



## **THE AALEP ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

Accreditation is the professional registration awarded to public policy advocacy and communication management practitioners who possess those special qualities that characterise a true professional. It is the highest level of the AALEP Registration System, which is based on academic qualifications and experience. It measures the scope and depth of a candidate's knowledge as well as his/her professional orientation as a prerequisite for accreditation and ultimate professional recognition.

AALEP's accreditation certification recognizes practitioners who have demonstrated broad knowledge, experience and professional judgement in the field. It seeks to improve public policy advocacy and communication management practice. The designation **APPA (Accredited in Public Policy Advocacy)** signifies a high professional level of experience and competence.

Because accreditation is a level of registration within AALEP, it is not possible to take the assessment or use the designation **APPA** without being first registered with AALEP.

An individual who is accredited may use the designation **APPA** in conjunction with his or her name. **APPA is an acronym for "Accredited in Public Policy Advocacy"**. This identification can be used only with the name of the member, who is accredited, not with the name of the business or organisation. Accreditation can be suspended or revoked upon censure or suspension for violation of AALEP's Code of Ethics & Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Policy Advocacy. Accreditation will be revoked automatically upon expulsion of a member. After a hearing, accreditation may also be suspended or revoked for violation of the rules governing the use of accreditation as set forth in the AALEP Code. Accreditation is also forfeited if the AALEP membership fees are not paid annually. The **APPA** status cannot be reinstated and written and oral assessments will have to be repeated after a period of three years.

An Accreditation Committee of seven to nine individuals will oversee the programme. The AALEP Board will appoint the Accreditation Committee from the registered accredited members (four to six) as well as experts in other recognised professional fields (two) and a recognised academic for the Public Policy Advocacy and Communication management field. A Chairman will be elected by the Accreditation Committee and will serve as an ex-officio member of the AALEP Board. The Accreditation Committee will meet three times a year to set policies, review the process and formulate new assessment questions and profiles. Day-to-day operations are administered by the AALEP Secretariat. The Accreditation process including the screening processes as well as candidates' scores are confidential. Deliberations of the Accreditation Committee involving results are held in closed session.

## **Who can Apply ?**

A practitioner who is eligible for accreditation must have at least 5 years experience in the professional practice of public policy advocacy and communication management or in the teaching of this field at an accredited education institution. Candidates must have accrued a minimum 70 points on the AALEP registration system. This system assesses a candidate's academic records as well as work experience e.g. Formal further education, completion of formal qualifications; attendance at identified seminars, workshops, conferences; specific courses; mentoring and coaching; participation in industry and professional bodies; contributions to the body of knowledge through presentations, publications of articles etc.

## **Competency Matrix**

- Research, plan, implement and evaluate advocacy and communication programmes and projects;
- Apply public policy advocacy/communication theories, models and practices;
- Apply public policy advocacy/communication strategies to business goals and objectives;
- Manage issues and crisis communication;
- Uphold professional standards and practice ethical behaviour;
- Demonstrate communication skills (written and oral presentation, negotiation etc.);
- Effectively manage organizational resources (human, financial, technological etc.).

The purpose of the accreditation programme is to test the candidate's actual knowledge of public policy advocacy and communication management on a strategic level as well as the application of strategic knowledge in a practical situation, i.e. his or her working knowledge of the profession.

## **The process**

### **Step 1: Application by Potential Candidate**

Application forms for accreditation can be forwarded to the candidate. The application form together with a detailed CV and initial fee must be forwarded to AALEP's accreditation administrator. The forms are submitted to the Registration Committee and the registration status of the applicant will be determined. The applicant will be notified if the application is successful and will receive the necessary accreditation documentation. If an applicant does not have the required points, career guidance will be given on how to achieve the necessary points.

### **Step 2 : Orientation Session**

A compulsory orientation session will be held twice a year in March and July to prepare candidates for the accreditation assessment sessions. Candidates will also have a briefing session on the assessment format. Candidates will receive a study guide from AALEP to assist them for the preparation of the portfolio of evidence and the assessment sessions (two examinations). During the session guidance will be given on topics such as corporate governance, strategic communication strategies, the value of public policy advocacy and ethics will be covered. Orientation sessions will be held initially in Brussels.

### **Step 3: Verification Process and Portfolio of Evidence**

The verification process will focus on assessing the candidate's competencies based on the skills matrix and on the portfolio of evidence the candidate will bring with him/her. An interview (if required) will also be held with the manager of the candidate to verify the person's skills and portfolio where possible, as well as to determine areas of development.

### **Step 4: Accreditation Committee Assessment**

The assessments are divided into two written assessments.

#### **Written Assessments**

##### **Session One: Practical assessment**

###### **Article**

The candidate selects a topic as indicated in the study guide and submits a written document of not more than ten pages - spacing letter size not smaller than 11 point. The candidate must illustrate his/her understanding of the topic, the relevance of the topic to the public policy advocacy environment as well as the business environment.

##### **Session Two: Practical assessment**

This is a five-hour session where candidates will be given a corporate profile and are to compile public policy advocacy and communication strategies based on the profile.

###### **Oral Assessment**

If a candidate has successfully completed the written assessments, he/she is invited to an oral assessment within a month. The purpose of the oral assessment is to review the candidate's professional knowledge and orientation by way of a set of structured questions. The oral assessment tests aspects such as the candidate's long-term vision and in-depth understanding of the public policy advocacy and communication management profession, as well as an ability to think strategically and to interpret the Brussels scene and global trends. During the oral assessment, a candidate is expected to demonstrate an awareness of current affairs and their impact on the profession and his/her organisation. A candidate is expected to comment on his/her own public policy advocacy and communication management department or consultancy from an organisational and strategic perspective.

Finally, a candidate must demonstrate an understanding of professional ethics and how these affect the profession. The duration of the oral assessment will be between 45 and 60 minutes. Accreditation assessments take place in Brussels.

English is used at all stages of the accreditation process i.e. for the proposal document and presentation as well as for the oral assessment. Public Policy advocates, particularly at the accredited level should be competent in both written and verbal English.

Candidates who have failed either at the written or at the oral assessment level will receive a brief report with feedback and suggestions. Queries from candidates should be submitted in

writing. Candidates may apply for a supplementary assessment in the following session. No more than one repeat is granted and the candidate must utilise this option within one year.

Failure to comply with these requirements would result in the candidate having to re-apply and pay for the full accreditation fee. Supplementary assessments are also held in Brussels and travel expenses incurred will be the candidate's responsibility.

### **Cost of accreditation**

The full accreditation process will cost € 900 (excluding VAT). This is inclusive of the study guide, the orientation session, certification.

- Initial application and orientation session: € 100
- First Assessment phase (Portfolio of evidence and interview with manager (if required) and study guide: € 500
- Final Assessment phase (Written and Oral Assessments) € 300

The initial application fee is required at the beginning of the process; the second payment is on application for the portfolio of evidence submission and the final payment to be paid before the assessment sessions take place. These costs also include the annual registration fee at the APPA level for the first calendar year of accreditation. Travel costs outside the designated areas are for the candidate's account.

### **How to apply ?**

A candidate may obtain an application form from the AALEP Secretariat ([aalep@numericable.be](mailto:aalep@numericable.be)). Completed forms must be sent to the AALEP Secretariat. Candidates can discuss eligibility, content and format or any other matters pertaining to the accreditation process with the AALEP Secretariat.