

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of July 15, 2026

THE HISTORY AND ROLE OF A–G IN UC ADMISSIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of California's A–G course approval process serves as the foundation for ensuring California students are academically prepared for success at UC and the California State University while promoting consistent, rigorous college-preparatory curricula statewide. Through ongoing course review, partnerships with K–12 schools, and targeted outreach programs, UC has expanded access to A–G coursework and improved completion rates.

BACKGROUND

The University of California's role in reviewing the curricular content of California public and private high schools dates back to the 1880s. To this day, UC has the authority to approve or disapprove courses submitted by a school and to confer with schools concerning their programs. Under the delegated authority of the UC Academic Senate, specifically the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), Undergraduate Admissions' High School Articulation unit reviews and approves A–G courses based on criteria set by UC faculty.

The current structure of the college preparatory curriculum in California was first established and incorporated into UC Academic Senate regulations and bylaws in 1931. The Academic Senate set the pattern of core University-approved courses in six subject areas and by the early 1960s, California high school students applying to UC were required to complete 15 A–F courses. In 1999, in coordination with the California State University (CSU), UC added visual and performing arts (now “F” in the A–G requirements, with “G” including college preparatory electives). The additional requirement went into effect in 2003. Accordingly, California high school students preparing for UC or CSU must complete the 15 A–G courses.¹

¹ The specific ways in which the courses requirements can be met for each system vary.
<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/files/documents/csu-uc-comparison-matrix.pdf>

SUBJECT AREA	YEARS REQUIRED
A: History/social science	2 years
B: English	4 years
C: Mathematics	3 years
D: Science	2 years
E: Language other than English	2 years
F: Visual and performing arts	1 year
G: College preparatory elective	1 year

UC's High School Articulation unit reviews thousands of A–G courses annually and supports California teachers and administrators in designing rigorous curricula to facilitate high school students' preparation for higher education. The review of courses and maintenance of course lists for a variety of types of institutions—such as public and private comprehensive high schools, continuation schools, K–12 districts, charter networks, and regional occupational programs hosted by County offices of education—serve to align curricula across educational segments to support students' successful and smooth transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions and to maximize their opportunities to enter college regardless of where they complete their high school coursework. Of the more than 2 million students enrolled in the state's public schools, 98 percent have access to the full A-G curriculum.

The A–G course pattern is meant to ensure that students have attained a body of general knowledge that will provide breadth and perspective to more advanced learning, preparing students to participate fully in their first-year program at UC or CSU in a wide array of academic disciplines. Additionally, the A–G curriculum fosters development of key study skills and provides students with practice in critical thinking and analysis to position them for successful college studies and future careers.

California requires fewer years of successful completion of mathematics, science, and English language arts than many other states in order to earn a standard high school diploma.² In addition to guiding strong student preparation for college studies, UC and CSU also encourage high schools to offer curricula that exceed these minimum credit requirements, creating opportunities for students to excel beyond the demands of a standard diploma.

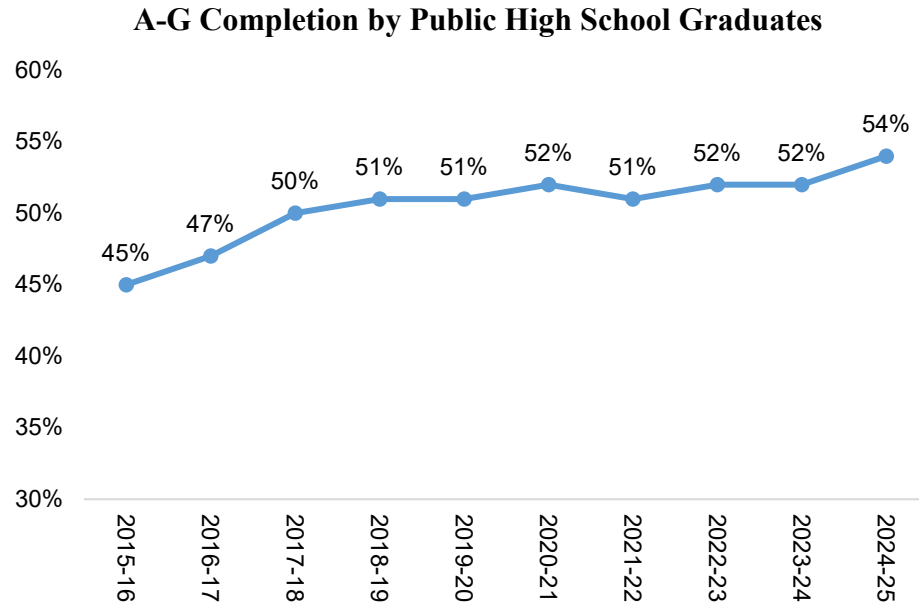
Under the California Master Plan for Higher Education, UC is mandated to provide access to the top one-eighth, or 12.5 percent, of the state's high school graduates and CSU to the top one-third. The admission requirements: A–G fulfillment, grade point average (GPA), and, until 2020, standardized tests were intended to identify that class of students who fall into this high-performing group. How well the criteria performed in identifying these students and their completion of college degrees have been assessed periodically, in particular by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), which was responsible for conducting regular eligibility studies until its dissolution in 2011.

² <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/high-school-graduation-requirements-2023-04>

The results of the eligibility studies often had a profound impact on UC admissions policies and practices. Eligibility studies showing that UC's admission requirements conferred eligibility on less than the top one-eighth of California's high school graduates led to strategies designed to increase access to the University — for example, the development of the Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) path, which granted UC eligibility to the top 4 percent (now 9 percent) of each high school class — while studies that showed UC's entrance requirements were providing access to too many students had the opposite effect, e.g., requiring all students to submit SAT/ACT scores; establishing the Academic Index, which combined test scores and GPA; and raising GPA and Academic Index requirements. Under both scenarios, the University was obligated to change its admissions rules to expand or limit the number of high school students who were deemed to be in the top 12.5 percent as envisioned when the Master Plan was created. Nevertheless, the A-G course pattern has provided clear achievement markers for students to aim for.

The end of CPEC has meant that there has not been an independent entity to conduct eligibility studies since the last such study in 2007. Moreover, despite the 2004 recommendation by the UC Eligibility and Admissions Study Group that studies be completed every three years, there was a nine-year gap between the last CPEC study and the next eligibility study commissioned in 2017 by the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, then known as the Office of Planning and Research, on the high school graduating class of 2015. No eligibility studies have been conducted since.

In furtherance of Regents Policy 4400, Policy on University of California Diversity Statement, UC has supported initiatives that extend opportunities for academic enrichment that enable a broader cross section of Californians to complete the University's rigorous entry requirements. Many of UC's K–16 pipeline activities, such as programs, services, and training provided by Student Academic Preparation and Educational Partnerships (SAPEP), UC Compass, UC SCOUT, Mathematics, Engineering, Science, and Achievement (MESA) and others, seek to improve academic preparation and college readiness, including closing gaps in A–G completion throughout the state. These outreach efforts have paid off, as data from UC's Information Center show that the rate of A–G completion among high school graduates has risen steadily from 45 percent of public high school graduates in 2015–16 to 54 percent completion in 2024–25.



Source: UC Information Center

KEY TO ACRONYMS

A-G	The college preparatory curriculum covering a range of high school subject areas used to satisfy the University of California and the California State University's minimum requirement for admission as first-year, freshman student.
BOARS	Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools
CPEC	California Postsecondary Education Commission
CSU	California State University
GPA	Grade Point Average
UC	University of California