

Google Analytics 4 Guide

University Relations, Digital Marketing & Analytics

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A. ABOUT THE TRANSITION

As of June 2022, UCR is in the process of transitioning the campus from using Universal Analytics (UA) to Google Analytics 4 (GA4) and preparing for the sunsetting of UA in July 2023.

This guide was created to serve as a resource for campus partners during this transition.

The campus-wide transition will be handled by University Relations and ITS, with the option for campus partners to request and configure their own Google Analytics/Google Tag Manager if additional customization is desired for their specific program area.

What is Google Analytics?

Google Analytics (GA) is a web analytics service used to track user behavior on websites with the GA tracking code configured. GA includes features that can help identify trends and patterns in how visitors engage with our websites.

What is the current Google Analytics setup?

The UC Riverside campus is currently set up with Universal Analytics (UA). Most ucr.edu sites are tagged with the main campus UA code (UA-3051875-1), with the following exceptions:

- The Enrollment Team and Student Affairs team are tagged with their own UA codes. Their analytics are still housed in different accounts but are now being managed by the University Relations team.
- There are a few program areas/colleges that have their own GA accounts that are managed by each team independently.

What is Google Analytics 4?

GA4 is **not** an upgrade to UA. It is a completely new version of GA that works based on a different model. GA4 is centered around an event-based model, whereas UA stands on a session-based data model.

Why are we transitioning to Google Analytics 4?

UA is going to stop processing data in July 2023, and historical data in UA will be available for up to 6 months after July 2023 (so up until January 2024).

One of the reasons that Google is discontinuing UA is to address data privacy concerns. Per Google, "UA was built for a generation of online measurement that was anchored in the desktop web, independent sessions and more easily observable data from cookies." By not relying exclusively on cookies and using an event-based data model, GA4 can operate across multiple platforms. This makes it a more future-proof solution.

What will the campus-wide transition to Google Analytics 4 look like?

With the transition to GA4, there is an opportunity to restructure our campus GA account(s) to be more cohesive, track user engagement across the entire ucr.edu domain (all sites hosted on Drupal), while still having the ability to drill down into specific segments as needed.

Next steps from University Relations and ITS

1. University Relations and ITS are working to globally add the new campus GA4 tracking codes to all ~700 sites hosted on Drupal once the Pantheon transition is complete.
2. University Relations will provide this guide, two live trainings, and a recorded video training to prepare our campus partners for this transition. These resources will all be available on <https://websites.ucr.edu/google-analytics-tracking>.

Timeline

- **September-October 2022:** The new campus GA4 tracking codes will be added to all ucr.edu sites by ITS.
- **September-October 2022:** Stephanie will release this guide and a recorded video training to campus partners.
- **October-November 2022:** Stephanie will host two live, basic GA4 training sessions for campus partners.
- **November-December 2022:** Campus partners will have access to training resources on <https://websites.ucr.edu/google-analytics-tracking>.
- **July 2023:** UA will no longer process any hits. We will officially move to GA4 as our main analytics platform.
- **July-December 2023:** Campus partners will identify and save historical data from UA before January 2024.

How will this transition impact my work as a campus partner?

Setting up GA4

- Campus partners will not need to set up the new campus GA4 codes on their sites. This will be handled by ITS.
- Campus partners can set up their own GA4 or GTM codes on their sites, if desired (not required). To do so, please follow the instructions outlined in the [Advanced Google Analytics 4 for My Program Area](#) section in this document.

Saving historical data

- Campus partners will need to identify and save historical data from UA, as it will not be available past January 1, 2024. Please keep in mind that for the most part, reports from UA and GA4 will not be comparable, as they are using completely different models to process data.
- University Relations and ITS are working to save UA data into Big Query. Details to come.

Understanding and using GA4

- Campus partners will need to take ownership of learning GA4 and applying their knowledge to their respective program areas/colleges.
- This guide and the resources provided by University Relations are meant to serve as a general overview of the transition and an outline of how it may apply to campus partners at a high-level. However, since GA4 is such a new tool with updates and enhancements happening constantly, it will be up to the campus partner to determine the depth of knowledge relevant to their respective program areas/colleges.

What are my next steps as a campus partner?

1. Read through the guide thoroughly and review the recommended online trainings.
2. Attend one of the two live trainings in October/November 2022 (both sessions will cover the same material).
3. Save your historical data from UA before January 1, 2024.

B. GOOGLE ANALYTICS 4 BASICS

What are the key differences between Universal Analytics and Google Analytics 4?

Please refer to this article: <https://www.monsterinsights.com/docs/google-analytics-4-versus-universal-analytics/>

How do I save my historical data from Universal Analytics?

Please refer to this article: <https://www.workshopdigital.com/blog/save-universal-analytics-data-for-ga4/>

Please refer to this video tutorial: [How to backup Universal Analytics: Exporting data from Google Analytics and moving to GA4.](#)

For the average campus partner, saving the basic metrics will be enough to reference for future reporting. I recommend exporting the data into Google Sheets or Excel. For more robust details and reporting capabilities of historical data, you may need to look into a data warehouse like Big Query.

Please note, you can export data from UA, but you cannot import this data into GA4. Remember that GA4 is a completely new version of GA, and data from UA and GA4 are not comparable since they are processed differently.

What standard reports are available in Google Analytics 4?

Please refer to this article: <https://www.bluecompass.com/blog/understanding-google-analytics-4-reporting>

Please refer to this article: <https://databox.com/most-useful-google-analytics-reports#head1.4>

To view standard reports specifically for your program area, you will need to create a comparison with the specific hostname(s) you would like to review. Please refer to [Google Analytics 4 Guide - Creating and Using Your Comparison/Segment in Reports](#).

How do I create custom exploration reports in Google Analytics 4?

Please refer to this article: <https://www.monsterinsights.com/how-to-create-google-analytics-4-custom-reports-step-by-step/>

To view key exploration reports specifically for your program area, you will need to reach out to the Marketing Data Manager to create a segment and set up key exploration reports for you. Please refer to [Google Analytics 4 Guide - Creating and Using Your Comparison/Segment in Reports](#).

C. ADVANCED GOOGLE ANALYTICS FOR MY PROGRAM AREA (Optional)

When should I create a separate Google Analytics 4 property/Google Tag Manager container for my program area?

We encourage our campus partners to create a separate Google Analytics 4 property and Google Tag Manager container if they want to customize and have more control over tags/tracking for their specific program area. The campus GA4 codes and the separate program area-specific codes will work concurrently if they are set up properly.

However, please note that you do **not** need to create your own GA4 property and GTM container if you only want to track your basic site analytics, which is what fulfills most campus partners' needs. With the standard campus set-up managed by University Relations and ITS, you will have access to all your basic site analytics, including your site's top pages, acquisition channels/mediums, referral sites, devices, regions/cities, views, engagements, and more.

What are the benefits of having a separate GA4 property/GTM container for my program area?

- Examples of how you can customize your GA4 property:
 - o Creating custom events, dimensions, or metrics.
 - o Defining specific custom events as conversions.
 - o Creating your own segments and audiences for targeting/retargeting with Google Ads.
 - o Creating your own funnel tracking to see if users follow your defined/expected site paths.
- Examples of how you can customize your GTM container:
 - o Creating custom tags that allow you to track specific details on your page, such as clicks on certain links, form completions, granular scroll depths, user-defined variables, etc.

How do I set up my separate tracking for my program area?

Create GA4 Property and GTM Container (one-time set-up by Marketing Data Manager)

Step 1: Submit an inquiry to the Marketing Data Manager via email

- Please reach out to the Marketing Data Manager, Stephanie Nguyen (stephanie.nguyen@ucr.edu), to inquire about custom Google Analytics tracking for your program area.
- If it's determined that the current campus GA4 property does not meet your business needs, we will create a separate GA4 property and GTM container for your program area that will be used concurrently with the main GA4 campus properties.

Step 2a: Get access to separate GA4 property

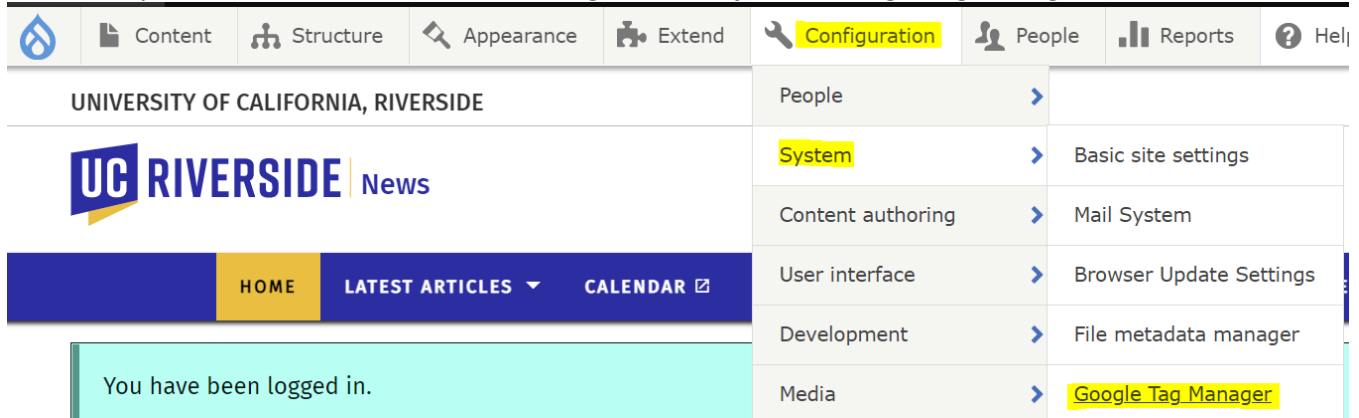
- The Marketing Data Manager will grant you full access to your program area's separate GA4 property.

Step 2b: Get access to separate GTM container

- The Marketing Data Manager will grant you full access to your program area's separate GTM container, which will already be configured by the Marketing Data Manager to process pageviews to your program area's separate GA4 property.

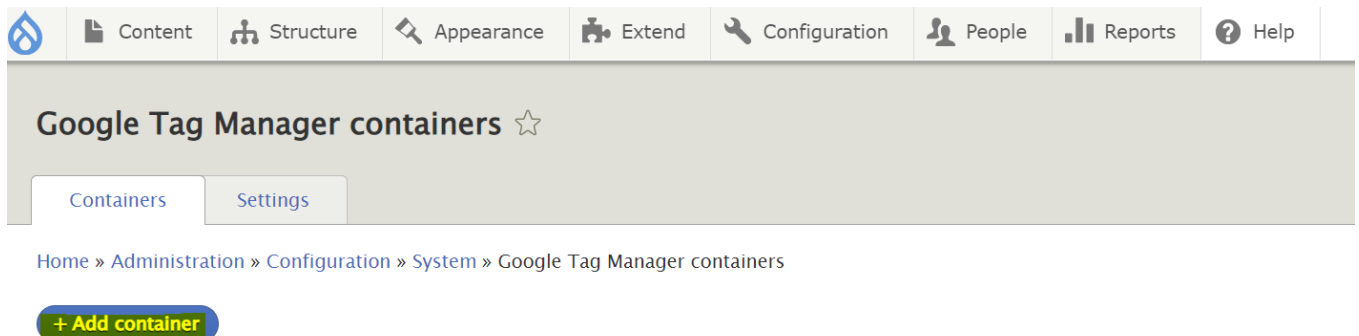
Step 3: Add GTM tag to program area websites using Drupal

- The Marketing Data Manager will instruct you to add your GTM tag to your program area's website(s).
- To do this, you will CAS into the site, select **Configuration > System > Google Tag Manager**:



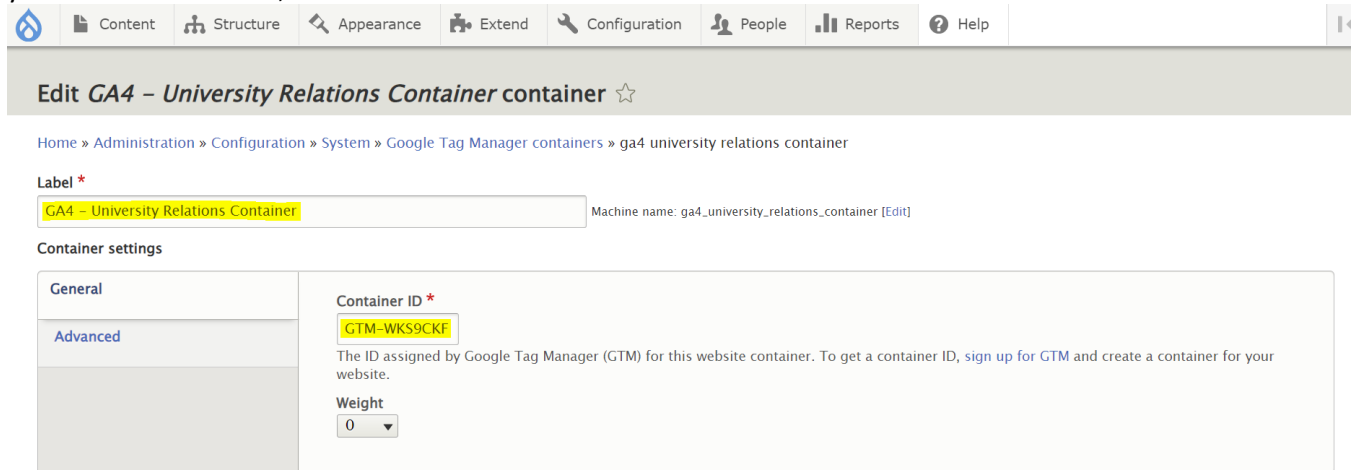
The screenshot shows the Drupal administration interface. The top navigation bar includes tabs for Content, Structure, Appearance, Extend, Configuration (highlighted), People, Reports, and Help. The Configuration menu is open, showing a list of options: People, System (highlighted), Content authoring, User interface, Development, and Media. The System option is selected, leading to a page titled 'UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE' with the UC Riverside News logo. The page has a navigation bar with HOME, LATEST ARTICLES, and CALENDAR. A message at the bottom states 'You have been logged in.' The right sidebar shows a list of configuration options: Basic site settings, Mail System, Browser Update Settings, File metadata manager, and Google Tag Manager (highlighted).

- Click Add Container:



The screenshot shows the Google Tag Manager containers page in Drupal. The top navigation bar includes tabs for Content, Structure, Appearance, Extend, Configuration (highlighted), People, Reports, and Help. The Configuration menu is open, showing a list of options: People, System (highlighted), Content authoring, User interface, Development, and Media. The System option is selected, leading to a page titled 'Google Tag Manager containers'. The page has a navigation bar with Containers (highlighted) and Settings. The main content area shows a list of containers. A button at the bottom left says '+ Add container'.

- Title your Google Tag Manager using the following format: **GA4 – [Program Area] Container**, copy and paste your GTM container ID, and click **Save**:



Home » Administration » Configuration » System » Google Tag Manager containers » ga4 university relations container

Label *

GA4 – University Relations Container Machine name: ga4_university_relations_container [Edit]

Container settings

General	<p>Container ID *</p> <p>GTM-WKS9CKF</p> <p>The ID assigned by Google Tag Manager (GTM) for this website container. To get a container ID, sign up for GTM and create a container for your website.</p> <p>Weight</p> <p>0</p>
Advanced	

- This is a one-time set up for each site. If a new site is spun up for your program area, make sure to add to your process to add your GTM container code to the site.

Customizing GA4 Property (full control by program area)

Step 1: Configure GA4 property as desired

- Example use cases will be available soon.
- For specific questions, you can reach out to the Marketing Data Manager for guidance.

Customizing GTM Container (full control by program area)

Step 1: Configure GTM container property as desired

- Example use cases will be available soon.
 - o Here are some custom GTM templates: <https://tagmanager.google.com/gallery>
 - o Here are some other GTM tag ideas: <https://www.analyticsmania.com/google-tag-manager-recipes/>
- For specific questions, you can reach out to the Marketing Data Manager for guidance.

Step 2: Test GTM container to ensure configuration is correct

- Follow the instructions outlined here: [Google Analytics 4 Guide - Confirm Your Google Analytics Tracking Codes Work](#).

Step 3: Publish GTM container

- Once you are confident with your configurations, move forward with publishing your changes and make sure to document your change details for each version. If you do not have access to publish your changes, please reach out to the Marketing Data Manager.

Linking Google Ads to the new Google Analytics 4 property (Optional)

How to link Google Ads to the new GA4 property

- Refer to these resources:
 - o <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/9379420#zippy=%2Cin-this-article>
 - o <https://www.kristaseiden.com/step-by-step-linking-google-analytics-4-to-google-ads/>
- You will be asked to configure 2 settings: enable personalized advertising and auto-tagging.

If you are already bidding on UA conversions...

- You can migrate these conversions to GA4 conversions, then import them to Ads.
- Refer to this resource: <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/11053134>
- Before importing UA conversions into Google Ads, you should avoid duplication by either:
- Removing your existing UA conversions, or
- Changing them from "primary" to "secondary" conversions in your Google Ads account.
- Plan ahead and confirm when you want to make this official switch before you do so. If applicable, consult with your media buying agency as well to see if they have any recommendations.

D. APPENDIX/RESOURCES

Overview of Google Analytics 4:

- <https://databox.com/google-analytics-4-vs-universal-analytics>
- <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-sunsetting-universal-analytics-in-2023/442168/>
- <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2022/06/23/google-analytics-4-vs-universal-analytics>
- <https://www.rootandbranchgroup.com/ga4-setup/>
- <https://measuremindsgroup.com/ga4-features>
- <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/9679158?hl=en>