

The Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations Readiness Review Presentation

Preparation Instructions for Candidates

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Overview

The Readiness Review aspect of the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations is the point-of-entry for Accreditation candidates, setting the tone for the process and helping ensure you are sufficiently experienced and as fully prepared as possible for the Examination. The Readiness Review has two components: the Readiness Review Questionnaire and the Readiness Review Presentation. Instructions for the Readiness Review Questionnaire appear online at: www.praccreditationi.org/becomeAPR/Written_Sub.html. Be sure to read these instructions before beginning to prepare for the Readiness Review Presentation.

In this document, you will find steps to take for the Readiness Review Presentation. During this component, a Readiness Review panel of three public relations professionals in your local area will ask you questions about your Readiness Review Questionnaire and will listen to your presentation of your portfolio. They will assess your public relations professionalism based on the 16 specific areas of competence. If you have not already reviewed these competencies, please visit www.praccreditation.org/becomeAPR/KSAs_Compencies.html.

A major element of the Readiness Review Presentation is your portfolio, which will provide tangible evidence of your readiness for the examination process. It should both compliment and supplement information you provide in your Readiness Review Questionnaire and in the answers that you give to the panelist questions during their meeting with you.

Assembling Your Portfolio

The materials and information you present in your portfolio are as individualized as you, serving as a reflection of the composite experience you have amassed over your professional career, to date. Within the ultimate boundaries of best practices in public relations, your portfolio should be a personalized extension of your life's work experience.

As traditionally has been the case, local Accreditation chairpersons and other accredited professionals are available to provide guidance, advice and counsel as you ready your portfolio. The structured review programs, materials and other resources supplied by Accreditation chairs, committees and others that you use in preparing for both your Readiness Review and the actual

computer-based Examination will also provide additional perspective to your portfolio preparation.

Portfolio Contents

Keep in mind that the portfolio you present should furnish the fullest possible evidence of your use of the essentials of public relations planning, execution and evaluation. Presentation of a vast collection of tactical tools without demonstration of situation appraisal, program planning and evaluation will be inadequate evidence of your mastery of the complete spectrum of the public relations practice – regardless of the quality and quantity of work product shown.

In planning your portfolio, you should reflect the public relations campaign described in your Readiness Review Questionnaire. Materials from other campaigns or major programs in which you were responsible for the full cycle of public relations activities can also be added. Remember to demonstrate that the plan from the Readiness Review Questionnaire included:

- 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 strategies and program elements/tactics directed to targeted audiences that will accomplish your stated program objectives
- Post-program analysis that loops back to the program objectives and situation appraisal to demonstrate program effectiveness

The key point in your 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.

Your Readiness Review Panel understands that you may not have been directly or solely involved with all aspects of the program or programs you choose to present. However, you should be prepared to describe activities conducted by other team members that contributed to the creation of the complete program. If you have no knowledge of certain aspects of the program, you 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 you have not held a professional position in which creation, development, implementation and assessment of one or more campaigns were within the realm of your assigned duties, you may want to tap extra-curricular organizational activities in which you have provided pro-bono services as a source of materials for your portfolio. Your locals Accreditation chairperson may also be able to offer suggestions for rounding out your portfolio presentation.

Organizing Your Readiness Review Presentation

Your goal is to relate a story to the panelists – your professional story, told through selected programs in which you have played a major role during your career. Like a case study or other descriptive tool, the best approach to organizing your 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 that you include are in good order, that these elements adequately and accurately represent the quality of your work, and that you are able to provide a clear indication of the role you played in the creation of each item presented. You should be able to provide the rationale and facts behind creation of each element or tactic of each program presented, and to respond to any questions that the panelists may ask. The focus of your remarks should always be

on the connection between the elements being presented, the objectives and the outcomes of the program.

Keep the Readiness Review Presentation Manageable

In a world rich in technological capabilities, you may be tempted to use an array of presentation support tools and resources. While the panelists want to see the full scope of your work, you are cautioned to choose the scope and scale of presentation items you incorporate carefully. Keep in mind that you are solely responsible for securing and operating any equipment needed for your presentation, and that you have a limited amount of time to set up any equipment you choose to use. The more different presentation elements you include, the more time is required to shift from item to item – i.e., spoken word to video to PowerPoint to audio to flip charts, etc. – and these added transitions could place at risk your ability to complete the presentation in the allotted time. Additionally, be aware that the Universal Accreditation Board has prohibited the use of LCD or other types of computer projectors in Readiness Review sessions. As with any presentation to students, employers, or clients, technical failure of your presentation support apparatus may result in your inability to adequately demonstrate your readiness to the panel.

Final Rehearsal for Your Readiness Review Presentation

Keep in mind that the entire Readiness Review Presentation is designed to last between one and two hours, so you have between 30 and 60 minutes to present your portfolio. Be mindful of time, both in planning *and* in delivering your portfolio to the Readiness Review panelists.

Choose your presentation style and be prepared to carry it out. Will you accept questions from the panelists “on the fly,” or do you want to deliver your entire presentation before opening the floor? It’s your call, based on what makes you comfortable and what reflects the approach you use in making presentations as a part of your professional approach.

On the matter of time, be aware that the panelists reserve the right to limit the amount of time they will spend reviewing video tapes or other support materials within your presentation. In the interest of time, you may want to edit video materials to present the most salient excerpts of the larger presentation.

Giving the Readiness Review Presentation

Like any other presentation, you should take advantage of every opportunity to set yourself up for success:

- Be sure to pace the preparation of your portfolio against a backdrop of other professional and personal responsibilities
- Allow yourself plenty of rest in advance of your Readiness Review Presentation
- Dress is business casual – pick clothing in which you look and feel good
- Come with adequate time to set up and to mentally prepare for the experience
- Be yourself and be comfortable in the experience

Keep in mind that the members of the Readiness Review Panel are advocates for you and for your attainment of Accreditation in Public Relations. The individuals chosen for your panel will lead you through the process and do everything possible to make the experience productive and forward-looking. As part of the session, Readiness Review panelists will offer suggestions that may further assist you in readying for the exam.

After the Readiness Review Presentation

Once the panel has completed its review of your readiness, as evidenced by your responses to the Readiness Review Questionnaire, information secured from your portfolio and your answers to specific questions asked during the Readiness Review Presentation, their recommendation to Advance or Not Advance you through Readiness Review will be forwarded to the Universal Accreditation Board. The UAB will notify you of your status in the process. Note that neither panel members nor local Accreditation volunteers can provide information on the outcome of your review.

In the event that the Readiness Review process reveals one or more areas in which you need additional work on your portfolio before being Advanced to the computer-based Examination, feedback from the panelists will be available upon your request. This information will provide guidance on steps you can take to strengthen your portfolio as you make adjustments in your presentation for subsequent review.

Unlike the role of oral examiners in the old Accreditation process, Readiness Review panelists serve both as *evaluators* of your preparedness for the Examination and *mentors* who can assist you in the experience. Whether you are Advanced to the examination process or given recommendations for further preparation that must be successfully completed before you are Advanced, your Readiness Review panelists are additional professional resources who are prepared to provide further mentoring to you as you move through the Accreditation process.

Questions?

If you have further questions about the process, speak with the people in your area who manage the Accreditation program and those who have successfully completed the Readiness Review. Or, you can contact Kathy Mulvihill, manager of Accreditation at kathy.mulvihill@prsa.org. We wish the best in your pursuit of the APR credential.