

# THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

FOR FRESHMAN AND TRANSFER APPLICANTS

*The personal statement is a critical, required component of your application for UC undergraduate admission and scholarships. Your test scores and grades show us what you have achieved academically; the personal statement allows us to get to know you as an individual through your experiences and accomplishments.*

## Steps to an Effective Personal Statement

- Begin well before the deadline.
- Read the application instructions carefully.
- Make a list of ideas.
- Write a first attempt, leave it for a day or two, and return to make revisions.
- Provide details and examples of your personal experience, and elaborate on insights gained.
- Read each draft aloud to catch misspellings or awkward or inappropriate wording.
- When you prepare your final draft, correct grammar and spelling.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE

The statement is an opportunity for you to add clarity, depth and meaning to information collected in other parts of the UC application, including talents, achievements or experiences that help us learn about you as an individual. We look for essays in which an individual's character emerges, and that include qualities that we know will help you succeed at UC Davis and also enrich our learning community. The two prompts offer you an opportunity to discuss your personal commitment to learning; any special talent, experience, contribution or personal quality you will bring to the university; and other information that is important for us to consider.

## WRITING A SUCCESSFUL STATEMENT

Composing a personal statement can be intimidating; this may be the first time you have written anything that summarizes yourself in this way. Begin well before the deadline in order to take pressure off yourself and improve the quality of the final draft. Read the instructions in the application book carefully. Make a list of ideas. Then write a first attempt, leave it for a day or two, and return to make revisions. Write it yourself. A well-focused statement is more effective, and you should write in a mature, thoughtful voice that avoids clichés. Read each draft aloud—this helps you catch misspellings or awkward or inappropriate wording. When you prepare your final draft, correct grammar and spelling. This effort contributes to a good personal statement.

Our application process involves comparing your application to those of other highly qualified and competitive students. Other applicants may have similar accomplishments to yours, such as serving in student government, playing on sports teams, chairing committees or traveling abroad. Providing details and examples of your personal experience can help you stand out from the crowd. Your statement can also be very successful if it elaborates on the insights you gained, or on the ways someone or something has influenced your outlook, activities, commitment or goals. Do not attempt to get noticed by using literary theatrics or by adopting an overly humorous tone.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants respond to two short-answer prompts using no more than 1,000 words total. Each response may be as long as necessary, yet we suggest your shortest response be no less than 250 words. In the application, a rationale accompanies each prompt to help you understand the intent. The first prompt is the only one that offers different expectations for freshman and transfer applicants, although the rationale is the same.

If you are an older or reentry student, or if you are currently on active military duty, a veteran of the U.S. armed forces or in the Reserves or National Guard, be sure to mention the significance of your life experiences as they relate to your educational plans.

If you are applying as a transfer student from an institution other than a California community college, include your reason for transferring to the University of California. You must also explain any gaps in your education, including an explanation of what you did during that period.

### Instructions for Scholarship Applicants

Some scholarship committees review your personal statement. An effectively written statement will serve you in the scholarship and admissions evaluation processes. Please note that some scholarships, such as the Cal Aggie Alumni Association Leadership Scholarship, may require separate applications and essays. Once again, read all instructions carefully.

### Instructions for Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Applicants

If you wish to be considered for participation in EOP (an academic support program for students from low-income families in which neither parent is a four-year college graduate), your personal statement should address that desire. Discuss your circumstances, your response to them, and how the program might benefit you. We are especially interested in learning about your determination and motivation to succeed academically, even though you may have lacked the kind of support and understanding available in families of second- or third-generation college-bound students.

## Common Statement Pitfalls

- Not reading the instructions in the application.
- Not writing about recent events.
- Repeating information already noted in the application without elaborating or providing specific examples and details.
- Listing accomplishments.
- Using gimmicky writing techniques.
- Writing more about an inspirational person than yourself.
- Rambling thoughts.
- Being overly self-deprecating or glorifying.

## Instructions for Applicants with U.S. Military Service

If you are currently on active military duty, a veteran of the U.S. armed forces, or in the Reserves of National Guard, you may wish to use the personal statement to communicate the following: 1) to describe how your military service has been instrumental in developing your educational plans, 2) to indicate if you are entitled to educational benefits as a result of your own military service or the service-connected death or disability of a parent or spouse, or 3) to indicate if you are affiliated with the military, such as but not limited to the spouse or dependent of someone who is on active duty or a current participant in an ROTC-type program.

## GETTING MORE INFORMATION

Teachers and counselors in your high school or community college are good sources of information about writing your personal statement. You may also want to consult various books or videotapes available in your counseling office, career center, transfer center or local library.

You can view the online application for admission and scholarships as well as instructions at [universityofcalifornia.edu/apply](http://universityofcalifornia.edu/apply). More information about UC Davis, including campus-specific admission information, can be found at [admissions.ucdavis.edu](http://admissions.ucdavis.edu).

If you are applying to non-UC schools, please read their instructions for writing a personal statement. The statement you write for us likely will not fulfill their requirements.

## IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Read the instructions in the application packet carefully. The most common mistake applicants make is to skim the written instructions or to rely on information received from others.

For the online application, we recommend creating the personal statement in a word processing program, then pasting it into the online application. Use the Word Count feature to be sure that you are writing to the appropriate lengths. If filling out the paper application, use 8.5"x11" white paper for your personal statement. Type in a 12-point common font or write in black ink on only one side of each sheet. Be sure each answer clearly indicates the question it is addressing. In the top right corner of each page, print your name, date of birth and the words "Personal Statement."

### Prompt 1

**Freshman applicants:** Describe the world you come from – for example, your family, community or school – and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

**Transfer applicants:** What is your intended major? Discuss how your interest in the subject developed and describe any experience you have had in the field – such as volunteer work, internships and employment, participation in student organizations and activities – and what you have gained from your involvement.

### Prompt 2

**All applicants:** Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

**Note:** The information and advice in this flyer are offered by the UC Davis campus to address what we look for in a personal statement. Other UC campuses may review your personal statement differently. This information is a supplement, not a substitute, for the application instructions.

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