

Where are we on accreditation maintenance?

By Janet Bliss APR

A good question – especially since Sept. 1 2001 is just around the corner, and that's the date when participation in the CPRS Maintenance of Accreditation Program was to become mandatory for members who have earned the APR designation.

Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. Officially, the mandatory maintenance program has neither been dropped nor deferred – but technically, its future appears to be in doubt since the National Board dropped mandatory accreditation from its agenda last year.

On behalf of the Calgary CPRS Accreditation Committee, I placed a few calls to National Office and wrote a few e-mails to senior National members to check on the status of mandatory maintenance. Admittedly, this was not a comprehensive or official survey, but the response was discouraging in revealing that the future of the program has not yet been decided.

It appears to boil down to this: if mandatory accreditation is no longer a policy of National, what is the driver behind mandatory – or even voluntary – maintenance of accreditation?

This issue must be decided at the National level, and should no doubt be a topic of discussion at the upcoming Annual General Meeting in Whistler. National President-elect Tony Iavarone APR has confirmed that the Executive Committee recognizes the dilemma and is seeking input from the Accreditation Council. Of course, any possible changes will require consultation with local boards, accreditation chairs and the members at large.

But where does all this leave those CPRS Calgary members who have been either pursuing voluntary maintenance of accreditation or preparing a plan for earning points once the mandatory maintenance program comes into effect?

“Anyone who is accumulating and recording maintenance points is already benefiting from personal and professional growth as a public relations practitioner,” says Lorelei Piotto, APR, Chair of the CPRS Calgary Accreditation Committee. “Until we receive confirmation of how the program will continue and whether or not the mandatory component is still in effect, I recommend members with their APR continue to keep track of the points they have earned.”

Members who have questions about the Maintenance of Accreditation Program and how points are earned are welcome to contact Lorelei by e-mail at: lpio@chevron.com

Maintenance of Accreditation in a Nutshell

1. CPRS introduces a voluntary Maintenance of Accreditation Program in September 1996 to record qualifying activities of accredited members that will “demonstrate the accredited member’s continuing training and professional development as well as leadership in the discipline, thereby ensuring the APR designation retains its relevance and value in an every-changing world.”
2. Members participating in the voluntary program are required to earn a minimum of 15 units over five years in three categories: training, professional activities and community service. They are given the option of tracking maintenance activities retroactive to December 1993, with a first filing date of December 1998, or beginning in December 1996, with a first filing date of December 2001.
3. Implementation of a mandatory Maintenance of Accreditation Program is set for September 2001. Under that program, all accredited members must demonstrate continued development and leadership over a five-year period by earning a minimum of 15 units OR write the APR examination again.
4. In 2000, the National CPRS Board drops the policy of mandatory accreditation, raising questions about the accreditation maintenance program.

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