

Eligibility-Related Questions

Can UC estimate the percentage of California public high school seniors who completed the 'a-g' courses and took UC's required SAT I and SAT II exams?

Periodic eligibility studies conducted by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) are the primary and most authoritative source for information on eligibility. An updated study is currently being conducted on the class of 2003 and will be available in May 2004.

Using a methodology that differs from that used by CPEC, UCOP staff have conducted a *preliminary and unofficial* analysis of the proportion of 2002 California public high school graduates who meet UC's current eligibility requirement. The UCOP estimates suggest that about 15.2 percent of California public high school graduates in 2002 may have been eligible for admission to UC. This percentage represents a mid-range estimate from a minimum estimate of 13.3 percent to a high of 16.2 percent. The details for this calculation follow.

Since, by definition, applicants to UC who are regularly admitted must be UC-eligible, the pool of eligible California public high school graduates should be at least as large as the pool of regularly admitted California-resident freshman applicants from California public high schools. In 2002, there were 43,320 such students, constituting 13.3 percent of California's 325,297 public high school graduates; 13.3 percent, therefore, is a minimum estimate of the UC eligibility rate.

Admission data do not allow a determination of eligibility for students who have not applied to UC. Data from the College Board and ACT, however, permit estimates to be made of how many test-takers from the 2002 cohort of high school graduates achieved test scores and grades sufficient to satisfy the UC Eligibility Index. Adding together (i) all regularly admitted UC applicants and (ii) California public high school graduates who are estimated to have met the eligibility index but who did *not* apply to UC yields a maximum estimated UC eligibility rate for 2002 of 16.2 percent.

While the College Board and ACT data provide information on high school grades and test scores, they do not contain reliable information on whether students have satisfied the a-g subject requirement. Therefore, while the minimum estimate of 13.3 is likely to be too low due to the exclusion of non-applicants, the maximum estimate of 16.2 percent is likely to be too high due to the inclusion of students who failed to complete the required high school course pattern. A mid-range estimate can be constructed by appealing to historical data, developed in conjunction with earlier CPEC eligibility studies, indicating that 85 to 90 percent of all UC-eligible students apply to UC in any given year. Relying on the midpoint of this range, if 13.3 percent represents 87.5 percent of all UC-eligible students, then the corresponding mid-range estimate of the UC eligibility rate for 2002 is 15.2 (87.5% of 15.2 equals 13.3).

It should be noted that these estimates are preliminary analyses that may differ substantially from the results of the 2003 CPEC study, anticipated in May 2004. Similar projections performed in advance of the 1996 study overestimated the number of UC-eligible graduates.

The CPEC study will rely on a more thorough methodology, based on complete high school transcript data for all graduates from a representative sample of California public high schools. These data, in combination with testing data from ACT and the College Board, will permit an exact determination of each student’s UC eligibility. CPEC’s estimate of the statewide 2003 eligibility rate will be determined by extrapolating from the sample schools.

Historically, what effect have changes to eligibility requirements had on the academic profile of the eligible pool?

Since the inception of the Master Plan, when the proportion of graduates who could achieve eligibility was capped at 12.5 percent, the effect of adjustments to UC’s eligibility criteria has been to raise the academic preparation levels of high school students whose goal is UC admission. In years when eligibility has been estimated below 12.5 percent, rather than relaxing its standards, UC has developed new approaches to identifying students with high potential. The effects of changes made over the past thirty years are summarized below.

Year	Changes
1962	To reduce the estimated size of pool from 15 percent to 12.5 percent, UC eliminated various “alternative” paths to admission, including one that considered eligible any student in the top 10 percent of his or his high school graduating class.
1968	In response to the 1966 eligibility study that found 14.6 percent of public high school graduates eligible, UC introduced the requirement that students take the SAT I and a battery of three SAT II examinations and instituted a minimum required test score for students with GPAs below 3.1.
1979	In response to the 1975 eligibility study that found 14.8 percent of public high school graduates eligible, UC introduced the Eligibility Index, which extended the minimum test score requirement to students with GPAs from 3.1 and 3.29. The University also set in motion increases in the course requirements which were implemented in the early 1980s. These included increases in the number of years of mathematics and English preparation required and in the total number of courses.
1986	When the 1986 CPEC study found only 9.1 percent of public high school graduates UC-eligible, the concept of “potentially eligible” students (those who met the course requirements and had GPAs above 3.29 but had not taken the full battery of required examinations) was introduced. This allowed the University to avoid relaxing the GPA and test requirements.
1990	Although the 1990 CPEC study found 12.3 percent of public high school graduates UC-eligible, UC increased course requirements in laboratory science and history/social science, effective with the entering class of 1994.
1992	The minimum GPA on the Eligibility Index was increased from 2.78 to 2.82.

Year	Changes
2000	In response to the 1996 CPEC eligibility study which found only 11.1 percent of public high school graduates eligible for UC, UC initiated the Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) program, designed to reach out to high-potential students in schools that do not traditionally send large numbers of applicants to UC. At the same time, UC changed the Eligibility Index to require minimum scores on the SAT II as well as the SAT I and adds to its course requirements a one-year course in Visual and Performing Arts.

What will be the principles, policies, and timeline for BOARS to act in response to anticipated California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) findings that more than 12.5 percent of high school graduates are actually attaining UC eligibility?

In preparation for the May 2004 release of the CPEC report on the *Eligibility of California's 2003 High School Graduates for Admission to the State's Public Universities*, BOARS has designated a portion of every meeting during the 2003-04 year to a discussion of the eligibility construct and to plan for the anticipated outcomes of the study.

The general outline for these discussions includes a primer on the background and history of the eligibility construct, a discussion of principles that should guide the development of new eligibility criteria, and the identification of a research agenda to inform further discussion. In addition, BOARS met with the California State University Admissions Advisory Council (November 2003) to discuss CSU planning for the study outcomes, and BOARS members are leading discussions in their local campus assemblies on topics related to eligibility and admission policy alternatives.

BOARS is developing a list of recommended principles to be used in this and future considerations of setting UC eligibility. It is expected that BOARS will provide policy recommendations to the Academic Assembly and The Board of Regents no later than Summer 2004.

How do our competitive comparison institutions determine eligibility?

The concept and implementation of "eligibility" make the University of California unique among major public university systems in the United States. No other state system has an eligibility construct that establishes the University's academic standards and makes admission available to every student in the state who meets those standards. Most states have either statewide/systemwide minimum eligibility standards or standards that guarantee systemwide admission. No other system has a single eligibility standard that serves both purposes.

Along similar lines, the UC eligibility pool is also unique in being defined as a proportion of high school graduates. Other states' minimum statewide/systemwide standards are explicitly based on levels of adequate preparation and/or probability of student success.

Virtually all selective colleges and universities utilize a direct admissions model, whereby applicants are judged directly against a set of admission criteria, without prior or separate assessment of whether the applicant meets some minimum standard of eligibility. The direct admissions model involves no concept of an “eligibility pool” as distinct from the pool of students who actually apply for admission.