

## **Certified Public Relations Counselor – FAQs**

**CPRC?** The CPRC certification program is designed to recognize professional growth and achievement of senior members. CPRC is a unique, second tier credential, exclusively available to FPRA members. To sit for the CPRC exam, candidates must (1) have earned the Accredited in Public Relations (APR) designation from the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) and (2) have a minimum of ten years of professional practice in public relations. The exam consists of a written and oral exam.

### **WRITTEN CPRC EXAM**

#### **1. Are the questions taken from PR textbooks? If so, which ones?**

CPRC is our second tier credential. However, it is not APR 2.0. Where the APR exam is an objective exam based on textbook and study guide preparation, the CPRC exam is a subjective exam that requires candidates to draw from their 10 or more years of solid public relations planning and experience in using the principles of R.A.C.E. to solve problems and present solutions. The CPRC exam is not based on a textbook. The questions are in case study format and intended to draw out the candidate's critical thinking process and problem solving ability. Some of the cases will reflect actual PR scenarios that may have appeared in the business press or other media.

#### **2. Does the written exam require verbatim answers related to the Code of Ethics?**

No. However, the Code of Ethics will play a role in some questions. Candidates need to be aware of the provisions of the Code and shape their answers accordingly. For example, a question may pose a client that has asked you, as a PR practitioner, to do something that is in violation of the Code. Your response should reveal how you would solve this dilemma while recognizing the Code violation.

#### **3. Is the test structured as essay, multiple choice, etc.?**

The CPRC exam consists of 16 essay questions designed to test your problem solving skills in public relations. Multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and true false formats are only valid in testing second-hand knowledge from sources such as lectures and textbooks. The CPRC exam is intended to draw on the candidate's experienced-based knowledge. It will be graded by PR professionals holding the CPRC credential.

Public Relations is a creative field in which there can be several possible solutions to almost any problem. Graders are being asked to weigh your solution and evaluate whether or not it would solve the problem being presented.

#### **4. What materials would be best to review in preparation for the CPRC exam?**

To prepare for the exam candidates are encouraged to form study groups and share some of their experiences in the practice of public relations. Candidates should also consider reviewing Golden Image summaries published on the FPRA Web site.

Each question should be approached following the RPIE (or RACE) formula, popularized in Cutlip, Center and Broom's *Effective Public Relations, 9<sup>th</sup> edition*. This is the text used as the original foundation for the APR exam. Finally, consider obtaining and working through a Public

Relations Case Studies text. This will assist you in learning to problem solve outside your normal range of experience. There are several good paperback texts on the market. Example: *Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems, 7<sup>th</sup> edition*.

### **5. Is the exam divided into sections addressing different PR functions, areas?**

The exam covers a wide gamut of PR practice and assumes that candidates are capable of strategic planning and wearing different hats. Scenarios include employee relations, crisis management, community relations, issues in the profession, media relations and so on. Questions are not grouped by category.

## **PROCESS**

### **1. How much time is allotted for the written exam?**

Six hours (including lunch) is allotted for the written exam. The morning session is set for two hours and thirty minutes. Then there will be a full hour break for lunch. All candidates are encouraged to take this break and unwind with their colleagues. The exam will be completed after the lunch break. Proctors will provide time warnings at one hour, one half hour and five minutes. Candidates are free to take breaks during the exam to stretch, use the restrooms, get coffee, etc. Candidates are encouraged to dress comfortably and bring drinks and snacks to help them through the day.

### **2. Are the exams submitted as electronic files or printouts?**

Both. Candidates will be asked to provide a CD or DVD on which answers are to be recorded. Answers will also be printed out in hard copy. Proctors will be asked to ensure that no answers remain on any of the hard drives at the work station. Printing time will be allowed outside the 310 minutes required by the exam so it is non-graded time.

### **3. How is the written exam scored?**

Each question has an estimated length of time for answering each question. The time estimates range from 15 to 60 minutes. The length of each time estimate also represents the number of points possible for that question. The total points possible on the written exam are 310. A candidate must score 217 points, 70%, or greater to pass.

Candidates will want to be as thorough as possible in answering each question within close proximity of the time suggested. However, do not make any assumptions that certain actions or steps in the R.A.C.E. formula are a given. To manage time wisely, outline, or bullet form, is acceptable. Other tips include paying attention to what the question is asking, not reading more into the question (there are no trick questions), sketching out your answer before you answer in detail, and factoring your practical experience into your answers. You do not need to worry about mechanics (typos) as long as the answer can be read, and understood, by the graders. However, do proofread answers for clarity, continuity and completeness.

### **4. Who scores written exams?**

Exams will be graded by FPRA professionals who have earned the CPRC credential. Two CPRC s will grade each exam. If both pass the candidate the CPRC will be awarded. If the graders disagree, the exam will be sent to a third CPRC for grading.

If the result is two passes the CPRC will be awarded. If the result is two failures, the candidate will be asked to retake the written exam. Candidates will be identified by code to protect their privacy. Graders will be selected to protect the confidentiality of candidates.

## **ORAL EXAM**

### **1. Understanding that the oral exam requires a candidate to present a public relations problem and a plan to address the problem, is there other guidance that you can provide?**

In the practice of public relations your first target audience is your client, supervisor, manager or organization. You can only implement your plans when you have convinced these gatekeepers of their value. The oral exam is intended to test your skills in this crucial persuasion process. The goal is to sell an idea or a course of action, rather than demonstrate extemporaneous speaking skills.

We recommend that candidates present a project or program that they already have presented to a client or their management. The candidate should not present an imaginary case. You are likely to be less nervous and more confident with subject matter drawn from your working experience and that you have presented prior to the exam.

### **2. Does the oral exam require A-V such as PowerPoint, flip charts, etc?**

Visual aids may be used but are not required. Use of A-V may be scored under the delivery criteria on the scoring sheet. However, this area is scored only if A-V materials are used. Panelists should only consider whether A-V materials were used in a manner that moved the presentation forward and were clear in their presentation. The oral exam is not scored as a Dog and Pony Show with points for dazzling special effects. As a rule of thumb, if A-V materials weren't needed for your original presentation to a client/management, then you don't need to create them for the oral exam.

## **PROCESS**

### **1. How much time is allotted for the oral exam?**

The time limit is flexible up to 30 minutes, the maximum time allowed. This is in keeping with the wide variety of presentations we anticipate for this component of the CPRC exam.

### **2. How is the oral exam scored?**

The presentation is made to three FPRA professionals who have earned the CPRC credential. Items evaluated are the introduction, transition, body, conclusion, delivery and effectiveness and overall impression. Each item is scored between 1 and 5 for a total of 35 points possible. A candidate must score 24.5 points, 70%, or greater to pass. Candidates can obtain a copy of the presentation evaluation form from the state office. The form can be used as a guideline for polishing the presentation you plan to give for the oral exam.

### **3. Who scores the oral exams?**

The presentation will be evaluated by three FPRA professionals who have earned the CPRC credential.

## **GENERAL**

**1. When are results provided?**

The state office is working for a two-week turnaround for the CPRC exam. However, depending upon the number of candidates taking the exam at any one time and the availability of graders, please allow 30 days.

**2. Has FPRA determined a Pass/Fail rate for the CPRC exam?**

Our Executive Directors have concluded that since their tenure in working with the CPRC exam the pass rate is 85%. We anticipate a higher pass rate than APR (about 70%) because candidates come to the CPRC exam having already completed the accreditation process and with at least ten years of professional experience.

**3. Can a candidate re-take the CPRC exam(s)?**

Yes. The oral exam may be repeated after 30 days with no charge. The written exam may be repeated after 30 days for a \$75 fee. The state office will arrange for new proctors/graders for a repeated exam. These fees apply only if the retake is done within twelve months of the original attempt. Otherwise, full fees will apply.

**4. Where can I get more information?**

For more information, contact Jeff Nall, APR, CPRC, Vice President of Accreditation & Certification at [jnall@coawfla.org](mailto:jnall@coawfla.org) or 850-432-1575 ext 130, the State Association Office at 941-365-2135 or your local Accreditation & Certification Chair.

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