



FAQ for the 2016 Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations

Why was the Examination updated?

The Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) has always made modest updates and changes to the Examination questions on an ongoing basis, and at any given time about 25 percent of the Examination questions would be in the beta (testing) phase. After reviewing a wide body of research on perceptions of the Examination, we were presented with overwhelming evidence that the Examination was outdated in both fact and perception, so the UAB embarked on a four-step process of updating the Examination. The first step was to update the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), based on a Practice Analysis conducted by the UAB. The second step was to update the learning objectives. (Those two components together make up the Examination blueprint.) The third step was to write new test questions, and the fourth step was to launch a beta examination based on the new questions. This was a two-year process.

Did the Examination change in other ways?

No. The fundamentals of the APR Examination are the same. The Examination is based on the enduring principles of public relations and tests a candidate's knowledge of the profession and his or her analytical skills and abilities.

What are the new KSAs?

The specific areas in need of updating were information technology, social media, analytical skills, management skills, issues management, ethics and the application of communication models. The number of KSAs was reduced from 10 to six, and some KSAs were restructured and reframed rather than eliminated. The KSAs now include: 1) Researching, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Programs; 2) Leading the PR Function; 3) Applying Ethics and Law; 4) Managing Relationships; 5) Managing Issues and Crisis Communications; and 6) Understanding Communication Models, Theories and History of the Profession.

What are learning objectives?

The learning objectives are specific statements about what we are going to ask a candidate under each KSA. The number of learning objectives was reduced from 43 to 31, and each learning objective has between three and six questions on the Examination. A full list of the learning objectives can be found on the UAB website,

www.praccreditation.org/resources/documents/2016-apr-KSAs-Tested.pdf.

Is the 2016 Examination harder than the prior version?

The 2016 Examination is neither harder nor easier. It is simply updated to reflect the current state of the profession and the frequency, importance and relevancy of the various parts of the public relations function.

Are all of the questions different?

The vast majority of the questions have been newly written or revised so significantly that they are considered a new question from a statistical standpoint. Some questions that continue to test well were modified slightly.

How many correct answers do I need on the computer-based Examination to “pass”?

Candidates must correctly answer 62 percent of the scored questions on the computer-based Examination. At this time, there are 132 scored questions on the APR Examination, and a candidate must answer 82 correctly (62 percent) to pass the Examination and earn Accreditation. The passing score for the 2016 Examination is different from that used in the prior iteration of the Examination, but that does not mean the Examination is harder or easier or that Accreditation standards are higher or lower. The passing score for any given examination is based first on a scientific algorithm of all of the candidates' scores in a beta-testing group and then analyzed and finalized by subject-matter experts. Thus, the current passing score reflects the most recent updates to the Examination and the beta-testing process that validated those updates. (See questions above.)

Isn't a 62 percent passing score equivalent to a D-minus?

No. The passing score for a credentialing exam is very different from the score given on an academic test. Whereas an academic test score uses a sliding scale of A–F with each grade representing a different level of knowledge of the subject matter, a credentialing exam sets a threshold for being minimally qualified to pass the exam. A candidate is determined to have or not to have the minimum qualifications needed to meet this standard.

Who writes the questions?

Any practitioner is invited to contribute questions for potential inclusion on the Examination. This process is called item writing. The UAB typically solicits at least 33 questions each calendar year. There is a [tool](#) on the UAB website where you can submit a question if this interests you. (www.praccreditation.org/teach/)

Are there guidelines for item writing?

There are established guidelines for item writing to assist practitioners in this process. These guidelines follow industry standards for computer-based exams. Additionally, each question on our Examination has at least one academic citation from one of the textbooks on our bookshelf, as well as a second-source reference, which can include the APR Study Guide or a second textbook. Citing a reference is a critical step in producing a valid and defensible answer on the Examination. Training also is available for those interested in helping with the item-writing process. Once questions are submitted for the Examination, each question is reviewed for technical accuracy, aligned with the Examination objectives and sourced. All questions are revised at least minimally in this process.

Who reviews the statistics?

A statistical analysis of all questions on the Examination occurs after approximately 100 administrations of the Examination. The UAB contracts with a psychometrician to analyze the data and present it to the Examination Work Group of the UAB. This session is called the In-service Analysis and identifies questions that need to be replaced or rewritten. This process was completed for all of the new and revised questions on the beta examination. A panel of Accredited professionals, referred to as subject-matter experts (SMEs), conduct the technical review, which includes a series of approximately eight, two-hour-long conference calls with a six-to-eight-professionals panel participating on each call. (Participants may help with one session or multiple.) During these calls, the participants review all questions that fall outside the acceptable range for performance, meaning those that were too hard, too easy or had poor answer options. The panel will review the way a question is worded, determine if it matches its objective, determine if there is one clearly correct answer and if the distractors (wrong answers) are appropriately distracting.

Are there test questions available to help candidates prepare for the Examination?

The UAB has made available sample questions to help candidates better understand how the questions are framed and presented. These questions do not appear on the 2016 Examination.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

The purpose of sharing these with candidates is to provide insight as to how questions are worded. Some establish a situation in which candidates must apply a level of professional understanding to answer correctly, while others test knowledge of history, theory or tactics in a recitation manner. Some of the questions require multiple correct answers, all of which must be chosen in order for the question to receive one point.

The questions are not designed to be tricky, but they should be challenging for those with the proper professional public relations experience. Any APR candidates should contact UAB members or other APR leaders with questions or suggestions.

Multiple choice, single answer:

Which law restricts corporate communications for publicly traded companies before and during the period that new securities are being registered?

- a. Securities Act of 1933
 - b. Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002
 - c. Investment Advisers Act of 1940
 - d. Investment Company Act of 1934
- (a.)

Which of the following entities cannot sue for libel?

- a. A politician
 - b. A private citizen
 - c. A house of worship
 - d. A government institution
 - e. A publicly-traded company
- (d.)

What public relations pioneer is credited with being the first practitioner to insist on “a place at the management table”?

- a. Carl Byoir
 - b. Edward Bernays
 - c. Doris Fleischman
 - d. Arthur Page
 - e. Harold Burson
- (d.)

What World War I-era organization introduced decentralized publicity “drives” as a strategy to mobilize U.S. public opinion to support the war?

- a. The Creel Committee
 - b. The Red Cross
 - c. The Council on Public Relations
 - d. The Office of War Information
 - e. AT&T
- (a.)

Multiple choice, multiple answers: (You must get both answers correct to receive one point.)

What are two major reasons why organizations retain outside public relations counsel? (Choose two.)

- a. They offer flexibility of talents and skills.
 - b. They bring greater credibility to the work.
 - c. They will provide sound ROI on the project or program.
 - d. They provide objectivity and a disinterested perspective.
 - e. They can provide more attention and detail to a project than in-house staff.
- (a. and d.)

What are two examples of an evaluation of outcome? (Choose two)

- a. Change in attitude
 - b. Placement of message
 - c. Distribution of message
 - d. Size of attentive audience
 - e. Social and cultural change
- (a. and e.)

Situation analysis:

You work for a utility company that is building a biomass plant in the community. Your employer asks you to give a series of community talks about the plant and future operations. You visit the plant several hours before you are due to give a speech that has been prepared by your immediate supervisor. During the tour of the plant, you discover several claims in the speech are not true. What do you do?

- a. Write and deliver a new speech that you know is entirely correct.
 - b. Cancel all speeches until you and your supervisor can get the information straight.
 - c. Deliver the speech as prepared and discuss the inaccuracies with your supervisor afterward.
 - d. Address the inaccuracies with your supervisor immediately and make the necessary corrections before giving the speech.
- (d.)

You seek the counsel of one of your peers who designed and implemented a communication program that resulted in the successful permitting of an automotive recycling center, despite strong opposition from community organizations. You have to design a program to win approval for a similar project proposed by your company. Your peer gives you a brief piece of advice that succinctly describes the foundation of his successful program.

What is most likely your peer's advice for a successful communication program?

- a. Solve their problems.
 - b. Kill them with kindness.
 - c. Expose them to ridicule.
 - d. Overwhelm them with facts.
- (a.)