

# Accreditation Overview

PRSA Detroit Chapter  
Prep Session  
March 3 & 4, 2006

# Key Accreditation Dates

- Mar. 3 – 4, prep session - Hospice of Michigan
- 10 a.m., Thursday, Mar. 16 - Readiness Review conference call
- Tuesday, Apr. 4 - Readiness Review questionnaire deadline
- Wk of Apr. 24 - Readiness Review portfolio presentations, Hospice of Michigan
- 10 a.m., Friday, May 12 - computer exam conference call

# Accreditation Questions?

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- Kathy Mulvihill
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# Key Accreditation Resources

- Candidate section at [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)
- Detroit Chapter prep session
- Online prep course
- Accredited colleagues and friends

**All info available at  
[www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)**

# Why seek Accreditation?

- Illustrates commitment to career and profession to potential employers/clients;
- Helps elevate status of PR profession;
- May earn a salary increase, but more importantly . . .
- A personal achievement.

# Accreditation Exam is two-prong:

- Readiness Review Process
  - Questionnaire
  - Portfolio Presentation
  - “Advance” or “not advance”
- Computer Test
  - Multiple Choice Format
  - 177 Total Questions
    - 30 beta questions throughout
  - 147 Graded Questions
    - 99 correct to earn Accreditation (67%)

# Exam evaluates 60 knowledge, skills and abilities

- Grouped within categories
- 16 performance-based competencies measured through Readiness Review process
- Remainder primarily tested through computer exam

# Steps to Accreditation

## 1. Submit application to PRSA National

- Open to any candidate in good standing; 5 years experience recommended

## 2. Complete Readiness Review Questionnaire

- Detailed, written answers to 17 questions:
  - Your organization and your role in it
  - Your experience (programming emphasis)
  - Your readiness for the written exam

# Steps to Accreditation (cont.)

3. Prepare work portfolio for Readiness Review presentation
  - Highlight a completed program or campaign
    - Can be paid or volunteer
    - Must be work you did solo or played a major role
    - Must be same program highlighted in Readiness Review Questionnaire
    - Plan can have “holes” – explain what you should/would do differently on questionnaire/during presentation

# Steps to Accreditation (cont.)

3. Prepare work portfolio for Readiness Review presentation (cont.)
  - Assemble/present presentation according to programming elements
  - Include supporting materials in hard copy or Power Point – KEEP IT SIMPLE
4. Present portfolio to 3 local APRs
5. Take multiple-choice computer exam

# Readiness Review Process

1. Submit questionnaire via e-mail, along with 3 hard copies via mail
  - Document distributed to 3 local APRs who will conduct your portfolio presentation
  - Must submit questionnaire at least 15 days prior to portfolio presentation
2. Schedule portfolio presentation

# Readiness Review Process (cont.)

## 3. Portfolio presentation highlights

- 1 – 2 hours long
- Format similar to job interview – dress for business
- Panelist questions primarily regarding questionnaire and portfolio; additional questions possible
- Evaluation based on 16 performance-related competencies on a 0 – 3 scale
- Panelists will provide feedback

# Readiness Review Process (cont.)

3. Portfolio presentation highlights (cont.)
  - Panelists determine whether you “advance” or “do not advance” and report to National
  - You must “advance” to sit for computer exam
  - Candidates who “do not advance” must wait 90 days to retry Readiness Review
  - Readiness Review results come from National

# Multiple-choice Computer Exam

- 3.75 hour test administered “on demand” through local Prometric Testing facilities
  - 10 – 15 minute optional break, clock still runs
- Preliminary results available immediately
- Notified through PRSA National
- **YOU MUST COMPLETE READINESS REVIEW AND THE COMPUTER EXAM WITHIN ONE YEAR OF APPLYING FOR ACCREDITATION**

# Candidate Prep Session

- Guest colleagues, handouts and exercises highlight key subject areas:
  - Research
  - Programming
  - Communications Models & Theories
  - Crisis Communications, Management, Media Relations
  - History
  - Ethics, Law

# 10 Evaluation Categories

- 30% - research; planning, implementing, evaluating programs
- 15% - ethics, law
- 15% - communication models, theories
- 10% - business literacy
- 10% - management skills, issues
- 10% - crisis communications, management
- 5% - media relations
- 2% - using information technology efficiently
- 2% - history, current issues in public relations
- 1% - advance communications skills

**60 competencies (KSAs)  
fall within various categories**

# Testing Frustrations

- Lots of information, some areas only touched on or not tested at all
- Prioritize studying according to testing percentage for each category
- Answers to some questions not covered in sessions or found in any text or Candidate Prep Guide

# 10-Volume Bookshelf

- Four general texts and six specialty books
  - Listing at [prsa.org](http://prsa.org) includes competencies covered by each book
- **IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO READ ALL BOOKS ON THE LIST. SELECT THE BEST GENERAL TEXT FOR YOU AND SPECIALTY BOOKS, AS APPROPRIATE.**

# Maintenance Required to Remain Accredited

- Accumulate 10 points in 3 categories every 3 years
  - Continuing education
  - Professionalism
    - PRSA involvement
    - Awards
    - Presentations
  - Community service

# Accreditation Costs

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Application Fee | \$25*     |
| Prep Sessions   | 65        |
| Computer Exam   | 410/385** |
| Books           | ?         |
| Maintenance     | 50        |

\* Application fee waived w/one payment

\*\* PRSA National refunds \$110 when you take the exam

# Programming

- Emphasized in Readiness Review and on computer exam
- If you don't write programs often, review Silver Anvil programs; consult with colleagues who do
- Prep session will detail all elements

# Ethics

- Core principles w/intent, guidelines and example of improper conduct
- Not necessary to memorize them exactly as written, but be extremely familiar
- Need to paraphrase well in Readiness Review and comfortable with nuances for computer exam
- Casual knowledge won't work – know them and, more importantly, what they mean

# General Tips

- View as an academic exercise. Experience is important, but you must study to succeed.
- In Readiness Review, stick with what you're most familiar with. If your experience is in community relations, don't focus on crisis management.

# General Tips (cont.)

- If your experience is narrow, you must work to think and present yourself as a well-rounded practitioner.
  - ie. If you work in internal communications, make sure to understand media relations, etc.
- Always answer questions from the perspective that you're in charge. For this test, respond as though you're the top public relations practitioner in your organization.

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