



---

Steven W. Cheung  
Chair, Assembly of the  
Academic Senate  
Faculty Representative,  
UC Board of Regents  
Academic Senate

Office of the President  
1111 Franklin Street  
Oakland, CA 94607

[senate.universityofcalifornia.edu](https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu)

---

CAMPUSES

Berkeley  
Davis  
Irvine  
UCLA  
Merced  
Riverside  
San Diego  
San Francisco  
Santa Barbara  
Santa Cruz

MEDICAL CENTERS

Davis  
Irvine  
UCLA  
San Diego  
San Francisco

NATIONAL LABORATORIES

Lawrence Berkeley  
Lawrence Livermore  
Los Alamos

December 19, 2024

Katherine S. Newman  
Provost & Executive Vice President

Re: Academic Senate Statement on Characteristics of Undergraduate  
Educational Quality at the University of California

Dear Provost Newman,

At its December 12, 2024 meeting, the Assembly of the Academic Senate  
unanimously endorsed (56-0) the attached statement, "Characteristics of  
Undergraduate Educational Quality at the University of California."

The statement, developed by the University Committee on Educational  
Policy (UCEP), underwent a systemwide Senate review and was revised  
based on broad feedback. It articulates the shared components of UC's  
academic excellence, offering a framework to guide the University's  
academic programs, priorities, and actions to sustain UC's success and  
impact. It addresses key features of educational quality, including courses  
and programs, the distinctive holistic context in which UC students  
experience their education, principles of oversight and review, and  
expected student outcomes. It highlights the expertise of UC faculty, the  
abilities and engagement of UC students, and the dynamic, research-  
based environment that defines UC. The statement is intended as a  
concise articulation of core principles rather than a detailed roadmap of  
processes and criteria.

In endorsing the statement, the Assembly agreed to transmit it to you for  
distribution to campus provosts and undergraduate deans. We also  
request that you share the document with the Board of Regents Academic  
and Student Affairs Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven W. Cheung". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Cheung" clearly distinguishable.

Steven W. Cheung  
Chair, Academic Council

cc: Assembly of the Academic Senate  
Senate Division Executive Directors  
Senate Executive Director Lin



## Characteristics of Undergraduate Educational Quality at the University of California

*Approved by the Assembly of the Academic Senate  
December 12, 2024*

A statement on educational quality was originally developed in 2009-2010 by the Education and Curriculum working group of the UC Commission on the Future, to be used as a basis for evaluating change due to the ongoing budget difficulties at that time and the possible inclusion of more online instruction. Increasing interest in online education prompted Academic Senate leadership to request that the [University Committee on Educational Policy \(UCEP\)](#) revise and update the previous quality statement and send the new statement to the Senate divisions for comment (divisions were not asked to comment on the previous statement). UCEP acknowledges that this statement on quality is aspirational in nature but believes that it is grounded in the mission of the University of California and the world-renowned excellence and rigor of UC's undergraduate academic programs. As of 2024, 52% of the undergraduate population are enrolled in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields. The rigor of UC degree programs is proven by the success of UC students in admission to graduate programs. Over the past two decades, more than 40% of all UC undergraduates have completed a graduate degree within 10 years of receiving their UC bachelor's degree. UC degree programs are highly successful in training students with challenging curricula. Graduation rates among UC campuses are among the best in the nation. 2024 graduation rates reported by the Department of Education (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>) are: Berkeley: 94%; Los Angeles: 93%; San Diego: 90%; Davis: 89%; Irvine: 87%; Santa Barbara: 86%; Riverside: 80%; Santa Cruz: 80%; Merced: 72%.

A UC Presidential Task Force on Instructional Modalities and UC Quality Undergraduate Degree Programs is currently drafting specific recommendations for online education with an expected completion of recommendations by Fall 2024. For this reason, the current UC Quality statement does not include specific reference to online instruction. We provide this updated statement and responses from divisions to inform the task force in their important work and as a guide for any new degree programs.

**Fundamental Basis for a UC Quality Education.** Collectively, the University of California, California State University, and California Community Colleges provide higher educational opportunities for all residents of the state. The distinctive mission of the UC "is to serve society as a center of higher learning, providing long-term societal benefits through transmitting advanced knowledge, discovering new knowledge, and functioning as an active working repository of organized knowledge." To support achievement of that teaching, research, and public service mission, the delivery of the highest caliber undergraduate educational programs is paramount. The quality of a UC education fundamentally derives from three key components: the training and expertise of UC faculty, the ability and engagement of UC students, and the rich research-based environment central to the UC system.

- The vision of what constitutes desired and acceptable quality will appropriately come from the faculty responsible for the curriculum and teaching in each undergraduate degree or program.
- The measures of success ultimately will be derived from the experiences and achievements of students supported by multiple campus resources.

**UC Quality: Environment.** UC quality derives not just from individual courses or activities but from the comprehensive educational experience at the system's 10 top-tier public research universities which:

- Leverages synergies across campuses while simultaneously giving students access to the unique characteristics of each institution.
- Provides a civil and inclusive multicultural environment that conveys and helps to develop the most current knowledge, theories, ideas, and perspectives, in a context of academic freedom.
- Takes advantage of the important social, cultural, and intellectual contributions enabled by enriching California's diverse population of faculty and students, with faculty and students from around the nation and world, particularly those from underrepresented populations.
- Offers insights and experiences based in both research and practice, including engaging students with hands-on projects closely mentored by UC faculty.
- Promotes a rich learning environment beyond the classroom, providing context for social interactions with others, potentially grounding and inspiring creative research activities and other contributions to society, and creating relationships that can continue after graduation.
- Fosters a safe and healthy living environment for each student, with the academic resources, libraries, campus facilities, health and wellness support, cultural events, social opportunities for informal interactions with peers and mentors, and other enrichment activities that will allow students to maximize their success.
- Employs first-class educational facilities and instructional environments (e.g., laboratories, libraries, and art studios) that promote student success.

**UC Quality: Educational Offerings.** The following features enable UC to deliver high-quality educational content and maximize student outcomes, leveraging UC's status as California's primary public academic research institution. Courses, programs, and extracurricular activities that define UC quality:

Are Structured to Maximize Student Success

- Are developed and taught primarily by UC Academic Senate faculty, as well as lecturers, graduate students, and external specialists with relevant expertise, and address content reflecting the most relevant research.
- Employ effective pedagogical practices for each area, recognize student needs, and promote high levels of engagement among different types of student learners, regardless of instructional modality.
- Include appropriate and substantive student-instructor and student-student interaction.
- Have appropriate student-instructor ratios, which might vary by discipline and with instructional aims.

### Build Core Competencies and Critical Thinking Skills

- Provide a framework by which students achieve objective standards of knowledge, competence, and information literacy appropriate to the field of study.
- Train students to find, evaluate, interpret, and organize information critically, analytically, and effectively. Empower them with skills in the acquisition, assimilation, and synthesis of knowledge that will allow nimble adaptation to the ever-changing intellectual, cultural, and technological environment, not only in California but across the globe.
- Promote intellectual curiosity and creativity and an appreciation for knowledge, including knowledge for which practical applications are not immediately apparent.
- Nurture intellectual independence, originality, creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

### Ensure Rigor and Depth

- Operate at a high level of intellectual rigor suited to the extraordinary level of academic potential of the student body.
- Maintain high ethical standards and intellectual integrity.
- Scaffold courses on a core set of knowledge, concepts, and skills, enabling students to reflect and build in a temporally extended way on what they are learning.

### Foster Breadth of Perspective and Interactive Learning Communities

- Develop interpersonal and communication skills that will contribute to success through collaboration.
- Provide ample opportunities for closely mentored relationships with faculty and other University-affiliated personnel, that allow students to pursue independent research, creative activity, or service to society.
- Facilitate informal and less-structured interactions that enable learning and development of perspectives beyond those that can be captured by typical tests and other structured assessments.
- Develop sensitivity to the diversity of domestic and international cultures that will enhance students' capacity to operate within the University, and advance U.S. and global society.
- Contribute to a sense of the course, program, and campus as a learning community that facilitates productive peer-to-peer interaction, support, and feedback.

**UC Quality: Oversight.** To ensure their effectiveness, UC courses and educational programs are subjected to rigorous and ongoing review. Key elements of this process include:

- Course and program development led by faculty with expertise in the latest pedagogy, research, and practice in the field, followed by reviews for content, rigor, innovation, modality-specific issues, and quality assurance at multiple levels (department, school, UC Academic Senate).
- Systematic monitoring of existing educational offerings, exercising the UC Academic Senate course and program review process.
- Regular review of content and delivery of instruction by individual faculty at multiple levels, including self-assessments, student evaluations, and internal and external peer faculty and

administrative appraisals, which are considered in the faculty member's record as faculty are considered for advancement within the University.

- A high-quality, equitable course and program assessment process in which faculty develop learning goals, mapping them to the curriculum, and evaluating students' mastery of those goals. Learning targets include skills related to critical thinking, analytical reasoning, written and oral communication, and other discipline-based skills.
- Investment in ongoing training, course development support, and resources for faculty, with reference to pedagogical developments and the emergence of new teaching modalities.
- Assessment of University and campuses to ensure that the system and campuses allocate the academic resources required for faculty to teach and students to learn with appropriately high, field-specific pedagogy, research, and practices.

**UC Quality: Expected Outcomes.** Graduates of UC will have the ability to:

- Weigh evidence critically and think independently.
- Demonstrate integrity and principled leadership.
- Simultaneously hold multiple narratives in mind.
- Communicate effectively using skills in rhetorical writing with clarity of thought.
- Assess information for accuracy and trustworthiness.
- Make intellectual and creative contributions that serve the public good in California, the nation, and the world.
- Succeed in subsequent study and other postgraduate scholarly activities.
- Make professional contributions in their chosen field, informed by their experience in a research-oriented academic environment, with undergraduates contributing to the creation of new knowledge with opportunities to work at the very cutting edge of theory and practice.
- Apply the breadth and depth of their education, readily adapting to and taking advantage of rapid changes and evolutions in knowledge, technology, and social paradigms.