

Canadian Public Relations Society

ACCREDITATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

2026 HANDBOOK



ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

National Council on Accreditation

Information for candidates

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION AND THE CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY

HISTORY

Tracing the origins of public relations is open to endless debate. While some people firmly believe public relations began in earnest with the Oracle at Delphi or with the leaders of the Roman Empire, others cite historical events ranging from the Reformation to the Boston Tea Party. No matter when the practice began or how it progressed, the basis of public relations remains the same — a desire to influence opinion or initiate action through the effective planning, management and execution of communication.

Public relations gained maturity and popularity during the early years of the 20th century and emerged as a distinct vocation in North America by the early 1920s, thanks in large part to the efforts of such American pioneers as Ivy Lee, Pendleton Dudley and Edward Bernays, and their Canadian colleagues Herbert Lash, Charles Vining and Rielle Thompson.

Early practitioners often worked as press agents. Many were moonlighting news reporters who were employed by clients wanting to get their names into newspaper columns, or to keep them out.

The Second World War brought about a major shift in the focus of public relations as governments and business tried to rally support for the war effort. The practice came of age during the conflict and was gradually recognized as an essential component of business operations. During the postwar years, hundreds of people were hired to provide communication expertise to federal, provincial and municipal government agencies, industrial and service-based corporations, professional and trade associations, social welfare and charitable groups, and advertising agencies.

The changing face of public relations was quickly evident as wartime veterans working in public relations were joined by practitioners from the traditional media and from new disciplines like business management, law and social sciences. This mix of experience, skills and ideals led to a new respect for the field of public relations — now marked by a keen sense of social responsibility, professionalism and, most important, recognition as a management function.

Public relations was transformed with the advent of the digital revolution, starting with the creation of the world wide web by Tim Berners Lee in 1995. The concept of the digital relationship rose to prominence with the advent of Web 2.0 in the 2000s. Social

networking led the way, as digital relationships made networking faster, easier and more measurable. The 2000s saw the rise of the influencer — the “person like me” — as a trusted expert starting in 2006, as measured by the Edelman Trust Barometer.

Next came the rise of the smartphone, a handheld digital tablet computer capable of being an interface to content, a medium of communication and a device for composition for everyone. Suddenly, each person held in their hand a world of information and almost significant new possibilities for communication and relationship-building. This accelerated the convergence of the creative professions, advertising, marketing, journalism and communication, as the digital relationship became the primary vehicle for persuasion, influence and sales. Today, communicators are beginning to explore new terrain — the metaverse, blockchain, Web3, augmented and virtual reality, as well as artificial intelligence are increasingly adopted.

THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is misunderstood. The practice is often reduced to media relations, caricatured as propaganda, or subsumed under marketing. However, none of these conceptions capture the true nature of the practice of public relations. The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) has adopted a definition proposed in 2008 by Flynn, Gregory and Valin:

“Public relations is the strategic management, through communication, of links between an organization and its various publics in order to promote mutual understanding, achieve its organizational objectives and serve the public interest.”

This definition is consistent with the body of knowledge taught in our universities and the best practices implemented by our members. Public relations thus defined is divided into several fields of practice: community relations, public participation, lobbying, corporate communications, internal communications, to name just a few. These fields of practice have certain specificities, but they all aim for the same fundamental objective: the management of an organization's relationships with its stakeholders.

The practice of public relations evolved into its current form approximately 30 years ago, largely in response to the extraordinary progress in information and communication technologies (*i.e.*, social media, smartphones, high speed wireless data transfer, etc.), which allowed the development and management of relationships at scale.

Relationship management is based on a process that follows a few steps, including: analysis of the environment and identification of stakeholders; the identification of objectives, strategies and means; the implementation of means; and finally, an evaluation of the results. The act of communicating is just one step in a larger relationship management process.

A PROFESSION IN DEVELOPMENT

In the modern sense of the term, a “profession” designates an activity meeting certain characteristics:

1. A systematic and recognized theoretical body of knowledge, which includes all the knowledge, skills and capabilities necessary for the practice of the profession;
2. Formal academic training or a period of internship before being authorized to practice in accordance with the rules and regulations of the authorities governing the profession and regulatory bodies (*e.g., doctors, nurses, teachers and lawyers are licensed; military officers are certified; and clergy are ordained*);
3. Community sanction to bring credibility, status, and recognition, which in turn confers certain powers, privileges, and responsibilities, of which the most important is the profession's control over its own training programs as well as the regulation, discipline and accreditation of members;
4. Other privileges such as confidentiality between the professional and their clients or employers; and
5. The overarching responsibility of its accredited members to conduct all their professional activities in the public interest, as demonstrated by a formally recognized code of ethical practices.

In Canada, there are professions legally recognized by provincial and territorial laws which confer obligations and privileges on them. These include law, medicine, nursing and other healthcare disciplines, engineering, architecture, etc. Public relations is not a legally recognized profession in Canada. It is valuable to examine to what extent our discipline meets the five criteria mentioned above. We do so in the following paragraphs.

How does the practice of public relations concern the public interest? It is commonly accepted that the public relations officer promotes the interests of their employer or

client, which would seem to place public relations at odds with the public interest. On the contrary, the ethical practice of public relations is directly relevant to the public interest in that it supports the democratic vitality of society.

Democracy cannot exist without free and open debate. Currently, organizations and individuals must use specific knowledge to communicate with each other effectively, enter relationships, exchange and negotiate. Communication and public relations cannot be improvised or made-up. Rather, public communication must conform to rules, procedures, transparency, truth, and ethics that form a specific area of knowledge developed in an ever-growing body of knowledge, which is taught in a large number of well-structured postsecondary education programs. Thus, even if formal recognition has not yet been established, three of the five conditions are essentially met (*i.e.* conditions 1,2 and 5). Indeed, the field of communication and public relations displays all the essential characteristics of a profession.

The two unmet conditions (3 and 4) relate to the recognition of the profession by society. This recognition would be accompanied by guidelines that govern ethics and professional conduct to guarantee that practitioners behave in accordance with strict professional standards that guarantee respect for the public interest.

Currently, no Canadian or provincial law defines the practice of public relations or the qualifications of its professionals – the profession is not regulated in Canada. So, anyone can retain the services of a self-proclaimed public relations practitioner, even though the result might not be ideal. It is on this point that the members of the Canadian Public Relations Society stand out.

CPRS membership is a commitment to behave as professionals, even if no law requires us to do so. Respecting standards of professionalism and ethics consistent with the rules of the art is at the heart of our commitment and distinguishes us from people who claim to do public relations, but who have no consideration for ethics and professionalism such as defined by a body of knowledge and the lived experience of professionals for over a century.

Being a member of CPRS means recognizing that public relations is based as much on a constant concern for ethics, truth, and respect for the code of ethics as on the effectiveness of the techniques and technologies used to achieve strategic objectives.

BEGINNINGS OF THE CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY

During the mid-1940s, a group of Montréal public relations people explored the need for a greater exchange of knowledge. On March 23, 1948, 16 professionals formally established the Canadian Public Relations Society, with membership limited to practitioners working in corporations.

Later that year, a group of 57 public relations people in Toronto formed the Public Relations Association of Ontario, designed to focus on their particular needs and open to government employees and consultants as well as corporate practitioners.

Five years later, the two organizations amalgamated to form the Canadian Public Relations Society, Inc. (CPRS). CPRS held its first national meeting and conference on May 14, 1953. Today, there are 13 member societies representing every region of Canada.

Through the [Global Alliance](#) for Public Relations and Communication Management, a reciprocity initiative was forged to develop formal links with public relations societies worldwide and explore opportunities for international co-operation. CPRS and the following 10 public relations organizations have agreed to recognize each other's professional accreditation on a reciprocal basis in accordance with signed reciprocity agreements: Public Relations Society of America, Communication and Public Relations Australia; Institute of Public Relations, Ghana; Public Relations Institute of Ireland; Public Relations Institute of New Zealand; Puerto Rico Association of Public Relations Professionals; Institute of Public Relations of Singapore; Public Relations Society of Slovenia; Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa; and Chartered Institute of Public Relations, United Kingdom.

CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY — MISSION

OUR VISION

The Canadian Public Relations Society and its members are recognized as the champions for ethical, strategic public relations and communication management.

OUR MISSION

We build a national public relations and communications management community through professional development and accreditation, collaboration with thought leaders, a commitment to ethics and a code of professional standards, advocacy for the profession, and support to members at every stage of their careers.

OUR VALUES

We believe that the ethical and strategic practice of public relations and communications management makes a positive contribution to the profession, our employers and to the communities we serve. As members of CPRS, we are committed to the following values:

- An Ethical Practice
- A Strategic Practice
- Achieving Mutual Benefit
- Demonstrating Leadership and
- A Commitment to Continuous Learning

The strategic goals of the CPRS community are available at this link:

<https://www.cprs.ca/About/Who-We-Are/Our-Mission-Vision-Values>

CPRS PUBLIC RELATIONS DEFINITION

Public relations is the **strategic management** of **relationships** between an **organization** and its **diverse publics**, through the use of **communication**, to achieve **mutual understanding**, **realize** organizational **goals** and serve the **public interest**.

(Flynn, Gregory & Valin, 2008)

CPRS DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The Canadian Public Relations Society, in setting forth its Declaration of Principles and Ethics of Professional Conduct, strives to:

- affirm that the obligations of a public trust are inherent in the practice of public relations;
- promote and maintain high standards of professional practice and conduct among the membership, so as to ensure that public relations shall be esteemed as an honourable profession;
- safeguard good taste and truthfulness in all material prepared for public dissemination and in all aspects of the public relations practitioner's operations;
- ensure that membership represents surety of ethical conduct, skill, knowledge and competence in the practice of public relations;

- foster increased attention to public relations as a course of study in universities, colleges, institutes and other similar educational organizations in order to further the proficiency, knowledge and training of anyone engaged in or interested in entering public relations;
- adhere to the Global Protocol on Ethics in Public Relations of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications; and
- subscribe to the principles of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

CPRS CODE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Members of the Canadian Public Relations Society pledge to uphold the letter and spirit of this [Code of Professional Standards](#).

Society members strive to improve their individual professional proficiency and advance their knowledge and competency through continuing research and professional development. Paramount in this respect is the achievement of professional accreditation.

The Code of Professional Standards is listed here:

1. A member shall practice public relations according to the highest professional standards.

Members shall conduct their professional lives in a manner that does not conflict with the public interest and the dignity of the individual, with respect for the rights of the public as contained in the Constitution of Canada and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

2. A member shall deal fairly and honestly with the communications media and the public.

Members shall neither propose nor act to improperly influence the communications media, government bodies or the legislative process. Improper influence may include conferring gifts, privileges or benefits to influence decisions

3. A member shall practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth, and shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information. Members shall not make extravagant claims or unfair comparisons, nor assume credit for ideas and words not their own.

Members shall not engage in professional or personal conduct that will bring discredit to themselves, the Society or the practice of public relations.

4. A member shall deal fairly with past or present employers / clients, fellow practitioners and members of other professions.

Members shall not intentionally damage another practitioner's practice or professional reputation. Members shall understand, respect and abide by the ethical codes of other professions with whose members they may work from time to time.

5. Members shall be prepared to disclose the names of their employers or clients for whom public communications are made and refrain from associating themselves with anyone who would not respect such policy.

Members shall be prepared to disclose publicly the names of their employers or clients on whose behalf public communications is made. Members shall not associate themselves with anyone claiming to represent one interest, or professing to be independent or unbiased, but who actually serves another or an undisclosed interest.

6. A member shall protect the confidences of present, former and prospective employers / clients.

Members shall not use or disclose confidential information obtained from past or present employers / clients without the expressed permission of the employers / clients or an order of a court of law.

7. A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the expressed consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts.

Members shall not permit personal or other professional interests to conflict with those of an employer / client without fully disclosing such interests to everyone involved.

8. A member shall not guarantee specified results beyond the member's capacity to achieve.

9. Members shall personally accept no fees, commissions, gifts or any other considerations for professional services from anyone except employers or clients for whom the services were specifically performed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CPRS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

PURPOSE

The purpose of the CPRS accreditation process is to assess a member's depth of experience and competence in the professional practice of public relations and to recognize this achievement through the designation of accreditation. Once accredited, members must remain current in the profession. Candidates for accreditation must pass a three-part accreditation exam process with a minimum overall average score of 65 percent and subscribe to the CPRS Code of Professional Standards (see Chapter one). Upon successful completion of the three-part process, a candidate will be recognized as an Accredited Public Relations practitioner (APR) and authorized to use the APR designation. Each year thereafter, and upon payment of national membership dues, successful candidates are authorized to use the APR designation.

Candidates may pursue accreditation in public relations through two streams:

- a regular stream, in which a candidate submits a work sample, and then takes the APR written and oral examinations; and
- an academic/educator stream, in which a candidate submits a piece of academic research or a major pedagogical contribution directly related to the practice of public relations and communications management in lieu of the regular work sample, and then takes the APR written and oral examinations.

ACCREDITATION MAINTENANCE

Accredited members are also encouraged to take part in the voluntary accreditation maintenance program. This program was designed to strengthen the value of the APR designation for the benefit of practitioners, their employers or clients and the public. The program demonstrates the accredited member's continuing training and professional development as well as leadership in public relations, ensuring the APR designation retains its relevance and value.

To participate, accredited members must record qualifying activities using the online form in three broad categories (training, professional activities and community service). These activities carry the respective unit value as set out in the Accreditation Maintenance program on the website. Once a candidate has 15 units, including a

minimum of 5 training units, the request may be submitted to the National Office. A minimum of 15 units is required every five years to keep maintained status.

The application is reviewed and the National Council on Accreditation will recognize the accredited member's maintenance of the APR designation. Maintained members are listed in a special section of the CPRS National website.

Participation by non-practicing, retired APRs is waived.

APPLICATION AND PREQUALIFICATION PROCESS

The accreditation process is a measure of the extent of an applicant's practical experience and competence in the field as judged by peers.

The APR program is offered annually. The general overview of the process is as follows:

December 1	Deadline for application deadline and payment of fee
December 30	Deadline for applicants to submit their résumé and Work Sample Overview
Early February	Deadline to inform applicants of their status
April 1	Deadline for candidates to submit their Work Sample
June*	Candidates informed of their Work Sample evaluation and eligibility to continue the process
Late October*	Written and Oral exams
December*	Candidates informed of their exam scores and overall score
January*	Conclusion of Appeal Process

CPRS National Conference*	APR pins awarded to successful candidates
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* Dates to be set annually.

An applicant may pursue this designation once they have satisfied the following eligibility requirements:

- has been employed full-time in a public relations position or have owned their own public relations business for at least five years*;
- has spent at least half of their professional time involved with specific public relations activities; and
- is a member in good standing of the Canadian Public Relations Society.

*Equivalent work credit (up to six months) may be awarded for a public relations practicum or cooperative education experience successfully completed while attending a recognized college or university.

Applications must be received by the CPRS National Office by **11:59 p.m. ET, December 1** (or be subject to a late fee; see the CPRS National website for current fees). The application must include three references of people familiar with the applicant's work who are willing and able to attest to the applicant's eligibility and professional conduct. **Two of three references must be accredited members of the Society.** The applicant's references may not include members of the CPRS National Council on Accreditation, or the applicant's subordinates at the candidate's workplace. Payment of the APR program fee should accompany the application.

If the candidate does not know any accredited members, they should contact the candidate's local Accreditation Chair or a member of the National Accreditation Council, who may help the candidate by making introductions. Those who have applied to enter the accreditation process, but whose eligibility was not recommended by the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility), may appeal to the Chief Examiner (see Appeals Section).

By December 30, applicants should send the following by email to certification@cprs.ca:

- a current resume outlining in detail the applicant's experience in the field; the applicant should ensure to include employer and company names and for the purpose of establishing the five years of experience, please include the months and years of employment.

- a work sample overview (see Chapter Three for guidance), explaining the nature and scope of the proposed work sample project or campaign and the extent of the applicant's role and ownership of the program or project;
- the work sample overview is treated as a **stand-alone document** outlining the candidate's proposed work sample. It must contain all key elements regarding scope, show the candidate's strategic thinking as well as ownership of the project. The work sample overview is the only part of the work sample that is given to the oral graders during the oral exam. It's best to ensure the overview is a true summary of the work sample. As such, candidates should make use of the 500-word limit to include all necessary details, including the contents of each section of the work sample (*i.e.*, each R.A.C.E. component)

ELIGIBILITY

Soon after the closing date for applications, the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) of the National Council on Accreditation carefully reviews all applications and related materials. The Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility [DPO-E]) sends the Academic and Educator applications to the Academic/Educator Eligibility Committee for evaluation. Once all decisions have been made by the DPO-E and the Academic/Educator Eligibility Committee, the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) notifies the National Office which applicants are eligible to proceed as candidates for the accreditation process. By **early February**, the CPRS National Office informs all applicants of their status. Those who are eligible to proceed are advised of the scheduling of accreditation components.

Those applicants whose eligibility was not recommended will receive an explanation from the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility). If the application was deemed not eligible due to lack of experience the candidate may supply additional information on work experience to the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) care of the National Office. After receiving this additional information, the decision of the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) as to experience is final. If the candidate does not have sufficient experience to enter the process, the candidate may request a refund of the accreditation fee. An administrative fee will be charged to process this refund. The applicant may then apply again at a later date when sufficient experience has been acquired.

If, in the view of the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility), the candidate's work sample overview does not demonstrate sufficient scope and ownership to be eligible, the candidate may submit a new work sample overview the following year or may withdraw from the process and request a refund. An administrative fee will be charged to process this refund.

Candidates can increase their chances of success by taking the time to review their proposed work sample project with a senior APR mentor or their local Accreditation Chair. A list of current APRs in good standing can be found on the CPRS website, and contact information can be found in the Membership Directory. Candidates should make sure to read the work sample overview guidance and work sample guidance carefully before preparing their submission.

Any candidate who is eligible to proceed following the work sample overview assessment, but who defers submission of the full work sample, is not entitled to a refund but may simply submit the full work sample the following year at no additional charge. For more information, see “**Deferrals**” on page 25.

If exceptional circumstances (*e.g.*, illness, death in the family, etc.) prevent the candidate from continuing and the candidate decides to withdraw completely from the accreditation process after having passed the eligibility review, the candidate will forfeit their fee and receive a refund of the remainder of their APR program fee. The candidate may then begin the process again in any subsequent year, with a completely new work sample, and with payment of full fees for that year.

FORM OF ACCREDITATION EXAMINATION

The accreditation examination consists of three components:

- a work sample which must be received by the CPRS National Office no later than **11:59 p.m. ET, April 1**;
- a written examination, with a maximum completing time of 3.5 hours, held in October;
- an oral examination lasting from 45 to 60 minutes, held in October.

Through these three components, examiners will be considering the following attributes of a public relations professional:

- the candidate’s leadership in or ownership of the project or campaign presented in the candidate’s work sample;
- the breadth of skills acquired and demonstration of the ability to transform theory into action;
- the range of communication tools effectively used;
- reaction to challenges in problem solving, issues management, etc.;
- relevance of answers to questions asked;

- readability of the written word through composition, grammar, spelling and syntax;
- articulation of the spoken word;
- ethics, including adherence to the CPRS Code of Professional Standards;
- objectivity;
- logic;
- imagination;
- persuasiveness;
- personal composure.

To be successful, candidates must achieve a minimum score of 60 percent on all three components of the accreditation examination AND an overall score of 65 percent.

The Society recruits a national team of accredited graders across the country to evaluate the three components of the accreditation process. The individuals are all accredited members of the Society. The Chief Examiner and CPRS National Office coordinate the evaluation of work samples by graders. In order to ensure impartiality, work samples are normally evaluated by a grader outside the candidate's region.

The Chief Examiner oversees the conduct of the written and oral exams, and may call upon the assistance of the local Accreditation Chair or another accredited member of the Local Society. Two graders evaluate each written exam, with a third called in should there be irreconcilable disagreement among the two graders. Given that written examinations are identified only by a code number, the bias is limited.

THE PREPARATION PROCESS

Preparation for the accreditation process requires even very seasoned practitioners to review their accumulated theoretical and practical public relations knowledge and experience. Candidates should begin preparing for the accreditation process soon after their eligibility is confirmed. Candidates are encouraged to look for advice and guidance from fellow CPRS members, particularly those involved with the accreditation committee of their Local Society. The experience and insights of accredited colleagues will assist the candidate in all phases of the process, especially for the work sample, which must be prepared over the winter and received by the National Office by the submission deadline, **April 1**.

Note that the submission deadlines are different for academic and educator stream applicants. In the academic and educator streams, the APR candidate submits a 500-

word brief describing their project and the project itself by December 30. The academic and educator work samples **are not graded**. If the work is deemed eligible as an educator or academic work sample submission, then the candidate proceeds to oral and written examinations. The 20 percent value of the work sample is reapportioned to the oral and written components, 10 percent to each. The value of the oral exam becomes 45 percent and the written exam 55 percent.

Candidates should also review successful work samples and previous exams, which are available on the CPRS website (Member Area), along with a selection of resources material and webinars to help prepare. Candidates should note that acceptable work samples must be initiated, completed and evaluated within the **three years prior** to the submission deadline, **April 1**. The candidate is admitted after Accreditation Council Review Committee approves the 500-word abstract, submitted by the **December 1** deadline, and the completed work sample project when submitted for the **April 1** deadline.

The Study Guide and Reading List are both helpful resources and can be found in Chapters Ten and Eleven, respectively, of the Accreditation Handbook. The Reading List identifies many of the leading books and periodicals devoted to public relations and will help orient candidates to prepare for the written and oral exams. In addition, the online [educational resource centre at Mount Royal University](#) houses work samples submitted by public relations practitioners that serve as helpful models.

The candidate's studies should concentrate on the principles of public relations and how communication can contribute to organizational solutions and the practical application of public relations theories and techniques to current issues.

THE APR PROCESS SCHEDULE

The Accreditation in Public Relations process follows a calendar which makes it easier for the candidate to schedule work and study time.

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

A few months before the December application deadline, the candidate should carefully evaluate their commitments for the following year. Will they have the time, resources and motivation required to complete the accreditation examination? Once they have decided to proceed, candidates should:

- consult a member of their Local Society's accreditation committee for guidance and assistance;
- identify possible subjects for their work sample and select the most appropriate;

- collect relevant reference materials;
- discuss their work sample topics and possible forms of presentation with their local Accreditation Chair;
- identify three colleagues, **two of whom are accredited members of CPRS**, who are willing to attest to their skills as a practitioner — these references are required as part of their formal application; and
- complete the Accreditation application form and make sure it is received by the CPRS National Office by the **December 1** deadline.

Candidates who were unsuccessful or deferred their work sample in the past three years must confirm with CPRS National Office that they intend to resubmit a work sample and may be asked to resubmit a new Work Sample Overview before the **December 30** deadline.

JANUARY

Verification of eligibility. Candidates start working on their work sample.

FEBRUARY

Now is the time to work on the report relating to the selected work sample (see Chapter Three). Candidates should map out the content and flow of the report and prepare a rough abstract outlining the theme and purpose of the work. It is extremely important that candidates discuss their draft work sample with their local Accreditation Chair to ensure it meets the requirements of ownership, scope and adheres to the RACE formula, in addition to supplying information about the budget to finance the project.

MARCH

Once candidates have completed their formal work sample, they submit it by email or to a designated dropbox in a PDF file using this naming convention: SurnameFirstnameWS for the work sample and SurnameFirstnameApp for the appendices. Submissions should be sent to certification@cprs.ca no later than **11:59 p.m. ET, April 1** or if April 1 falls on a holiday, by 11:59 p.m. on the next business day. Work sample files that arrive at CPRS National Office after the stipulated deadline will have 10 marks deducted from the final work sample grade. If candidates have any questions about submitting an electronic file they should contact the CPRS National Office.

APRIL

The CPRS National Office issues confirmation that the candidate's work sample has been received and forwards the material to the graders. If the candidate does not receive this confirmation by mid-April, they should contact the CPRS National Office.

MAY, JUNE

The graders evaluate the work samples and report the results to the Chief Examiner, care of the National Office. By the end of June, the Chief Examiner advises candidates whether they have received a passing grade on the work sample and are eligible to proceed.

APRIL TO SEPTEMBER

The candidate's work sample is just one portion of their accreditation process — once it is submitted, the candidate should begin researching and reading in preparation for the examinations. The candidate should prepare comprehensive notes related to the practice of public relations, guided by the reading list, and the Code of Professional Standards upheld by the National Society. This puts the candidate in good stead for the formal examinations in October.

OCTOBER

Examinations are generally scheduled for the third week of October and moved to virtual examination as a result of the global pandemic. **The APR exams remain virtual in 2026 and the mode of delivery will be reviewed annually.** Exact dates for the examinations are available on the accreditation process schedule on the CPRS National website. If professional obligations impede a candidate's participation in the examinations, the candidate should consult the National Office as soon as possible.

DECEMBER

Candidates receive formal notice of their performance in the accreditation process. Successful candidates may begin using their new APR designation immediately upon notification. Successful candidates will be recognized as an accredited member with the presentation of their certificate at the annual National Conference of the National Society. They will also receive a PDF of their certificate, and an electronic badge that can be used on their LinkedIn page and other digital media.

Acknowledgements and congratulations announcements will be released in late January or early February once each candidate has been notified of their successful completion of the process. Best of luck to all candidates!

APPEAL PROCESS

DEFERRAL BEFORE SUBMISSION OF THE FULL WORK SAMPLE

If the candidate has been judged eligible following the review of the Work Sample Overview but is unable to submit the full work sample by the April 1 deadline, they should send an email informing the national office of their intention to defer. The national office will confirm the deferral has been processed and inform the candidate as to how many years they have left to write the deferred component(s) of the exam. The candidate must then contact the national office by December 1 to confirm that they will be using the same work sample project. If the candidate wishes to use a different work sample project, they must submit the Work Sample Overview for the new project by December 30, along with a current résumé.

WITHDRAWAL BEFORE SUBMISSION OF THE FULL WORK SAMPLE

If exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness, death in the family, etc.) prevent the candidate from continuing and the candidate decides to withdraw completely from the accreditation process after having passed the eligibility review but before proceeding to exams, the candidate will forfeit the accreditation fee and receive a refund of the remainder of their APR program fee. The candidate may then begin the process again in any subsequent year, with a completely new work sample, and with payment of full fees for that year. Any such request must be made before the October exam date for that calendar year.

FAILING GRADE ON THE FULL WORK

60 percent is the passing grade for the work sample. A candidate who has received a marginal grade (55 percent - 59 percent) on the work sample may choose the mentoring option rather than accept the failing grade. In this case, the unsuccessful candidate reviews the work sample with the Chief Examiner and then submits an acceptable revised work sample to the Chief Examiner by no later than 30 days after the date on the email advising the candidate of the original work sample grade. For this type of resubmission, 60 percent is the highest possible grade that may be awarded to the candidate if the resubmission is successful.

A candidate who fails the work sample component may not proceed to exams in October but can re-enter the following year. The candidate must contact the National Office by **December 1** to confirm they will be using the same work sample project. If the candidate wishes to use a different work sample project, they must submit the Work Sample Overview for the new project by **December 30**, along with a current résumé and submit the revised full work sample by the **April 1** deadline. The three-year rule applies to this situation: if the work described in the work sample was completed more than

three years before the submission date, it is considered stale-dated and a different work sample project must be approved as eligible, through the eligibility review of the Work Sample Overview. A candidate who has not passed the work sample component within three years of the accreditation application is considered withdrawn but may choose to begin the process again in any subsequent year on payment of full fees.

WRITTEN AND ORAL

Written and oral examinations receiving a grade between *55 percent-60 percent will be automatically appealed*. The Chief Examiner will appoint an appeal panel of two different graders to review the examination. The appeal panel will grade according to the same marking guidelines. The appeal panel does not have access to the original grades or comments on the candidate. The decision of the appeal panel is final. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the candidate will have the opportunity to re-try the examination/s within the next two-year period. Candidates receive notice of outcome by email or by letter with summary comments about their performance on the written or oral examinations. Please note that a mark of less than 55 percent on the written and/or oral examinations is NOT eligible for appeal. The Accreditation Council has deemed that this is reflective of too weak a performance to be considered for an appeal.

Candidates should note that following a third unsuccessful attempt at the written and/or oral examinations, they will be required to wait a minimum of one full year or one full examination cycle, whichever is greater, before being able to reapply for accreditation. Candidates are expected to use this time to improve in their areas of weakness. An individual reapplying for accreditation will be required to submit the full accreditation fee, new references, a new work sample overview and a new work sample.

EXTRAORDINARY APPEAL

An extraordinary appeal may also be granted if a candidate's examination experience is so unusual that in the view of the Chief Examiner additional consideration is appropriate. Extraordinary appeals will be reviewed by the National Council on Accreditation, who will determine the course of action on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that actions within the candidate's responsibilities and control, such as: meeting timelines, meeting any technical/IT or related requirements for online/remote examinations, submission of the examination manuscript they intend to be graded, etc., are not considered grounds for an extraordinary appeal.

DEFERRALS

All notices of intention to defer should be made in writing to CPRS national office: certification@cprs.ca

Candidates who have started the accreditation process, but did not submit a work sample, may have their files reactivated during either of the next two accreditation cycles. They must confirm, in writing, their intention to re-enter the program before the December 1 deadline for new applications.

Following submission of a successful work sample, should the candidate be unable to complete the accreditation process because of extenuating personal or professional circumstances, they may inform the national office of their intention to defer completing the written and oral components. A written notification of intention must be submitted to the CPRS national office.

Please note that candidates must still complete the remaining components (written and oral examinations) within three years after the completion of the project they described in their work sample (otherwise, the grades obtained on the work sample become obsolete since the work sample must be initiated, completed and evaluated within three years).

If a candidate is unable to complete the accreditation process within the stipulated three-year time frame, the accreditation fee is forfeited. Candidates may reapply at a future date.

UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES

To enhance the professional development aspect of the accreditation experience for unsuccessful candidates, the Chief Examiner advises them of their area(s) of weakness so they may use this constructive feedback to improve their overall proficiency before reapplying for accreditation.

Candidates who received a total aggregate mark within five (5) points of the minimum passing grade of 65 percent will be given an option to redo any or all of the three components of the examination which were below 65 percent in order to attain a passing average within three years. There is a fee to retake the examinations (see the CPRS National website for current fees).

Special Leave: An allowance of one additional year may be granted to candidates upon approval of the Accreditation Council for special leave (i.e. parental leave, elder care, critical illness, etc.).

CHAPTER THREE

PREPARING THE WORK SAMPLE OVERVIEW AND WORK SAMPLE

The structure of the accreditation examination process recognizes that a single evaluative instrument cannot adequately assess the candidate's professional knowledge and competence. Consequently, CPRS combines three methods — each one providing a different insight into the candidate's approach to communication practice. Together, they give examiners a comprehensive view of the candidate's ability to approach public relations work with integrity, professionalism, intelligence, and strategic and executional skills. The Work Sample is an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate excellent writing skills as well as skillful project management.

WORK SAMPLE OVERVIEW GUIDANCE

Each APR candidate must submit a Work Sample Overview (WSO) and résumé in pdf format to certification@cprs.ca on or before the deadline (**11:59 p.m. ET on December 30** or the next business day if this is not a business day). The naming convention for the Work Sample Overview is: SurnameFirstnameWSO, e.g., SmithJaneWSO

FORM AND CONTENT

The Work Sample Overview describes the project the candidate intends to submit for the work sample component of the accreditation process and is contained in a one-page (300 — 500 words) description that outlines the scope of the project and the candidate's role and ownership in it. The candidate's résumé must set out their public relations experience to ensure they meet the minimum experience requirement of five years of full-time public relations experience.

Candidates must use the RACE formula to organize their Work Sample Overview. Each eligible Work Sample project **must also include** a budget component. The word count (maximum 500 words as indicated by the candidate's word processing software) must appear at the top of the page. A cover page is not required; it is sufficient to include the candidate's name, member ID number, date, proposed title of the work sample project and word count at the top of the first page. The name, member ID number, date and title of the work sample do not factor into the total word count.

SCOPE

For the project scope, the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) will review to assess:

- An overview of the project, meaning that the project is multifaceted, incorporating a variety of communication approaches (Single deliverable program, e.g., one seminar or one report, will generally not meet minimum scope guideline).
- That the Work Sample Overview contains a concise summary of the contents and findings of each component of the RACE formula, above and beyond a simple statement that the components are included (*i.e.*, “Research found that...”, rather than “Research is outlined in the work sample.”)
- The organizational and public relations goals the project was intended to serve and how these relate to the evaluation of the candidate’s project, meaning the project must clearly serve a stated public relations goal and the overview mentions how this links to an organizational goal and the overview refers to the ability to evaluate the outcome, not just the output of the program or project.
- The approximate date of the candidate’s project; the project must have been completed (evaluation finished) within three years prior to the full work sample submission date of April 1.

If a candidate does not meet the minimum scope standard, they can elect to proceed with the work sample, addressing the weaknesses identified, in order to increase the likelihood of success. No appeal is required. The candidate’s alternative is to voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation process until a suitable project is available that meets the scope standards.

ROLE AND OWNERSHIP

For the project role and ownership, the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) will review to assess:

- The candidate’s involvement in the decision to launch the project, or the point at which the candidate became the lead public relations practitioner for the project. The candidate’s involvement must pre-date the commencement of the analysis.
- The candidate’s role in the research, analysis, communication and evaluation related to the project. The candidate must have had some direct involvement in at least three of the four RACE elements.

- Whether the candidate worked alone, as team leader, or as a member of a team. If the candidate worked alone, that is fine or if they were the team leader then they must have been responsible from the start of the project and ensure they meet the requirements of #2 above. If the candidate was a member of a team, then the candidate must have been solely responsible for activities serving a specific PR objective.
- The staff or consultant support available for the project. Their involvement in the project or program must not be limited to staff or consultant supervision.

If a candidate does not meet the minimum ownership standard, the work sample project is disqualified. The candidate may appeal to the Chief Examiner care of the National Office within 15 days of receipt of the decision with the submission of a new Work Sample Overview providing additional information that clearly sets out the role and ownership.

PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERIENCE

For the candidate's public relations experience, the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) will review to assess whether the candidate meets the minimum experience requirement of five years of full-time work in public relations. This is a strict standard and will be assessed based on the month and year of employment in each public relations position listed in the candidate's résumé. A candidate should include some detail on the duties of the role to allow the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) to determine if this was fully a public relations role or if only part of the time was spent on public relations work, in which case it may count for 50 percent of the time. Work in the media in a profession adjacent to public relations may be considered equivalent to public relations experience if the work was substantially public relations work (*i.e.*, traditional journalism may not count as public relations experience, whereas in-house journalism may count).

If the candidate does not meet the eligibility requirements (five years of experience in public relations and three positive references, of which two are APRs), the candidate may appeal to the Chief Examiner care of the National Office within five days of receipt of the decision, supplying additional information or evidence to support eligibility.

A candidate who does not meet the minimum experience requirement is not eligible to enter the accreditation program and may request a refund of the accreditation fee, minus an administrative fee or may request a deferral to re-enter the following year, if less than a year of experience is missing.

Candidates should note that a decision by the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) that the candidate is eligible to proceed, following assessment of the Work Sample Overview, does not guarantee that the full Work Sample will receive a passing grade. The full Work Sample submission is due on April 1 of each year and is graded based on the grader rubric (please see Work Sample Guidance for more information).

DEFERRAL AND WITHDRAWAL BEFORE SUBMISSION OF THE FULL WORK SAMPLE

See the Appeal Section of this document.

WORK SAMPLE GUIDANCE

REGULAR WORK SAMPLE (PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN OR EVENT)

Each APR candidate must submit a Work Sample (and appendices, if desired) in pdf format to certification@cprs.ca on or before the deadline (**11:59 p.m. ET on April 1** or the next business day if this is not a business day). The naming convention for the Work Sample is: SurnameFirstnameWS, e.g., SmithJaneWS and the naming convention for the appendices is: SurnameFirstnameApp1, e.g., SmithJaneApp1. Work sample submissions that arrive at CPRS National Office after the deadline will have 10 marks deducted from the final work sample grade.

The Work Sample allows examiners to gain insight into a candidate's ability to plan, analyze and execute within the context of current public relations theory and practice. A Work Sample is a description of a public relations campaign, special project, outstanding event or other public relations exercise. Because it is intended to portray the candidate's competence at the time of being accredited, the work sample is considered eligible if it was initiated, completed and evaluated within three years prior to the APR application.

One important requirement, which is reviewed in the work sample overview when it is assessed for eligibility, is the candidate's "ownership" of the project, in other words, the extent of the candidate's responsibility for strategic planning and involvement at every stage of the project. The work sample should demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to execute, the key elements of public relations planning and programming, and clearly reflect to readers the candidate's role as initiator, planner, controller and evaluator.

FORM AND CONTENT

Candidates should include their name, member ID number, date, and title of the work sample at the top of the first page. The name, ID, date and title are not included in the word count. The word count for the Executive Summary should appear at the top of the

Executive Summary section and the word count for the discussion section should appear at the top of that section. A cover page is not required.

The Work Sample consists of:

- an executive summary of no more than 500 total words (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software), providing a clear, comprehensive overview of the submission; and
- a report or analytical discussion of no more than 2500 total words (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software), detailing the candidate's planning, execution and evaluation of the project.

Marks will be deducted (up to five marks on the executive summary and up to five marks on the main body of the report) if the work sample executive summary or report exceeds or falls below the stipulated word count by 150 words. To eliminate this possibility, we encourage candidates to write within prescribed limits and include the word counts on both the work sample executive summary and case study portion. References and footnotes are not included in the work count.

In addition to these required elements, the candidate may include appendices with collateral material such as news releases, brochures, photographs, scripts, newsletters, links to videos, etc. The total appendices must be submitted to the accreditation dropbox, if files are too large for the accreditation dropbox, the candidate must provide links to large files. Complete budgets may also be included as appendices, but discussion of them must appear in the main body of the submission.

Appended materials will be considered by evaluators for their illustrative value only, not as evidence of proficiency or of the program's quality. Therefore, please do not include in the appendices information or materials that are crucial to the understanding of the subject of the work sample — evaluators may or may not review the appendices in detail.

Candidates must use the RACE formula to organize their submission, following the standard communication plan headings of Research, Analysis, Communication and Evaluation (see the Evaluation section below for more details). Graders will be looking for certain elements of form and content, as reflected by the grading rubric on the marking sheet, such as their role in the strategic planning, budget, SWOT analysis and lessons learned. Candidates are strongly advised to review the grader marking sheets. The work sample should demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of, and ability to

execute, the key elements of public relations planning and programming, and clearly reflect to readers the candidate's role as initiator, planner, controller and evaluator.

The submission should be written in the style of a formal business report; a helpful article on business report style can be found [here](#).¹ In addition to narrative style, the submission can include tables, graphs, or other non-narrative elements. Citations of sources should follow APA style.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Senior APR examiners use the standard score sheet and their professional judgment in determining how well the candidate applies these elements to the subject of the work. It must be clear to them that the submission is a legitimate example of public relations work, and that all key elements of the overall planning, execution and evaluation process are both present and adequate.

The work sample counts for 20 percent of the total accreditation score. The examiners will grade the following elements of the work sample:

- Executive summary: Explains the key points of the project, **without requiring reference** to the subsequent report. Refers to each element of RACE, as appropriate to the submission. Includes lessons learned.

Research

- Research background / situation identification: Makes clear reference to the problem or opportunity and the organization's key objectives and how this PR program/project and/or academic materials plays a role in advancing those objectives.
- Research methodology: Includes discussion of more than one research methodology (formal or informal). If only one form of research was conducted, the candidate must explain if other options were considered and why they were rejected.
- Summary of research findings: Spells out what results came from the research, and how these are relevant for analysis, design or planning purposes, if appropriate to the submission.

¹ University of Nevada, Reno. University Writing & Speaking Center. <https://www.unr.edu/writing-speaking-center/writing-speaking-resources/how-to-write-a-business-report>

Analysis

- Stakeholder identification and analysis: Identifies the who and why of key stakeholders
- Vulnerabilities and opportunities: Spells out vulnerabilities and opportunities or does SWOT analysis
- SMART Communication objectives: Refers to objectives that require more than just creating awareness. The link between program objectives and organizational objectives must be evident. Objectives should follow the SMART Objectives format. Candidates should note that objectives are not lists of tactics. Rather, objectives should describe outcomes that align with organizational strategic vision and mission.
- SMART objectives should serve the achievement of organizational goals. That means that your communications project should be explicitly aligned with organizational goals. The SMART objectives should align with stated organizational goals.

Communication

- Appropriateness of tools and techniques: Explains the tools and techniques selected, based on research, SMART objectives and stakeholders. Employs at least one two-way communication tactic.
- Creativity of the program: Uses an imaginative mix of tools and techniques, given available resources.
- Key messages / consistency: Identifies key messages that speak to the benefits of the program and its positioning.
- Action plan/implementation: Outlines the steps, timelines and responsibilities in the action plan and its implementation.
- Budget: Illustrates the relationship between the plan and its hard and soft costs (e.g., in-kind contributions, staff time, goodwill, etc.). In situations of confidentiality, percentage breakdowns are acceptable.

Evaluation

- Evaluation Results/outcomes: Links this section back to the original objectives, both PR and organizational. Strong work samples will use both qualitative and quantitative measures. Should follow outputs, outtakes, outcomes model.
- Evaluation Methodology: Discusses the methods used to determine the success of the program.

Key Learnings

- Lessons for the future or lessons learned: The candidate's analysis of what worked / what didn't / what should be changed in the future.

General Structure & Quality

- Report structure, organization and clarity of ideas: Has a logical structure and flow and causes the reader no difficulty in understanding all components of the program.
- Spelling and grammar: Contains only minimal spelling and grammar errors. A pattern of spelling or grammar errors should be taken to illustrate a deficient standard.
- Overall presentation, appearance: Is neat and professional. Glitz is not required to achieve a pass mark. Business report writing standards are evident.

WORK SAMPLE GUIDANCE FOR THE EDUCATOR WORK SAMPLE

Educator work samples may be submitted by a full-time educator teaching public relations at a post-secondary institution. Such a work sample must have been completed within the previous three (3) years.

An Educator work sample project can be a full public relations campaign; a social media campaign anchored in a public relations program; a detailed academic course curriculum with associated lesson plans, course outline, learning outcomes and assessments/marking rubrics (for one semester, minimum 12 weeks, two hours a week); an instructional book/manual for a specific course or area of study (e.g., crisis communication manual) — either self-published or peer-reviewed; or a case study developed for a specific course or program. Most commonly, an Educator work sample project is a discussion of a public relations course curriculum or program, particularly where such a course or program was developed as a new project to meet a specific organizational and learning objective.

In order to submit an Educator work sample, the candidate must be a full-time instructor (minimum 12 hours a week of classroom and/or online teaching) in a government-approved and government-audited communication/public relations program (diploma, degree or certificate) at a government-licensed and government-regulated college and/or university in Canada. The candidate must also be a Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) member in good standing, with **a minimum of five years of practical experience in the field prior to entering the academy to focus on teaching**

or five years of cumulative field and teaching experience. The candidate should ideally have some practical experience in addition to teaching experience.

The candidate must submit an executive summary of the academic project of a maximum length of 500 words. The candidate must also submit the final approved and passed academic project (e.g., the full syllabus outline and description, the textbook that was published, etc.). The documents must be submitted to certification@cprs.ca on or before the deadline (**11:59 p.m. ET on December 30** or the next business day if this is not a business day). The naming convention for the Work Sample is:

SurnameFirstnameWS, e.g., SmithJaneWS and the naming convention for the appendices is: SurnameFirstnameApp1, e.g., SmithJaneApp1. Work sample submissions that arrive at CPRS National Office after the deadline will have 10 marks deducted from the final work sample grade.

The graders will examine whether the educator project submitted is a substantive contribution to pedagogy in public relations and communications management.

If the candidate's educator project is not of such a nature, it may be desirable to choose a different project undertaken during the candidate's work experience in the field. In this case, the candidate would rely on the regular Guidance for Work Samples. The candidate may consult with the Chief Examiner to inquire as to the eligibility of the project.

FORM AND CONTENT

Candidates should include their name, member ID number, date, and title of the work sample at the top of the first page. The name, ID, date and title are not included in the word count. The word count (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software) for the Executive Summary should appear at the top of the Executive Summary section and the word count for the discussion section should appear at the top of that section. A cover page is not required.

The Work Sample consists of:

- an executive summary of no more than **500 total words (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software)**, providing a clear, comprehensive overview of the submission; and
- the final approved version of the submitted research project (e.g., published book or manuscript proofs, full final syllabus and course outline, etc.).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The educator work sample submission will be given a pass or fail grade. The value of the work sample grade will be redistributed to the candidate's oral and written examinations — an additional 10 percent to each (45 percent - Oral Examination 55 percent - Written Examination).

WITHDRAWAL AFTER DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

If exceptional circumstances prevent the candidate from continuing and the candidate decides to withdraw completely from the accreditation process after having passed the eligibility review but before proceeding to exams, the candidate will forfeit the accreditation fee and receive a refund of the remainder of their APR program fee. The candidate may then begin the process again in any subsequent year, with a completely new work sample, and with payment of full fees for that year. Any such request must be made before the October exam date for that calendar year.

INELIGIBLE WORK SAMPLE

If a candidate submits a 500-word executive summary and full educator project, but it is found to be ineligible as an educator work sample, the candidate has an additional 30 days from notification of ineligibility to submit a work sample overview of a traditional work sample project.

WORK SAMPLE GUIDANCE FOR THE ACADEMIC WORK SAMPLE

Public relations program graduates may submit an Academic work sample for the work sample component of the accreditation process. A public relations program graduate is a communication/public relations practitioner who has completed a full-time graduate program (master's or doctorate) at a government-licensed and -regulated college or university (national or international). For the academic work sample, the candidate can choose to submit work on a research project involving both primary and secondary research anchored in public relations and communications management research methodologies and measurement. This research project must have been submitted as part of the requirements of the study program (thesis, dissertation, capstone research project, major research project), and been reviewed by a second reader before being passed.

The candidate must be a CPRS member in good standing, with **a minimum of five years of practical experience in the field** (can include time spent on co-op placement work) prior to applying to the APR program. This experience can be gained either prior to or in tandem/coincident with attending/completing the academic program.

The candidate must submit an executive summary of the research of a maximum length of 500 words. The candidate must also submit the final approved and passed research project. These should be combined into one document. The document must be submitted to certification@cprs.ca on or before the deadline (**11:59 p.m. ET on December 30 ET** or the next business day if this is not a business day). The naming convention for the Work Sample is: SurnameFirstnameWS, e.g., SmithJaneWS and the naming convention for the appendices is: SurnameFirstnameApp1, e.g., SmithJaneApp1. Work sample submissions that arrive at CPRS National Office after the deadline will have 10 marks deducted from the final work sample grade.

The academic work sample is considered eligible if the candidate has already graduated from the program and the project passed evaluation in the academic institution, within three years prior to the December 30 deadline.

The graders will examine whether the research project submitted is a substantive contribution to applied or experimental research in public relations and communications management.

If the candidate's academic research is not of such a nature, it may be desirable to choose a different project undertaken in the course of the candidate's work experience in the field. In this case, the candidate would rely on the regular Guidance for Work Samples. The candidate may consult with the Chief Examiner to inquire as to the eligibility of the project.

FORM AND CONTENT

Candidates should include their name, member ID number, date, and title of the work sample at the top of the first page. The name, ID, date and title are not included in the word count. The word count (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software) for the Executive Summary should appear at the top of the Executive Summary section and the word count (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software) for the discussion section should appear at the top of that section. A cover page is not required.

The Work Sample consists of:

- an executive summary of no more than **500 total words (as indicated by the candidate's word processing software)**, providing a clear, comprehensive overview of the submission; and
- the final, graded and approved manuscript of the submitted research project.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The academic work sample submission will be given a pass or fail grade. The value of the

work sample grade will be redistributed to the candidate's oral and written examinations — an additional 10 percent to each (45 percent — Oral Examination; 55 percent — Written Examination).

WITHDRAWAL AFTER DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

If exceptional circumstances prevent the candidate from continuing and the candidate decides to withdraw completely from the accreditation process after having passed the eligibility review but before proceeding to exams, the candidate will forfeit the accreditation fee and receive a refund of the remainder of their APR program fee. The candidate may then begin the process again in any subsequent year, with a completely new work sample, and with payment of full fees for that year. Any such request must be made before the October exam date for that calendar year.

INELIGIBLE WORK SAMPLE

If a candidate submits a 500-word executive summary and full research project, but it is found to be ineligible as an academic work sample, the candidate has an additional 30 days from notification of ineligibility to submit a work sample overview of a traditional work sample project.

APR PROCESS FOR ABC HOLDERS

Candidates holding an ABC (Accredited Business Communicator) designation have the option to apply for the APR program using the ABC process. The candidate will submit two documents: (i) their résumé, and (ii) a completed application for membership. These two documents and references will be reviewed by the Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility). The candidate must meet the five-year experience requirement of the APR. If the candidate is deemed eligible, then they will only have to pass the APR Oral Examination component with a score of 65 percent or higher to qualify for the APR.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WRITTEN AND ORAL EXAMS

WRITTEN EXAM

The written exam is used primarily to examine the candidate's theoretical and practical knowledge, professional ethics, judgment and philosophical approaches to the practice of public relations.

Form and Content

The written examination covers a wide range of topics and issues, including history, theory, fundamentals of practice and professional ethics. Knowledge of the [CPRS Code of Professional Standards](#) is necessary. Candidates are expected to be knowledgeable about any area of public relations practice — even those in which they may not have practiced.

The examination is divided into three sections: Public Relations Knowledge and Practice, Professionalism, and Communications Planning. Total writing time allocated is 3.5 hours to allow for completion and review of answers. The suggested completion time of the exam is 3 hours with an additional 30 minutes to give candidates time to read through the examination and proofread their answers. Examples of questions and answer guidelines are available on the CPRS website. The written examination is worth 45 percent of the candidate's total accreditation evaluation (55 percent for academic or educator stream candidates). The minimum passing grade is 60 percent for this examination. The candidate must receive a minimum average of 65 percent overall for the combined marks from their work sample, written examination and oral examination in order to qualify for accreditation.

Taking the Written Examination

The written examination is open-book, including digital resources. While candidates may have reference material on-hand during the exam, they should discuss the value of doing this with accredited members. Some have found it reassuring to have materials with them, while others have found there is little time to review the information unless specific sections have been highlighted beforehand in anticipation of possible questions. The purpose of the written examination is to challenge candidates to express themselves in their own words within a certain time frame, which reflects real-life situations for many practitioners. A career in public relations is more than an open-book examination. PR professionals must have the ability to express themselves, in writing or orally, on the spur of the moment, and to give advice often without the benefit of any

notes. Even though candidates are allowed to bring reference material, the information must be handled only as inspiration. In the end, examination answers must reflect what candidates understand and are able to compose in their own words, in “real time.” A cut and pasted answer to a question is not a reliable indicator of this skill. Examiners are looking for evidence of candidates’ thoughtful, reflective consideration of public relations issues and practices.

Carefully reading each question is the key to successfully completing the written examination. Words like “outline”, “describe” and “discuss” suggest what is expected in a response. Candidates should also watch for questions that require more than one task. For example, questions are often structured so that several points of basic knowledge must first be set out, and then used in a specific way.

Written exams were carried out in person each year, but moved to online exams in 2020 due to the global pandemic. While this format remains in place for **2026**, candidates should be prepared in any given year to meet the exam format determined for that year. Candidates must have access to a computer to complete the examinations. Should a technical problem arise (e.g., no power/equipment failure) the decision to continue resides with the Chief Examiner. (See Extraordinary Appeals).

At the completion of the written examination, whether an in-person exam or an online exam, the candidate is solely responsible for submitting their written examination for grading. The exam handed over in person or uploaded virtually by the candidate is the examination that will be graded. Candidates are encouraged to allow themselves enough time before the end of the written exam to ensure what they are submitting is what they intend to have graded.

Evaluation Criteria

To ensure candidates have the opportunity to fully present their ideas and to demonstrate their writing skill, all questions on the written examination are designed for essay-style answers. Graders in every region are provided with guidelines and a rubric to help them distinguish between strong, average and weak answers. Graders use rubrics and marking guidelines which are available on the CPRS website.

While candidates are expected to turn in a written examination that contains few grammatical, spelling or typographical errors, examiners are prepared to forgive typographical mistakes somewhat more readily in a candidate’s written exam than in their work sample. However, errors in spelling and grammar that clearly demonstrate a knowledge deficit will weigh against the total mark. Candidates may use the computer’s

spell check function. No additional time beyond the three and a half-hour limit is provided for proofreading or spell-checking.

ORAL EXAM

The oral exam complements the work sample and written examination by allowing examiners to explore in greater depth the candidate's knowledge of public relations and approaches to practice. In addition, it allows them to evaluate the candidate's personal presentation capabilities, as well as their oral language and interpersonal skills.

Taking the Oral Examination

Normally scheduled on the same day as, or on the next calendar day after the written examination, the oral examination is worth 35 percent of the candidate's total accreditation evaluation (45 percent for Academic and Educator stream candidates). The minimum passing grade is 60 percent for this examination. Candidates must receive a minimum average of 65 percent overall on their work sample, written and oral examinations to qualify for accreditation. The candidate's oral examination is a 45-60 minute interview conducted by accredited CPRS members in-person or over an audio or audio-video channel. The candidate's performance is evaluated on knowledge, presentation, competence, and poise. All in-person or audio/audio-video examination calls are recorded.

The oral exam is composed of five sections:

1. A warm-up section — usually only one question (about five minutes).
2. Work sample overview — The candidate will be asked a few questions about their work sample overview and will have about 10 minutes for this section.
3. General public relations knowledge - The candidate will be asked questions testing their knowledge of public relations and are allocated an estimated five minutes for each answer for a total of 20 minutes.
4. Current affairs - The candidate will be asked questions on public relations related to current affairs, based on both national and regional stories and issues. The candidate will have about five minutes for each answer for a total of 15 minutes.
5. Wrap up — If time permits, the candidate will be asked one last question or given an opportunity to make a comment.

Depending on the number of candidates, it may take place immediately after the candidate's written exam or normally be scheduled for the next calendar day. The oral examination will be recorded so that if a question or concern arises, the recording can be reviewed.

All graders use a standard marking sheet to evaluate oral examinations. The Chief Examiner provides standard questions for the examiners to include in the oral examination. In addition, examiners may ask questions that arise in the normal course of conversation relating to the candidate's responses to previous questions. The questions may be wide-ranging, covering topics or issues which may or may not have been part of the written examination.

Examiners may not ask the candidate questions that might be deemed to compromise personal or professional integrity, or which may be seen as prejudicial under the laws of Canada. If a candidate believes such a question is being asked, the candidate may refuse to answer. In a situation where the candidate believes the integrity of the oral examination itself is in jeopardy, they may request that the exam be ended. The candidate is responsible for reporting the circumstances directly to the Chief Examiner within 24 hours.

Examiners may also suspend the oral examination if a candidate does not arrive at the scheduled time, if a candidate appears to be under the influence of substances, or if a candidate falls ill before or during the exam. In each of these cases, the National Office staff member invigilating the exam is responsible for reporting the circumstances directly to the Chief Examiner within 24 hours. If possible, candidates should notify the Chief Examiner and CPRS National Office that they will not sit the examination.

Evaluation Criteria

The oral examination gives candidates the opportunity to present themselves as confident, knowledgeable professionals who are comfortable discussing issues related to public relations. In addition to evaluating their knowledge, oral language skills and ability to clearly articulate ideas, examiners consider appropriate manner and dress, confidence, interpersonal skills and professional commitment.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

CPRS acts in compliance with the Human Rights Code (1990) to accommodate exam candidates with disabilities who need special arrangements to sit for the written and/or oral examinations. Auxiliary aids and services will be provided/accepted except where these may fundamentally alter the exam or result in an undue burden. Any individual who has a physical or cognitive impairment or limitations that prevent them from taking the examination under standard testing conditions may request special testing

arrangements. The types of accommodation that may be provided include a person to read the examination questions, extended testing time (if requesting extended time, please indicate how much time is needed), or other agreed-upon accommodations.

When submitting their CPRS Accreditation Application form, the candidate requesting accommodations must include a separate letter describing each of the following:

- Candidate's disability, differently abled or special need
- Accommodations or adaptations the candidate is requesting
- Documentation from a physician or other appropriate diagnostic authority (e.g., psychologist, vocational specialist, etc.) concerning the disability and special needs.

Special accommodation requests must be made at least thirty (30) days prior to the published written and oral examination date. This can be done by emailing the CPRS National Office at certification@cprs.ca.

Candidates who cannot participate in the written and/or oral examination on the published date, under certain circumstances, can take the examinations within seven (7) working days of the published date. CPRS National Office must receive a request in writing at least sixty days (60) prior to the published National Examination date. Please note that all exam date change requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS

THE ENVIRONMENT

The practice of public relations is inextricably bound to influencing public opinion, attitudes and behaviour in order to manage the relationship between an organization and the environment in which it exists. By creating and maintaining effective relationships which foster mutual understanding with internal and external publics, public relations assists organizations to achieve their mission and goals.

Just as the practice of public relations has become more sophisticated through the years, so has the methodology of influencing opinion. This process involves a series of complex, logical activities planned and executed by a seasoned public relations practitioner. This combination of skills, knowledge, planning and communication provides a formula for effective public relations which has been identified as:

- fact finding and feedback;
- planning and programming;
- action and communication; and
- evaluation.

The Canadian Public Relations Society and the Public Relations Society of America recognize this four-step public relations process as the RACE formula: Research, Analysis, Communication and Evaluation. What is important is that the RACE process represents the steps embedded in all accepted models designed for planning and implementation of programs for positive results in business.

Application of the RACE formula depends on a practitioner's knowledge and skills related to public relations practice. Candidates for accreditation should become familiar with the RACE formula as a guideline for the planning and implementation of an effective public relations program.

Successful public relations practitioners are people who understand the realities of human nature. A familiarity with the humanities, social sciences and the emerging areas of communication technology (CommTech) and data-driven decision-making, is essential for anyone wishing to establish, influence or modify public opinion and prevailing attitudes. The RACE formula is a valuable tool for anyone concerned with such endeavours. Materials identified in the Reading List (last chapter) explain the role of social science and the importance of research, analysis, communication and evaluation.

RESEARCH

Before launching an effective public relations program, one must understand an organization's environment — especially the prevailing attitudes and issues as they are perceived by all stakeholders (e.g., employees, shareholders and residents of the community or communities in which a program will run). It is important to recognize that public relations functions within an organizational context by including plans to mobilize or leverage resources across the organization.

The attitudes and issues identified through this research dictate the approach and scope of any public relations activity. For example, research may show that attitudes toward the organization are generally positive, indicating the need for a less aggressive, perhaps more focused, public relations program. Less favourable results may indicate the need for immediate and intensive attention to address specific concerns.

An effective research program identifies the action / reaction equation in an organization's environment. Its purpose is to:

- identify publics within the organization's environment;
- determine current attitudes of these publics toward the organization;
- isolate factors that determine these attitudes;
- identify issues that may alter these attitudes; and
- determine how a public relations program may affect issues and influence attitudes / behaviour.

Some of the most common objectives of public relations research are to:

- identify a problem or opportunity;
- identify research questions that will inform and structure the research;
- identify or measure the level of understanding of the organization among target groups;
- identify or track current and potential issues;
- shape and pre-test a specific message; and
- evaluate and measure changes in perception.

Popular research methodology and research tools include:

- polling;
- communication audits;
- mail, email and telephone questionnaires;
- person-to-person interviews;
- participant observations;

- social network analysis;
- content analysis;
- reviewing industry best practices; and
- issues identification and trend tracking.

Valid research must be thorough and complete. If any of the elements within an organization's environment are improperly or inadequately identified and measured, a public relations program will not achieve its objectives.

ANALYSIS

Research provides the knowledge and evidence required to proceed with a comprehensive and effective strategic public relations plan. Once the research is complete, the immediate task at hand is to make sense out of the data collected and to develop accurate conclusions. It is in the analysis phase that the public relations practitioner uses all the information at hand to develop SMART communication objectives which will assist the organization to improve in specific areas, manage an issue or crisis, or to move in new directions. Without clearly defined and measurable objectives, it is not possible to proceed. SMART objectives should align neatly and explicitly onto organizational goals.

Drawing upon their experience in human relations and in both the qualitative and quantitative social sciences, the practitioner can use this information to build an appropriate program. If analysis of the available data does not allow the practitioner to thoroughly understand the problems or to identify opportunities to affect attitudes, one's research is probably insufficient. It is important to identify the additional facts and feedback required and revisit the research phase so that the public relations program is built on a solid, defensible foundation.

Once the problems and opportunities are identified, planning appropriate solutions is feasible. While many management principles could be applied to arrive at a viable solution, virtually all are variations of a basic problem-solving process:

- identify the problem(s);
- determine the factors contributing to the problem;
- identify the critical factors;
- identify possible solutions;
- choose the best solutions; and
- apply solutions through the program.

Scott Cutlip and Allen Center, two of North America's most noted practitioners, advocate a similar formula under the title Strategic Analysis:

- identify objectives;
- consider alternatives;
- compare risk benefits;
- consider consequences;
- make the decision; and
- plan tactics.

Candidates are advised to use the FAST goals and SMART objectives method, because these are emerging as business standards that lend themselves to the formation of relevant, realistic and measurable goals and objectives.

Whatever system of analysis is employed, it is critical to ask four key questions: What do I want to accomplish? What challenges are before me? Who benefits from my plan? How do I overcome them strategically? The answers to these questions help the practitioner prepare an outline of the program, taking into account the communication resources available. The practitioner is then ready for the final phase of analysis — refining the methods they will use to achieve their program objectives.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the action step of the public relations process. In simple terms, communication is a two-way, preferably relational, transmission — a message is sent from one person or group of people to another, with feedback coming from the receiver to the sender. These messages are transmitted in many ways, including print and electronic media, direct mail, and person-to-person discussions. They are interpreted by receivers in many ways as well. Variables such as pre-existing emotional factors, socio-cultural, ethnic and demographic backgrounds and community dimensions have a significant influence on the way a message is received.

The challenge faced by the public relations practitioner is to identify target publics and design messages so precisely that their intended message is easily and clearly received, and desired outcomes are achieved. During the research and analysis phases of this process, the practitioner identifies those factors which may inhibit effective communication. Things like attitudes, awareness, preconceptions, predispositions, group allegiances, levels of education, language, ethnic background, religious affiliation and household income have a definite influence on the practitioner's program and may enhance or hinder the effectiveness of their efforts.

Equipped with a detailed profile of target groups, the practitioner is in a position to design specific messages for each group. Special messages are variations on the practitioner's main theme, individually tailored to the interests of each group by considering diverse factors which apply to the groups. Proper research and analysis also identify potential barriers to communication activities, referred to in a communication model as "noise." Isolating the noise in the various media of communication helps in the selection of methods to be employed.

When planning the communication elements of the public relations process, practitioners should keep in mind:

- Target groups or audiences consist of people who live, work, and play in the framework of social institutions in cities, suburbs and villages — consequently, each person is subject to many influences, of which the practitioner's message is only one;
- People tend to read, watch or listen to communication that presents points of view with which they are already sympathetic or in which they have a deep personal stake;
- The mass media create their own separate communities — those who read newspapers constitute a community separate from those who rely on television, radio or the internet for information; and
- The mass media influence individual behaviour in a number of ways, not all of which are measurable.

It is important for the practitioner to remember that their communication plan should be strategic. That is to say, it should further the mission, vision, values, goals and objectives of the practitioner's organization or client. A strategic plan is more likely to be perceived to be contributing value to the organization.

EVALUATION

The success of their public relations program is essential if the practitioner hopes to contribute to their organization's strategic mission, goals and objectives. Predetermined goals and objectives are critical, not only for the satisfaction of the practitioner, but also for the organization. The work sample and the written and oral examination will offer the accreditation candidate opportunities to demonstrate their ability to set reasonable and measurable communication objectives and to evaluate their success.

A public relations plan must include a measurement system to gauge the success of the program and to signal where the program may not be reaching its full potential. This is why it is critical to measure and evaluate the impact of the practitioner's efforts

continually during the implementation phase. Cutlip and Center say that “evaluation is an ongoing process that enables executives to make the corrective adjustments required to guide an organization safely through the tides and wind of turbulent seas of opinion.” Mindful that communication is a two-way process, they also caution that “... dissemination does not equal communication.”

Systematic evaluation includes:

- selecting the rationale for evaluation;
- specifying evaluation objectives;
- collecting data;
- analysing data at appropriate points during and after the campaign;
- reporting results at appropriate points during and after the campaign; and
- applying the results to decision-making in an iterative fashion during and after the campaign;
- identifying outputs, outtakes, and outcomes.

Evaluation seeks to ascertain:

- whether target groups are receiving the message(s);
- whether specific target groups are responding to the message(s);
- what lasting impression the message(s) leaves in the minds of the target groups; and
- whether the channels of influence and mechanisms of persuasion generated by the message(s) are recognized in terms of positive and favourable responses.
- whether organizational goals and SMART objectives were achieved.
- whether campaign results fall into one of three generally accepted categories: outputs, outtakes, outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX

GRADING GUIDE FOR ACCREDITATION

THE WORK SAMPLE

The work sample accounts for 20 percent of the total accreditation evaluation. The minimum passing grade is 60 percent. Anyone whose work sample does not reach this minimum passing grade is not eligible to continue with the accreditation process. Graders carefully review the candidate's work sample to assess its overall application of the RACE formula, and more specifically (*see also Chapter Three*):

- the explanation of the candidate's organization's key objectives and the extent to which the candidate's program or project advanced these objectives;
- the validity of the program and its effectiveness in modifying or changing attitudes, opinions, behaviour or the public relations environment, and in meeting the candidate's project objectives;
- the adequacy of the candidate's research in identifying factors bearing on the rationale for the program;
- the appropriate analysis of pertinent stakeholders and related environmental issues;
- evidence that the principles of sound public relations practice have been applied in the search for solutions;
- the development of an appropriate budget and its assignment to each element of the candidate's program or project;
- employment of a full range of public relations skills in the conduct of an ethically based program and a method for evaluation;
- demonstration of a well-rounded understanding of the ongoing nature of the public relations process;
- the candidate's ability to communicate effectively through the written word, particularly the quality of the candidate's paragraph and sentence structure, grammar, syntax and readability; and
- the conciseness and clarity of the candidate's executive summary, and
- whether the word count falls within the prescribed limits of 500 for the executive summary (abstract) and 2,500 for the main body. In French, the word counts are 600 for the abstract (executive summary) and 3,000 for the main body. Note the actual word count (by computer) on the first page of the candidate's document. The graders need to see it.

- any use of artificial intelligence (AI) is professionally cited, disclosed, and appendix objects are provided for any AI uses that require further elaboration.

THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

The written examination is worth 45 percent of the candidate's total accreditation evaluation. The minimum pass mark is 60 percent. The candidate must receive at least this minimum passing grade to qualify for accreditation. (There must be unanimous agreement among the examiners that the candidate has attained the minimum passing grade).

The candidate's written examination is graded by each of the examiners using the marking sheets available on the CPRS website.

THE ORAL EXAMINATION

The candidate's oral examination is worth 35 percent of their total accreditation evaluation. The minimum passing grade is 60 percent. The candidate must receive at least this minimum passing grade to qualify for accreditation. The candidate's oral examination is a 45 to 60 minute interview. The examiners evaluate the candidate's performance using the marking sheets available on the CPRS website.

ATTAINING ACCREDITATION

In order to ensure fair and accurate evaluation of all candidates, the National Council on Accreditation adheres to a policy of confidentiality and unanimity among members of the examination panel. This holds true for all components of the accreditation process as well as the aggregate grade.

Once the evaluation of all work samples, written examinations and oral examinations is complete, the Chief Examiner reviews the overall evaluation of each candidate's performance. While the passing grade for each of the three components is 60 percent, the candidate must achieve an overall average of at least 65 percent.

When the candidate accomplishes this level of performance, they have earned their accreditation and their APR designation.

Acknowledgements and congratulations announcements will be released in late January or early February once each candidate has been notified of their successful completion of the process. Best of luck to all candidates!

CHAPTER SEVEN

ADMINISTRATION OF ACCREDITATION - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The National Council on Accreditation administers, manages, and shall have power to develop terms of reference for the Accreditation Program subject to regulations adopted by the National Board of Directors. The Council shall establish and administer the use of the term “Accredited, Public Relations” designated by the suffix, “APR” and will also:

- develop policy and procedure as it relates to the administration of accreditation;
- develop and deliver the accreditation examination process;
- promote the value of accreditation;
- monitor that only eligible accredited members use the designation;
- administer accreditation maintenance; and
- regularly review all processes and documents associated with the APR designation.

The National Council on Accreditation shall consist of a Presiding Officer, at least four (4) and not more than nine (9) accredited members and two (2) representatives appointed by the Board.

The members of the National Council on Accreditation shall serve a 3-year term renewable once to a maximum of 6 years, the terms so arranged that retirement is on a rotation basis.

Members of Council must be accredited members in good standing who have maintained their Accreditation through the Accreditation Maintenance Program.

2. The Presiding Officer is responsible for ensuring that the National Council on Accreditation carries out its mandate.

3. The Chief Examiner is responsible for the development and delivery of the examinations to the eligible candidates in accordance with the guidelines of the National Council on Accreditation. The Chief Examiner is responsible for the recruitment of graders. The Chief Examiner provides the grader training necessary to ensure that all candidates receive the same equal and fair treatment in the examination process. The Chief Examiner works closely with the National Office in all aspects of the process from the time a candidate applies until the completion of the accreditation process. The Chief Examiner also provides guidance and direction to graders, particularly to ensure objectivity and fairness on behalf of all candidates for accreditation and to ensure that candidate confidentiality is upheld through the signing of a Confidentiality Agreement.

4. The Chief Instructor guides and coaches APR candidates across Canada toward their success. This role, created in 2025, works with the Chief Examiner and Presiding Officer to provide deeper support on a national scale to candidates in their preparation for the APR work sample and exams (both written and oral). The Chief Instructor organizes national level workshops for candidates, and also supports those who might not have local chapters. The Chief Instructor also works with the Local Accreditation Chairs to ensure a network of support.

5. Local Accreditation Chairs are APRs from within Local Societies who are available to provide the necessary information and guidance at the local level. These individuals serve as the local bridge between the candidate and the Chief Examiner. Responsibilities include having regular and ongoing contact with candidates throughout the process, and would involve such tasks as:

- hosting accreditation readiness information sessions;
- using and supplementing resources offered to candidates at the national level;
- encouraging practitioners to participate in the process;
- answering questions about the process at various stages once a candidate has applied;
- assisting the candidate in working through the selection of work sample topics;
- ensuring that candidates receive copies of previous examinations for study purposes, along with copies of the grading guidelines, and examples of high-marking successful work samples (all are available on the CPRS website, under the Accreditation tab);
- keeping in contact with other accredited practitioners who are willing to provide feedback to candidates prior to submitting their work samples; and
- communicating with candidates in the months leading up to the exam.

6. CPRS National Office acts as the focal point for dissemination of all communication to candidates, from application, acknowledgement, acceptance into the process, submission of work samples, and results of the process. The National Office coordinates the receipt of Work Samples, sending them to graders, receives the samples back, records the results and returns the work samples to the candidates at the end of the process. The National Office coordinates the distribution and collection of exams, and the tabulation of marks for work sample, written and oral exams results. The National Office also serves as liaison for inquiries regarding accreditation and ensures that inquiries are channeled to the appropriate persons at the Local Society level. The National Office is also responsible for advising local Accreditation Chairs of the final

results (*i.e.*, results that have been approved by the Chief Examiner) for candidates in their jurisdiction.

7. The Academic/Educator Eligibility Committee is responsible for deciding on the eligibility of the academic and educator stream work sample submissions. They do not grade the submissions, they simply decide upon eligibility. This committee should be composed of APRs involved in education who hold a master's or doctorate degree and teach at the postsecondary level. Academic Stream: Evaluators must avoid examining files from candidates who graduated from an organization at which they teach; a conflict of interest should be communicated at the earliest convenience, so that an appropriate evaluator can be identified. Educator Stream: Evaluators should, if possible, avoid examining files from applicants who are co-authors, colleagues or with whom they have collaborated significantly.

8. The Deputy Presiding Officer (Eligibility) determines eligibility of candidates to the program and ensures that only persons qualified are able to participate in the accreditation process. They assess candidates' experience and determine to what degree, if any, work prior to becoming a member of CPRS qualifies for "time served" in the five-year experience window. They also review the work sample overviews and provide feedback to candidates on whether their work sample project meets the requirements of scope and ownership.

9. The Accreditation Examination Development Committee works with the National Council on Accreditation to develop questions for the accreditation exams. This committee encompasses accredited practitioners from all regions, who collectively possess expertise in a broad range of public relations work (*i.e.* corporate, not-for-profit, government, agency and the education community). This committee is responsible for ensuring that the written examination is fair, representative of the profession and that it contains a balance of questions to test not only the candidate's grasp of theory, but more importantly, their ability to demonstrate their practical expertise.

10. The Liaison to Accreditation Chairs on the National Council on Accreditation provides the link between the Accreditation Council and the local Society Accreditation Chairs.

CONTRIBUTING AND GIVING BACK

Accreditation is the flagship program sponsored by the Canadian Public Relations Society. By volunteering to help with the administration of the process or otherwise contributing to the APR program, accredited members make a valuable contribution to

the future of professional communication practice while remaining connected to the program in whose credibility they have a major stake. In addition, they benefit from a special professional development opportunity, participating in discussions about accreditation itself and various aspects of current public relations practice.

The National Council on Accreditation welcomes any current APR to support the accreditation process by volunteering and applying for one of the following roles that become available, including:

- Chief Examiner
- Chief Instructor
- Deputy Presiding Officer - Eligibility
- Examination Development Team
- APR Maintenance Lead
- Local Accreditation Chair (an APR chosen by the Local Society)
- Grader (no limit on the number of positions or term of appointment).

Job descriptions for most of these positions are available from the National Office.

GRADER ORIENTATION

A paramount objective in administering the accreditation process is to ensure objectivity, consistency and fairness in the evaluation of candidates across the country. Any current CPRS member who has held their APR designation for over 5 years is invited to attend grader orientation and become a grader.

All accreditation volunteers involved in the accreditation process must sign a Confidentiality and Privacy Declaration to protect all candidates' personal and professional information that they may encounter throughout the accreditation program.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GUIDE FOR ACCREDITATION CHAIRS OF MEMBER SOCIETIES

INTRODUCTION

Attaining accreditation is an important milestone in the career of a professional public relations practitioner. It recognizes personal achievement, experience, and competence in the field and, as such, is an important measure of success and self-awareness. The accreditation process is a serious, professional endeavour and must be managed in this manner. Candidates must realize the full experience and rewards of pursuing this recognition. For this reason, this chapter has been prepared especially for the Presiding Officers and Accreditation Chairs. It will assist in developing effective accreditation programs within the societies so they can offer the guidance, advice, instruction, and reinforcement required to support their public relations colleagues. Both candidates and Accreditation Chairs should realize that:

- the APR (Accredited, Public Relations) designation is recognition of effective public relations capabilities and current membership in CPRS;
- the accreditation program is the Society's contribution toward developing and maintaining high professional standards of its members; and
- achieving accreditation status is a source of self-satisfaction for CPRS members and fosters greater recognition of their professional stature among peers, employers and clients.

The primary objective of the Accreditation Chair is to encourage eligible members with the appropriate qualifications to undertake the accreditation process. Some members may be ready and eager to accept the challenge. Others may be hesitant and need reassurance. The success of the accreditation process, as with any public relations program, begins with identifying and analyzing the local situation.

It is important that members understand the true purpose of the accreditation process. Accreditation is a personal challenge, a journey that helps them realize their professional strengths, abilities, and growth. It must be stressed that there is no need to fear the process, or the thought of facing examinations.

The APR program is delivered in a national cohort model. A national group is created via a digital communication system wherein all candidates and Accreditation Chairs can interact. This serves two purposes:

- It enables candidates to share resources in preparing for the exam. This creates greater equity, evens the playing field between local chapters who have very active Accreditation Chairs and those who do not;
- It enables APR candidates to build a network of professional colleagues and friends that may last a lifetime.

It is important to maintain confidentiality surrounding candidates' results as they go through the APR program. For this reason, the results of the work samples, the written examinations, and the oral interviews are known only by those doing the evaluation, the Chief Examiner, and the CPRS National Office. Local Society Accreditation Chairs are notified of candidates' success or failure, but not of specific grades. Of course, candidates may choose to share their grades with anyone they want.

THE MEMBER SOCIETY'S ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

Local Accreditation Chairs must be accredited members of CPRS. Members should consider their position on the committee as a 12-month assignment and develop an action program as soon as possible. Members should keep in mind that candidates sit for examinations in late October of the following year.

The Local Society's Accreditation Chair should begin each year by identifying, with the assistance of the National Office, local members who appear to be eligible during the next accreditation period. Potential applicants should be contacted and asked if they have any questions about the accreditation process and if they are interested in pursuing accreditation. All conversations concerning eligibility for or achievement within the APR program between a potential applicant and their Accreditation Chair, National Office Staff or members of Accreditation Council must be kept strictly confidential.

The number of eligible members and their individual needs determine the extent of the Accreditation Chair's activities. These may include an introductory information session to which all members are invited, follow-up training sessions and individual counseling sessions or follow-up calls.

The general information session should be organized as early as possible so candidates have time to consider the process - its requirements and commitment. In planning this information session, the Accreditation Chair and committee members should prepare to discuss:

- how to build a local group of APR candidates and APR holders to provide mutual support and mentorship to candidates in their APR prep, while taking advantage of resources offered at the national level;
- the CPRS accreditation process;

- the application and prequalification process — completing the form, providing references, preparing the work sample overview, etc.;
- the written and oral examination content — using previous examination questions as examples;
- the content, approach, subject matter and format of the work sample; and
- books, periodicals and abstracts which may be of value in preparing for the examinations.

Suitable work samples of former candidates who have received accreditation may be obtained online or from the CPRS resource centre located at Mount Royal University in Calgary: <https://library.mtroyal.ca/friendly.php?s=publicrelations/cprscollection>

Accreditation Chairs should be prepared to assist anyone who makes the decision to apply. Prior to the annual December 1 deadline for applications, the Accreditation Chair should assist interested members with their applications and references, if asked. Between December and April, candidates may request help with preparing the work sample. From May to September, a study group may be organized to prepare for examinations in the fall. Study sessions should cover these basic requirements:

- a successful study schedule (*see Chapter Two*);
- study material (*see Reading List*);
- the responsibilities of examiners; and
- what to expect from the written and oral examinations.

Accreditation Chairs may request help from the National Office for resources or support.

CHAPTER NINE

ACCREDITATION SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

The question of readiness comes up repeatedly as public relations practitioners and educators grapple with the demands of busy jobs while trying to maintain work/life balance. Yet at some point in time, most of us want to see how our skills measure up on a national scale. That's usually when we begin to wonder about pursuing the APR designation and ask the question "Am I ready?"

To help candidates do a self-assessment, the Council has prepared the checklist below. Beyond the first five must-haves, the more check marks a candidate can make, the closer the candidate is to readiness to proceed with the process. Once the candidate determines they are ready to proceed, the Council has put in place a variety of supports to help them apply and be successful.

A GUIDING CHECKLIST: AM I READY?

	1) WORK EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT: I have a minimum of five years public relations practical work (and/or teaching) experience where I have been exposed to a broad range of communication activities.
	2) LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT: I have the ability to communicate well both orally and in writing in one of Canada's two official languages.
	3) WRITING REQUIREMENT: I am able to write clearly and concisely in plain language and demonstrate I am competent in grammar, spelling and punctuation.
	4) THEORY REQUIREMENT: I have a solid theoretical working knowledge of communication principles; including but not limited to: the RACE formula, communication strategy, communication planning, linking goals and objectives to outcomes, media relations, crisis communication, stakeholder identification. I am confident in my knowledge and understanding of public relations theories.
	5) PLANNING REQUIREMENT: I have taken on progressively more responsible roles on behalf of my employer and/or clients; have

	had experience in planning, guiding and directing projects, activities and/or people toward the fulfillment of strategic objectives; and in developing the strategies themselves. I have experience dealing with a broad range of issues, publics and situations.
	6) STRATEGY EXPERIENCE: I am comfortable in a setting when tasked to draw on my experience and best practices to evaluate challenging situations, and where I am called upon to provide my counsel and insights on matters of a strategic nature as they relate to the organization(s) with which, or for which, I work.
	7) PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES: I have been able to hone my skills as a public relations generalist through my work and volunteer experience. I can cite examples from my work or volunteer activities of how I might apply a theoretical challenge.
	8) PROBLEM SOLVING EXPERIENCES: I have earned a reputation as a “go to” practitioner among my peers, and my view or guidance is often sought by others due to my ability to think strategically, act calmly in crisis situations, or come up with practical solutions to problems.
	9) ETHICAL ANALYSIS SKILLS: I am able to think on my feet to formulate plausible, rational and insightful responses to ethics questions.
	10) CURRENCY IN NEWS: I follow local, regional, national and international current events to help inform my professional decision making .
	11) READLNG LIST REVIEWED: I have reviewed the suggested reading list on the CPRS Accreditation web site. I am familiar with the Accreditation Handbook.
	12) MENTORSHIP AIMS: I would welcome mentoring (formally or informally) by an accredited public relations practitioner who would willingly share their senior public relations experience and knowledge.
	13) INTRINSIC VALUE: I believe attaining my APR is as important to me personally as it is professionally, recognizing that it may not

	have a direct impact on my career development or financial remuneration.
	14) LIFE-LONG LEARNING: I am committed to participating in lifelong learning and involvement in the discipline, industry or profession, as it is very important to maintain the APR designation once I attain it.

EDUCATOR PATH: A GUIDING CHECKLIST

	1) LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENT: If I am an educator, I have taken on a leadership role to develop and/or to improve program/course curriculum, delivery and assessment.
	2) COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: If I am an educator, I encourage students to volunteer in the community and in the public relations profession. I lead them by example, being active in the community and in the profession as a volunteer.
	3) PEDAGOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS: If I am an educator, I have made a significant contribution to the teaching of the profession of public relations and communications management by writing a book, developing a course or program, creating a learning app or other pedagogical achievement.

Many APRs acknowledge one of the most important aspects of their accomplishment in successfully completing the accreditation process was the mentoring they received from a senior practitioner. Many had the benefit of this through their employment and others found mentors through their local society activities or through working with their local accreditation chair. Still others reached out to CPRS members beyond their own Society who formally or informally provided guidance and direction.

If a candidate would like to discuss their readiness or have other questions about the accreditation process, or would like to be connected to a mentor they may either contact their local accreditation chair, or call the CPRS national office at (416) 239-7034 or e-mail certification@cprs.ca

CHAPTER TEN

APR STUDY GUIDE FOR WRITTEN AND ORAL EXAMS

The CPRS Accreditation website offers an array of resources to help candidates prepare for the written and oral exams, including a reading list and samples of previous written exams. As we emphasize in “The Preparation Process” section of the Accreditation Handbook, the candidate’s studies should concentrate on the principles of public relations and their practical application to present-day Canadian and international issues and real-life organizational situations. But this is a vast territory and the study process may be daunting. Where does one begin? What topics does one need to know to be able to apply theory to practice? How can one make all this material manageable?

This short guide has been developed to facilitate the candidate’s preparation. The themes are clustered under major headings as well as the components of the RACE formula, in the form of text and questions that are fundamental to the subject. To help the candidate formulate answers, locate the relevant reading(s) in our suggested list (see **chapter 11** of this handbook) and/or access others the candidate knows or uses, and then map the theory against their knowledge of current events and personal experience in the field. In each subject area, the candidate should be thinking about applying their professional experience by citing examples to illustrate the theoretical concepts. The Handbook also provides foundational background related to the practice, the profession and ethical considerations.

Below are core categories of public relations knowledge with which APR candidates should be familiar to be able to handle questions in the written and oral exams comfortably and skillfully.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE WRITTEN AND ORAL EXAM

Candidates should have knowledge of brand management in a wide range of contexts (e.g., financial, marketing, technology, organizational purpose and values) as well as strong understanding of emerging issues, which will be examined both in the written and oral accreditation exams.

Candidates must also be aware that they will be evaluated in the oral exam on “professionalism” that can include body language, mannerisms, composure and other visual cues of competence such as evidence of preparation, fact-based knowledge and expertise. These aspects of professionalism impress upon the grading panel that they can envision the candidate providing strategic counsel and advice to senior leadership.

Candidates will also be questioned in the oral exam about their work sample, including lessons learned. Given it is the candidate's own work sample, they should be able to effectively prepare for this component of the exam.

Candidates must be able to get their points across accurately, clearly, cohesively and concisely — both orally and in writing. High quality of writing (i.e., proper grammar, spelling, sentence construction) is the foundation of communication and the public relations profession. Managing time is another top consideration, since candidates have a limited amount of time to respond in each section.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: THE PRACTICE

When considering the practice of public relations, candidates should consider all components that can encompass the process of public relations including its definition, its vision, mission, goals, objectives, strategies, tactics, evaluation, stewardship and so on. Candidates should be able to define the core competencies at the root of the practice and demonstrate their professionalism through proficient oral and written communication. Additionally, candidates should be able to respond to what is the social significance of public relations and what socio-economic and political factors can influence the practice.

Current trends in public relations are important to monitor. A good resource example, for instance, are surveys of the profession, such as the CPRS (2025, October). 2025 State of Public Relations in Canada:

<https://www.cprs.ca/CPRS/media/SOPR-Items/SOPR2025-ConfidentialDraft-October2025.pdf>

Candidates should also have a solid knowledge of the significance of the Barcelona Principles 3.0 which relate to public relations measurement and the **Melbourne Mandate** (see: <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/melbourne-mandate>), which focuses on organizational behaviour. From a Canadian perspective, candidates should familiarize themselves with the white paper **“THE ELEVATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS: A discussion paper on a profession's present — and its possible future”** (Daniel Tisch, 2017). It can be accessed at:

<https://www.cprs.ca/Learn/Articles-White-Papers-Other-Documents/The-Elevation-of-Public-Relations>

PUBLIC RELATIONS: THE PROFESSION

- How has the field of public relations evolved as a profession in Canada and abroad?

- How do professional organizations such as CPRS contribute to the advancement of the public relations profession?
- How does accreditation serve to advance the profession?

PUBLIC RELATIONS: CORE COMPETENCIES

Candidates should have a solid understanding of the core competencies at the root of the public relations profession. For example, they should understand the full range of possibilities within the profession and recognize the differences and similarities of public relations work within agencies, the private sector, the public sector, and the not-for-profit sector. Candidates should be aware of the variety of functions that comprise public relations practices, including: community relations, government relations, media relations, employee relations, political communication, and investor relations.

Candidates should also be aware of the value and impacts of digital and social media, emerging digital technologies and data science. Artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, augmented and virtual reality are changing the ways that people engage with organizations and with one another. For example, these developments require communicators to put new tools into their belts — new competencies for the effective strategic communicator of the near future.

Candidates should consider the following:

- How is the RACE formula integral to public relations?
- When considering environmental scanning, what value does public relations bring to this function that other areas of an organization cannot?
- What impact can public relations have on decision-making within the C-suite?
- How can the RACE formula be applied to event management so it is seen as a strategic function rather than organizing social activities?
- What are the distinctions between crisis and issues management?
- How are publicity and media relations related? What are the distinctions?
- Is there a difference between communication/public relations and public affairs or marketing?
- How does public relations influence advocacy work?
- How does PR influence organizational goals and internal stakeholders to drive shared outcomes?
- What are proactive and reactive communication? Candidates should be able to provide concrete examples of each.
- How have digital and social media transformed the practice of public relations?

- Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned media are tactics and outcomes that can be shared or blurred between marketing and public relations. Candidates should have an idea of what each is, and how these tactics and outcomes encompass disciplines such as media relations, community relations, investor relations and internal communication. Candidates should be able to discuss how the convergence of marketing and public relations is affecting the profession's institutional stature. Where do brand, brand management and reputation management fit into this mix?
- How is public relations being affected by the rise of data science, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, blockchain, Web3 and the metaverse?
- What are the barriers to effective communication?
- What communication channels can a public relations practitioner control? What channels cannot be controlled?
- How does rapidly-changing technology impact the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of public relations work? What are the challenges and benefits?
- How does Canada's diversity (socio-economic, cultural, gender identification) affect public relations work?
- What role can public relations play in supporting the challenges journalism faces?
- What role can public relations play in serving the public interest by defending democracy, freedom of speech, and free markets?
- What roles and responsibilities must public relations assume, as the media landscape changes and a broader range of voices, such as citizen journalists and others takes over more of journalism's traditional role?

PUBLIC RELATIONS: THE RACE FORMULA IN PRACTICE

RESEARCH

Before considering tactics and tools to use as research methods when building a communication plan, candidates need to have a solid grounding in the ethical framework of public relations. Ethics theory and practice are integral to and part of the overall ethical considerations of the public relations practice.

Candidates should be able to reflect on and to discuss the following:

- Importance of ethical principles in the practice of public relations.
- Building trusting relationships as a key accountability of an ethical public relations practice.

- How do the CPRS Code of Professional Standards and Declaration of Principles promote ethical public relations practices?
- What are the key elements of ethical decision-making in public relations?
- What are the ethical responsibilities of a public relations practitioner who uses persuasion techniques to influence others?
- Would there ever be a situation where not applying ethical considerations can be justified?
- What are ethical considerations in public relations research?
- How do the Barcelona Principles 3.0 serve as a guide to public relations research ethics?
- How can survey research be best used as a public relations tool?
- How can digital and social media research be used effectively to build publics, and to build and manage relationships through a cycle of perpetual evaluation?
- What are effective informal and formal research methods in public relations practice?
- What are best practices in public relations research?
- What are the values and drawbacks of qualitative research methods in public relations practice?
- What are the values and drawbacks of quantitative research methods in public relations practice?
- What are the pros and cons of research tools such as, online surveys, telephone surveys and personal interviews?
- How can social media be used as a research tool?
- What are the various content analysis methods? What are the pros and cons of each?
- What types of research can be used to segment, categorize and prioritize target audiences?
- What types of research are necessary to make certain that the planned communication will advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples?
- What additional research and considerations are required to be inclusive and respectful of Indigenous people?

ANALYSIS

- What makes an effective SWOT analysis?
- What are other strategic analysis tools that could be used (e.g., PESTLE, Blue Ocean, PESO, Ansoff Matrix, Porter's Five Force, etc.)
- What are the key ingredients for an effective message?
- How are messages pre-tested and post-tested? What are the pros and cons?

- Can an audience be “general” for public relations purposes? What are the pros and cons?
- How are opinions and attitudes formed and expressed?
- What is organizational culture? How does it impact public relations work?
- What is the role of opinion leaders and “influencers”? How do they impact public relations?
- How can public opinion be predicted, determined and interpreted?
- What are the positive and negative impacts of social media on the public relations profession, including citizen journalism, democratization of communication and erosion of accountability?
- How have social media and the 24-hour news cycle impacted the practice?
- How are ethical principles relevant to managing social media?
- How do evolving social media influence ethical public relations behaviour, including privacy rights, transparency and democratization of communication?

COMMUNICATION

- What are the various approaches to public relations planning (e.g., management by objective, strategic)? What are their respective strengths and weaknesses?
- What makes a public relations program plan effective?
- What planning is required to make planned communication inclusive and respectful of diverse populations (e.g., newcomers, Indigenous Peoples, disabled persons, etc.)?
- What is the difference between a communication goal and a communication objective? What are FAST goals and SMART objectives?
- What is the difference between an informational and a motivational (behavioural) objective?
- What is the difference between a communication strategy and a communication tactic?
- How does the CASL legislation have an impact on the type of communication tactics used in a public relations plan?
- How do Canadian privacy laws impact public relations planning, particularly in a digital environment?
- How important is media planning in a public relations program?
- How important is digital and social media planning in a public relations program?
- What are the respective strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/tensions of the different media available today (the array of traditional and new media)?

- How can an organization effectively mitigate issues that result from “fake news”?
- Is there ever a circumstance where using “fake news” would be justified?
- How does geographic region influence a plan (e.g., urban vs. suburban vs. rural vs. remote western vs. eastern vs. northern)?
- How can traditional and digital tactics be incorporated into an integrated framework?
- What are the essential elements of a sound budget?
- What role should a public relations practitioner play in the costing (budgeting) of the work or projects they are trying to implement?
- What are the challenges of budgeting for public relations programs?
- How do successful public relations practitioners gain buy-in for their proposed campaigns from their client(s) and/or employer?

EVALUATION

- What methods can be used to evaluate traditional tools such as a newsletter?
- What methods can be used to evaluate new tools such as X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Reddit, virtual and augmented reality or artificial intelligence (e.g., chatbots, automatic text generators, etc.)?
- What are the limitations of traditional evaluation methods such as Media Rating Points?
- How can one use qualitative and quantitative metrics and key performance indicators to capture the specific value of a public relations campaign in ways that other organizational units (e.g., finance, engineering, sales, human resources, etc.) will understand?
- Do situations exist where evaluation is not possible?
- What is the role of stated goal(s) and objectives in evaluating public relations programs?
- How is evaluation of a campaign linked to planning, goals and objectives?
- What is the difference between an output, an outcome, and an outcome?
- When considering communication planning, is changed behaviour the most desired outcome?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY READING LIST

This reading list includes recommendations by CPRS members and Canadian colleges and universities with public relations programs. If a candidate would like to recommend a text for the reading list, they should email the CPRS National Office at certification@cprs.ca.

The goal of the APR program is to certify that successful candidates have demonstrated the requisite knowledge, skill and abilities to effectively practice public relations and communications management at a senior level in the Canadian professional context.

This reading list is a compilation of empirical research and informed commentary on the theory and practice underpinning successful strategic professional communication.

To be prepared for the written and oral examinations, the candidate is advised to read and take notes on the core readings outlined below. Supplementary readings are suggested if they wish to do a deeper dive into a particular theme.

Candidates will also find a list of useful periodicals, textbooks and other references at the end of this document. These are not testable materials; they are for reference only.

The APR reading list is updated annually and published generally no later than the end of April for each APR cycle to help with the candidates' preparation for the Written and Oral Exams; dates may vary based on transitions in the Chief Examiner role. The Chief Examiner leads the revision of the Reading List each year. To do so, the Chief Examiner consults senior tenured professors of public relations and communications management in both English and French Canada. The Chief Examiner also consults many senior practitioners from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors for their opinions on what students need to know. This process is based on informal interviews with each person. Once the Reading List is composed, the Accreditation Council approves the final copy.

READING TO PREPARE FOR THE ORAL EXAMINATION

The oral examination is a peer-to-peer conversation that is meant to test the candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities in public relations and communications management theory and practice as applied to the formulation of effective strategy and tactics.

Of course, central to success in the oral examination is a performance that communicates poise, confidence and professionalism.

Another key is the ability to speak to current affairs questions intelligently, strategically, and tactically, demonstrating that the candidate has thought about how to apply the

elements from the readings they consider appropriate. Candidates are advised that good answers make thoughtful, unforced references to relevant or applicable theory or strategy to inform or support an argument they make about a current affairs topic.

Candidates are advised to bear this in mind when going through the reading list to prepare for the oral examination — encyclopedic knowledge of the readings is not required. Rather, thoughtful integration of references to them throughout the candidate's conversation with the examiners helps achieve a successful experience.

A NOTE ON HOW TO WORK THROUGH THE READINGS

The readings are divided into themes for candidates' convenience. There are 12 themes, which correspond roughly to the number of weeks between the date candidates are notified of their successful work sample and the late-October date of the written and oral examinations.

There is no specified order for the readings. The order in which they are suggested is based on the principle of starting with theory and broad questions, then delving into specific areas of practice. Candidates can choose to do the readings in whatever order suits them.

Candidates are reminded that the examination is open-book, meaning they may bring their annotated and highlighted resources to facilitate citation and referencing.

A NOTE ON HOW TO READ ACADEMIC SOURCES

Academic style may seem a little impenetrable at first glance. This is because the density of ideas in academic papers is quite high. Much higher, in fact, than in journalism, popular science or everyday conversations.

The best way to read academic writing is to start with the abstract. Then, to do a quick read with a pencil or highlighter, underlining sentences that seem to pop out. Look for the items that were flagged in the abstract, since academic authors try to encapsulate the most important elements of their paper in the abstract. After that, do an in-depth read, focusing on the highlighted pieces.

Candidates should not attempt to memorize every element of every reading. It is important to remember that the exams are designed to test the candidate's ability to apply the knowledge contained in the required readings to concrete professional scenarios. Therefore, the candidate should aim for functional rather than encyclopedic knowledge of the readings. This just means that when candidates are reading, highlighting and taking notes, they should always ask themselves these questions:

- How will this knowledge help inform my practice?

- How can I use this knowledge to create a strategy or to inform my choice of tactics?
- How can I use this knowledge to write clear and evaluable goals for my campaign?
- How will this knowledge enable me to set intelligent KPIs and other metrics that showcase the value my work adds?

It is important to remember that public relations and communications management require *integrative thinking* — that is, taking inspiration from and drawing on a diversity of perspectives to inform the candidate’s strategic and tactical decision-making.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to keep this in mind as they go through the core reading list.

A NOTE ON ATTRIBUTION, GRAMMAR, AND STYLE GUIDES

The APR Examination requires candidates to write in long form, as well as to use “informal attribution” when referencing sources. This means naming the source of the citation or reference the candidate is making (e.g., As Dan Tisch says, in his article, “The elevation of public relations ...”).

In terms of in-text spelling, style and grammar, candidates should follow the latest edition of the Canadian Press Style Guide.

Remember that short, declarative sentences are best for getting an idea across quickly and efficiently. Beware the run-on sentence!

CITATION, STYLE AND GRAMMAR RESOURCES

- The Canadian Press. (2018). *Caps and Spelling* (22nd ed.). The Canadian Press.
- The Canadian Press. (2018). *Stylebook: A Guide for Writers and Editors* (18th Edition). The Canadian Press.

APR READING LIST — THEMES

Theme 1 Public Relations: Present and Past

CORE READINGS

- Grunig, J., & Hunt, T. (1984). Characteristics of four models of public relations. *Managing public relations* (Chapters 1 and 2, Table 2-1, p. 22). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, pp. 1-46. [URL](#) (pdf — long download).
- Grunig, J. (2001). Two-way symmetrical public relations: Past, present and future. In R.L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 11-30. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Grunig, J. (2013). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. In K. Sriramesh, A. Zerfass & J.-N. Kim, *Public relations and communications management: Current trends and emerging topics*, pp. 1-26. [URL](#)
- Tisch, D. (2019). The elevation of public relations: A discussion on a profession's present and its possible future. Canadian Public Relations Society. [URL](#)
- Carney, W.W., and Lymer, L. A., eds. (2015). *Fundamentals of Public Relations and Marketing Communications in Canada*. University of Alberta Press. [URL](#)

CORE RESOURCE

- CPRS. (2025, October). 2025 State of Public Relations in Canada. [URL](#)

Theme 2 Theory and Practice: The Debate Papers

CORE READINGS

- Moncur, C. (2006). Embracing PR theory: An opportunity for practitioners? *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(1), 95-99. [URL](#)
- Cheney, G., & Christensen, L.T. (2006). What should public relations theory do, practically speaking? *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(1), 100-102. [URL](#)
- Watts, R. (2006). What is the role of public relation theory? *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(1), 103-105. [URL](#)
- Butschi, G., & Steyn, B. (2006). Theory on strategic communication management is the key to unlocking the boardroom. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(1), 106-109. [URL](#)
- Toth, E. (2006). On the challenge of practice informed by theory. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(1), 110-111. [URL](#)

Theme 3 Strategy and Strategic Thinking

CORE READINGS

- Porter, M., Kim, C., & Mauborgne, R. (2020). HBR's 10 Must Reads on Strategy. 2-Volume Set. Harvard Business Review Press. [Bk1-URL](#) [Bk2-URL](#)
- Carney, M. (2021). *Value(s): Building a Better World for All*. Signal Publishing. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Freedman, L. (2013). *Strategy: A History*. Oxford University Press. [URL](#)
- Rumelt, R. (2011). *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy: The Difference and why it Matters*. Currency Publishing. [URL](#)
- Moore, M. (1997). Creating Public Value. Strategic Management in Government. [URL](#)

Theme 4 Marketing Communication

CORE READING

- Meerman Scott, D. (2020). *The New Rules of Marketing & PR* (7th Edition). Wiley Publishing. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Schwartzman, E. (2021). *The Digital Pivot*. Kane and Sons. [URL](#)

Theme 5 Ethics in Public Relations and Communications Management

CORE READINGS

- Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management. (2018). Global Code of Ethics. [URL](#)
- Canadian Public Relations Society. Code of Professional Standards. [URL](#)
- Everyday Ethics, prepared for CPRS by Guy Versailles, ARP, FSCRP, & Stephanie Yates and Elizabeth Hirst, ARP, FSCRP. [URL](#)
- CPRS Decision Tree. [URL](#)
- CPRS Fake News Primer. [URL](#)
- Parson, P. (2016). *Ethics in Public Relations*. [URL](#)
- O'Neil, C. (2016). Weapons of Math Destruction. [URL](#)
- Gregory, A., & Valin, J. (2020). Ethics Guide to Artificial Intelligence in PR. Chartered Institute for Public Relations & Canadian Public Relations Society. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Bivins, T. (ed.). (2009). *Mixed Media: Moral Distinctions in Advertising, Public Relations, and Journalism*. Routledge. [URL](#)
- Brooks, L., & Dunn, P. (2020). *Business and Professional Ethics*. Cengage Learning. [URL](#)

Theme 6 Media Relations

CORE READING

- Carney, W.W., Babiuk, C., & Hunter Lavigne, M.. (2019). *In the News: The Practice of Media Relations in Canada* (3rd ed.). University of Alberta Press. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Ansell, J., & Leeson, J. (2010). *When the Headline Is You: An Insider's Guide to Handling the Media*. Wiley. [URL](#)
- Bonner, A. (2004). *The Bonner Business Series: Media Relations*. Sextant Publishing. [URL](#)

- Burton, C., & Drake, A. (2004). Hitting the Headlines in Europe. A Country-by-Country Guide to Effective Media Relations. [URL](#)
- Shiller, E. (2013). In the Spotlight: the Essential Guide to Giving Great Media Interviews. Yorkland Publishing. [URL](#)
- Sommers, S. (2009). *Building Media Relationships: How to Establish, Maintain, & Develop Long-term Relationships with the Media* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. [URL](#)

Theme 7 Public Relations as Community and Identity

CORE READINGS

- Jean-Baptiste, A. (2020). Building for Everyone: Expand your market with design practices from Google's social inclusion team. Wiley. [URL](#)
- Smith, B.G. (2012). Public relations identity and the stakeholder-organization relationship: A revised theoretical position for public relations scholarship. *Public Relations Review*, 38, 838-845. [URL](#)
- Valentini, C., Kruckeberg, D., & Stark, K. (2012). Public relations and community: A persistent covenant. *Public Relations Review*, 38, 873-879. [URL](#)
- antiracismPR. (2021). Resources Page. National Summit on Anti-Racism in Public Relations and Communications Management. [URL](#)

Theme 8 Public Relations as Strategy and Storytelling

CORE READINGS

- Edelman, R. (26 June, 2014). *PR's Next Frontier: Storytelling at the Speed of Now*. Speech given to 2014 Academic Summit. Chicago, IL. [URL](#)
- Meyer, A. L., & Leonard, A. (2014). Are we there yet? En route to professionalism. *Public Relations Review*, 40, 375-386. [URL](#)

Theme 9 Research: Data, Analytics, Evaluation

CORE READINGS

- Paine, K.D. (2011). *Measure What Matters, Online Tools for Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships*. Wiley. [URL](#)
- The Barcelona Principles 3.0 for public relations and communications measurement. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Lindemann, W. (1997; 2003). Guidelines and Standards for Measuring and Evaluating the Effectiveness of PR Programs and Activities. Institute for Public Relations. [URL](#)
- Stacks, D.W. (2016). *Primer of Public Relations Research* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press. [URL](#)

- Yin, R. (2017). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th Edition). Sage Publishing. [URL](#)

Theme 10 Crisis Communication

CORE READINGS

- Coombs, W. T. (2022). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*. SAGE Publications. [URL](#)
- Koerber, D. (2017). *Crisis Communication in Canada*. University of Toronto Press. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Cooper, J. (2015). *Crisis Communications in Canada: A Practical Approach* (2nd Ed.). Centennial College Press. [URL](#)
- Czarnecki, A. (2007). *Crisis Communications: A Primer for Teams*. iUniverse. [URL](#)
- Flynn, Te. (2013). Special Crisis Issue. *Journal of Professional Communication*, 2(1). [URL](#)
- Regester, M., & Larkin, J. (2008). *Risk Issues and Crisis Management in Public Relations: A Casebook of Best Practice*. Kogan Page Publishers. [URL](#)

Theme 11 Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

CORE READINGS

- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (2015). *What We Have Learned: The Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*. [URL](#)
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. [URL](#)
- Business Reconciliation in Canada. [URL](#)
- Reconciliation Toolkit for Business Leaders. [URL](#)
- Beyond 94. [URL](#)
- Native Land Interactive Map. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Website. [URL](#)
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (2020). *Lessons Learned: Survivor Perspectives*. [URL](#)

Theme 12 The Future of PR: Emerging Trends

CORE READINGS

- Dietrich, G. (2025, Sept. 30). *How the PESO Model Helps You Avoid AI Bubble Burnout*. Spin Sucks. [URL](#)
- Dietrich, G. (2025, October 23). *How to Prepare for a Bot-Created Crisis*. [URL](#)
- Dietrich, G. (2026). *PESO Model GPT*. [URL](#)

- Arthur W. Page Society. (2019). The CCO as pacesetter: What it means, why it matters and how to get there. [URL](#)
- Arthur W. Page Society. (2017). The CEO view: Communications at the centre of the enterprise. [URL](#)
- Arthur W. Page Society. (2016). The new CCO: Transforming enterprises in a changing world. [URL](#)

CORE RESOURCE

- CPRS. [URL](#)
- CPRS. (2025, October). 2025 State of Public Relations in Canada. [URL](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Penn, C. (2021). *AI for Marketers: An Introduction and Primer* (3rd ed.). TrustInsights.ai Publishing. [URL](#)
- Pentland, A. (2015). *Social Physics: How Social Networks Can Make Us Smarter*. Penguin Publishing. [URL](#)
- Mitchell, M. (2019). *Artificial Intelligence: A Guide for Thinking Humans*. [URL](#)
- Shane, J. (2019). *You Look like a Thing and I Love You*. Voracious Publishing. [URL](#)
- The State of AI in 2022 and a Half-Decade in Review (McKinsey). [URL](#)
- Arthur W. Page Society. (2020). Commtech quickstart guide. [URL](#)
- Arthur W. Page Society. Knowledge base website. [URL](#)

LARGER REFERENCE LIST

PR Writing Style Resources

- Bivins, T. (2013). *Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format* (8th ed.). McGraw-Hill. [URL](#)
- Hagley, T. (2006). *Writing Winning Proposals: PR Cases*. Allyn and Bacon. [URL](#)
- Kent, M. (2010). *Public Relations Writing: A Rhetorical Approach*. Allyn & Bacon. [URL](#)
- Marsh, C., Guth, D., & Poovey-Short, B. (2015). *Strategic Writing: Multimedia Writing for Public Relations, Advertising and More*. Taylor & Francis. [URL](#)

PR Case Study Resources

- Center, A., Jackson, P., Smith, S., & Stansberry, F. (2014). *Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems*. Pearson Publishing. [URL](#)
- Hendrix, J.A., Hayes, D., & Kumar, P. (2012). *Public Relations Cases* (9th ed.). Wadsworth Publishing Company. [URL](#)
- Swann, P. (2014). *Cases in Public Relations Management: The Rise of Social Media and Activism*. Taylor & Francis. [URL](#)
- Van Slyke Turk, J., & Valin, J. (2017). *Public Relations Case Studies from Around the World*. Peter Lang Publishing. [URL](#)

PR Practice Reference Books

- Glenn, T. (2014). *Professional Communications in the Public Sector: A Practical Guide*. Canadian Scholars Press. [URL](#)
- Hunter, J., & Lavigne, M. (2007). *Making Ink and Airtime: How to Conduct Proactive Media Relations in Canada*. Hunter LaVigne Communications, Inc. [URL](#)
- Lesly, P. (1998). *Lesley's Handbook of Public Relations and Communications* (Fourth Edition). McGraw-Hill Ryerson. [URL](#)
- Parsons, P. (2003). *A Manager's Guide to PR Projects: A Practical Approach*. Routledge. [URL](#)
- Smith, R.D. (2024). *Strategic Planning for Public Relations* (7th ed.). Taylor & Francis. [URL](#)
- Wilcox, D., Cameron, G., & Reber, B. (2015). *Public Relations Strategies and Tactics* (11th Edition). Pearson. [URL](#)

Communication Reference Textbooks

- Adler, R., Rodman, G., & Sévigny, A. (2019). *Understanding Human Communication* (4th Canadian ed.). Oxford University Press. [URL](#)
- Belch, G.; Belch, M., & Guolla, M. (2020). *Advertising & Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective* (7th Canadian ed.). McGraw-Hill Education. [URL](#)
- Cardin, M., & McMullan, K (2015). *Canadian PR for the Real World*. Pearson Canada. [URL](#)
- Kelleher, T., & Males, A.M. (2020). *Public Relations in the Digital Age* (1st Canadian Edition). Oxford University Press. [URL](#)

Relevant Periodicals

- Business for Social Responsibility. Overview of Corporate Social Responsibility. [URL](#)
- Canadian Centre for Ethics & Corporate Policy. Management Ethics Newsletter. [URL](#)
- CPRS Accreditation Handbook, CPRS Declaration of Principles and the Code of Professional Standards
- Influence. Journal of the Chartered Institute for Public Relations, United Kingdom. [URL](#)
- Institute for Public Relations. [URL](#)
- International Association of Business Communicators. [URL](#)
- International Public Relations Association. IPRA Review. [URL](#)
- Journal of Public Relations Research. [URL](#)
- Journal of Professional Communication. [URL](#)
- Page Society. [URL](#)
- Public Relations News. [URL](#)
- Public Relations Review. [URL](#)

- Public Relations Strategies and Tactics. Public Relations Society of America. [URL](#)

LISTE DE LECTURE DE RESSOURCES DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

Titres fondamentaux/généralistes

Adary, A., Villaudière, S., Mas, C., Monnoyer-Smith, L., Westphalen, M.-H., & Westphalen, C. (2025). *Communicator. Toute la communication à l'ère de l'IA*. Dunod.

Versailles, G. (2019). *Le temps des relations publiques*. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)

Yates, S. (2019). *Introduction aux relations publiques : Fondements, enjeux et pratiques*. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)

Yates, S. (2015). Relations publiques et gouvernance participative : Une vision partagée du « vivre ensemble »? *Communiquer. Revue de communication sociale et publique*, (15), 107121. [URL](#)

Planification

Libaert, T. (2023). *Le plan de communication: Définir et organiser votre stratégie de communication*, 6e éd. Dunod. [URL](#)

Recherche et évaluation

Alloing, C. (2022). *Évaluer la communication des organisations : 7 concepts et leurs mesures*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Libaert, T., & Suart, J. (2019). *Pilotez votre communication - Evaluation, indicateurs et tableaux de bord : Evaluation, indicateurs et tableaux de bord*. Dunod.

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Farmer, Y. (2026). *L'éthique de la communication : Introduction aux notions de base*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Grunig, J. E. (2014). Questions et théories en éthique des relations publiques : Introduction. *Communiquer, Revue de Communication Sociale et Publique*, (11), 114. [URL](#)

Relations avec les médias

Boily, L., & Chartrand, M. A. (2016). *Conjuguer avec les médias*, 3e éd. Presses de l'Université Laval.

Motulsky, B., & Vézina, R. (2024). *L'art de parler aux journalistes*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Communication de crise

Ivanov, I. (2021). *La communication de crise à l'ère du numérique: Stratégies, processus et pratiques*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Libaert, T. (2026). *La communication de crise*, 6e éd. Dunod.

Sujets spécialisés

Alcantara, C., Charest, F., Lavigne, A., & Saglietto, L. (2023). L'acceptabilité sociale : Enjeux de société et controverses scientifiques. IMT Mines Alès, École Mines-Télécom.

Almeida, N. d', & Libaert, T. (2024). *La communication interne des entreprises*, 9e éd. Dunod. [URL](#)

Tremblay, S., D'Almeida, N., & Libaert, T. (2018). *Développement durable—Une communication qui se démarque*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Autres ressources

- Billiet, S. (2017). *Les relations publiques: Refonder la confiance entre l'entreprise, les marques et leurs publics*. Dunod. [URL](#)
- Bonneville, L., Grosjean, S., & Lagacé, M. (2007). *Introduction aux méthodes de recherche en communication*, Gaëtan Morin, Éditeur. [URL](#)
- Boily-Blanchette, L., & Chartrand, M. (2016). *Conjuguer avec les médias, les défis inédits du relationniste*. Presses de l'Université Laval. [URL](#)
- Charest, F., Lavigne, A., & Moumouni, C. (éds.) (2015). *Médias sociaux et relations publiques*. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)
- Chartrand, M. (2020). *La transparence en communication: Une clé théorique et pratique pour la réussite*. Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa. [URL](#)
- Cossette, R. (2013). *Éthique de la communication appliquée aux relations publiques*. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)
- Dagenais, B. & Lafleur, T. (2016). *La politique de communication*. Les Presses de l'Université Laval. [URL](#)
- Dumas, M. (2014). *Les cabinets de relations publiques*. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)
- Heiderich, D. (2010). *Plan de gestion de crise. Organiser, gérer et communiquer en situation de crise*. Dunod. [URL](#)
- Maisonneuve, D. (2010). *Les relations publiques dans une société en mouvance*, 4e éd. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)
- Tremblay, S., d'Almeida, N., & Libaert, T. (2018). *Développement durable et communication : au-delà des mots, pour un véritable engagement*. Presses de l'Université du Québec. [URL](#)

Note sur les guides de citation, de grammaire et de style

L'examen de l'ARP exige que les candidats élaborent leurs réponses; ils doivent aussi mettre à profit des citations de style « attribution informelle ». Cela signifie nommer la source de la citation ou de la référence que vous faites (e.g.: Comme le dit Dan Tisch, dans son article, "L'élévation des relations publiques...").

Quant au style et à la grammaire, les candidats devraient consulter le Guide de rédaction de la Presse canadienne. ([URL](#))

N'oubliez pas que les phrases courtes et déclaratives sont préférables pour présenter, proposer ou défendre un argument ou une idée.

Méfiez-vous de la phrase qui s'enchaîne !

Les ressources mentionnées ci-dessous décrivent les différences entre le style scientifique, journalistique et littéraire.

Nous encourageons les candidats à adopter un style se situant entre les pôles scientifique et journalistique, selon leurs préférences et habiletés.

RESSOURCES DE CITATION, DE STYLE ET DE GRAMMAIRE

- Papineau, C. (2006). La Presse Canadienne Guide de rédaction. La Presse Canadienne. [URL](#)