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UC Freshman Eligibility Changes: Q&A

With this change in policy, what should high school students know about preparing for UC?

UC's historic advice to students preparing for college still applies: Take the most challenging high school courses available to you and do your best in them. Be aware of college testing requirements and deadlines, and take the necessary tests. Apply, and your record will be given a thorough review.

What impact will the new policy have on students?

- The new policy will expand the pool of potential UC applicants by as much as 30,000 students. From this broader pool, the Academic Senate projects that 10,000 to 15,000 more students may apply to UC than would have under current policy. All of these students will receive a full review of their applications.
- Almost all students who would be eligible under current policy will still be entitled to review under the new policy. About two-thirds of these students will continue to receive a guarantee of admission somewhere in the UC system.
- More students (from 4% today to 9% under the new policy) will be guaranteed admission by virtue of their *high performance within their own school*. This improves UC's reach among high schools in many geographic regions of the state, and is supported by research which indicates that high school rank is not only a strong predictor of college success but also catalyzes college preparation in the schools.
- More students will be considered for UC admission even if their academic record varies slightly from policy or they have not taken the SAT Subject Tests.
- More high-achieving students may apply to UC because of the signal sent by the new policy that high-performing students should submit an application and have it considered.

What impact will the new policy have on UC's academic standards?

- The number of college-preparatory courses and minimum GPA required will remain the same as it is now.
- With the elimination of SAT Subject Test scores, the remaining test scores and grades required for students to be in the portion of the statewide graduating high school class that is guaranteed admission *will rise*. The Academic Senate estimates that students who are guaranteed admission either by falling in the top 9% of the state or top 9% of their own class will have an average GPA that is 0.17 points higher, and an average SAT score 17 points higher, than students in the current eligibility pool.
- But *numbers alone do not define high achievement*. The new policy enables more students who fall outside the guaranteed pools to have their applications fully reviewed (as long as they meet the GPA minimum in UC-required courses by the end of 11th grade). Those judged to have the highest levels of achievement and promise will be offered a place at a UC campus.

What is the impact on UC's diversity?

The impact on the diversity of the freshman class is difficult to project because we cannot know who will apply under the new policy and, among those who apply, who will be admitted.

Based on the best data available, the broader pool of students entitled to review is predicted to be more diverse with respect to race/ethnicity, geography and socioeconomic status than the current eligibility pool. The guaranteed pools, however, are projected to be slightly less diverse (in the current eligibility pool, 3% of students are African American and 19% Latino; under the new policy, those proportions in the guaranteed pools are projected to be 3% and 18%, respectively). Historically, only a small percentage of students offered admission via the guarantee have accepted.

Why eliminate the SAT Subject Test requirement?

First, some definitions: While the SAT Reasoning Test (previously known as the SAT I) is a standardized assessment of students' critical reading, mathematical reasoning and writing skills, the SAT Subject Tests (previously known as the SAT II tests) assess students' mastery of specific academic subject matter. There are 20 SAT Subject Tests.

In addition to requiring the ACT with Writing or the SAT Reasoning Test, UC currently requires two SAT Subject Tests in two different subject areas – history, literature, level 2 mathematics, science or language other than English. UC is the only public higher education system that currently requires SAT Subject Tests.

In the view of the Academic Senate, the SAT Subject Tests pose several problems for establishing student eligibility for the UC system:

- They add little to the prediction of how well a student will do at UC, once GPA and ACT/SAT Reasoning scores are considered.
- Typically about half as many California students take Subject Tests as take the SAT Reasoning exam. Many high-achieving students do not take them because they are unaware of UC's requirement, or for other reasons. It is currently impossible to become UC-eligible without taking the two required Subject Tests.
- As a result, UC today is granting eligibility to some students with lower GPA and ACT/SAT scores at the expense of students with higher GPA and ACT/SAT scores simply because these higher-scoring students did not take the SAT Subject Tests.

Under the new policy, campuses can still recommend SAT Subject Tests for admission to particular majors, if they choose. Also, students who believe that the subject test scores help boost their case for UC admission will still be able to voluntarily submit them.

How does this new policy fit with the California Master Plan for Higher Education?

The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education calls on UC to select first-time freshmen *from among* the top 12.5% of California public high school graduates and has been amended to specify that UC guarantee *all* students in the top 12.5% a place somewhere in the UC system if they apply. The Master Plan explicitly accords to UC the responsibility to set the criteria for determining the top 12.5%. Subsequent legislative reviews have recommended that UC rely on factors beyond grades and test scores alone in determining UC eligibility. The new policy is consistent with the Master Plan intent to offer access to a UC education to a broad group of California's best students and with the Legislature's interest in evaluating students based on multiple criteria.

The new policy defines the top 12.5% differently from in the past. Students who fall in either the top 9% in the state or the top 9% of their class will together represent an estimated 10% of the statewide graduating high school class. Students in this pool who apply will be admitted somewhere in the system, even if they are not admitted to any campus to which they apply. The students reviewed and admitted by campuses from the broader “entitled to review” pool will bring the total percentage of high school graduates offered admission up to the 12.5% specified by the Master Plan.

Currently, test and coursework completion, together with grades in UC-approved courses and test scores – including scores on the SAT Subject Tests – are used to determine the top 12.5%. Under the new policy, “top” will be adjusted to *exclude* SAT Subject Test scores and to *include* considerations of merit beyond grades and test scores alone, through creation of the “entitled to review” pool.

Eligibility Status	Current Policy	New Policy
Eligible for UC and guaranteed admission to at least one UC campus	12.5% / 4%: Top 12.5% statewide, by GPA in UC-required courses plus scores on SAT Reasoning Test (or ACT with Writing) and 2 SAT Subject Tests Top 4% within each school, by GPA in UC-required courses Total % of high school class guaranteed admission: 12.5%	9% / 9%: Top 9% statewide, by GPA in UC-required courses plus scores on SAT Reasoning Test or ACT with Writing (no SAT Subject Tests) Top 9% within each school, by GPA in UC-required courses Total % of high school class guaranteed admission: 10%
Entitled to a review of application, but not guaranteed admission	No such category currently	All applicants on track to complete UC-required courses with the required GPA who have taken SAT Reasoning Test or ACT with Writing Total % of high school graduates estimated to be admitted by this route: 2.5%

What will be the specific GPA and test scores required to fall in the top 9% of high school graduates statewide?

Those specific requirements have not yet been set, and will in any case vary over time depending on the size and preparation of the statewide graduating class. It is projected that applicants with a weighted 3.0 GPA will need an SAT Reasoning Test average of 712, up from 470 today. Applicants with a 3.8 weighted GPA will need an average of 524, up from 370.

How many more applications do campuses expect to have to review? Do they have the capacity?

UC's best estimate is that application volume will increase by about 12-15%. Applicants pay a \$60 fee for each campus to which they apply, which essentially covers the cost of application review. However, in the current budget environment, other demands are placed on these resources besides application processing. In any case, substantial work will be involved in expanding operations sufficiently to accommodate the increase.