



# **Readiness Review Guide and Materials**

## **for Candidates for Accreditation in Public Relations**

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## Readiness Review Guide and Materials for Candidates

### Welcome to the Readiness Review Process

The Readiness Review is the first of two steps to achieve Accreditation. This document is divided into five sections:

**I. Purpose of Readiness Review.** The Readiness Review evaluates a candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities in 16 specific areas that cannot be effectively judged in the computer-based Examination.

**II. Procedures for Readiness Review.** This section offers policies, procedures and how-to's for the Readiness Review and its two components: 1) the completion of a Readiness Review Questionnaire and 2) the Readiness Review Presentation.

**III. Readiness Review Questionnaire.** In this section, candidates will find tips on preparing responses to most effectively demonstrate public relations expertise.

**IV. Preparing for Readiness Review Presentation.** Information in this section will help the candidate learn how the portfolio, public relations plan and responses required in the Readiness Review Questionnaire come together for the Readiness Review Presentation.

**V. Appendices.** This section contains resources needed to prepare for Readiness Review, including the Questionnaire and lists of knowledge, skills and abilities assessed in the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations. For additional resources, visit the candidate resources page of the Universal Accreditation Board website at <http://www.praccreditation.org/resources/candidates/>.



## Readiness Review at-a-Glance

<i>Typical Timeframe*</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Chair / Panelists</i>
<i>Before Readiness Review</i>	Notify local Accreditation chair of intent to enter Accreditation process.  Read this document thoroughly and assess your public relations experience and ability to respond effectively to the Readiness Review Questionnaire before completing the application.	Provide candidate with local resources and overview on process.
<i>Before Application Submittal</i>	Begin collecting and preparing materials for Readiness Review.	
<i>Month 1</i>	Submit Application for Accreditation to Universal Accreditation Board.	
<i>14 days after application is received by UAB</i>	Receive notification from UAB of application approval and eligibility for the Examination process. If not approved, UAB provides reasons for ineligibility.	Receive notification from UAB of application approval.
	<b>NOTE:</b> <i>Readiness Review and computer-based Examination must be completed within one year of application approval.</i>	
<i>Months 1, 2, 3</i>	Prepare for Readiness Review and computer-based Examination.	Conduct study groups, assist candidate in preparation.  Recruit three Accredited professionals to serve as panelists for Readiness Review presentation.
<i>Month 1 (30 days prior to Readiness Review)</i>	Request schedule for Readiness Review presentation. Prepare written responses to Readiness Review questionnaire, portfolio and presentation.	Organize panelists, identify date, time and location.
<i>Month 2 (15 days prior to Readiness Review Presentation)</i>	Submit Readiness Review questionnaire.	Review candidate's written responses to Readiness Review questionnaire.
<i>Month 2</i>	Finalize portfolio and presentation.	
<i>Month 2, 3</i>	Participate in Readiness Review presentation.	<i>Conduct Readiness Review presentation.</i>
<i>Immediately following Readiness Review presentation</i>		<i>Vote for Advance or Not Advance recommendation.</i>
<i>Within five business days following Readiness Review</i>		<i>Submit required documentation and recommendation to UAB panel chair</i>
<i>Within two weeks of receipt of panel's recommendation</i>	Receive notification via regular mail of Advance or Not Advance status from UAB.	Receive notification via e-mail of candidate's Advance or Not Advance status from UAB.
<i>Post Readiness Review</i>	If Advanced, prepare for computer-based Examination. Must sit for Examination within one year of notice of approval and eligibility.  If Not Advanced, may repeat Readiness Review process after a 90-day waiting period. Must sit for computer-based Examination within one year of notice of approval and eligibility.	<i>Provide mentoring and preparation support to candidate, as needed.</i>

\*Each candidate progresses through this process at his or her own pace. This timeframe reflects an average time period but may be shortened or lengthened per candidate's needs.

## I. PURPOSE OF READINESS REVIEW

The Readiness Review marks the beginning of the process to earn Accreditation in Public Relations. It is a gateway to the computer-based Examination.

According to the Universal Accreditation Board Policies and Procedures, the intent and purpose of the Readiness Review is:

- “to determine whether or not each candidate for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations is sufficiently prepared to be a viable candidate for the computer-based Examination”
- “to help each candidate determine an appropriate course of study to prepare for the computer-based Examination.”

“The intended result of the Readiness Review is that each candidate will earn an Advance or Not Advance assessment that will recommend the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) either accept or decline the candidate’s request for admission to the computer-based Examination at this time.”\*

\*The final decision on whether or not to advance a candidate rests with the Universal Accreditation Board.

The Readiness Review is an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate competence in 16 specific areas of public relations knowledge, skills and abilities that cannot be effectively judged in the computer-based Examination:

1. Creative conceptualization/creativity
2. Initiative
3. Interpersonal skills
4. Management skills
5. Client/Employer/Organizational focus
6. Multi-tasking
7. Flexibility
8. Teaches others
9. Time management
10. Uses multiple delivery mechanisms
11. Control analysis
12. Communication skills/Speaking
13. Communication skills/Interviewing
14. Communication skills/Writing and Editing
15. Communication skills/Listening
16. Presentation skills

### Tip 1

The complete list of knowledge, skills and abilities tested can be found in Appendix A and Appendix D.

Details for each of these areas can be found in Appendix A.



## II. Procedures for Readiness Review

The Readiness Review has two components: The Readiness Review Questionnaire and the Readiness Review Presentation. Detailed instructions for both appear in Section III and IV. This section provides information about how the Readiness Review process works.

### For the Candidate

Potential candidates first submit an application to the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) that confirms work in public relations and the required minimum qualifications for Accreditation. See the [Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations Application](#). Candidates have one calendar year from the date the application is approved to complete the Readiness Review and computer-based Examination. The Readiness Review may be taken as many times as necessary during that calendar year to advance to the computer-based Examination.

Once the application is approved, candidates contact the local Accreditation chair to plan for the Readiness Review and to learn about study courses and sessions.

**Timing and location for the Readiness Review.** The Readiness Review Presentation will take place during a time and place mutually agreed upon between candidate and Accreditation chair. Readiness Reviews may also occur at annual meetings or conferences, or at the end of intensive preparation sessions such as Boot Camps.

**Location.** The Accreditation chair arranges the meeting location, typically a professional setting (e.g., conference room of local agency/organization), free of distractions (phones, etc.).

The candidate completes and submits the Readiness Review Questionnaire no fewer than 15 days prior to the Readiness Review Presentation

### About the Panelists

The Readiness Review process employs a volunteer panel to assess the candidate's competence in 16 areas of skills as noted in Appendix A. The panelists recommend to UAB an Advance or Not Advance recommendation of the candidate and also may volunteer to serve as mentors to the candidate to prepare for the computer-based Examination.

### How Does Readiness Review Work?

#### **Step 1. The Readiness Review Questionnaire**

The Readiness Review Questionnaire is a three-part survey where candidates respond to questions in these areas:

- 1) organization and role;
- 2) work experience and sample public relations plan;
- 3) assessment of readiness for the computer-based Examination.

#### **Tip 2**

Within your responses to the Questionnaire, you will provide a complete public relations plan.

Candidates, on average, spend eight to 10 hours to complete the Readiness Review Questionnaire. The Questionnaire should represent the candidate's best public relations writing and should be proofread thoroughly.

The completed Questionnaire is submitted to the local Accreditation chair at least 15 business days before the Readiness Review Presentation (Step 2). Panelists study the candidate's responses carefully and prepare a list of questions or concerns to review with the candidate during the Readiness Review Presentation.

#### **Step 2. The Readiness Review Presentation**

Before the Readiness Review Presentation, the candidate prepares a portfolio of materials demonstrating a public relations plan and other public relations activities. The portfolio is **NOT** submitted before the Readiness Review Presentation; the candidate brings the portfolio on the day of the Presentation.



During the Readiness Review Presentation, three panelists meet with the candidate to:

- Listen to the candidate’s presentation of the portfolio materials supporting the public relations plan outlined in the Questionnaire.
- Ask questions about the candidate’s written responses to the Readiness Review Questionnaire.
- Assess candidate’s preparation and readiness to sit for the computer-based Examination.

### **Step 3. Scoring the Readiness Review Presentation**

Using a scale of “0” to “3,” each panelist completes a voting form ranking each of the 16 areas of competence:

- 0 = the candidate was unable to demonstrate any knowledge, skills or abilities in the rated areas;
- 1 = the candidate demonstrates a very weak level of knowledge, skills and abilities in the rated area;
- 2 = the candidate shows acceptable knowledge, skills and abilities in the rated area;
- 3 = the candidate demonstrates exceptional knowledge, skills and abilities in the rated area.

**Tip 3**  
Candidates must receive a score of “1” or better in each of the 16 KSAs.

If the candidate achieves a total of at least 32 points and has no zero assessments in any single KSA category from any panelist will receive an Advance recommendation.

If a candidate does not achieve a total of at least 32 points, or has a zero assessment in any single KSA category from any panelist, the candidate will receive a tentative Not Advance recommendation. Panelists(s) scoring the candidate as Not Advance must complete a document that describes reasons for a Not Advance recommendation and submit(s) the document to the panel chair.

Within five business days, the panel chair sends an Advance/ Not Advance recommendation, along with other material, to the UAB. The candidate is notified by mail about an Advance or Not Advance status within two weeks of receipt of these materials.

### **Appeal Process**

After two separate unsuccessful Readiness Review sessions, candidates may make a formal appeal in writing to UAB chair. The chair will appoint a member of the UAB Eligibility and Appeals Work Group, will investigate the appeal and make a recommendation to the UAB chair and Executive Committee. The final ruling will be made as determined by the UAB Chair.

A candidate who receives a Not Advance status and whose organization cannot accommodate a second Readiness Review within the one-year time frame may apply to UAB for an extension.



### III. THE READINESS REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidates should contact the local Accreditation chair at least one month before a proposed Readiness Review Presentation.

#### How to Submit

As directed by the Accreditation chair, candidates will submit four printed copies of the completed Questionnaire or will send the Questionnaire via e-mail to an address provided by the Accreditation chair.

#### When to Submit

The completed Readiness Review Questionnaire must be submitted no fewer than 15 business days prior to your scheduled Readiness Review Presentation.

#### Completing the Questionnaire

The Readiness Review Questionnaire can be found online at [www.praccreditation.org](http://www.praccreditation.org) or in Appendix C. In addition to completing the Questionnaire, the candidate also compiles a portfolio of materials that were prepared in the execution of the public relations plan described in the Questionnaire. *The portfolio is not submitted beforehand but is presented by the candidate during the Readiness Review Presentation.*

**NOTE:** Proofread your submission carefully. It should be free of typographical and formatting errors.

#### **Section One: Your Organization and Your Role**

In this section, candidates provide information about current employment in public relations. There is no word or page limit but responses should be succinct. Responses to each question should reflect your work situation.

#### **Section Two: Your Experience**

This is the heart of the Readiness Review. Candidates present a public relations plan that they have planned and implemented using the Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (RPIE) four-step process. Materials produced in the execution of the plan are included (collaterals, scripts, messaging, news releases). These items will be the core of the portfolio. Using the RPIE process in your Questionnaire is a good way to become even more comfortable and familiar with this planning process — it accounts for 30 percent of the computer-based Examination.

If a candidate contributed but was not solely responsible for the creation of a four-step plan, he or she should describe how members of the public relations team developed and executed the plan. Discuss what best practices were used or could have been used to develop the plan into a full spectrum of public relations programming to meet the goals and objectives of the plan. Candidates should clearly identify their role(s) with the plan and roles taken by other members of the team.

For examples of well-written sketches of comprehensive public relations plans, visit the PRSA Silver Anvil award recipients' submittals at [www.prsa.org/awards/index.html](http://www.prsa.org/awards/index.html).

#### **Section Three: Self-Assessment of Readiness for the Computer-Based Examination**

Candidates should be familiar with the complete set of KSAs that are tested in the computer-based Examination (Appendix D). After review of the KSAs, use this section to discuss competency in these areas.



#### IV. PREPARING FOR READINESS REVIEW PRESENTATION

After the Readiness Review Questionnaire has been submitted, candidates have 15 days to finalize the portfolio and presentation.

##### The Portfolio

The portfolio should furnish the fullest possible evidence of use of public relations research, planning, implementation and evaluation. Presentation of a vast collection of tactical tools without demonstration of situation appraisal, program planning and evaluation will be inadequate evidence of mastery of the complete spectrum of the public relations practice — regardless of the quality and quantity of work products shown.

##### Tip 4

The portfolio contains materials illustrating the public relations plan you have described in the Questionnaire. It is **not** submitted with the Questionnaire; bring the portfolio with you to the Presentation.

Focus the portfolio materials on the public relations campaign described in the Readiness Review Questionnaire. Additional materials from other public relations campaigns can be included if they help demonstrate public relations strengths. The portfolio materials should support all elements of the plan from the Readiness Review Questionnaire, including the following:

- An initial statement of the problem or opportunity.
- Primary and/or secondary research to validate the problem or opportunity and translate it into a situation appraisal that drives one or more specific program objectives.
- Identification of goals, objectives, strategies and program elements/tactics directed to targeted audiences that will accomplish stated program objectives.
- Evaluation activities that were used to assess the program objectives and situation appraisal to demonstrate program effectiveness.

##### Tip 5

Make sure you know the difference between primary and secondary research.

Many candidates prepare the portfolio in a three-ring binder, with tabs to reflect research, planning, implementation and evaluation products. A fifth tab for materials from other campaigns could complete the portfolio. The key point in the portfolio should be the demonstration of a single program, from inception to completion, with an emphasis on the full cycle of conceptualization, research, program development, implementation and assessment. Only one copy of the portfolio needs to be compiled.

The Readiness Review Panel understands that candidates may not have been directly or solely involved with all aspects of the program presented. However, candidates should be prepared to describe activities conducted by other team members that contributed to the creation of the complete program. If candidates have no knowledge of certain aspects of the program, they should be equally prepared to provide a clear statement of the best practices that would be appropriate to create a full continuum of programming.

If candidates have not held a professional position in which creation, development, implementation and assessment of one or more campaigns were within the realm of assigned duties, candidates may want to volunteer for a nonprofit organization to provide pro-bono services and thus, create a source of materials for the portfolio. Local Accreditation chairs also may be able to offer suggestions for rounding out the portfolio presentation.



## The Presentation

### ***Time Limit***

Presentations should be a minimum of one hour, with a maximum of two hours, including time for panelists' questions. Count on between 30 and 60 minutes to present the portfolio; the remaining time will be used by the panelists for questions about the written responses to the Readiness Review Questionnaire.

### ***Organizing the Readiness Review Presentation***

The goal is to relate a professional story to the panelists told through the selected public relations plan and perhaps a few other portfolio items. Like a case study, the best approach to organizing the presentation is to start at the beginning of the process and take the panelists through the program.

### ***Pay Attention to the Details***

Make sure that all materials in the portfolio are in good order, that these elements adequately and accurately represent the quality of work and that they provide a clear indication of the role the candidate played in the creation of each item. Candidates should be able to provide the rationale and facts behind creation of each element or tactic presented and to respond to any questions that the panelists may ask. The focus should always be on the connection between the elements being presented, the objectives and the outcomes of the program. Carefully proofread all materials.

### ***Keep the Readiness Review Presentation Manageable***

While panelists want to see the full scope of work, be aware that the Universal Accreditation Board prohibits the use of LCD or other types of computer projectors in Readiness Review Presentations. Candidates are solely responsible for securing and operating any equipment needed for the presentation, and there is limited time to set up equipment. Therefore PowerPoints, audio and video clips or flipcharts are not recommended. Part of the scoring for the presentation is based on speaking and presentation ability, not the ability to present a slide show.(minimum of one hour, maximum of two hours).

#### **Tip 6**

The Universal Accreditation Board prohibits the use of LCD or other types of computer projectors in Readiness Review Presentations.

### ***After the Readiness Review Presentation***

Once the panel has completed its review of the Presentation and Questionnaire, their recommendation to Advance or Not Advance the candidate through Readiness Review will be forwarded to the Universal Accreditation Board. The UAB will notify candidates of the results.

Neither panel members nor local Accreditation volunteers can provide information on the outcome of the presentation.

If the Readiness Review process reveals one or more areas in which a candidate needs additional work before being Advanced to the computer-based Examination, feedback from the panelists will be available upon request to the local Accreditation chair.

Readiness Review panelists are additional professional resources who are prepared to provide mentoring as candidates move through the Accreditation process.

### **Questions?**

For more information on Readiness Review or about Accreditation in Public Relations, please visit the Universal Accreditation Board at [www.praccreditation.org](http://www.praccreditation.org). Or, contact the Universal Accreditation Board administrator:

Kathy Mulvihill; Public Relations Society of America; 33 Maiden Lane, 11th Fl.; New York, NY 10038-5150  
Phone: (212) 460-1400; [kathy.mulvihill@prsa.org](mailto:kathy.mulvihill@prsa.org).



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## V. Appendices

- Appendix A. Sixteen Areas of Competency Assessed by the Readiness Review
- Appendix B. Resources for the Preparation for Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations
- Appendix C. Readiness Review Questionnaire
- Appendix D. Detailed List of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Assessed in Computer-based Examination

## Appendix A. Sixteen Areas of Competency Assessed by the Readiness Review

The Readiness Review panel will be responsible for evaluating candidates' readiness in 16 specific areas of competence that cannot effectively be judged in the computer-based Examination environment:

1. **Creative conceptualization/creativity:** Uses imagination to develop new insights into or responses to a public relations issue. Develops innovative solutions to the issue or problems posed. Devises new methods/processes or adapts existing ones when the standard methods and processes are not applicable.
2. **Initiative:** Displays courage in suggesting new ideas and justifying them to clients/employers.
3. **Interpersonal skills:** Relates empathetically to other individuals in order to understand their concerns or needs. Influences another's decision or behavior. Displays confidence when interacting with others.
4. **Management skills:** Develops expertise in planning, organizing, budgeting, communicating, coordinating, scheduling, monitoring and evaluating.
5. **Client/Employer/Organizational focus:** Holds service to and interest in his or her employer or cause as a top priority. Considers long-term client needs, as well as short-term demands. Makes and delivers on commitments to clients.
6. **Multi-tasking:** Effectively and efficiently manages numerous projects and responsibilities simultaneously. Applies prioritization and tracks progress toward completion of tasks.
7. **Flexibility:** Responds to the changing business, social and cultural landscape.
8. **Teaches others:** Identifies learning needs of staff. Coaches others on how to perform tasks. Serves as a mentor. Leads by example.
9. **Time management:** Prioritizes and sequences tasks to meet goals and deadlines.
10. **Uses multiple delivery mechanisms:** Uses advertising, direct mail, Web and other delivery mechanisms and promotional tools effectively.
11. **Control analysis:** For selected media, determines who the owners are, their aims, their political allegiances, their influence on the content and editorial policies, and their legal constraints.
12. **Communication skills/Speaking:** Demonstrates logical thinking when describing client issues and framing approaches to solving public relations problems.
13. **Communication skills/Interviewing:** Asks relevant, insightful and probing questions while interacting with employers/clients and target audiences (priority publics).
14. **Communication skills/Writing and Editing:** Communicates relevant information (including technical material) in a concise, organized fashion. Writes content that is factual and grammatically accurate, and at a reading level that is appropriate to the target audience. Authors persuasive communication material for public relations programs. Demonstrates the ability to examine and alter a document and correct for format, organization, completeness, factual accuracy, style, tone and grammar.
15. **Communication skills/Listening:** Receives, interprets, verifies, and responds to verbal and non-verbal messages and other cues in the context of client, teammate and audience concerns.
16. **Presentation skills:** Uses visual aids (charts, slides, transparencies, etc.) effectively. Maintains eye contact with audience. Uses appropriate language, gestures, tone of voice and volume to convey information.



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## Appendix B: Resources for the Preparation for Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations

### [The Accreditation in Public Relations Online Study Course](#)

One-year subscription:

\$195 for members of UAB Participating Organizations

\$295 for nonmembers

This interactive online multimedia course helps candidates prepare for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations (APR). Course content, geared toward the knowledge, skills and abilities measured during the Examination, is presented through a variety of interactive methods, including multimedia module introductions, asynchronous activities, case study analysis, projects, directed discussions, self-correcting quizzes and simulations. It provides opportunities for self-study, collaboration and teamwork — all situations that public relations professionals encounter in their day-to-day work.

The Online Course is easy to use, with course managers available to help with any technological questions. Candidates can proceed through the course at their own pace, and monthly optional Web conferences allow candidates to ask questions and meet other course participants. This Online Study Course is helpful to those who cannot participate in the study programs offered locally because of distance or other constraints. It also is valuable to candidates who want to take advantage of additional preparation tools for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations.

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### [APR Study Guide](#)

The Second Edition APR Study Guide is a key tool in preparation for Accreditation in Public Relations and a tremendous resource for all APR candidates. Produced by the Universal Accreditation Board, the Guide is the product of many hours of research and evaluation. It contains exercises, case studies and insight into modern public relations practices. And, it's available at no cost to those pursuing Accreditation.

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### **The Short Bookshelf of Texts Recommended to Candidates for Accreditation in Public Relations**

The Universal Accreditation Board recommends that candidates review selected contents of at least one general text from the Short Bookshelf of Texts Recommended for Preparation, and one or more specialized texts that provide in-depth material on KSA-related subjects, such as planning, research or law.

**The basis for every question on the computer-based Examination can be traced to one or several of these texts.**

Each text is listed with the Competencies or KSA groupings covered by its content to help candidates select those most appropriate for their individual preparation. Each candidate should select the text or texts best suited for his or her own preparation and professional development. Book titles link to sources for text purchases. URLs link to texts' home pages, some with Q&A and additional preparation tools.

**NOTE:** Based on feedback from Accreditation chairs, coaches and successful candidates, the Short Bookshelf now reflects those texts cited as the most widely used preparation resources.

*You do NOT need to buy or study every text on the Short Bookshelf.*

### **Short Bookshelf of Texts Recommended to Candidates for Accreditation in Public Relations**

- [The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law](#)  
Associated Press  
**KSAs/Competencies Covered:** Business Literacy; Ethics and Law; Media Relations.
- [Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations](#)  
Broom, Glen M., Sha, Bey-Ling  
**KSAs/Competencies Covered:** All



- [Primer of Public Relations Research](#)  
Stacks, Don W.  
**KSAs/Competencies Covered:** Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Campaigns; Management Skills and Issues.
- [Public Relations Strategies and Tactics](#)  
Wilcox, Dennis L., and Glen T. Cameron.  
**KSAs/Competencies Covered:** All
- [Strategic Planning for Public Relations](#)  
Smith, Ronald D.  
**KSAs/Competencies Covered:** Communication Models and Theories; Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Campaigns; Management Skills and Issues.

**For the Longer Bookshelf of Texts Recommended to Candidates for Accreditation in Public Relations, visit <http://www.praccreditation.org/resources/recommended-texts/index.html>.**



## Appendix C: Readiness Review Questionnaire for Candidates

### Instructions

You will submit four printed copies of your typewritten responses to the Readiness Review Questionnaire no fewer than 15 business days prior to your scheduled Readiness Review Presentation. Submit your completed document to your local or organizational Accreditation chair.

### Section One: Your Organization and Your Role

This section asks for your response to questions about your current employment in public relations, be it corporate, non-profit, agency or academic. Answer all questions completely and succinctly. There are no right or wrong answers for this section, but only truthful and accurate statements.

- 1) Describe how your public relations firm, department or other operation is organized. Describe the reporting structure, personnel and the key relevant roles of each person.
- 2) Given the current economic climate and present social situations, what is/are the major problem(s)/opportunity(-ies) facing your department, firm or other public relations operation at this time? What about in the next three-to-five years? Pick and briefly articulate the most significant solution or approach you would recommend to address this opportunity or challenge.
- 3) Describe the changes, if any, you believe are needed in the structure/function of your public relations firm, department or operation. Describe the steps you would recommend to implement these changes
- 4) If you were starting a public relations department, academic department or public relations firm today (or starting over again in your organization, institution or firm), what would be your top-three concerns or considerations in doing so and what would you plan for addressing them?
- 5) Describe what you do each day to contribute to helping your organization achieve its objectives.
- 6) In what ways can you improve your productivity?
- 7) Provide an example of when and how you have provided training or mentoring to others, either as a public relations professional or other organizational advisor.
- 8) Describe a situation where you had to deal specifically with the issue of time management in completing a major assignment.

## Section Two: Your Experience

- 1) Describe how you planned or participated in the planning of a specific public relations program for your organization or a client. Clearly state the problem or opportunity the program was created to address, the research, the objective(s) of the program and all of the other components of a complete public relations plan. Include specific information to describe your role. If you have never written or participated in the development of a formal public relations plan, develop a program for an organization in which you are or have been involved. Work samples from the plan you describe in this section must be included in the portfolio you will present during the Readiness Review Presentation.
- 2) Describe the research you conducted to develop the plan presented in the first question in this section. If no research was conducted, explain why not. In specific terms, how did the research guide the development of the plan?
- 3) Describe how you obtained or participated in obtaining approval for the plan described in the first question in this section.
- 4) Describe in detail the process you used to evaluate the outcome of the program described in the first question in this section. Describe the outcomes. (Do not attach work product samples to this submission but do include them in your portfolio review.)
- 5) Describe how you would, if given unlimited resources and authority, improve the process by which public relations programs in your organization are developed, approved and measured.

## Section Three: Your Assessment of Your Readiness for the Computer-based Examination

- 1) Why have you chosen to become Accredited at this time?
- 2) Describe what you have done and what you plan to do to prepare for the computer-based Examination.
- 3) Describe your strengths and weaknesses in terms of your experience and examination preparation in each of the major areas of the Examination listed below. (For an expanded list, go to [http://www.praccreditation.org/becomeAPR/KSAs\\_Compencies.html](http://www.praccreditation.org/becomeAPR/KSAs_Compencies.html).) Use the expanded list to identify the specific knowledge, skills and abilities that will be evaluated within each of these major categories. Do not respond to each sub-item on the expanded list.)
  - Research, planning, implementing & evaluating communication programs
  - Ethics & Law
  - Communication models & theories
  - Business literacy
  - Crisis communication management
  - Management skills & issues
  - Media relations
  - History of and current issues in public relations
  - Using information technology
  - Advanced communication skills



## **Appendix D. Detailed Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) Tested in the Computer-based Examination**

### **RESEARCHING, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS (30%)**

#### **Analytical skills**

Distinguishes between objectives and goals. Recognizes the difference between strategies and tactics. Objectively interprets data. Thinks logically.

#### **Audience identification and communication**

Identifies appropriate audiences (publics) and the concerns of each, including employees, investors, suppliers, community, industry analysts and government and non-government. Prioritizes and properly sequences communications to the different audiences (publics). Tailors messages to various audiences (publics).

#### **Evaluation of programs**

Determines if goals and objectives of public relations program were met. Determines if, and the extent to which, the results or outcomes of public relations programs have been accomplished. Develops, states and tests a public relations program's informational, motivational and behavioral objectives using qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

#### **Financial management**

Prepares, justifies, and/or controls the budget for public relations programs/departments/agencies. Plans, administers and monitors expenditures to ensure cost-effective support of public relations program. Maintains thorough and accurate records of expenditures. Bills clients accurately. Keeps accounts payables and receivables current.

#### **Planning ability**

Develops a comprehensive public relations plan that reflects the organization's needs including appropriate sequencing of plan elements.

#### **Research (Applied)**

Gathers information about the client, company or organization for which the practitioner is working. Gathers information on issues to help develop objectives, strategies and target audiences (priority publics) using a variety of research tools (the Internet, interviews, library, focus groups). Plans and interprets research activities from the public relations activity at hand (projects, crisis management). Takes into account message recipients' understanding of the product, company, candidate and issue when conducting research.

#### **Research (Basic)**

Develops a premise. Develops the research plan. Determines appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods. Decides on the population and sampling techniques to use with that population. Designs instruments (questionnaire, interview, etc.). Uses the acceptable techniques to collect data. Codes and analyzes results and presents findings.

#### **Stakeholder management**

Identifies institutions, groups or individuals who have an interest in or are affected by some part of the program. Assesses interest of influential institutions, groups and individuals. Mobilizes key stakeholders to help ensure the success of a program.

#### **Strategic thinking**

Synthesizes relevant information to determine what is needed to position the client/organization/issue appropriately in its market/environment, especially with regard to changing business, political or cultural climates.

#### **Methodology**

Develops public relations programs using research methodology or approaches that address the following components: Research, Goals, Planning, Execution, Monitoring and Evaluation.



## **ETHICS AND LAW (15%)**

### **Ethical behavior**

Conducts professional activities in a principled manner and adheres to commonly accepted standards for professional behavior.

### **Integrity**

Recognizes and deals professionally with ethical and legal issues.

### **Knowledge of legal issues**

Upholds applicable international, national, state and local laws regarding libel, corporate governance, disclosure, copyright, trademarks, fair use, First Amendment issues, slander, privacy, regulations on commercial speech, corporate political expression, Foreign Agents Registration Act, lobbying and grassroots lobbying. Uses laws regarding media access, due process, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or Sarbanes-Oxley, Regulation Disclosure or Sunshine Act to meet the needs of clients.

## **COMMUNICATION MODELS AND THEORIES (15%)**

### **Communication models**

Is familiar with, understands the implications of and can apply to practice the theoretical and research-based foundation of public relations practice. Demonstrates familiarity with current theory and research, as well as older established models that should guide such practical communication program decisions as selecting and prioritizing target audiences, developing messages, selecting spokespeople, establishing credibility, the foundations of trust, how issues are formed and developed, how opinion can be changed, the effectiveness of public information programs and so forth. Is familiar with fundamental social science research that affects communication practice such as the Hawthorne Effect, co-orientation, cognitive dissonance, diffusion theory and others.

### **Understands barriers to communication**

Is familiar with, understands the implications of and can apply to practice the body of knowledge, drawn from public relations and social science disciplines that address the processes by which messages are interpreted by different audiences and how audiences are or are not moved to take action based upon those messages. Understands how factors such as semantics, cultural norms, timing, context, interference, competing messages and others may have an impact on the effectiveness of communication activities.

## **BUSINESS LITERACY (10%)**

### **Business literacy**

Understands and explains how employers/clients generate revenue and how their operations are conducted. Identifies relevant business drivers and how they impact the business.

### **Environmental scanning**

Continuously analyzes the business environment that includes the client stakeholders and employer.

### **Industry knowledge**

Understands and explains the nature of the employer or client industry or industries. Discusses current issues, opportunities and threats to those industry or industries.

### **Knowledge of current organizational issues**

Takes into consideration the client's or employer's current internal and external business drivers. Performs strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats (SWOT) analyses.

### **Knowledge of business technology and trends**

Understands technology trends and how they apply to the business of the client field.



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### **Understands all levels of management**

Recognizes chain of command including senior leadership, middle management, direct line supervisor to the line worker and the distinctions. Analyzes stakeholder needs for purpose of crafting tailored programs. Knows how organizations are horizontally and vertically structured, (e.g., pyramid, flat), and how that affects organizational behavior. Comprehends how organizational structure affects organizational culture and programs.

### **Uses organization's resources**

Identifies other divisions within an organization that need to be involved in any communication program (e.g., legal in the case of product liability).

## **MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND ISSUES (10%)**

### **Diversity**

Identifies and respects a wide range of differences among target audiences (publics). Crafts messages that will help achieve objectives within diverse audiences (publics). Researches the cultural preferences of target audiences (publics) as necessary.

### **Decision-making abilities**

Makes sound, well-informed and objective decisions in a timely manner. Assesses the impact and implications of these decisions.

### **Leadership skills**

Influences others to achieve desired goals. Motivates others. Builds coalitions. Inspires and motivates. Communicates vision.

### **Looking beyond prejudices/mind-set**

Considers and accommodates alternative views to obtain alternative views on an issue or crisis, and factors this information into a communication strategy and into message construction.

### **Organizational skills**

Manages the efficient sequencing and execution of work. Integrates multiple dimensions of a public relations campaign. Integrates internal and external components so that there is a synergy between the messages. Staggers a campaign to ensure timely rollout of different tasks for maximum effectiveness. Adjusts the planned rollout of events as necessary to account for success or failures of previous campaign activity. Identifies bottlenecks in a campaign and develops workarounds. Prioritizes tasks and selects those most appropriate.

### **Problem-solving skills**

Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical judgments. Identifies the sources of problems, evaluates opportunities for resolution and devises appropriate course of action based on situational context and factual information. Uses sound reasoning to arrive at conclusions. Finds alternative solutions to complex problems.

### **Sensitivity to cultural concerns**

Conducts research to determine cultural concerns of affected audiences (publics). Understands how to develop strategies and messages that are relevant and meaningful to different groups.

### **Team building**

Builds and maintains positive work environment. Recognizes and optimizes talents of others. Involves others in planning and decision-making. Celebrates success of individual contributors and the team as a whole.

## **CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT (10%)**

### **Understands different phases of a crisis**

Understands the roles and responsibilities of public relations at the pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis phases. Communicates the implications of each of these phases and understands the messaging needs of each.



### **Risk management capabilities**

Identifies potential risks. Analyzes probability and potential impact of risk. Develops and deploys appropriate responses and controls for risk events.

## **MEDIA RELATIONS (5%)**

### **Media relations**

Understands the relationships between public relations professionals, journalists and media organizations. Builds effective relations with mass and specialized media based on mutual respect and trust.

### **News sensibility**

Relates current events and trends to employers/clients and markets. Analyzes current events and trends for opportunities and threats.

### **Understands media**

Considers strengths and weaknesses of various media (e.g., radio, print, Web sites, blogs, television). Identifies and uses appropriate media for communicating with external audiences (all publics). Identifies influencers of different media. Selects appropriate media outlets for delivering message. Distinguishes lead times for different media. Identifies major changes resulting from the widespread use of new communications technology. Understands the roles of current and emerging technologies.

### **Understands distribution systems**

Understands information distribution systems including: publicity, advertising, special events, face-to-face communication, third-party communication, promotion and other distribution techniques between sender and receiver.

## **USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EFFICIENTLY (2%)**

### **Information management**

Identifies the types of information needed to be collected, evaluated and retained. Knows how to obtain the information and store it, using information technology, so that it can be retrieved easily for future use.

### **Knowledge of distribution channels**

Selects appropriate traditional and non-traditional media, themes and strategies to disseminate message. Deploys public relations tools (media kits, news releases, media alerts, backgrounders, biographies, media contact lists, news conferences/briefings/tours) appropriately.

### **Technology literacy**

Understands the power, as well as the limitations of the Internet and other technology that can be applied to public relations, as both a tool for clients and a weapon against clients. Properly analyzes Internet usage data and its meaning for the public relations campaign. Uses current technology, as appropriate, to plan, manage and evaluate public relations programs. Investigates emerging technologies as possible public relations tools.

## **HISTORY OF AND CURRENT ISSUES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS (2%)**

### **Knowledge of the field of public relations**

Identifies key figures in the history of public relations (George Creel, Edward Bernays, Arthur W. Page, etc.) and their contributions to the field. Identifies and describes major trends in the development of public relations as it is practiced today. Identifies key forces that influenced the field of public relations and describes their impact. Is familiar with the origins of earlier and outmoded stereotypes of the public relations profession.

Defines and differentiates among related concepts, including publicity, advertising, marketing, press agency, public affairs, issues management, lobbying, investor relations.



## **ADVANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS (1%)**

### **Consensus-building**

Uses consensus-building strategies and techniques to persuade key stakeholders to support a decision. Ensures that key stakeholders have an opportunity to express their opinions.

### **Consulting skills**

Identifies a problem or opportunity, analyzes its causes and its implications and impacts on affected parties and other stakeholders. Manages conflict, generates alternatives, makes sound recommendations and assists in implementing them.

### **Negotiating skills**

Conducts discussions with affected parties and other stakeholders to find a mutually acceptable solution to problems.

**For Readiness Review / KSAs Tested, see Appendix A.**