



## Frequently Asked Questions - Accreditation

### **What is Accreditation?**

Accreditation in Public Relations is a voluntary certification program for public relations professionals, administered by the Universal Accreditation Board, a consortium of 9 leading industry organizations, including FPRA. The program originated in 1964 and was administered by PRSA until 1998, when the Universal Accreditation Board was formed to administer the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations. The public relations organizations that are members of the Universal Accreditation Board include the Agricultural Relations Council, Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA), Maine Public Relations Council, National School Public Relations Association, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Religion Communicators Council, Southern Public Relations Federation, Texas Public Relations Association and Asociación de Relacionistas Profesionales de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Public Relations Association).

### **What is the purpose of Accreditation?**

The purpose is to unify and advance the profession by identifying those who have demonstrated broad knowledge, experience and professional judgment in the field. The program seeks to improve public relations practice. The designation Accredited in Public Relations (APR) signifies a high professional level of experience and competence.

### **Who is eligible?**

Members of participating organizations who are involved in the professional practice of public relations, or in the teaching or administration of public relations courses in an accredited college or university.

### **What is the process?**

Candidates will sit for a Readiness Review prior to the candidate taking the written portion of the exam. The Readiness Review replaces what has been known as the oral exam. The Readiness Review will include a portfolio review and assessment of the candidate's readiness to take the Exam. The local Readiness Review panel (comprised of Accredited members) will coach each candidate to determine his or her areas of weakness and help identify specific areas of the body of knowledge in which the candidate should focus further study. Candidates may not take the written exam until they have advanced from the Readiness Review.

### **What role does the candidate play in the Readiness Review?**

Candidates are expected to have considered fully their credentials, experience and commitment to Accreditation in embarking on this process and to demonstrate personal leadership throughout the Readiness Review process. Candidates are expected to supply thoughtful responses to the pre-Review questionnaire and to make solid presentations of their capabilities through a portfolio presentation that summarizes their knowledge and experience.

### **What goes into the portfolio that will be presented in Readiness Review?**

Ideally, a portfolio should include evidence of personal knowledge and experience in all aspects of a comprehensive public relations/communications program, from pre-program research through post-implementation evaluation. In cases where individuals other than the candidate performed key functions within the program or campaign being presented, the candidate should be fully prepared to summarize those elements that were conducted by others. If the candidate has no first-hand knowledge of one or more of the elements performed by others - due to being a latecomer

to the project, for example - he or she should be prepared to identify what types of activities conceptually would be performed to result in a comprehensive, objective public relations program.

**Where will Readiness Reviews be held?**

Readiness Reviews will be conducted at a location mutually convenient to the three panelists and the candidate(s) involved in the process.

**Who is responsible for managing the Readiness Review process?**

Readiness Review panels are recruited and prepared by the local Credentialing chairperson.

**How does the Readiness Review connect with the new written Examination?**

Based on the design of the new Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations, candidates successfully demonstrating competency in the 16 different criteria being evaluated during the Readiness Review are viewed as generally having the essential competencies required to successfully pass the written examination. While no guarantee is expressed or implied, the Readiness Review process has been designed to maximize candidates' potential for success.

**How do I prepare for Readiness Review?**

It is suggested that the candidate review the preparation guide for general insight into the Readiness Review process. Then, the candidate should download and answer a series of Readiness Review questions that provide an overview of the candidate to the Readiness Review panel. The Guide to Preparing Your Portfolio supplies recommendations for building the content for the panel's review.

**Does the Readiness Review Panel grant or deny candidates permission to take the written exam?**

No. The panel will review the candidate's Readiness Review session and support materials and determine her or his readiness using a standardized set of criteria. If the candidate scores a minimum of 32 points and scores at least 1 point (on a range of 0-3 points) in each of the 16 criteria, the panel will recommend to the Universal Accreditation Board that the candidate be advanced to take the written Examination. If the candidate does not receive a recommendation to advance to the written Examination, the panel will recommend areas in which the candidate can strengthen his or her knowledge or understanding in preparation for resubmission for Readiness Review. Whether a candidate is advanced or not advanced to the written Examination, the panel will serve as mentors following readiness assessment activities to assist candidates in further preparation.

**Is the Readiness Review "graded" on the quality of the presentation made?**

While speaking and presentation skills are two of the 16 criteria that Readiness Review seeks to identify in candidates, these two criteria are not weighed any more than the other 14 criteria being sought in the process. Candidates must have a certain minimum level of competency in all 16 criteria to advance through Readiness Review and be approved to take the written Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations.

**How are Readiness Review candidates scored?**

To be advanced, candidates must earn a total of 32 points across the 16 criteria examined in this process, based on a scoring range of 0 through 3 points. An assessment of "0" indicates that the candidate was unable to demonstrate any skill in the rated area, "1" reflects very weak demonstration of skill, "2" shows acceptable skill in the rated area and "3" demonstrates exceptional skill in the rated area. Additionally, any candidate receiving a score of 0 in any category cannot be recommended for advancement to the written Examination.

**How will I learn whether or not I have advanced through the Readiness Review stage of the process?**

The Readiness Review panel will report its recommendation to the Universal Accreditation Board. The candidate will receive a communication from the Board within approximately three weeks, reporting the outcome of the Readiness Review.

**How often can a candidate submit to the Readiness Review process?**

Candidates may submit as many times as are needed to demonstrate their readiness for the Examination. If a candidate

is not recommended for advancement to the written Examination, she or he must wait ninety (90) days from the date of the initial Readiness Review session to submit a request for a subsequent Readiness Review.

**If a candidate needs to repeat the Readiness Review process, will he or she sit before the same panelists?**

To the fullest extent possible, a different group of Accredited professionals will be compiled for a second or subsequent Readiness Review.

**Is there an appeal process, in the event that a candidate disagrees with the result of the Readiness Review?**

If a candidate is not deemed as ready to advance to the written examination after two separate Readiness Review sessions, the candidate may request an appeal of the decision from the Universal Accreditation Board.

**How is the new exam for Accreditation in Public Relations different?**

The written portion of the new exam for Accreditation in Public Relations is in a multiple-choice question format and takes 3 hours to complete. It will test what public relations professionals do in the 21st century while maintaining the same high level of quality embodied in the previous exam. This new, enhanced exam for Accreditation in Public Relations is credible and relevant to today's practitioner and employs current best practices in professional certification testing.

**What is the fee to take the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations?**

The fee is \$385. Several of UAB's participating organizations offer their members a rebate for a portion of the Examination fee as a member benefit. FPRA offers candidates trying to attain their Accreditation in Public Relations a \$100 rebate provided the candidate sits for the exam within 30 days of completing the Readiness Review or the chapter's APR study sessions. ***The Southwest Florida Chapter of FPRA offers an additional \$100 rebate.***

Please note *that examination fees are non-refundable or transferable.* Examination fees will be forfeit if a candidate does not cancel or reschedule his/her computer-based examination appointment by noon at least two (2) business days prior to the appointment date. If a candidate misses his/her appointment, he/she will not be rescheduled and will forfeit all fees paid.

Candidates with disabilities covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the UAB staff for details about paperwork that needs to be filed.

**Is Accreditation good for life?**

Yes, with fulfillment of Maintenance of Accreditation requirements and continued membership in a participating organization. Every three years, PRSA members Accredited after January 1, 1993 and participating organization members Accredited after January 1, 1998, must accumulate the required number of points in continuing education, professionalism or service categories as part of the Maintenance of Accreditation Program. This further strengthens the value of the APR credential and keeps professionals actively involved in the currents of the public relations profession.