

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS
ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN
Public Relations

Basic Information

Program Name: Public Relations

College: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS)

Department: School of Communication

Program Level (check all that apply)

Associate's

Bachelor's

Undergraduate Certificate

Master's

Doctoral

Graduate Certificate

Date Plan Re-Submitted: April 2026

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1. Introduction (identify college, unit, and degree programs)

Purpose: According to the Public Relations Society of America, "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. At its core, public relations is about influencing, engaging and building a relationship with key stakeholders across numerous platforms in order to shape and frame the public perception of an organization." Hence, the major in public relations at UCA incorporates coursework in public relations specifically along with courses in the related fields of communication and journalism. It prepares students for careers in a variety of sectors, including business, education, government and nonprofit contexts. Further, as it states on the school's website, "The public relations program is a collaborative, service learning-focused curriculum that equips students with both practical skills to get jobs as professional communicators, and the strategic theory necessary to turn those into thriving careers helping people and organizations find their voice."

In order to facilitate both a strategic foundation and tactical toolkit, the PR program emphasizes the following four areas.

- Real work for real clients across the PR curriculum
- Practical skills development in writing, social media management, photography, graphic design and professionalism
- Networking through speaker series, agency tours in Little Rock and events sponsored by the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA)
- Global perspectives through an emphasis on current events, emerging technologies and Collaborative International Online Learning (COIL) projects

Vision Statement: The public relations program at the University of Central Arkansas envisions a future where our graduates are at the forefront of strategic communication, driving positive change in organizations and communities. We strive to be a nationally recognized program that prepares ethical, innovative, and adaptable public relations professionals. Our vision encompasses:

- Cultivating critical thinkers and problem solvers who can navigate complex communication challenges in a rapidly evolving media environment.
- Fostering a collaborative learning environment that emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical application through service learning, real-world projects.
- Developing culturally competent communicators who can effectively engage with diverse audiences in an increasingly globalized world.
- Integrating technology and digital strategies into our curriculum to ensure our graduates are prepared for the future of public relations.
- Enhancing partnerships with industry professionals and organizations to provide students with networking opportunities and insights into emerging trends.

Unit Mission Statement

The School of Communication is a collaborative community of dedicated faculty, staff, and students engaged in the study and practice of communication. As communicators, journalists, public relations practitioners, rhetoricians, and writers, we teach and research to facilitate student learning and growth through caring relationships, innovative curricula, and experiential learning. Because speaking and writing are foundational to society and create social realities, we prepare students to become ethical citizens who make meaningful contributions both professionally and personally. We model collegiality and camaraderie to foster a culture of cooperation to accomplish shared goals.

The PR Program in the UCA School of Communication cultivates adaptable, ethical and innovative communicators prepared to excel in the public relations field. Through a blend of theoretical knowledge, practical experience and exposure to new technologies and cultures, our curriculum challenges its graduates to become leaders, ready to navigate the ever-evolving communication industry with confidence and integrity.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

SLO 1: Students will be able to gather, evaluate and synthesize information from primary and secondary sources to inform decision-making. (Research & analysis)

SLO 2: Students will be able to develop goal-oriented PR approaches that align with organizational objectives and address stakeholder needs through the RPIE process of Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. (Strategic thinking & planning)

SLO 3: Students will be able to create clear, compelling and audience-appropriate written communication across various PR formats and platforms. (Writing skills)

SLO 4: Students will be able to conceive, design and produce innovative content that engages audiences while achieving objectives. (Creative content development)

SLO 5: Students will be able to consistently apply professional writing conventions, industry standards and organizational style requirements (AP/APA style). (Style guide & formatting standards)

3. Assessment Cycle

Data will be collected and reported after every fall and spring semester. A shared Google drive will be used to record and store data. Individual instructors who teach the courses involved in measuring these SLOs will report the data in the shared spreadsheets in Drive within two days of the date final grades are due; the PR program coordinator will ensure that all data have been reported following each semester deadline.

Further, the PR program coordinator will report annually to the school director a summary of the year’s results for each of the five SLOs. Based on the 10-year cycle for external program review, the next detailed analysis and report should occur in AY 2034-2035 and include all of the data from the SLOs reported and collected since AY 2025-2026.

4. Curriculum Map

I = The skill is introduced
 R = The skill is reinforced
 A = The skill is applied

COURSE	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3	SLO 4	SLO 5
PR 2305 (Intro to PR)	I	I			
PRLS 3310 (Writing PR)			R		R
PRLS 3305 (PR Techniques)			I	I	I
PRLS 4308 (Social Media Mgmt)				R	
PRLS 4305 (Capstone)	A	A	A	A	A

5. Assessment Methods and Measures

Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria and Measurements
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<p>1. Students will be able to gather, evaluate and synthesize information from primary and secondary sources to inform decision-making. (Research & analysis)</p>	<p>Each student in PRLS 2305 will complete quizzes and applied assignments that require gathering, evaluating and synthesizing information. Target: Students score an average of 2 or higher on SLO 1 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 4305 will work in teams to gather, evaluate and synthesize secondary research as a milestone in their comprehensive PR campaign proposal. Target: Teams score an average of 3 or higher on SLO 1 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p>
<p>2. Students will be able to develop goal-oriented PR approaches that align with organizational objectives and address stakeholder needs through the RPIE process of Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. (Strategic thinking & planning)</p>	<p>Students in PRLS 2305 will work in teams to develop a small-scale PR plan for a hypothetical client using the RPIE process. Target: Students score an average of 2 or higher on SLO 2 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 4305 will work in teams to develop a comprehensive campaign proposal for an external service-learning client using the RPIE process. Target: Teams score an average of 3.25 or higher on SLO 2 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p>
<p>3. Students will be able to create clear, compelling and audience-appropriate written communication across various PR formats and platforms. (Writing skills)</p>	<p>Students in PRLS 3305 will work in teams to produce media kit materials in appropriate written formats for hypothetical scenarios. Target: Teams score an average of 2 or higher on SLO 3 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 3310 will produce at least one news release and one feature story based on real-world scenarios in PR formats appropriate for the platform. Target: Students score an average of 2.5 or higher on SLO 3 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 4305 will work in teams to write a comprehensive campaign proposal for an external service-learning client. Target: Teams score an average of 3.25 or higher on SLO 3 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p>
<p>4. Students will be able to conceive, design and produce innovative content that engages audiences while achieving objectives. (Creative content development)</p>	<p>Students in PRLS 3305 will work in teams to design media kit materials and mock news conferences that engage target audiences while supporting campaign objectives. Target: Teams score an average of 2 or higher on SLO 4 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 4308 will work in teams to create social media content and propose a social media campaign plan that demonstrate innovative approaches. Target: Teams score an</p>

	<p>average of 3 or higher on SLO 4 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 4305 will work in teams to create innovative tactics plans with actionable deliverables for an external service-learning client. Target: Teams score an average of 3.25 or higher on SLO 4 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p>
<p>5. Students will be able to consistently apply professional writing conventions, industry standards and organizational style requirements (AP/APA style). (Style guide & formatting standards)</p>	<p>Students in PRLS 3305 will work in teams to learn how to apply AP Style and industry standards in the development of a media kit. Target: Teams score an average of 2 or higher on SLO 5 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 3310 will demonstrate consistent application of AP style, grammar, punctuation and formatting for news releases and feature stories. Target: Students score an average of 3 or higher on SLO 5 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p> <p>Students in PRLS 4305 will work in teams to ensure the final campaign proposals apply the client’s style guide and professional formatting standards. Target: Teams score an average of 3.5 or higher on SLO 5 of the PR program assessment rubric.</p>

6. Data Collection and Review

Compiled data will be given to the Program Coordinator by 5 p.m. two days after grades are due each Fall and Spring semester. See the following grid for who is responsible for gathering data.

Intended outcomes or objectives	How data is collected	Responsible party
<p>Students will be able to gather, evaluate and synthesize information from primary and secondary sources to inform decision-making (SLO 1 – Research & analysis).</p>	PRLS 2305 Quizzes and applied assignments	Faculty member teaching PRLS 2305
	PRLS 4305 Secondary research milestone	Faculty member teaching PRLS 4305
<p>Students will be able to develop goal-oriented PR approaches that align with organizational objectives and address stakeholder needs through the RPIE process (SLO 2 – Strategic thinking & planning).</p>	PRLS 2305 Small-scale PR plans	Faculty member teaching PRLS 2305
	PRLS 4305 Campaign proposals	Faculty member teaching PRLS 4305
<p>Students will be able to create clear, compelling and audience-appropriate written communication across</p>	PRLS 3305 Media kit materials	Faculty member teaching PRLS 3305
	PRLS 3310 News releases, feature	Faculty member teaching PRLS 3310

various PR formats and platforms (SLO 3 – Writing skills)	stories PRLS 4305 Campaign proposals	Faculty member teaching PRLS 4305
Students will be able to conceive, design and produce innovative content that engages audiences while achieving objectives. (SLO 4 – Creative content development)	PRLS 3305 Media kit materials, mock news conferences PRLS 4308 Social media content and campaign plans PRLS 4305 Tactic plans with actionable deliverables	Faculty member teaching PRLS 3305 Faculty member teaching PRLS 4308 Faculty member teaching PRLS 4305
Students will be able to consistently apply professional writing conventions, industry standards and organizational style requirements (AP/APA style). (SLO - 5 Style guide & formatting standards)	PRLS 3305 Media kits PRLS 3310 News releases, feature stories PRLS 4305 Campaign proposals	Faculty member teaching PRLS 3305 Faculty member teaching PRLS 3310 Faculty member teaching PRLS 4305

7. Participation in Assessment Process

The PR Program Coordinator will work with full-time, permanent faculty members to ensure measurements are completed and will analyze all available data. The coordinator will then share data with the appropriate parties.

8. Data Analysis

- How will the data and findings be shared with faculty?

The Department Chair will distribute the results to the Department Curriculum and Assessment Committee (members from the previous academic year) and charge the committee to discuss possible curricular and/or pedagogical changes.

- Who was involved in analyzing the results?

The Department Chair collects Curriculum and Assessment Committee feedback and shares recommendations with all departmental faculty members for discussion and implementation.

- How are results aligned to outcomes and benchmarks?

In reviewing the results on an annual basis, the PR program faculty will note any discrepancies between the year’s outcomes and the established benchmarks, identifying when adjustments should be made in the benchmarks versus when they should be made in the curriculum and/or the way the curriculum is taught.

Benchmarks on the PR program assessment rubric are set to reflect minimum proficiency expectations for upper-division majors and may be adjusted when two consecutive cycles of results substantially (+/- 5%) exceed or fail to meet targets.

9. Plan for Using Assessment Results to Improve Program

Full-time faculty members will meet annually each May to review results and make adjustments. Alumni feedback on preparedness for research, strategic planning, writing, content development and professional standards will be used as an indirect measure of SLOs 1-5 and will be reviewed alongside direct measures each May.

When results fall short of benchmarks for two consecutive cycles, faculty will determine whether to adjust benchmarks, modify assignments, or revise course outcomes.

10. What are the plans to evaluate students' post-graduate success? The PR Program Coordinator will seek feedback at least once a semester from an alum employed in PR and make recommendations to the faculty annually in May as part of the assessment review process.

11. What are the plans to evaluate teaching effectiveness? Multi-faceted feedback based on peer reviews, student evaluations, and assessment performance.

12. Appendices-Required. Curriculum Maps by Program, Assessment Tools (examples: Rubrics, Surveys, Tests, etc.), any other important materials/documentation

13. Submit Assessment Plan Send completed form electronically to assessment@uca.edu