**Universal Accreditation**

Universal Accreditation is a voluntary program that allows you to demonstrate your 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.

# Download the APR Exam Application at: http://fpra.org/Professional\_Development/APR.aspx

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Who administers the exam?*

The Universal Accreditation Board was formed in January 1998. Nine public relations organizations now participate in the universal program, including the [Agricultural Relations Council](http://www.agrelationscouncil.org/" \t "_blank), [Florida Public Relations Association](http://www.fpra.org/" \t "_blank), [Maine Public Relations Council](http://www.meprcouncil.org/" \t "_blank), [National School Public Relations Association](http://www.nspra.org/" \t "_blank), [Public Relations Society of America](https://se.prsa.org/fck25/fckeditor/editor/plugins/seplugin/www.prsa.org" \t "_blank) (PRSA), [Religion Communicators Council](http://www.religioncommunicators.org/" \t "_blank), [Southern Public Relations Federation](http://www.sprf.org/" \t "_blank), [Texas Public Relations Association](http://www.tpra.com/" \t "_blank) and [Asociación de Relacionistas Profesionales de Puerto Rico](http://www.relacionistas.com/" \t "_blank) (Puerto Rico Public Relations Association).

*Who governs the process?*

The Universal Accreditation Board - comprised of one chair and representatives from each partner organization dedicated to three-year terms - oversees the program. Providing a balanced blend of backgrounds in a number of public relations specialties, this group of senior-level Accredited members meets several times a year. Responsibilities of the Universal Accreditation Board include the following:

* Develops and implements policy for the program
* Develops and maintains the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations
* Reviews appeal cases
* Grants Accreditation

*What can I expect in the written exam for Accreditation in Public Relations?*

The written portion of the 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. The exam for Accreditation in Public Relations is credible and relevant to today's practitioner and employs current best practices in professional certification testing.

*What happens when I pass the APR exam?*

Congratulations! You are now one of more than 5,000 accredited PR professionals. You are entitled to use the APR initials after your name, on business cards, etc. (Note: individuals are accredited, not firms)

*Is Accreditation good for life?*

Yes, with fulfillment of Maintenance of Accreditation requirements. Every three years, professionals 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.

## Requirements

FPRA members, along with members of any of the partner organizations, are eligible to sit for the exam. Although five years of paid, full-time experience in the professional practice of public relations, or in the teaching or administration of public relations courses in an accredited college or university is not required, it is strongly recommended.

*What is the fee for taking APR?*

The actual cost of the exam is $385 plus a $25 application fee. FPRA voted to continue to subsidize the cost of the APR exam for members. Candidates pay the full $385 when they apply for the exam and receive a $100 rebate once they have completed the rebate form and sent it to the State Office. To be eligible for the rebate, members must have taken the written exam within 30 days of passing their Readiness Review and/or finishing their Study Sessions.

## Accreditation Maintenance

The Universal Accreditation Board felt that requiring a maintenance procedure would strengthen the APR credential. This procedure is only required of FPRA members taking the APR exam after January 1, 1998.

Every three years, you will need to complete a form reviewing your activities in three areas: continuing education, professionalism and service. Send in this form along with the $50 fee (required to cover the cost of processing your application) to **PRSA, Attn: Accreditation Department, 33 Maiden Lane, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10038-5150**.

Download the Accreditation Maintenance Form at: http://www.praccreditation.org/currentAPRs/Maintenance.html

## Process

### APR Readiness Review

Candidates will sit for a Readiness Review prior to the candidate taking the written portion of the 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.

*Who conducts the Readiness Review?*

A Readiness Review panel consists of three professionals who are Accredited in Public Relations by the Universal Accreditation Board. These are local professionals who are committed to Accreditation, to the process of granting Accreditation and to candidates pursuing the process. Readiness Review panels follow detailed processes and procedures to assure the highest possible levels of support and consistency for all Accreditation candidates.

*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 Accreditation chairperson.

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

Based on the design of the 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 guaranty is expressed or implied, the Readiness Review process has been designed to maximize the 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.

#### Download Readiness Review Process Instructions and the Questionnaire at: http://www.praccreditation.org/becomeAPR/index.html

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

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

While speaking and presentation skills are two of the 16 criteria that the Readiness Review seeks to identify in candidates, these two criteria are not weighed any more than the other 14 criteria being graded in the process. Candidates must have a certain minimum level of competency in all 16 criteria to advance through the 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 two 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.

## FPRA APR Rebate

Florida Public Relations Association offers candidates trying to attain their Accreditation in Public Relations a $100 rebate following the candidate’s advancement from the Readiness Review to assist in offsetting the cost of the exam. Candidates pay the full $385 when they apply for the exam and receive a $100 rebate once they have completed the rebate form and sent it to the State Office. To be eligible for the rebate, members must have taken the written exam within 30 days of passing their Readiness Review and/or finishing their Study Sessions.

To receive your rebate from FPRA, please fill out the form below and mail, along with a copy of either the registration card from the testing center showing payment for the exam, or a copy of your credit card receipt, to FPRA State Office, Attn: Christopher Carroll, APR, CPRC, 40 Sarasota Center Blvd., Suite 107, Sarasota, FL 34240.

#### Download the FPRA’s APR Rebate Form at: http://fpra.org/Professional\_Development/APR.aspx

### Code of Ethics

#### View the FPRA Code of Ethics at: http://fpra.org/Prospective\_Members/Code\_of\_Ethics.aspx

### Contacts

Please direct your questions to Christopher Carroll, APR, CPRC at the State Office at (941) 365-2135 or the State VP of Accreditation and Certification.

### More Information

#### For more information, visit the Universal Accreditation website at www.praccreditation.org

## Test Dates and Locations

Following being advanced from the Readiness Review, candidates will take the exam at their convenience at a Prometric Testing Center in the United States and Canada. Strict confidentiality procedures will be enforced, and feedback and results will be available quickly. To find a testing center visit: http://www.prometric.com.

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