

Certified Public Relations Counselor FAQs

The Certified Public Relations Counselor (CPRC) certification program is designed to recognize professional growth and achievement of senior members of the Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA). 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 10 years of professional practice in public relations. The exam consists of a written exam and oral presentation.

WRITTEN EXAM

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

The CPRC exam is not based on a textbook. The questions are in case study scenario 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. CPRC is our second tier credential. However, it is not APR 2.0. While 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 applying the Research-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (RPIE) method to solve problems and present solutions.

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 PFRA Code of Ethics and shape their answers accordingly. For example, a question may pose that a client 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 14 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. In contrast, 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 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 posted on www.FPRA.org. Some candidates might find it helpful to review the

Cutlip & Center's Effective Public Relations, 11th Edition textbook, which is the text used as the original foundation for the APR exam and the text that popularized the RPIE formula. Candidates might also consider obtaining and working through a public relations case studies text. This will help you learn to problem solve outside your normal range of experience. There are several good texts on the market, for example: *Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems, 8th edition*. Don't forget to review the FPR Code of Ethics as well. Lastly, the state VP of Accreditation and Certification or your local Accreditation and Certification Chair can provide you sample exam questions to help you prepare.

5. Is the exam divided into sections addressing different PR functions and 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, PR campaigns, community relations, issues in the business and the profession, media relations, social media, issues management and so on. The scenarios are realistic for public relations professionals working in government agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations and PR firms.

WRITTEN EXAM LOGISTICS

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

Six hours (including lunch) is allotted for the written exam. The morning session is two hours and 30 minutes. Then there is a full hour break for lunch. All candidates are encouraged to take this break and unwind with their colleagues or proctor. The exam will be completed after the lunch break with another two hours and 30 minutes. Proctors will provide time warnings at one hour, a half hour and five minutes remaining. Candidates are free to take breaks during the exam to stretch, use the restrooms, get coffee, etc., but the time clock does not stop during that time. 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?

Candidates take the exam on a computer via a Word document. After the test is complete, proctors send an electronic copy of the exam to the State Office for grading and make sure no answers remain on any of the hard drives at the work station. Printing the exam is not necessary, given the large number of pages included in each exam.

3. How are the exams submitted for grading?

Each question has an estimated length of time for answering the question. The time estimates range from 15 to 60 minutes. The time estimate also represents the number of points possible for that question. For example, a 15 minute question is worth 15 points. The total points possible on the written exam is 300. To pass, a candidate must score 210 points (70%).

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 RPIE formula are “a given.” For example, the question might not ask about research, but an astute candidate might start his/her answer with “I would begin first by conducting research.” 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. Because the test is timed and candidates are asked for very thoughtful replies, points are not deducted for AP style or spelling errors. Candidates should emphasize professionalism, clarity, continuity and completeness in their answers.

4. Who scores written exams?

The CPRC exam is peer-evaluated. 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 failures, the candidate will be asked to retake the written exam. Candidates are identified by a number, not their name, to protect their privacy. Graders also will be kept confidential.

ORAL PRESENTATION

1. What do I have to do for the oral presentation?

In the practice of public relations your first target audience is your client, supervisor, manager or organization. You can only implement your plan when you have convinced these gatekeepers of its value. Seven days prior to your oral presentation, candidates are given three realistic public relations scenarios. Candidates choose one of the three scenarios to present. Candidates are evaluated on their ability to counsel company leadership through the selected scenario using persuasive, verbal communication skills.

2. Does the oral presentation require PowerPoint, handouts, etc.?

Candidates are evaluated based on their verbal communication skills, not presentation materials. You do not need to provide any presentation materials or use PowerPoint/Prezi/etc.; however, you may do that if it makes you feel more comfortable. Again, visual aids are not required and will not be graded.

3. How much time is allotted for the oral presentation?

The oral presentation should take about 20 minutes, followed by about 10 minutes of question and answer afterward.

4. How is the oral presentation scored and who scores it?

A panel of three FPRA professionals who have earned the CPRC credential will evaluate and grade your presentation. Items evaluated include the specific steps of RPIE, whether the candidate was persuasive and effective and overall impression. Each item is scored between one and five for a total of 50 points. A candidate must score 35 points (70%) or greater to pass. Candidates can get a copy of the presentation evaluation form from your local Accreditation and Certification Chair or the State Office. The form can be used as a guideline for preparing for your presentation.

GENERAL CPRC INFORMATION

1. When are results provided?

The State Office strives for a two-week turnaround for the written CPRC exam. However, depending upon the number of candidates taking the exam at any one time and the availability of graders, please allow up to 30 days. For the oral presentation, candidates generally are notified within 24 hours (not including weekends).

2. What is the pass/fail rate for the CPRC exam?

The most recent data available indicates an 85% pass rate for the exam.

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

Yes. The oral presentation 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 12 months of the original attempt. Otherwise, full fees will apply.

4. Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact the VP of Accreditation and Certification (you can find contact information on www.FPRA.org), the State Office at 941-365-2135 or your local Accreditation and Certification Chair.