**APR Information for Chapter Chairs**

# Overview of APR Process

Universal Accreditation is a voluntary program that allows a person to demonstrate his/her proficiency in public relations through a standardized written exam following advancement from an oral readiness review. Successful completion of the exam validates a PR professional's commitment to the field and level of knowledge in public relations practice.

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 the public relations practice. The designation APR signifies a high professional level of experience and competence.

A candidate’s participation in the process is kept confidential. It is up to each individual candidate as to whether he/she would like share that he/she is going through the process. Group study sessions are not mandatory, but it is the responsibility of the chapter Accreditation Chair to provide support for the candidates who need it.

# General Sequence of Events

1. **Apply For Eligibility –** The candidate initiates the process of attaining accreditation. The first step is to print the eligibility form from the FPRA website and submit the completed form with payment to the Universal Accreditation Board.The candidate will then receive notification of eligibility from the UAB. During this period the candidate should download the study guide and reference materials, and request local preparation courses, mentoring and coaching.
2. **Download Readiness Review Questionnaire and Complete –** There are three sections to the Readiness Review Questionnaire, which include questions about your organization and your role, your experience, and your assessment of your readiness for the written portion of the examination. The candidate then needs to contact their local chair and request a Readiness Review.
3. **Participate in the Readiness Review -** The candidate needs to submit four copies of the questionnaire to the local chair at least 15 business days in advance of the scheduled review. During the Readiness Review, candidates will present their portfolio and respond to interview questions. Panelists will score candidates in 16 areas of knowledge, skills and abilities. The UAB will notify the candidate whether he/she will advance or not advance to written examination. Candidates may appeal the result to the UAB after two re-takes of the Readiness Review.
4. **Request Coaching and Mentoring** – Candidates need to contact their local accreditation chair to request support services. All local chapters have different schedules and resources.

5. **Take the Examination** – Candidate may schedule examination at their convenience at a Prometric testing center using unique ID#. To locate a testing center, use Prometric’s website, www.prometric.com. Prometric has peak demand periods. Candidates need to complete the written portion of the Examination within one year of receipt of unique ID#. Use it or lose it. Candidates will receive the official notice from the UAB of pass or fail within 2 – 4 weeks.

### Accreditation Chair

The Chapter Accreditation Chair has the responsibility of encouraging eligible members to seek professional accreditation and helping guide them in the accreditation process by offering advice, giving moral support, coordinating study sessions and coordinating with Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) in the administration of the exam. The Accreditation Chair also has the responsibility of keeping information about members involved in the process strictly confidential. The following is a suggested list of activities:

1. Send a personal note to all eligible members.
2. Follow with a phone call. One-on-one contact is very important in encouraging your members.
3. Conduct an orientation meeting or perhaps make accreditation one of your chapter’s programs at a regular meeting. This is your chance to explain the process.
4. Double check with your members that they have sent their fees and applications in. Determine along with your candidates the date they will take their exam.

5) Contact other APRs and CPRCs to serve as proctors for the Readiness Review. You will need three panelists. Panelists must not be related to the applicant, be employed by the same firm or have a client-counselor relationship.

1. Along with your Chapter Board, the State VP of Accreditation/Certification should be kept informed of your activities and plans, and can be valuable resource if you have questions or need assistance.
2. Candidates will receive notice of pass or not pass when they finish the written exam; however, official written notification will come directly from the UAB (It currently takes approximately 2-4 weeks for results to be mailed).
3. The UAB office will copy the FPRA State Office on letters to candidates. The State Office then notifies the State VP Accreditation/Certification.
4. Send letters to newly accredited members from the chapter president congratulating them. Accreditation chairs may also want to send personal notes of congratulations.

(NOTE: The State Office will send letters to candidates who successfully pass the exam and offer to send letters to their employers. Letters to employers will be sent upon notification from those candidates.)

1. Send information to your local news media using FPRA news release templates and guidelines through your Chapter Chair of Public Relations.
2. Give yourself a pat on the back for taking this responsibility!

# Working with Unsuccessful Candidates

Despite all you do – the briefings, seminars and individual help – some candidates will not pass the exam the first time. We encourage you to contact the failing candidate and urge him or her to start making plans to try again.

Occasionally, a fully qualified, but nervous candidate, will so focus on details or have a sudden burst of humility about his or her work that it becomes a disadvantage.

Inform those candidates who fail either the oral or written test (or both) that he/she has one year to retake that portion of the exam.

# Contacts

For questions and information about the APR process, contact:

* FPRA State VP of Accreditation/Certification
* FPRA State Co-executive Director Christopher Carroll, APR, CPRC

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