



GETTING YOUR APR IN 2025

THE APR – WHAT IS IT?

So you've been in Public Relations for a while (at least 3 years), and you think it's time to pursue your APR.

Congratulations! You've made the first step, and your SCPRSA chapter will help you get there.

What, exactly, is the Accreditation in Public Relations, and why is it significant?

The APR signifies a deep understanding of the Public Relations profession as well as a commitment to the PRSA Code of Ethics. It signifies that you, the candidate, have demonstrated the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that are fundamental to public relations:

- An understanding of the history of public relations, as well as theories and models.
- An understanding of the RPIE process that is fundamental to any communications campaign: Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation.
- An understanding of issues, risk, and crisis management in public relations.
- An understanding of the role of public relations within your organization.
- An understanding of reputation management.
- An understanding of First Amendment issues, and the ethical underpinnings of public relations.

The path to getting your APR is not easy. You must commit to it. But it is very doable, and the chapter APRs are ready to help you reach your goal.

If you are interested in learning more, please review this packet, and then email the SCPRSA Accreditation Chair Kathleen Williams, kbwilliams54@gmail.com.

You're on your way!



2024 CALENDAR

The new mantra for obtaining your APR is:

- Study
- Apply
- Present your communications plan to your APR panel
- Take the written exam

Please, do NOT apply for the credential until you have completed some of the necessary studying, whether you are doing it on your own, or through the APR Online Study Course (more on that below). Why? Because once you apply, you have a year to get your credential. A lot can happen in a year, both professionally and personally, to derail your timeline. It's better to be fairly confident that you know and understand what will be asked by your panel and on the test, and the only way for that to happen is to study.

STEP 1

JANUARY-APRIL 2025 -- STUDY

Michael Henry, an e-learning producer, coordinates an APR online study course that has several terms during the year.

The **SPRING COHORT** begins in late January. The Open House for that for that is at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 28. The Spring Cohort will start at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 4, the first of 10 one-hour online sessions every Tuesday night. They are led by APRs with extensive professional experience.

The sessions include topics such as ethics, communications models and theories, several on the RPIE process, managing issues and crisis communications, etc. It also includes practice sessions for your Panel Presentation.

Why do we recommend this online course? It will give you a THOROUGH grounding and intense preparation for your panel presentation and exam. Each module is taught by an APR(s) with particular expertise in that area. You will be in a cohort of other students, whom you can rely on, study with, etc. Once you take and complete this course, you are well on your way to earning your credential in 2024.

Each module is recorded. If you miss a class, you can watch it at a later date.

Cost: \$260. If you have a supportive employer, make the case that this class will make you a better public relations practitioner, and allow you to support your company or organization with additional expertise.

Note: We'll publish information on the spring and fall cohorts in 2025.

More details on the online course can be found here:

https://o21.talentlms.com/catalog/info/id:127,cms_featured_course:1



STEP 2

MAY 2025 -- APPLY

To apply for the APR credential, and start the one-year clock ticking, you must apply online at PRSA. **The cost is \$385 for members of PRSA.** (And \$745 for non-members so make sure you are a member!) This fee includes taking your exam one time. If you pass, you will receive a \$100 rebate.

Apply here:

https://accreditation.prsa.org/MyAPR/Content/Apply/APR/APR_CandidateProcessChart.aspx

Plan to do this in May 2025, after you have completed your study course.

STEP 3

MAY-JUNE 2025 -- COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Communications Plan: While you are going through your online study course from late January through late April, you will be thinking about and preparing the Communications Plan that you will present to your APR panel.

The Communications Plan can be for a campaign that you led or were a part of and is completed, or one that you are in the midst of, or one that you are planning. If it is one that you have already participated in, it can include tweaks – such as what you might do differently, lessons learned, etc.

Questionnaire: Before you go before your panel, which will likely be comprised of three APRs from South Carolina, you will need to complete a questionnaire. This will take several hours; it is quite in-depth. You will be asked questions about your current position, your organization, how you might change its public relations structure, and your Communications Plan.

This questionnaire must be reviewed first by Kathleen Williams, the Accreditation Chair, who may make some suggestions on possible changes (it's always good to have a second pair of eyes, correct?).

The completed questionnaire then must be sent to your panel at least 15 days ahead of your scheduled presentation so that the panel has time to review it.

In addition, you should send your Communications Plan to your panel a couple of days prior to your presentation so that they can take a look at it as well.

(See link to Questionnaire on APR page.)



STEP 4

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2025 – PANEL PRESENTATION

Work with Kathleen Williams to set up your Panel Presentation. They are typically done virtually, but you have the option to ask for an in-person presentation. They last an hour to 90 minutes, during which time the panel will listen as the candidate presents their Communications Plan, and answers questions. The questions may also cover material from the questionnaire.

Note: Plan to show any supporting material for your campaign during this session. (Ask Kathleen to send you the Panel Presentation Guide.)

The panel is trying to determine if the candidate shows a command (those KSAs!) of public relations principles, RPIE, ethics, etc. After the candidate is finished, the panelists will discuss the presentation and then vote. The panel chair will send the results of the vote to Kathy Mulvihill, Senior Accreditation Manager for PRSA, who will then contact the candidate to let them know if they have passed the panel and can now sign up for the examination. She will have instructions on how to sign up for the exam, which you can take at home. It is proctored virtually.

Note: It can take several weeks to set up a panel. We have to find volunteers, and then set up a schedule that works for four people. Panelists need to get the questionnaire 15 days ahead of time. Please don't tell Kathleen you're ready to go and can do it in two weeks. That will not work.

STEP 5

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2025 – TAKE THE EXAM

Once you get the OK from Kathy Mulvihill, go ahead and schedule your exam. Try to set aside time each week before the exam to review your course material. There is a practice exam available from PRSA as well. (*Ask Kathleen about that.*)

OTHER AVENUES TO OBTAINING YOUR CREDENTIAL

Steps 2-5 are all the same. Step 1 can vary. If you are a disciplined person, you can certainly study on your own.

Resources include an **APR study guide** (*see link under Resources below*).

Also, invest in **Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations** (latest edition): \$100+. This is the Bible for PR professionals and will come in very handy for you as you prepare.

APR Boot Camp: APR Boot Camps, hosted by national, are different from the APR Online Study Course. For the APR Boot Camp, a candidate prepares (you submit your questionnaire ahead of time) and sits for a panel presentation (virtually or in person, depending on the event) on the first day and then prepares



for the exam over the next two days. Once the Boot Camp is completed, the candidate (or National) will make an appointment to take the exam. The APR Boot Camp is designed for individuals who are ready (have been studying) and want to sit for the two parts in a short amount of time. **Current cost: \$450**

STEP 6

MAINTAINING YOUR CREDENTIAL

Congratulations! You have earned your credential! We are all so proud of you! Now what?

Well, besides putting that coveted APR in your signature and on your business card, you need to maintain it. The APR must be renewed every three years.

PRSA has a handy-dandy worksheet to help you keep track of the CEUs you accumulate over three years. *(See link on APR page.)*

Over the three years, a minimum of 15 CEUs is required, including at least 7 in continuing education and professional development, and one in ethics training.

Note: Do NOT wait until Year 3 to start accumulating your CEUs!

There is a VERY EASY way to stack up those CEUs! Volunteer for SCPRSA!

Be an APR mentor (2 CEUs)! Serve on an APR panel (.5 CEU)! Judge another chapter's competition (1 CEU)! Become a chapter officer or chair (3 CEUs)!

Published work in public relations, PR presentations to professional or student organization, or advanced degrees in public relations/communications will rack up the CEUs.

And PRSA offers a wealth of webinars – at .5 CEU per webinar.

Our chapter, SCPRSA, needs active members to thrive. **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!** Please consider getting involved, and giving back to this rewarding profession!