

# Become a Chartered PR Practitioner

A guide to chartered status



PROFESSIONAL  
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# Contents

What is 'chartered status' .....	3
Why get chartered? .....	3
Are you ready to apply for chartered status? .....	4
How to apply .....	5
How to prepare .....	5
Chartership Assessment .....	6
On the day of the Assessment .....	7
- The Assessors .....	7
- Conflicts of interest .....	7
- Marking .....	8
- Assessment and feedback .....	8
- Withdrawal .....	9
- Peer review of CPD plans .....	9
- Chartership Award .....	9
- Inability to attend .....	9
Assessed Skills, Competences & Background Competences .....	10
- Ethics .....	10
- Strategy .....	11
- Leadership .....	11
- Understanding communication models, theories and the history of the PR profession .....	12
- Managing relationships .....	13
- Managing issues and crisis communications .....	13
Guidance notes from Assessors .....	14
- Grounding in practice .....	14
- Grounding in theory .....	14
- Preparation .....	14
- The assessment pack is only the beginning .....	14
- Ethics .....	14
- Strategy .....	15
- Leadership .....	15
Example assessment questions .....	16

## What is 'chartered status'?

Public Relations makes organisations more resilient and effective. It builds and sustains relationships and reputations in an increasingly uncertain operating environment. It is a challenging and complex strategic management discipline, demanding a high degree of intelligence and professional judgement.

Professional judgement – the application of knowledge, skills, experience and ethics – is a resource highly valued by employers and clients. It is the difference between getting it right and getting it wrong, whether you are dealing with daily challenges or in a high pressure, crisis management situation.

Chartered PR Practitioners have been assessed for the quality of their professional judgement. They have demonstrated knowledge, skill, experience and ethical competence. They have made a commitment to maintaining their personal professional development to stay sharp and continually improve.

**The CIPR is the only organisation with a Royal Charter enabling us to assess and award Chartered PR Practitioner status.**

With over 70 years of promoting the highest levels of skill, knowledge, competence, standards of practice and professional conduct, we are committed to a future in which Chart.PR status is the minimum expected of a PR manager.

## Why get chartered?

We believe there is a huge difference between a dedicated professional who has made a commitment to a career in Public Relations and someone offering a similar service who lacks skill, knowledge, experience and ethical competence.

Employers and clients who take their reputation and relationships seriously want to work with trustworthy, proven professionals who can protect and enhance their organisation.

For employers and clients, chartered status is an assurance that you practice to the highest professional and ethical standards. It is proof of your capability to make good professional judgements. It means you have been assessed rigorously and to high standards by the only Chartered professional body in public relations. It is evidence of your commitment to continuing professional development and accountability to a Code of Conduct.

**For you, it means confidence and recognition.**

Greater value will be placed on your work and on your judgement. Organisations will understand the benefit of working with a Chartered PR Practitioner and you will be recognised as a leader who can shape the future in line with their objectives.

## Are you ready to apply for chartered status?

To apply, you need to be a member of the CIPR, at either MCIPR or FCIPR grade, and be able to provide evidence of a commitment to life-long learning.

However, not everyone who meets the threshold is ready to get chartered.

### Ideal candidate

You will have a deep understanding of the technical and managerial issues in public relations, such as measurement, leadership and strategy. You will have been working in public relations long enough to have acquired a range of experiences and skills. You may have deepened your knowledge through a qualification in PR or through self-directed study.

A vital personal attribute is self-reflection – the awareness to know your strengths and weaknesses as a professional. You need to consider if you have sufficient knowledge, skill and experience to do well in a rigorous, live group discussion in which you will have to provide relevant real life and theoretical examples.

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**Thought-provoking  
and well worth doing.  
I'd recommend it  
to any experienced  
practitioner ready to  
take the next step in  
their career.**

Kate Reynolds  
Chart.PR MCIPR

### Background and experience

Chartered PR Practitioners are drawn from a variety of backgrounds and work in a wide variety of PR contexts and disciplines, including as an independent practitioner. You may be managing people or projects, responsible for small or large budgets and you may or may not be reporting directly into the Board. You may be a specialist in an area such as public affairs, digital or internal communications. You may have worked in one industry exclusively or had a variety of roles in your career.

What matters is that you can reflect on your own experience and draw on the experience of others to satisfy the assessors that:

- You practice ethically (based on the CIPR Code of Conduct) and consider the wider consequences of your actions, not just doing whatever a client asks of you
- You think strategically, beyond the confines of an individual campaign, about what will best serve your organisation's or client's long-term interests and advise accordingly
- You demonstrate leadership, by showing your understanding of context and what can be achieved in different circumstances, identifying and resolving challenges effectively, collaborating with others and exercising your professional judgment appropriately

**Chartered PR Practitioner is the hallmark of a committed professional who wants a challenging career in public relations. If that describes you, you should consider applying today.**

## How to apply

**Dates of forthcoming assessments are regularly updated on the CIPR website. You can attend any of the advertised sessions.**

**You need to register for your preferred assessment date online and pay the assessment fee. Payment can be made online, by invoice or credit/debit card.**

Self-employed CIPR Members putting themselves forward for a Chartership Assessment can claim the assessment fee as a tax-deductible expense.

If you have not completed CIPR CPD, you will be required to provide evidence of life-long learning, as well as a copy of your CV so that we can gauge experience. Documents such as copy of certificate, record of completing CPD with a different professional body or proof of attending training can be emailed to the [Membership Team](#). The registration also gives you the chance to let the organisers or assessors know if you've any special requirements they need to consider. If you would like to discuss any special requirements in detail, please email the Membership Team - [membership@cipr.co.uk](mailto:membership@cipr.co.uk).

Apply online at [www.cipr.co.uk/chartered](http://www.cipr.co.uk/chartered)

## How to prepare

The assessment criteria are drawn from the 'Global Body of Knowledge' developed by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management in 2015. (Please see the 'Assessed Skills & Competences and Background Competences' on page 10).

### 1 Benchmark yourself against the Background Competences

The assessment focuses on leadership, strategy and ethics, but you should have a good level of knowledge and skill across the Background Competences on page 12. These areas are not directly tested in the assessment, but if you appear to have significant areas of weakness in any of them, you may not be able to become chartered.

### 2 Prepare a CPD plan

You need to prepare a CPD plan for the two coming years. Address the areas where you want to improve and which activities you'll take on to best help your development (reading, mentoring, training, shadowing someone else, and so on). You'll need to have your plan ready to share on the day of the assessment.

### 3 Prepare your remarks

Around two weeks before your assessment day, you'll be sent a set of questions and links to case studies, articles and other sources. Please bear in mind that these case studies are intended to get the discussion going on the assessment day. It is not a good idea to over prepare on the questions; rather, use them as a starting point for reflecting on your own practice. On the day of the assessment, and during each of the assessment sessions, discussions will be equally divided between these materials and your personal experiences and perspectives.

## Chartership Assessment

The Chartership Assessment is a full day that focuses on three main 'Assessed Competences' – Ethics, Strategy and Leadership – and a peer review of CPD plans.

Prior to the assessment, you will be asked to provide photographic proof of identification. This can be a scanned/photo of your passport or drivers license. Once identification has been verified, this data will be deleted.

At the start of the day, you'll be asked to introduce yourself briefly to the assessors and other candidates. After introductions, you'll be placed in a group of around four candidates and one or two assessors. You'll be with this group throughout the day.

### Group discussions

Each session lasts around an hour and focuses on one of the three assessed competences – ethics, strategy and leadership. You can bring your preparation notes with you if you find this helpful, but it is not essential.

Discussions will be led by the assessor, who will invite each of the candidates to talk about their own experience and reflections on professionalism relevant to the chosen subject.

Other candidates are encouraged to engage constructively, such as questioning the candidate, contributing to discussions and making relevant suggestions.

The assessor will be there to keep the discussion focused, ask for clarification and invite candidates to respond to particular points.

You'll find yourself with candidates from a variety of backgrounds, different experience and sector expertise. Having more years of experience doesn't mean you're more likely to become chartered: in the same way that having fewer years doesn't necessarily put you at a disadvantage.

### What the assessors are looking for

The assessors are looking for your ability to draw on whatever experience you have, relate it to the issues under discussion and to talk in an informed way about things of which you don't have direct experience. Everything in the assessment process is designed to give you the opportunity to answer the question, explicitly or implicitly, **'What would you do?'**

The assessors want to get a strong sense of how you would conduct yourself in different situations: how you would respond to certain challenges and how you would analyse problems and develop solutions. If they have a good sense of what you would do, they can decide whether you can proceed or not. If you don't give them this sense, they won't allow you to proceed.

It's important that you take time to speak during the assessment. If you can't clearly articulate what you would do in a given situation and why you would do it, the assessor won't allow you to proceed. Likewise, if you give generic answers about 'good practice' rather than saying what you've done or would do in similar situations, the assessors won't let you proceed.

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**The Assessment Day was a rigorous test of PR skills and knowledge, but I really did enjoy it.**

Tim Walsh  
Chart.PR MCIPR



## On the day of the assessment

### Proof of identification on arrival

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Once identification has been verified, photographs will be deleted, and results released.

### The Assessors

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The assessors are all CIPR members who've been Chartered Practitioners for some time. They come from a range of backgrounds and specialisations and the CIPR doesn't seek to match assessors to the candidates they'll be working with on the assessment day.

On occasions, there might also be trainee assessors present during your discussions, shadowing the assessors for learning purposes. Other assessors might also be present at different times of the day to monitor how the assessment is going.

One assessor will be designated as the Lead Assessor, who will be responsible for the overall running of the day.

### Conflicts of interest

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The CIPR will always take steps to minimise the chances of candidates being assessed by an assessor who is known to them, but because the assessment day is a group activity, this won't always be possible.

Assessors who have some relationship with a candidate are obliged to declare this in advance of the assessment day.

All notified potential conflicts will be indicated to the candidates at the start of the day.

If you become aware of any additional potential conflict at any time during the day, you're obliged to declare it at once to your assessor.

**Examples of potential conflicts of interest include having an assessor:**

- who is a current or former employer, employee or colleague
- with whom you have or have had a personal relationship of some kind
- with whom you have or have had a dispute of some kind
- whom you have previously interviewed, assessed or judged in some capacity
- who has previously interviewed, assessed or judged you in some capacity

If during the assessment day you feel a potential conflict with an assessor makes it inadvisable for you to proceed, you can elect to withdraw and register for a later assessment day without paying an additional fee.

## Marking

### Positive marks will be awarded for:

- Active participation in discussions
- Active listening to other candidates and engaging constructively with what they say
- Evidence of thorough preparation
- Respectful communication with others
- Coherent, organised thinking
- Evidence of a reflective approach to professional practice and self-development
- Evidence of a satisfactory level of abilities in the three key competences
- Reference to concrete examples of your own practice during the discussion, as well as to the practice of others where appropriate

### The assessors will mark you down for:

- Not participating actively in discussions
- Not listening to or engaging constructively with points other candidates make
- Showing evidence of not preparing for the discussions
- Attempting to dominate discussions or treating others with disrespect
- Failing to show sufficient awareness of ethical dilemmas and how to approach them
- Failing to show sufficient evidence of reflective practice
- Failing to show evidence of a satisfactory level of ability in the three key competences
- Taking calls, checking emails or fiddling with hand-held devices

## Assessment and feedback

### As the group discussion proceeds, the assessor will rate you as:

- Clear proceed
- Borderline
- Cannot proceed

### Cannot proceed

If you receive a single 'cannot proceed' in any assessment area, you won't be able to become chartered.

You'll be informed of this after the peer review of CPD plans. You'll be told the outcomes of each assessment, but you won't be given any detailed feedback on the day. The CIPR will send you written feedback as soon as possible after the assessment day, focusing on what you need to do to proceed in the future. The decision of the assessors on the day is final.

### Borderline

If you receive three 'borderline' assessments, likewise, you won't be able to proceed.

If you receive two 'borderline' assessments, your case will be deliberated by the assessors, who will decide whether you can proceed or not. This decision will be made by a majority vote of the three assessors who have met you.

### Further assessment

If you don't proceed after your first assessment, you'll be allowed to attend one further Chartership Assessment without paying the assessment fee again, as long as you attend within a year of the initial assessment.

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**The Assessors did a great job of probing for answers and ensuring that everyone had a chance to input.**

Gill Stephenson  
Chart.PR MCIPR



## Withdrawal

During the assessment day, you might feel for one reason or another that you've not presented yourself as you intended and that you'd like to withdraw from the assessment.

The conclusion of the assessed parts of the day (the end of the third assessment session) is the deadline for withdrawal. You're not allowed to seek informal guidance as to whether you've been assessed as able to proceed or not before withdrawing.

If you withdraw up to this point, you may register for a later assessment day without paying an additional fee. You may exercise this right only once. If you withdraw, you won't receive any feedback from the assessors.

## Peer review of CPD plans

Your CPD plan is not formally assessed, but if you don't bring one to the assessment day or don't peer-review it with other candidates, you cannot proceed.

You'll share your CPD plans with others in your group, discuss the development areas you wish to focus on, and offer suggestions to each other about useful learning materials and opportunities.

## Chartership award

If you're assessed as able to proceed, you'll become chartered right away and your certificate will be available to download from your CIPR account at the end of the day.

We take a group photograph of the newly-chartered practitioners and publicise their names on social media and in the news area of the CIPR website. If you do not wish to be included in these announcements, please make the assessors aware of this during the day.

Once you have been awarded chartered status, you'll be required to continue your membership and complete CIPR CPD annually to maintain your accreditation.

## Inability to attend

**If you're unable to attend the assessment date you've registered for, you need to be aware of the following:**

- 1 Chartership assessment fees are non-refundable.
- 2 The CIPR recognises that, sometimes, unforeseen events can prevent you from attending the assessment. In such cases, we'll allow you to defer to the next available date within four months of the original assessment date. You'll need to inform the CIPR as soon as possible if you're unable to attend.
- 3 If you request a second deferral, you will need to pay a second assessment fee.
- 4 No refunds will be made to candidates who begin an assessment day but withdraw before completing it.
- 5 If you arrive at the assessment day late, the Lead Assessor can admit you at their discretion, or might allow you to defer to a later assessment day without additional charge.

## Assessed Skills & Competences and Background Competences

Candidates will be assessed according to six general skills and three key categories.

### General skills:

- Mastery of language in oral communication
- Sensitive interpersonal communication and emotional intelligence
- High-level public speaking and presentation
- Critical listening
- Contextual awareness
- Problem-solving, critical thinking and adaptability

### Key assessment categories:

- Ethics
- Strategy
- Leadership

### 1 Ethics

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#### a Ethical behaviour

You'll be asked to examine and explain commonly accepted standards of professional behaviour, to recognise ethical dilemmas, identify ethical solutions, and demonstrate ethical conduct.

#### b Ethical competence

You need to display a detailed knowledge and understanding of the CIPR Code of Conduct and apply this to ethical dilemmas.

You should also show the ability to guide others through ethical dilemmas in the terms of the CIPR Code.

#### c Legal and privacy issues

You should understand and articulate the conditions for libel, slander, defamation and the relevant defences, as well as understand the impact of digital records on the status of public and private individuals and organisations.

You'll need to show an understanding of the prevailing laws regarding privacy, identity protection and digital record keeping. You'll also need to advise on the strategic adoption and effective use of technology for listening to, communicating with, and engaging priority audiences.

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**Jot down your thoughts on the competencies and think of examples to draw on to demonstrate your understanding of how each applies.**

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Lindsey Collumbell  
Chart.PR FCIPR

## 2 Strategy

### a Research and analytical skills

You must show how you use a variety of tools for gathering information on your employer or clients and their relevant industries and issues.

Similarly, you must show how you continuously analyse the business environment, including your employer, clients, stakeholders, employees and suppliers.

You'll need to show how you process and filter large amounts of data in order to extract the relevant information and key insights for decision-making, and that you can identify when and how PR activity can support your employer's or clients' objectives.

### b Strategic thinking and management

You must show you can synthesise relevant information to establish what is needed to position your employer or client in its market or environment, particularly regarding changing business, political or cultural climates.

### c Planning

You must show you can set goals and objectives based on your research and be able to distinguish goals, objectives, strategies and tactics.

You should also distinguish organisational or operational goals and strategies from those of communications.

You must show how you align project goals with organisational missions and goals, and identify specific PR outcomes.

Budgets and strategic directions for communications should be established in relation to organisational goals, as well as communication metrics to evaluate success.

### d Evaluation and measurement

You need to articulate how goals and objectives were met, and the extent to which the results or outcomes of PR programmes support the organizational goals.

You then need to show how these evaluation results can be used for future planning.

### e Counsel to management

You should illustrate the importance of providing counsel to the management or client regarding risks, crises and other issues, looking beyond the current organisational mindset to explore solutions.

You should consider and accommodate all views on an issue or crisis, factoring these views into your communication strategy.

### 3 Leadership

#### a Values and character

You need to show that you understand the role that PR plays at the strategic level, that you provide advice and counsel to management and that you shape the organisation's values and character.

#### b Business literacy and resource management

You need to understand how your employer or client generates revenue and how operations are conducted to identify relevant business drivers. You should illustrate how the PR function contributes to an organisation's commercial success and its 'licence to function'. Consider all human, financial and organisational resources, and prepare, control and justify budgets for organisations, clients or agencies, departments and programmes.

#### c Diversity

While identifying and respecting the widest possible differences in a target audience, you should research and address the cultural preferences and needs, as well as communication barriers in that audience.

From here, develop culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies and tactics with inclusivity in mind at all times.

#### d Problem solving and decision making

You should approach issues with sound reasoning and logic, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information, and always being aware of opportunities for resolution.

This will involve making well-informed, objective decisions in a timely manner, all the while assessing the implications of your decisions.

#### e Leadership skills

You should show that you can influence others to achieve desired goals, motivate and inspire, build coalitions and communicate visions. Ideally, you'll be able to demonstrate influence in organisational changes in policy, procedures, staffing and structure where appropriate.

#### Background competences

As well as the central areas for assessment listed above, your successful application for chartership will also require you to show the assessors that you have a reasonable level of knowledge and skills in the following 'background' competences.

These areas are not directly tested in the assessment, but if you appear to have significant areas of weakness, you may not be able to become chartered.

#### These background competences are:

- Understanding communication models, theories and the history of the PR profession
- Managing relationships
- Managing issues and crisis communications

#### 4 Understanding communication models, theories and the history of the PR profession

##### a PR communication models and theories

You'll need to demonstrate familiarity with PR and social science theories and any research that guides planning, prioritising audiences, developing messages, selecting spokespersons and establishing credibility and trust.

##### b Barriers to communication

You must understand how different audiences interpret messages and their messengers, the barriers that prevent changes to knowledge, attitude and behaviour, and how semantics, cultural norms, timing, context and related factors influence communication results. You'll also need to illustrate how greater transparency leads to greater trust.

##### c Knowledge of the field

This is the knowledge of what PR is and the differentiation of related concepts (for example publicity, advertising, marketing, propaganda, press agency, public affairs, lobbying, investor relations, social networking and branding). You'll need to identify transformations in the practice and major trends in the development of PR.

#### 5 Managing relationships

##### a Relationship building and engagement

You'll need to define consensus building strategies and techniques to engage key stakeholders in decision-making and allow the stakeholders the opportunity to express opinions.

You should recognise the need for affected parties and stakeholders to find mutually acceptable solutions, and for the use of persuasion, negotiation and coalition building.

##### b Reputation management

You should understand the need for maintaining individual and organisational credibility with and among key constituents, and recognize the value of reputation, image, public trust and corporate social responsibility.

##### c Internal stakeholders

You should understand the importance of internal relationships to the PR function. You should also understand the importance of organisational culture and the communication of key messages through the appropriate channels using mediated and non-mediated channels of communication for effective engagement, prioritising internal influencers.

##### d Media relations

You need to understand the definitions, strengths, weaknesses and needs of different media, and the relationships between PR professionals, journalists and media organisations.

You should show how to build effective relationships with the media based on mutual respect and trust.

You should also show how you analyse current events and trends for both opportunities and threats, and identify appropriate controlled and uncontrolled media channels and key influencers.

##### e Networks

You'll need to illustrate your understanding of how to establish and enhance relationships with stakeholders (for example electronic communications, special events, face-to-face communication, networking, social networking, word-of-mouth, and third-party communication). You should also recognize the interconnectedness of various stakeholders, as well as considering broader or global relationships.

## 6 Managing issues and crisis communications

### a Issues and risk management

You should show how you identify potential or emerging issues that might influence or affect the organisation, as well as the potential risks to the organisation, and how you analyse the probability and potential impact of risk.

You should show how you would design, lead and deploy responses to a crisis, and ensure that the organisation develops the appropriate legal, ethical, and reputational response plans.

### b Crisis management

You need to understand the roles and responsibilities of PR at the pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis phases, communicating the implications of each of these phases and their messaging needs.

You should be able to look beyond the current organisational mindset and explore various solutions.



## Guidance notes from Assessors

### 1 Grounding in practice

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- a Some candidates offer what the assessors call 'text book answers'. In one instance, the assessors said that listening to the candidate talk was like listening to someone reading aloud from a textbook.
- b Evidence of reading, discussing and thinking about the topics under discussion is viewed very positively by the assessors, but what they want is to gain a sense of how you would apply what you've read or thought about in practice.

### 2 Grounding in theory

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- a The assessors have observed that some candidates would benefit from doing the CIPR Diploma before attempting Chart.PR.
- b Some candidates appear to be unfamiliar with the commonly-used models and approaches all Chartered Practitioners should know about, if only to explain why they were applying some different model themselves.

### 3 Preparation

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- a You need to spend time reading and reflecting on the materials in the assessment pack, as well as referring to other reading or learning you might have done. Making a note of your thoughts, ideas and questions is highly recommended.
- b If you wish, you can keep your notes with you and refer to them during your discussions with the assessors.

### 4 The assessment pack is only the beginning

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- a The purpose of the questions in the assessment pack is to ensure that all candidates have a common starting point for their discussions. The whole discussion, however, is not going to be about the material provided in the assessment pack or covered in the sample questions.
- b You must be able to discuss the issues presented in the materials in the context of your own work, experience and perspectives.

### 5 Ethics

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- a The assessors are looking for a clear sense of your moral compass and the approach you would take to unexpected ethical dilemmas as they arise in the future. They're not looking for 'the right answer', although they will be alert to inappropriate answers.
- b A good understanding of how the CIPR Code of Conduct applies to everyday professional activities is essential.

## 6 Strategy

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- a The assessors have commented that some candidates don't seem to have a strong grounding in strategic working. While they're able to discuss campaigns and tactics, they're not able to articulate how an organisation or team determines its longer-term purpose and objectives, what the role of a PR practitioner might be in this context and what they, as a Chartered Practitioner would be able to contribute.
- b The assessors are looking for evidence of an ability to research, plan, analyse and provide management advice.

## 7 Leadership

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- a Leadership is a quality that can be demonstrated in different contexts and at different levels. It doesn't necessarily require you to be in a management or director position, although that would likely give you an advantage.
- b If you've no formal role in leading others, you can still satisfy the assessors that, for example, you're able to consider and deal with diversity issues and tackle complex problem-solving in ways that support the needs of a business or other organisation.

## Example Assessment Questions

### ETHICS

<http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/slave-caught-seafood-isnt-healthy/>

[http://www.cipr.co.uk/sites/default/files/Environmental\\_Sustainability\\_Guidelines\\_0.pdf](http://www.cipr.co.uk/sites/default/files/Environmental_Sustainability_Guidelines_0.pdf)

- 1 There are some obvious recommendations that you might make to Chicken of the Sea and its parent company, Thai Union. But how would you establish a relationship based on trust with them? If you were appointed to work for either company (in-house or as a freelancer/consultancy) how would that reflect on you or your consultancy?
- 2 Is Greenpeace whiter than white in campaigning against Chicken of the Sea? Is 'Slave-caught seafood' fair? Are they being opportunistic in an effort to raise their profile and raise funds? Could they be accused of greenwashing?
- 3 The CIPR best practice guide talks about 'proof points'. Can you give examples from your experience? Can you suggest which of these proof points could apply to Chicken of the Sea or another organisation in the public domain?

### STRATEGY

Turner, M 2015. 'Communications micro-strategies'.

In: Waddington, S Ed. *Chartered Public Relations*. London: CIPR/Kogan Page, pp 141-155

- 1 Is the tetrahedron a useful concept? Are the four elements of the tetrahedron a comprehensive summary of the elements of a strategic plan? How does it relate to other strategic planning models?

- 2 'Public Relations deals with a much wider set of potential outcomes, encompassing not only selling, but reputation, policy formation, cultural change and almost all other forms of communication.' How do we address this challenge?

- 3 '... a strategic framework developed for PR can provide leadership for integrated campaigns...' Can you support this assertion? Are there examples from your own experience that provide evidence for that support?

### LEADERSHIP

The four Ps of public relations leadership

<http://www.prconversations.com/2014/10/the-four-ps-of-public-relations-leadership>

- 1 Why is it that PR's role to serve society is sometimes seen 'as being in conflict with the interests of the organisations that we work for...'? How can we address this?
- 2 'Organisations meet their objectives through people.' How do you contribute to the achievement of this maxim?
- 3 Do you agree with Anne Gregory's assertion that public relations leadership can be demonstrated at any level within an organization? Can you give examples from your own experience or the observation of others?