directly to that. I have volunteered for women's shelters, helped feed homeless communities, tutored underprivileged Latinx youth, and have marched in solidarity with organizations dedicated to social issues. Furthermore, I have studied and continue to study books/articles that help to learn and deepen my understanding of the critical issues that affect our world today. Trying to make sense of the world and the reasons why it functions as it does (in regards to poverty, human relations, power structures, and the "normality" of it all) has captured my interest for even longer than I knew there was a field dedicated to it. Growing up in a 744 square foot home with two older brothers and a single immigrant mother, I always knew what it meant to be poor and to live with less. I also realized early on that it was not something I wanted for myself as an adult and that only through a proper education would I have a shot at ensuring that would never happen. From the moment that I was able to apply for work, I have hustled and worked for better opportunities and better means of living. Although it is still a work in progress, I know that I am nowhere close to where I used to be, and for that I consider myself very thankful and blessed. Even still, and most importantly, I recognize that not everyone has had the same privileges and opportunities as I have; some for reasons that are beyond their control and have been set in stone for centuries. That component alone is what has maintained my interest in sociology. I believe the key component to restructuring for a better society is to understanding why it is such in the first place.

Case Study #1- Response

- Highlights non-classroom involvement related to the major
- Provides additional context about their background and relates that to their major
- Addresses what they want to gain from the major in the future



Case Study #2

I have prepared for the upper-division classes at the university by looking at each particular university and seeing what classes I would take. I then will look the class up on youtube and see what the class takes. For instance how much does the upper division thermodynamics class require you remember from the first physics course you take your freshman year. I also look at the previous test posted by the professors online and see what I do and do not know, I also look at how the test are graded and which methods the professors want the students to utilize to solve the problems. This gives me a head start on what could potentially be upcoming in the future classes. I go on YouTube and try to see if I can find the class and correlate it to the test to see if I can tie a connect from a lecture to the test. I also use that as a gateway to gauge to see if I like their style of teaching, or if I can understand the professor because some of them can have a really difficult accent to understand. I have visited every UC campus that I am applying for so I know what the campus looks in person and I know exactly what I am getting myself into for each unique university. I am not going blindly in, I have the tools that I will need to succeed at any university I choose to go to. I will have all my lower division preparation completed and I have followed assits.org course pattern as much as I possibly could.

Case Study #2- Response



1. Missed opportunity to address major or field of interest. Student discusses preparation for upper division coursework but is unclear on what major or field they are interested in.

2. Vague or limited discussion of other experiences.

Response could be strengthened with additional context from activities or other experiences that contributed to interest in major.

Case Study #3

My creative side is most commonly expressed through my ability to draw and artistically render images onto paper or a tablet. Even from simply taking notes in lectures, I doodle on the sides of my paper, even in between notes but this only engages me to learn better with more intent on being present in class. Creativity has always been a big factor in my life, and I believe that it is one of the greatest factors in our lives that make us all different. One's perspective on a piece of art may differ from others, as some enjoy hyper-realistic drawings, while others may enjoy minimalistic cartoons. Everyone's perception of the world are different from one another and has helped me realize that that very idea is why some disputes become unsolved. I always try to understand both sides to an argument or problem before I give my own input. This has many times made me the "all seeing" voice in my groups, as I'm usually a spectator to the chaos, rather than someone who is personally invested or detrimentally involved in decision making. Overall, I highly value a different outlook to approaching challenges and look forward to facing what new obstacles await me and being that I aspire to become a teacher, am ecstatic for how I may create a curriculum that is different, fun, and engaging for my students

Case Study #3- Response

- Too many broad statements and 3rd person perspective instead of writing in 1st person using I and my statements
- Disjointed statement – shifting from drawing to understanding arguments
- How does doodling foster class engagement?
- What is the point the student is trying to convey- unclear
- No specific examples



Case Study #4

I express my creativity through playing guitar. I first decided to pick up the guitar in 9th grade after tearing my ACL. Bedridden with my leg wrapped up and connected to an ice machine, I was limited to watching TV, eating Cheez-Its and doing homework. However, I soon discovered that a guitar sat perfectly on my lap and didn't require any walking, jumping, or anything else related to the legs. My dad let me use his guitar and taught me the basics of playing the instrument. I practiced everyday for hours, and soon progressed from learning other artists' songs to writing my own. Writing my own music felt so natural. When I strummed each chord and played each note, any emotions that I was feeling at the moment seemed to slide off of my fingertips and onto the strings, bouncing off of the metal strands into the air as an audible tune. Elation, grief, frustration, serenity --I found that I could render any emotion perceptible as a song. This proved a healthy outlet for those feelings, and my songs became something I took pride in. Over the last four years, I have written over 60 songs, have recorded a few, and have copyrighted four of them. I am currently working on compiling an album of my songs to be recorded over this upcoming spring and summer. Not only is music a creative outlet for me, but it is also an effective study tool. In the past, I have altered the lyrics of popular songs to fit with the material I was learning about. For instance, in 7th grade I changed Katy Perry's "Hot n Cold" into a song about genetics and used it to study for the test. To this day, I still find myself humming those altered lyrics when studying biology. Music is a significant part of my life and my being, and it benefits me both emotionally and academically.

Case Study #4- Response

- Documents progression from learning guitar to writing/recording own songs
- Very genuine descriptions of accomplishments
- Connects musical ability to his academics
- Clear timeline, gives background and states how utilized currently



Resources...

- **FAQs about the personal insight questions**
<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/q-and-a/personal-questions/index.html>
- **Transfer questions & directions** <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/transfer/index.html>
- **Download the list of questions only, go to:** <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/transfer/index.html>
- **Guide for Transfer Applicants (brainstorming worksheet)**
<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/files/uc-personal-questions-guide-transfer.pdf>
- **YouTube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6NKDLSDNrc>