

- **Make a copy of this document, review it, draft your PIQ responses, and share it with your college advisor/counselor for feedback!**
- For additional college planning information and resources, visit our resource page: <https://cep.berkeley.edu/resource-directory>

<b>Name:</b>	<b>High School:</b>	<b>Last Updated:</b>
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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

- **You have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to only 4 of the 8 questions. Each response is limited to a maximum of **350 words**.**
- YOU choose the questions: Select questions that are most relevant to your experience, and that best reflect your circumstances.
- All questions are equal: All are given consideration; there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing specific questions over others.
- There is no right or wrong way to answer: It's about getting to know your personality, background, interests, and achievements in your voice.
- Remember, the personal questions are just that — personal. This means you should use our guidance for each question as a suggestion in case you need help. The important thing is expressing who you are, what matters to you, and what you want to share with UC.
- Your responses are **ONLY** read by UC Admissions & Scholarships. Your information is kept private and not shared outside of UC admission purposes.
- **The most important tip is to START EARLY** - this gives you time to consider all questions and get appropriate feedback.
- **VIDEO From UC:** [General Introduction & Purpose](#)
- **Review this writing tool in its entirety!**

**BEGINNING YOUR DRAFTS:**

- [Review writing tips](#)
- [UC PIQ Guide for Freshmen](#) / [UC PIQ Guide](#)
- Once you know which 4 questions you will respond to, begin your responses where you see “Start typing response here.....”
- Share your responses with 1-2 adults/friends who will provide feedback (English teacher, counselor, adviser, etc.).

**You are ready to share your DRAFT with others if you can answer YES to all of the following questions:**

- ☐ Is there a precise TOPIC and 1-2 examples to support it?
- ☐ Do the first couple of sentences answer the question?
- ☐ Am I telling a story? With enough facts for the reader to understand? Did you explain why/how this is meaningful/significant to you, your growth, and/or your future?
- ☐ Did I answer all parts of the questions?
- ☐ Does the response focus on me (using I statements)?
- ☐ Did I read it out loud to myself?

## PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS

**Question #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.

**#1 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #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.

**#2 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #3:** What would you say is your greatest **TALENT OR SKILL**? How have you developed & demonstrated that talent over time?

**#3 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #4:** Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY** (OR) worked to overcome an **EDUCATIONAL BARRIER** you have faced. *An educational opportunity can be anything that has added value to your educational experience and better prepared you for college. Examples: SUMMER program, honors or Advanced Courses (AP), Concurrent Enrollment courses at a community college, or choosing to attend your selected high school. Examples of educational barriers can be anything that you had to work through and overcome to succeed academically (i.e., having a learning disability or learning to speak English). There can also be barriers presented by schooling experiences (attending elementary or middle schools that did not prepare you for the rigor of high school, having long-term substitutes, attending schools with limited college prep or advanced courses, attending a high school with little counseling/college guidance).*

**#4 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #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?

**#5 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #6:** Think about an **ACADEMIC SUBJECT** that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

**#6 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #7:** What have **YOU DONE** to make your SCHOOL (OR) COMMUNITY a **BETTER PLACE**?

**#7 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

**Question #8:** Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you **STAND OUT** as a strong candidate for admission to the UC?

**#8 Response** - Start typing the response here...

[General Feedback](#)

### ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) COMMENT SECTIONS

There are 2 Additional Comment Sections on the UC Application: **BOTH ARE OPTIONAL**

**ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC COMMENTS:** Tell us *anything else you want us to know about your academic record that you have not had the opportunity to describe elsewhere in this section. Utilize this section to explain any circumstances related to your academics, courses, grades, etc. - this typically clarifies information. (550 character limit)*

- **Bullet/list possible items on your academic record that require a brief explanation.**

**ADDITIONAL PERSONAL COMMENTS:** Describe anything else that you have not had an opportunity to include elsewhere in your application. (550-word limit). *Technically, this is optional, but we recommend using all parts of the application to share information about yourself!*

Read the suggestions below:

- LEAVE THIS FOR LAST - speak with your counselor about what you include in this section.
- Found in the section where you upload your prompts.
- DO NOT USE TO CONTINUE YOUR PROMPTS.
- Use to clarify or expand essential details about your academic history or personal life that may not be explained anywhere else on your application and that you HAVE NOT already mentioned in your prompts.
- Provide additional clarification on essential details in your application, such as honors, awards, and activities.
- It's ok to mention different pieces of information in response. For example, you can discuss a failing grade in Pre-Cal and also write about visa or name issues.
- If you are applying to highly selective majors or math & science-based majors (*i.e., engineering, computer science, pharmacology, architecture, or very small arts-based majors*) and have not written about WHY you are passionate about this area of study and career pathway - DO SO HERE!
- **Possible topics:**
  - o Participation in College Access Programs
  - o 5th year in high school
  - o A poor grade in a particular course
  - o If any AP's that you wanted to take are not offered at the school/don't fit into your schedule
  - o Having to be a teacher's assistant (TA) senior year (see a counselor before you write)
  - o Name Change
  - o Visa Issues
  - o Learning Disability
  - o Attending many schools

- **Bullet / list out possible topics**

## WRITING TIPS

- **Start Early** - this gives you time to consider all questions and get appropriate feedback.
- **The response should focus on YOU!**
- **We don't look at writing style; we look for content.** Your response should add clarity, depth, and/or context to the application as a whole.
- **Write persuasively** - Expand on a topic by using specific examples to support your points.
- **Be you.** Use plenty of "I" statements. Talk about yourself so that we can get to know your personality, talents, accomplishments, and potential for success on a UC campus.
- **Get to the point** - 350 words is not a lot; know how you will answer the prompt before starting to write.
- **Don't be afraid to tell a difficult story.** We want to know about any hardships you have overcome and how they have made you a better, stronger, more determined person.
- **Don't leave out important details.**
  - If you are writing about a talent you have been working on - how many years?
  - If you are writing about the need to work and balance your schoolwork - how many hours a week do you work? How long have you been working?
  - If you are sharing about a difficult situation - how long has this been going on?
- **Tell us what you want us to think about you;** if you want us to think you are a LEADER, identify yourself as a LEADER and explain.
- **Get feedback** - getting feedback from a trusted adult can help you write powerful responses. Keep in mind that different people may give you different feedback/suggestions. Try to get feedback from no more than 2 readers (if possible, one should be someone with expertise in reading college essays, like a college counselor or advisor).
- **Copy and paste.** Once you are satisfied with your answers, save them in plain text (ASCII) and paste them into the space provided in the application. If you use contractions or any special characters (" , ' ! ) after you cut and paste, proofread again to ensure your characters appear appropriately.
- **Proofread and edit.**
- **Don't be afraid to start over** or change your mind on which questions to answer - this is part of the writing process.

## AVOID:

- **Waiting until the last minute and only doing one draft.** Expect to write many, many drafts. Ask at least two people (a peer and a teacher/counselor) for feedback.
- **Not answering ALL parts of the question**
- **Focusing on others** (family) and not yourself
- **Talking about one particular campus** - all UC campuses will see your response
- **Repeating a theme/topic in several questions**
- **Stretching the truth**
- **Inappropriate use of humor**
- **Creative Writing** (poems, scene-setting)
- **Quotations** - this is about YOUR thoughts
- **Acronyms** - spell it out!
- **Generalities** - stick to facts and specifics
- **"Laundry list"** of accomplishments or activities - each response should mention one or two new ideas/examples
- **Philosophy** - Don't ask questions without providing an answer
- **Continuing prompts in Additional Comments**