



Canadian Public
Relations Society

Société canadienne
des relations publiques

CPRS Recognition Program for Canadian Post-secondary Education Public Relations and Communications Management Programs

Information and Application Guide

CPRS | National Council on Education

CPRS

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CPRS Recognized post-secondary education programs

In 2011, CPRS launched a recognition program for public relations and communications management education programs offered through Canadian colleges and universities

Seeking recognition is a voluntary process for Canadian institutes. It provides a benchmark to the industry, potential employers, current and future students, and to the institutes that an educational program offers a sound preparation in public relations and communications management.

This guide includes the information and application required for this recognition program which is based on the *Pathways to the Profession: An Outcomes Based Approach Towards Excellence in Canadian Public Relations and Communications Management Education*, a guide to Canadian public relations and communications management curriculum.

Individuals or educational institutes with questions about becoming recognized or about the recognition process should contact Lorianne Weston, Director of Accreditation and Education at the Canadian Public Relations Society. Call 416-239-7034 or email: accreditation@cprs.ca.

A Milestone in PR and Communication Management Education

Congratulations on taking the first step toward achieving program recognition. CPRS is excited and honoured to have your participation in this initiative for education programs, to benefit students, employers and the public relations industry.

Why this is an important step for you?

The delivery of post-secondary education is complex, facing frequently changing requirements and expectations. With more options than ever, students are faced with tough decisions as they consider their career aspirations. For those who choose a program that is regulated, such as accounting, education, medicine and law, program and curriculum standards are transparent. Students pursuing unregulated paths could also benefit from a recognized standard to provide a benchmark against which they and others can measure delivery of competence and capabilities. They will be looking for that as they make their post-secondary institution choices.

We know that this is a goal for provincial Ministries of Education across Canada and as the Society representing public relations professionals across Canada, CPRS reviewed and analyzed post-secondary public relations program curricula in light of the desired learning outcomes, resulting in a transparent and comprehensive framework that allows any institution to compare their program and curriculum. In fact, when the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities began developing their regulatory curriculum standards for college-level public relations programs, CPRS was involved and the final

regulation follows and aligns with the Pathways model of outcomes-based learning objectives. Until other provinces develop specific curriculum standards along similar lines, the Pathways recognition program continues to serve a unique purpose: it is the only pan-Canadian benchmark for public relations programs.

Post-secondary institutions that proudly display the Pathways seal of recognition give a message to students and employers that their program has taken the important step of submitting to independent assessment and qualifies as a program that includes all necessary elements to ensure their graduates are prepared for a career in public relations and communications management.

Background

The Pathways recognition program is based on a review of a program's alignment with the CPRS *Pathways to the Profession, a guide to public relations (PR) and communications management (CM) curriculum in Canada*.

The Pathways outlines five (5) different pathways into the profession (Technical Pathway; Career Pathway; Management Pathway; Leadership Pathway; Scholar Pathway). These different pathways recognize that programs may have different goals in terms of the focus and purpose of the public relations education. There is no value judgment associated with categorizing a program in a scholar pathway as opposed to a technical pathway; rather, it serves to recognize that the competencies required to achieve an academic career may not be identical to those required to work in an agency. However, whichever pathway dominates the program goals, there is a clear framework of skills and knowledge learning outcomes associated with it.

The agreement

CPRS developed the recognition process through the *Pathways to the Profession* and is collaborating with recognized Canadian educational institutes in order to recognize that such institutes are either meeting the recommended curriculum model or are working towards such. **Note that recognition is given to specific programs (not institutes).** The process is not an endorsement of partnership with the educational institute but rather an acknowledgement of specific programs.

Once an institution completes the application process, the CPRS Program Review Committee studies the application and upon approving the program, recognition is granted with a certificate issued and use of the seal of recognition, both on the CPRS Centre for PR Learning site as well as on the program's site.

The Application Process

Step 1 – Where do your programs fit?

Read *Pathways to the Profession: An Outcomes Based Approach Towards Excellence in Canadian Public Relations and Communications Management Education* which is available as on the CPRS website. Section 4 explains the Course framework, each Pathway, and the respective Outcomes.

Step 2 – Form completion

The Application form is available on the CPRS website. You may request the Word version by writing to national office (accreditation@cprs.ca).

The application form comprises 6 sections as follows:

Section 1 – Institute Information

Section 2 – Introduction to your program and institute

Section 3 – Determining your pathway

Section 4 – Program outcomes

Section 5 – Course framework

Section 6 – Declaration and signature

Step 3 – Confirm you have met all of the submission requirements

In order to be eligible for the CPRS recognition program the institute must:

- Be a recognized^{1*} Canadian college, university or post-secondary institution.
- Submit all the required application documents including the signed and completed application form, fees (Appendix I) and any required supporting materials.
- Meet the depth and scope required for the outcomes and course framework as described in the application form and in the *Pathways to the Profession*.
- Provide further documentation to the CPRS National Council on Education and the Review Committee to support its application, as required (e.g., testimonials, letters of support, etc.).

Step 4 –Submission

Completed application forms may be saved and emailed to accreditation@cprs.ca. Fees may be paid by cheque made payable to Canadian Public Relations Society or credit card Visa/AMEX/Mastercard as indicated on the form. Alternatively, you may be invoiced. Please contact the CPRS office at (416) 239-7034 if you have any questions on payment.

¹ ***Recognized Canadian Post-secondary Institution** – For these purposes, defined as a Public or private institution that has been given authority to grant degrees, diplomas, and other credentials by a *public or private* act of the provincial/territorial legislature or through a government-mandated quality assurance mechanism. <http://www.cicic.ca/507/definitions.canada>

The Review Process

Upon receipt of the completed forms and appropriate payment, the Program Review Committee (PRC) will, collectively, review all submission information and make a recommendation to the CPRS National Board of Directors regarding that institution's status.

The PRC will consider recognizing Canadian post-secondary programs that effectively demonstrate all or most of the following, or demonstrate a strategy towards incorporating the following:

- Incorporation of the Pathways program outcomes into those of the educational program and inclusion of performance measures into courses.
- Incorporation of recommended content elements in program design.
- Sound curriculum and program design.
- A clear vision for the program.
- A commitment from the institute to the program, which includes appropriate resourcing.
- The professional accreditation of core faculty members or teaching instructors, e.g., APR designation, graduate degree.
- Promotion of ongoing professional development to faculty members.
- A commitment to five-year review cycles (program recognition is valid for five (5) years, unless significant or substantive changes are made to the program before that time).

Who is the Program Review Committee?

The PRC is made up of senior CPRS members with expertise and experience in curriculum design and public relations, as well as deep familiarity with the Pathways to the Profession framework. The PRC is a Subcommittee of the CPRS National Council on Education.

The Decision

After reviewing the application, the PRC will make one of the following decisions:

- **Approved:** The program is eligible for all benefits and recognition as outlined under "recognition" for five (5) years.
- **Denied:** The program is not eligible for CPRS recognition. Applicants are provided with feedback and options for adapting/revising their program and resubmitting their application.
- **In progress:** The program did not meet all the criteria outlined but indicated plans to strive to meet all the criteria outlined. The program is approved and will be reviewed within three (3) years to ensure it has continued to strive towards, or has met, all the criteria outlined.

All decisions will be communicated to the contact person indicated on the application form and to the CPRS National Board of Directors.

Please note: Once a program is recognized as "approved" or "in progress" any significant or substantive changes to the program (e.g., the addition or deletion of specific courses, major changes in delivery and changes to credentials offered) must be forwarded to CPRS in a timely manner or risk revocation of recognition (see section on "revocation").

Program recognition

Once an educational institution has received notification of the approval of their program's application for recognition:

- The program may begin using the CPRS recognized program seal and language (see section on “use of seal and language”).
- The program will be listed on the CPRS Centre for PR Education site and provided with an Enhanced level listing for one year at no cost.
- The program will maintain its recognized status with CPRS for five (5) years unless otherwise noted by CPRS or unless the conditions of the agreement are broken (see section on “revocation”). Recognition may be in place for three (3) years to institutes who have not met all criteria but who indicate a plan or process to do so.

Use of seal and language

The CPRS recognized program seal is sent electronically to the contact person on record with the ‘approval of use’ notification. The seal is non-transferable and is intended for use in connection to the recognized program only and not to the institute itself. Please note the following when using the seal:

- The recognized program can only use the CPRS Seal Recognition and the sample language provided by CPRS.
- The seal can only be used in relation to the recognized program and not by any other program or by the institute itself.
- The seal cannot be used on any marketing materials or websites without mention of the recognized program.
- Sample language: [Insert program and institution name] has been approved as a CPRS Recognized Program for the period of XXX – XXX as per the requirements outlined by the CPRS Recognition Program for Public Relations and Communications Management Programs. For more information on the recognition program and on CPRS go to www.cprs.ca

Online Centre for PR Education

All recognized programs will receive at no cost an Enhanced level listing (\$360 value) in the CPRS Centre for PR Education on the CPRS website, for the first year of the term of recognition. This listing includes:

- Recognition seal
- Institution name (medium bold font)
- Program name and type of program (e.g., diploma, certificate)
- Contact name and title, faculty, address, phone number and email address
- Website with hyperlink
- Email address with hyperlink
- A unique 50-word description of your institution's program and services
- Priority listing in searches

Renewal

Programs are eligible for renewal after five years (or three years, depending on the original agreement). If there have not been any substantive or significant changes to the program, the short form renewal may be used (please contact CPRS national office to request this form) and the cost is \$750 for the first program renewal and \$250 for any additional program renewals requested at the same time. If there have been significant program changes or enhancements, the long form must be used and the cost is \$1500 for the full review, and \$500 for the assessment for any additional programs as part of the same application. Upon renewal, the program is also given an Enhanced level listing at no cost (\$360 value) in the CPRS Centre for PR Education on the CPRS website, for the first year of the renewal term.

Revocation

In cases where a breach of professional ethics is found plausible, CPRS reserves the right to revoke the recognition status. CPRS may revoke if it is determined the institute and/or program:

- Provided false information on application.
- Misused the seal or language.
- Used improper or unethical marketing of programs that were not approved for CPRS recognition.
- Made significant changes to the program without notifying CPRS.

If allegations or complaints are made against an institution or program, CPRS will notify the contact person and they will be provided the opportunity to address any issues or concerns and correct minor violations within 30 days. CPRS may revoke the privilege to seek recognition for at least one year. Repeat violations may result in permanent revocation.

APPENDIX I – FEES

Initial application and assessment:

Fees for application and program assessment are as follows:

Institute Application Fee (includes assessment of one Program):	\$1,500
Each additional Program Assessment Fee:	\$500 per program

Program recognition is granted for a 5-year period from the date of Approval.

Interim Program assessments

It is understood that if a program changes significantly or substantively within the 5-year recognition period, an early review may be required.

Fees for program reassessments are:

Each program-	\$500
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A full 5-year recognition period will be reinstated, effective the date of the re-assessment approval.

Program Renewal

2 months prior to the expiration date of the Program Recognition, CPRS will contact the institute to advise of the upcoming renewal at which point a new application submission will be required. If the program has not undergone significant or substantive changes since the previous recognition approval, the expedited or short form of renewal may be used, with the following fees applicable:

Renewal Application Fee (includes assessment of one Program):	\$750
Each additional Program Assessment Fee:	\$250

Program recognition renewal is granted for a 5-year period from the date of approval.