

CAPIO's Insider Guide to Everything You Need to Know About APR Accreditation



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WHAT IS ACCREDITATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS (APR)?

APR is a professional credential earned through a rigorous process. Accredited professionals demonstrate a commitment to professional advancement, broad and strategic public relations knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as a high professional level of experience and competence.

ELIGIBILITY AND FEES

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Members of nine participating organizations, including CAPIO, are eligible for APR Accreditation. Applicants are recommended to have five or more years of paid, full-time professional experience or teach/administer public relations courses at an accredited college or university.

The fee to apply for APR is \$385. Some associations will rebate part of the fee to members once they receive accreditation. **CAPIO gives members a \$100 rebate upon receiving their APR.** Many employers also pay for part or all of the APR as part of professional development programs.

The APR is “good for life” once received, with the fulfillment of Renewal Accreditation requirements and continued membership in participating organizations.

FIVE STEPS TO LIFELONG APR

STEP 1: APPLY

You can initiate the process at your discretion, making sure to review the process first and prepare before applying. Visit [CAPIO.org/apr](https://www.capio.org/apr) to apply online and pay. Following submission, you will receive notification of eligibility. Once approved, you must complete the APR process within one year.

STEP 2: STUDY

- Read the APR Study Guide
- Complete the Panel Presentation Questionnaire
- Identify additional texts to fill in gaps
- Work on your own or with a cohort
- Sign up for CAPIO/ OCPRSA online study group (check [CAPIO.org/apr](https://www.capio.org/apr) for current schedule)
- Take advantage of free CAPIO mentor matching
- Use the resources at www.praaccreditation.org

STEP 3: PANEL PRESENTATION

- The Panel Presentation includes a questionnaire and a portfolio review that demonstrates the RPIE process. You will present your organization, your role and your experience during the presentation.
- The Panel Presentation assesses competence in several areas, which are not easily judged in other ways. This presentation process will determine whether you are ready to succeed on the Computer-based Examination.
- This step is conducted locally or virtually and judged by three accredited members. The judging panel will recommend whether to advance the candidate to the Computer-based Exam. The candidate will be informed whether they are eligible to proceed to the Computer-based Exam in approximately one to two weeks.

STEP 4: COMPUTER-BASED EXAMINATION

The Computer-based Examination is computer-delivered and scored. This assessment is 100% multiple-choice, testing on terms, situation analysis and examples. Testing takes between 2 to 3.5 hours to complete. The testing process is administered by Prometric at a local site, or the test can be proctored remotely via Pro Proctor. Preliminary results of the exam will be immediate, and results will be received within a couple of weeks.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES ASSESSMENT

The Examination process tests these areas:

- Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (30%)
- Communication Models and Theories (15%)
- Ethics/Laws (15%)
- Business Literacy (10%)
- Management Skills and Leadership (10%)
- Crisis Communications and Issues Management (10%)
- Media Relations (5%)
- History and Practice of PR (2%)
- Using Information Technology Effectively (2%)
- Advanced Communication Skills (1%)



STEP 5: RENEWAL

The Renewal process ensures that APRs remain current and involved in the PR profession, and pursue professional growth. Renewal requires a minimum of 15 Continuing Education Units. 7 CEUS must come from continuing education and professional development, 1 CEU of ethics, and other CEUs can be fulfilled through public service, volunteer PR work, awards, speeches, articles or leadership roles with CAPIO or other participating organizations. **Every three years, the Renewal form must be submitted with a payment of \$75.**



Seven Tips for Success



By CAPIO Member Robin Rocky, APR, CEO of RockSpark Communications + Marketing

1. Learn the APR process. Read up so you know what to expect at each step, including the four key APR milestones:

- Application
- Questionnaire
- Panel Presentation
- Computer-Based Examination

The CAPIO website and the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) website are excellent sources of information.



2. Study first, then apply. A one-year clock to complete the Panel Presentation and Computer-based Exam starts ticking the day the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) approves your application. Aim to complete the majority of your studies before you apply. That way, you won't feel rushed, and you won't risk forfeiting your application fee if you run out of time.

I highly recommend first completing the APRPREP Online Study Course then signing up for an in-person class or boot camp. The convenient online course provides a deep dive into the knowledge, skills and abilities required to become accredited, plus the chance to study with a cohort and experienced APRs.

The 10-week Study Session offered by CAPIO and OCPRSA was incredibly enlightening and provided me with hands-on training and expert instruction from public relations professors and APRs from top local organizations, agencies and universities. It was also an excellent way to interact with fellow APR candidates, which helped us learn from each other and build a support network.



3. Reach out to CAPIO's Accreditation or Education Chair to get connected with the latest APR resources. CAPIO's Education and Development Chair can give you the latest information about upcoming APR classes and incentives.

They can also connect you with a potential mentor and other CAPIO members who are starting their APR journeys or have recently earned accreditation. Think of them as a trusted resource who can support you every step of the way as they show you how to earn your APR.



4. Set a realistic deadline. Life happens. Work responsibilities and personal priorities may force your APR studies to the back burner at times. Factor in flexibility so that a few unexpected bumps in the road don't throw you off course.



5. Inform your manager and colleagues. The APR is a significant professional milestone, and starting the process demonstrates your commitment to excellence and lifelong learning. I incorporated the APR into my Goals and Personal Development Plan at work, which gave me an extra incentive to complete the process. It's likely that your colleagues are thinking about starting the APR process, and you might gain a study buddy or two!



6. Check for financial incentives and resources. For example, OCPRSA offers members a rebate upon completion/passing of the Panel Presentation portion of the APR, and CAPIO offers a partial refund of APR fees upon successful completion of the exam. Because the APR is a professional certificate, your expenses might qualify for tuition reimbursement from your employer.



7. Keep moving forward. There is a significant amount of material to cover and work to complete, which can seem overwhelming. Set aside time each week to tackle the process one chunk at a time. Don't be afraid to reach out to APRs for encouragement or advice. We want you to succeed!

The APR process is as rigorous as it is rewarding. Your hard work will pay enormous dividends in terms of enhanced knowledge, skills and abilities, along with closer connections to fellow public relations practitioners. Best of luck on your APR journey!



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Get Started

Visit [CAPIO.org](https://www.capio.org) to for more resources, including:



INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS AND VIDEOS



INFORMATION ABOUT UPCOMING STUDY SESSIONS



MENTOR MATCHING OPPORTUNITIES



TIPS AND STRATEGIES FROM CURRENT APRS



THE APR APPLICATION AND STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDE TO EARNING YOUR APR



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Experienced. Educated. Ethical.

CAPIO is one of only nine public relations organizations to offer its members the internationally recognized Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) credential. While many communications principles are universal, government communicators face unique requirements, challenges and demands from their communities and other key audiences. At CAPIO, we help our members develop and advance as communications professionals to meet the needs of their agencies.