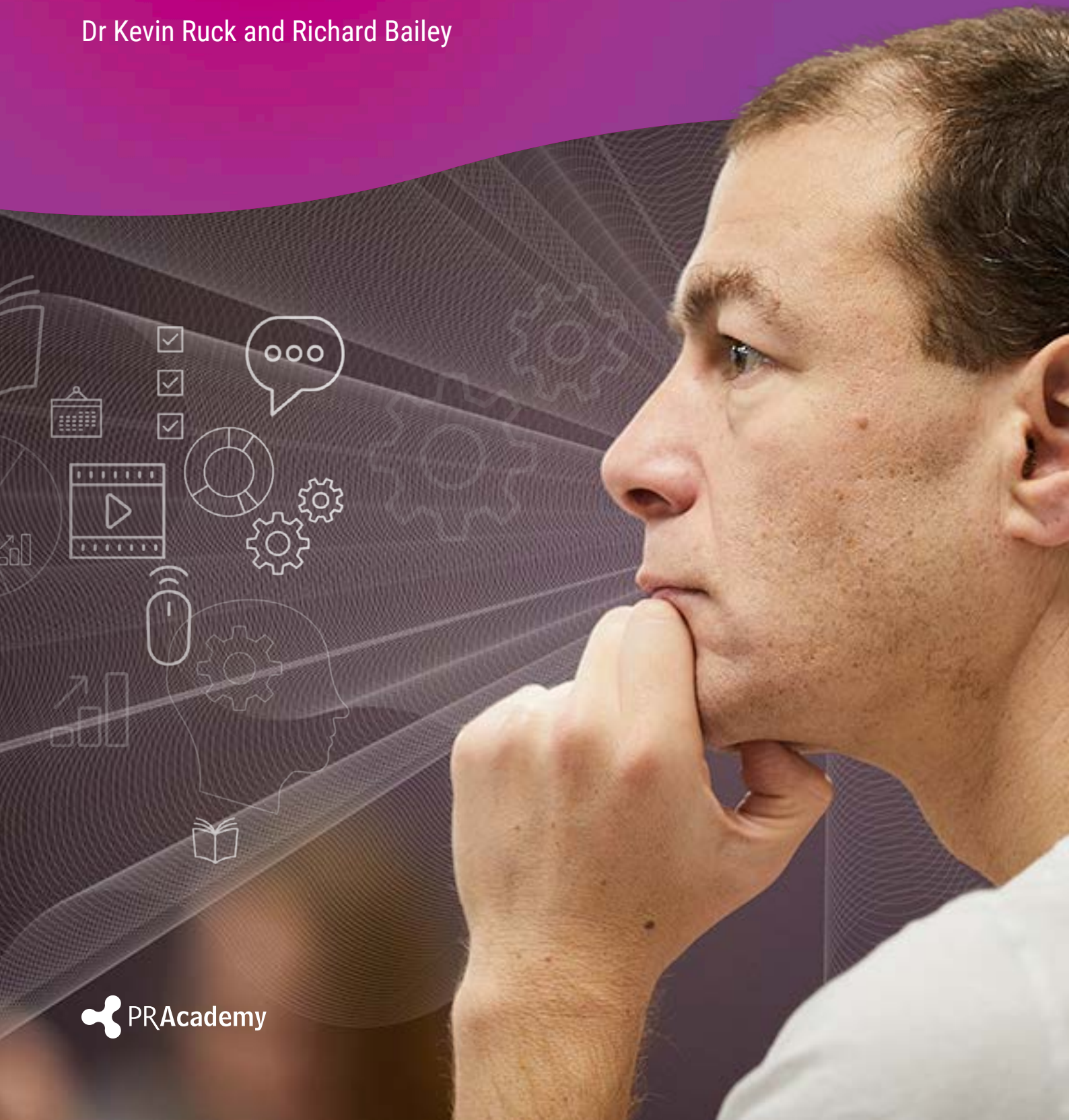


SPRING 2023

PR Education, Training and Accreditation

PR ACADEMY RESEARCH PROJECT

Dr Kevin Ruck and Richard Bailey





SUMMARY

Public relations is professionalising. As this report argues ‘an impressive level of professionalisation of public relations through qualifications has been achieved in the past twenty years. As a result, we believe that public relations can justifiably proclaim to be well on the path to becoming a qualified profession – where a significant number of practitioners (more than 50 percent) hold a professional qualification.’

Yet growth in public relations education is not evenly spread nor is its value universally recognised. Employers have not been quick to recognise public relations professional qualifications; there is scepticism about the value of Chartered Practitioner status; and single honours public relations undergraduate degrees are fast disappearing in the UK. This decline in public relations degrees stands in contrast with the growth in academic research and publications in this field over recent decades. There is now a well-established body of knowledge, but fewer degree courses to teach it on.

As we argue here, ‘despite the occasional dismissal of theory that is still expressed by some in our field, it is clear from our research that practitioners understand and appreciate the value of it when it is applied.’

The decline in BA degree courses noted in this report may be a rational response to the greater integration of public relations with marketing and other disciplines. But if that logic is followed, practitioners would seek membership of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), say, rather than the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) or the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA). So the professionalisation of public relations may not benefit the public relations professional bodies or even the public relations profession.



INTRODUCTION

This report is about PR education and accreditation in the UK.

It covers public relations training, chartership, professional qualifications, and degrees in the UK.

- **Training** is delivered on short courses and is often focused on skills and personal development. Attainment is not always assessed, though certificates of attendance may be offered.
- **Professional qualifications** are gained through a longer period of structured study and the completion of problem-solving assignments requiring the application of models and principles to practice.
- **Degrees** can be taught or research-based. Taught degrees are conventionally BA degrees offered primarily to school leavers and lasting three or four years; and MA/MSc degrees of one or two years duration offered to older students who have already achieved a BA award. Research degrees include Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).
- **Apprenticeships** are offered through employers though assessed by independent awarding bodies. They are workplace qualifications studied alongside work, and offer the advantage of no student debt.
- **Chartership** is awarded after several years of completing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) returns and having passed an assessment day.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Desk research on professional qualifications, degrees and training courses
- Interviews with twelve university PR lecturers
- Questionnaire completed by 237 practitioners who have undertaken recent training and/or qualifications

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents to the questionnaire represent a broad range of public relations experience.

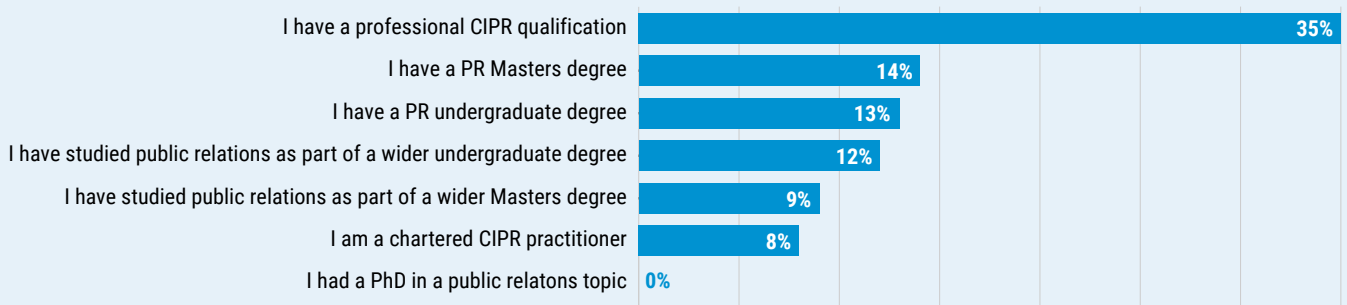
- More than ten years 43%
- Five to ten years 19%
- Two to four years 19%
- Two years or less 19%

As shown in **Figure 1**, the education level of survey respondents represents a wide range of qualifications. A total of 35 percent of respondents have a CIPR public relations qualification. A total of 25 percent of respondents have a public relations undergraduate degree or have studied public relations as part of a wider undergraduate degree.

Other qualifications held by respondents include the AMEC International Certificate in Measurement and Evaluation, a Master's in Business Administration, a PhD in Media Arts with a focus on internal communication, Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) qualifications, a journalism qualification, and a PR apprenticeship.

Almost half of the survey respondents (48 percent) have a broad public relations role and a quarter of the respondents specialise in internal communication (see **Figure 2**)

FIGURE 1: Education Levels of Survey Respondents



INTERVIEWS

The university lecturers interviewed have not been identified in the report to protect the confidentiality of the conversations. We would like to thank them for the time they gave to contribute to this project.

CAVEATS

We acknowledge that this is a 'big' topic and we have not covered every aspect of it in this report. There are many other points to be addressed and further research that could usefully be conducted. This is discussed in more detail in the future of education, training and accreditation section of the report.

The research itself is relatively small-scale. The results shown in the survey data analysis have a five percent margin of error and this should be borne in mind in any comparisons with other data or future data.

There may be some inaccuracies in the lists of current courses offered. This is a fluid situation with courses closing and new ones being developed all the time. If a course has been missed, we apologise.

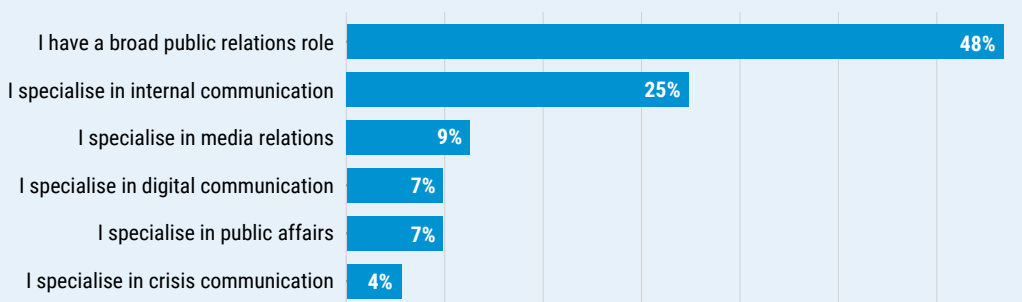


Dr. Kevin Ruck
CO-FOUNDER, PR ACADEMY



Richard Bailey
EDITOR OF PR PLACE INSIGHTS

FIGURE 2: Public Relations Roles for Survey Respondents





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PR EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION IN NUMBERS (2022)

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING, CHARTERSHIP AND CPD

CIPR, PRCA and AMEC professional qualification enrolments in 2022

Data provided by PRCA, CIPR and AMEC

1,006

CIPR and PRCA paid training courses completed in 2022

Data provided by PRCA and CIPR

5,527

CIPR charterships awarded in 2022

Data provided by CIPR

71

CIPR and PRCA record of practitioners who logged CPD for 2022

Data provided by PRCA and CIPR

2,378

HIGHER EDUCATION TRAINING

Undergraduate students studying a single honours public relations degree

Total students across years 1-3

250

Masters level students who registered for a public relations, strategic communication, or political communication degree in 2022

Data provided by 11 of 16 universities who responded to a request for student numbers

650

Note: it was not possible to identify the number of students studying public relations as a unit within a wider BA/BSc degree



THE RISE AND RISE OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Although there is no absolute record of the number of practitioners who have a professional qualification provided by an CIPR, PRCA or AMEC in the UK, a reasonable estimate is between 15-20,000.

This figure is based on previous research conducted into public relations education by Heather Yaxley in 2018, data from PRCA and CIPR, and data from PR Academy's database of students. Yaxley's review of her research was published as 'Professional Qualifications: Past, Present and Future' in CIPR's 'Platinum' book published as part of its 70th anniversary.

More than 1,000 practitioners registered for a professional qualification in 2022.

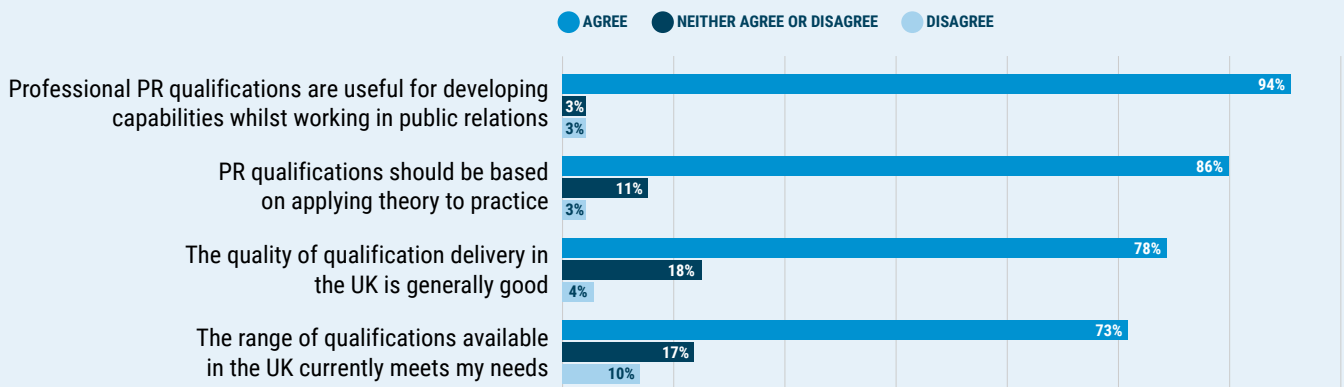
It is also worth highlighting that 45 percent of respondents in a 2019 CIPR survey said they held a professional qualification (Gregory, 2020, p.649).

Whatever the precise number, there is little doubt that a strong level of professionalisation of public relations through qualifications has been achieved in the past twenty years.

A total of 18 different professional qualifications are now awarded by CIPR, PRCA and AMEC. These include the CIPR Professional PR Diploma and specialist diplomas in crisis communication, public affairs, internal communication, digital communication, change communication, and integrated communication. The full list is provided at Appendix A.

In the survey conducted with practitioners as part of the research for this report, an overwhelming endorsement (94 percent) was found for the usefulness of professional qualifications for developing capabilities while working in public relations (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: Usefulness, range and quality of professional qualifications



There was also very strong support (86 percent) that qualifications should be based on applying theory to practice. This underlines the importance of public relations education as an applied, practical, field underpinned by scholarly knowledge and research. Despite the occasional dismissal of theory that is still expressed by some in our field, it is clear from our research that practitioners understand and appreciate the value of it when it is applied. It is worth noting that all CIPR qualifications were revised from 2016 onwards to incorporate assessment based on applying frameworks, principles, and models to a real case study organisation.

Respondents expressed a strong level of satisfaction with the quality of qualification delivery (78 percent). The range of qualifications available also met the needs of 73 percent of respondents. However, a small but important group of respondents (10 percent) said that qualifications did not meet their needs (see Figure 3).

In open comments about professional qualifications, many practitioners reported a very positive experience of their studies. A selection of comments is provided in Box 1 below.

BOX 1: COMMENTS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

"Currently enrolled in AMEC and have been very excited about the new knowledge gained."

"Very positive experience of the CIPR Diploma"

"The CIPR Professional Certificate course gave me a good grounding of PR theories, copywriting techniques, research ideas and evaluation metrics"

"Completed a Specialist Certificate in Internal Communication it was a great experience"

"It was a fantastic experience to undertake the Diploma in Crisis Communication because the subject was practically served"

"The course gave me a strong background in the theories behind PR"

"The Professional PR Diploma definitely grew my skill-set and also brought home much more the need to use models, planning tools (OASIS, AMEC) and especially the evaluation side of our work to reflect/amend future practice"

"I studied for the CIPR Internal Communications Diploma which was brilliant. Broken down really well and helps you put best practice into action"

"CIPR Internal Comms Diploma - brilliant course, has helped me massively in my role - equipping me with strategic understanding, knowledge on how to apply IC theory into practice and confidence that I know what I'm talking about"

"I did a PR Certificate and was impressed by the standard and delivery of the course - I found the theoretical elements a good way of getting fresh perspective on practical challenges at work"

"CIPR Specialist Diploma: Internal Communication - I work in IC but was surprised to find out how little I knew about the discipline before I studied for the Diploma. The training helped me to understand the many important aspects of IC theory and how we can integrate them into IC practice"

"CIPR Specialist Diploma: Internal Communication. The highest quality of training and learning support. I am better able to do my job, more confident, happier in my work and in life, keen to keep learning. I also got a new job paying £10k more than my current role."

"I completed the CIPR specialist diploma in internal communications in 2020. I found it to be really useful and opened my mind to lots of theory that I still reference today. What was even more useful was meeting other internal comms specialists from other organisations so we could share ideas, swap notes, and learn from each other, as well as the course leader."

“

In general, the data indicates that current professional diploma level qualifications are focused on the capabilities that practitioners are seeking to develop.



Respondents in our survey were asked to select capabilities that should be included in a professional diploma level qualification from a list provided (see Table 1).

All the options given are, to a greater and lesser extent, included in current professional diploma level qualifications. Some capabilities resonated more than others. For example, 'listening to employees and external stakeholders' and 'contemporary organisational leadership theory' were selected by less than 70 percent of respondents.

In general, the data indicates that current professional diploma level qualifications are focused on the capabilities that practitioners are seeking to develop.

Respondents were also asked to cite other capabilities that should be included that were not in the list provided. The following were suggested:

- Artificial intelligence and handling data analytics
- Behavioural science/communication
- Equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EED&I)
- Knowledge management
- Managing yourself and others in PR leadership
- Negotiation skills
- Project management
- Psychology of PR

TABLE 1: Capabilities that should be included in a professional diploma level qualification

Strategic planning including communication objective setting, measurement and evaluation	93%
Reputation issues and risk analysis	82%
Research methodologies and data analysis techniques	80%
Stakeholder identification, prioritisation and engagement	80%
Contemporary PR theory and models established through academic research	74%
Coaching and advising senior leaders	74%
Listening to employees and external stakeholders	66%
Contemporary organisational leadership theory	56%

These capabilities suggest that future reviews of professional diploma level qualifications could consider including more emphasis on how AI, data analytics, and the associated fields of knowledge management and project management are embedded into contemporary practice. It is worth noting that a revised version of the AMEC International Certificate in Measurement and Evaluation incorporates new perspectives on AI and data analytics from 2023 onwards.

The psychology of PR and EED&I are included in many course syllabi, although there is a case for making these more prominent.

An important suggestion is made about negotiation and management skills, although as we will discuss in a later section of this report, training is available for these personal development points.

Respondents in our survey who have studied (or are currently studying) a professional qualification were asked why they did this. The results shown in Table 2 indicate that 'enhancing skills' is the strongest reason for studying.

TABLE 2: Reasons why practitioners study a professional qualification

To enhance my skills	84%
To improve my career prospects	71%
Personal fulfilment	65%
To gain professional recognition	64%
To gain a competitive edge in the employment market place	53%
Financial bonus/salary increase	13%
Required by my employer/client or prospective client	7%



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*‘Enhancing skills’
is the strongest
reason for studying*

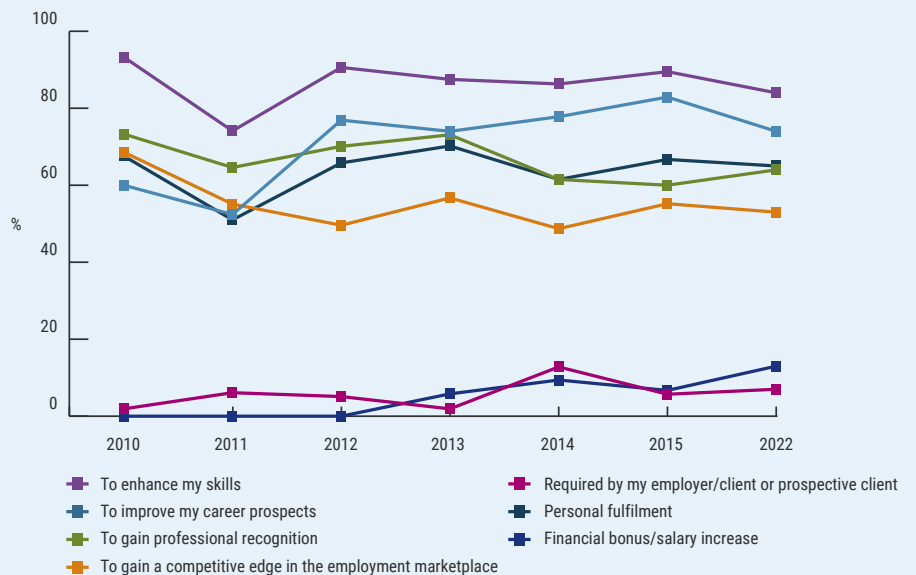


At PR Academy we have tracked this question since 2010 and there are no major changes to report during that time as Figure 4 illustrates. This should be viewed as a broad guide only as the margin of error in the data is around 5-6 percent. Nonetheless, the results indicate that ‘enhancing skills’ is a consistently highly reported factor and ‘financial bonus/salary increases’ is a consistently weak reason for studying.

Respondents in our survey were also asked if they hold a professional qualification, has this led to career progression/promotion. This is a question that PR Academy has tracked since 2013. The trend analysis is shown in Figure 5. Again, there are no major changes indicated during this period. There is a consistent report of between 74 and 85 percent that a professional qualification has led to a career progression combined with confidence that it will.

At the end of our survey, we asked practitioners for final thoughts on public relations education. Comments that were provided that are relevant to professional qualifications are shown in Box 2 on the opposite page.

FIGURE 4: Trend analysis of reasons why practitioners study a professional qualification (2010-2022)



BOX 2 GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

"PR education needs some PR work to popularize the qualifications"

"I think qualifications should be nationally recognised by employers more"

"I think it's important that employers start to recognise qualifications"

"CIPR qualifications gain you trust in the workplace"

"PR Education in the UK is at an advanced stage. The fast-paced growth in PR theory and practice has led to increase in respect and value for PR. Education and qualifications raise an individual's knowledge to serve skilfully and confidently. This in turn wins respect for the profession by business leaders."

"My qualification set me aside when applying for my current role"

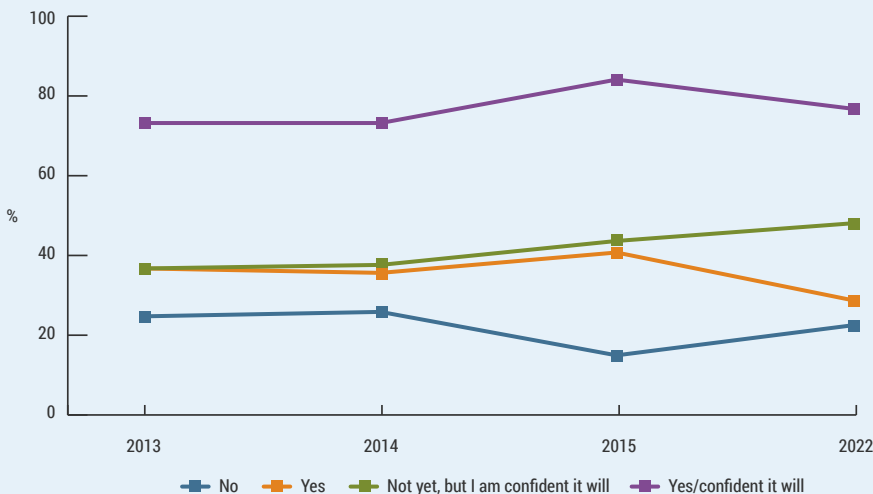
"I believe that the Chartered Institute for Public Relations and its qualifications have a positive impact on agencies and their work ethic (in the UK)"

"PR education has become much more accessible to those outside the South East/with commitments outside of work, thanks to more online. Only suggestion would be to make sure courses' content is still relevant to those working outside of the London/SE/FTSE100 PR world."

Three broad themes that emerge from these comments:



FIGURE 5: Professional qualifications and career progression/promotion (2013-2022)





THE RISE AND FALL OF UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE COURSES

NEW DEGREES AT NEW UNIVERSITIES

The story of public relations courses within UK higher education has a clear beginning, an impressive middle and, by conjecture, a predictable end point.

The rise matches the emergence of new universities and the rapid expansion of higher education in postwar, post-industrial Britain (Tony Blair's slogan before becoming prime minister in 1997 had been 'education, education, education' and he set the target of 50% of school leavers going into higher education, a target that has since been exceeded).

So the UK's first public relations degree course was a Master's degree offered at Stirling in Scotland in 1988 (the University of Stirling having been founded in 1967). Though started by Sam Black, this course came to be associated with Jacquie L'Etang and MSc courses are still offered at Stirling.

Soon after, BA courses were established at Bournemouth Polytechnic (now Bournemouth University) and Leeds Polytechnic (which became Leeds Metropolitan University and is now Leeds Beckett University).

These three pioneers were subsequently joined by many more post 1992 'new' universities as the vocational aspect of public relations education fitted the ethos of institutions that had recently been polytechnics and because there was no competition for these courses from the Russell Group of research universities.

TEACHING, RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

By the first decade of this century, public relations degree courses in the UK had reached their peak in terms of prestige and recruitment. The joint-author of this report, Richard Bailey, recalls teaching some 140 students a year across BA and HND courses at Leeds Metropolitan University. This meant that seven tutorial groups had to be staffed for each core module. Today, that number is two (itself a rise from just one a couple of years ago.)

Alongside this successful recruitment came a rise in UK research and publications. Where there had once been a distinction between research universities and teaching universities, in higher education all universities are measured on their research and on their teaching, key metrics that are reflected in their league table standings.

The publication in 1996 of *Critical Perspectives in Public Relations* by Jacquie L'Etang and Magda Pieszcka was a milestone text in critical public relations scholarship and a reminder that public relations degrees were moving beyond technical skills training.

At Bournemouth, Kevin Moloney's *Rethinking Public Relations*, first published in 2000, cast a sceptical eye on the relationship between public relations, media and democracy.

At Leeds Beckett, Ralph Tench and Liz Yeomans published the first edition of *Exploring Public Relations* in 2006, a book that has since become Europe's best selling public relations textbook and has run to five editions. A year before that, Professor Anne Gregory from the same university was president of the Institute of Public Relations when it gained its royal charter and became the CIPR, a move she had championed.

It's worth recalling that when public relations degrees started in the UK, the only available textbooks were either imported from the US or were 'how-to' guides by practitioners such as Frank Jefkins and Roger Haywood.

Alongside these publications, universities hosted academic conferences and started offering research degrees. Of those gaining doctorates at Leeds Beckett University, Lee Edwards has emerged as a leading critical scholar in succession to Jackie L'Etang and she now leads an MSc in Strategic Communications at the London School of Economics. Clea Bourne teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Other UK centres of public relations education and scholarship are or have been the universities of Cardiff, Chester, Greenwich, London College of Communication, Manchester Metropolitan, Queen Margaret (Edinburgh), Sheffield Hallam, Sunderland, Swansea and Ulster. There's now an MA offered at Newcastle University, a founder member of the Russell Group, and an MA in Corporate Communications, Marketing and Public Relations at Leeds University.

Appendix B lists all the undergraduate public relations degree courses currently available (January 2023) through the UCAS website.

GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION

The peaks and troughs of recruitment can be seen nationwide. There has been a shift from BA courses - which mostly recruit home students - to MA/MSc courses, which recruit well among international students. There has been a shift from public relations taught at post-1992 'new' universities to public relations being taught at higher ranked traditional universities (the University of Oxford's Centre for Corporate Reputation within Saïd Business School deserves a mention in this context).

The full list of postgraduate taught degrees in public relations offered at UK universities and listed on the UCAS website (January 2023) is presented in Appendix C. There are many more postgraduate degrees offering a specialist focus on public relations than there are at undergraduate level, but there is also a trend towards naming the discipline 'strategic communication'.

You can argue from this that public relations has grown in stature by developing from a skills-based course to an intellectual discipline; from being a pure subject to becoming interdisciplinary. Public relations is now included in a degree title alongside any one (or more) of the following: advertising, brand communication, business, journalism, marketing, marketing communications, mass communications, and media. It is worth noting that internal communication does not currently feature in any BA or



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In 2022, the PRCA had 25 partner universities.



BSc titles, although it is taught as a dedicated MA at Solent University.

But the shift in recruitment from BA to MA courses is not necessarily a sign of growing sophistication. Across a three year BA degree (or four year sandwich degree containing a year's industrial placement), a student can make great strides in their practical, intellectual and emotional development. By contrast, on a one-year taught MA programme with a majority of international students, there's a necessary reversion to traditional 'chalk and talk' teaching methods and prescribed, academic assignments. In other words, what's offered is a purely textbook version of public relations. Connections to industry and to the public relations professional bodies are weaker at some universities offering MA courses.

In 2004 Jo Fawkes and Ralph Tench identified 22 BA public relations degree courses in a research report for the Institute of Public Relations (later the CIPR). There's a long list of universities that once offered BA public relations degrees and no longer do so – Central Lancashire (UCLAN), Edge Hill, Falmouth, Gloucestershire, Greenwich, The College of Mark and St John (Marjon), Lincoln, Liverpool John Moores, Manchester Metropolitan, Robert Gordon, Solent, Teesside, University of West of England and Westminster among them. But the major losses have been Bournemouth which no longer recruits onto a public relations course though public relations is still taught through a Marketing Communications with Public Relations degree and Leeds Beckett, which closed recruitment to its single honours BA Public Relations and Brand Communication degree in December 2022 and instead now offers a joint honours BA in Marketing and Public Relations.

At the time of writing only two universities still provide a single honours undergraduate public relations degree: London College of Communication within University of the Arts, London and Ulster University with a BSc in Communication Management and Public Relations.

By contrast, 16 universities offer MA courses focused exclusively on public relations and/or corporate/strategic communication, not including those offering degrees in Public Affairs or Internal Communication (see Appendix C). Eleven of these universities responded to our request for information about student numbers. The total number of students reported to us was 650 for 2022 and a reasonable estimate for all 16 universities is around 1,000 students. Many universities reported a growing interest in MA courses from international students, primarily from China, India, Nigeria and South-East Asia.

In its league table for 'marketing and PR' degrees The Guardian lists 67 universities (with Lancaster at the top), although not all of these currently include public relations as a module in their marketing courses.

In 2022, the PRCA had [25 partner universities](#).

The CIPR [recognises courses](#) rather than institutions, and it lists some 40 courses at 25 UK universities (though not all are currently offered and the list needs updating).

As for professional qualifications, there is no record of the number of people who have completed undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in public relations or corporate communication in the UK. There were significant undergraduate student numbers when programmes were

established and these remained steady for several years before declining. More recently there has been a growth in postgraduate student numbers (around 1,000 in 2022). A very broad estimate of the combined number of undergraduate and postgraduate students who have studied in the UK since degrees were offered is around 12,000. This figure is based purely on known cohort numbers for leading providers in the early 2000s extrapolated to 2022 with estimated declines and dates.

In 2014 a PR Apprenticeship programme was established. The public relations and communications assistant standard is awarded by the UK Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. It is typically a 12-18 month course. Once selected and hired, the apprentice is a full-time employee of the organisation. Apprentices are required to spend the equivalent of at least one day per week on apprenticeship work, which can be done remotely. An Apprenticeship Coach guides them through the qualification and sets and assesses assignments.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

There is no consensus on where public relations should be located within a university structure. The traditional model, imported from the US, is for public relations to sit alongside journalism within a journalism school or media faculty. This brings the advantage of some media production skills and facilities, but does little to enhance the professional status and distinctiveness of public relations.

A model that has been favoured in the UK has been to place public relations within a business school which brings synergies with marketing, advertising and organisational behaviour (human resources) courses. The challenge here is that public relations will always appear small and subservient to larger marketing and advertising degrees, leading other universities to the same conclusion as Bournemouth and Leeds Beckett that public relations should be subsumed within marketing communications - which does not necessarily allow space for distinctive public relations disciplines such as internal communication, crisis communication or public affairs.

Elsewhere, some universities locate public relations within the humanities or cultural studies departments, an approach favoured by some academics who view public relations as a branch of sociology, though not one that necessarily leads to easy relationships with industry partners and professional bodies.

Broadly, the trend seems to be to merge public relations with marketing at BA level, and to present it as corporate or strategic communication at MA level.

This makes sense from a recruitment and from a vocational perspective, but it is scarcely a vote of confidence in an emerging profession that has had its specialist professional body for 75 years. The same logic that argues for a merging of public relations with marketing at university should also argue for a merging of the CIPR (and the IOiC and PRCA too) with the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

If this happens, it would represent the end of an era rather than the start of a brave new world. It would see the end of public relations degrees, though not the end of public relations education.

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There is no consensus on where public relations should be located within a university structure.





RATIONALISING CHANGES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Twelve university public relations lecturers were interviewed for this report between December 2022 and January 2023. The informal interviews focused on how teaching has changed, the reasons for any changes, current challenges, and thoughts on how teaching public relations may evolve in the next two to three years. Notes from the discussions were clustered into themes as shown in Table 3.

Many lecturers reflected on a lack of clarity in defining public relations that may contribute to a lack of understanding in general which, in turn, impacts the number of people who consider public relations as a potential degree option and career. This is, of course, not a new issue. But it is clear that some interviewees link this to the demise of the BA/BSc public relations degree. Indeed, many interviewees talked about the way that ‘strategic communication’, ‘corporate communication’ or ‘digital communication’ is being used more in degree titles as these terms have a less negative connotation than ‘public relations’ for potential ‘home’ students. At the same time, some interviewees noted that ‘public relations’ is an attractive term for international students from China, Nigeria and South-East Asia.

TABLE 3: Themes from interviews with PR lecturers

DEFINING AND POSITIONING PUBLIC RELATIONS	COSTS AND COMMERCIAL DRIVERS	DATA, ANALYTICS AND CRITICAL THINKING	SUPPORT FROM INSTITUTES
Lack of clarity – is it a scientific discipline?	Pushes public relations to be seen as a less viable undergraduate degree	Growing importance of data analytics	Quality of resources provided
Stakeholder focus is a fundamental	Leads to a focus on technical skills rather than problem solving or critical thinking capabilities	Problem-solving management remit	Linking qualifications & chartership to degree programmes
Links to sociology, social value	Heightened cost consciousness (is online delivery perceived as a reduced service?)	Practitioners need to be multi-skilled & speak the language of business	Promoting PR as a study option/ career to school/college leavers
Links to applied psychology	Constrains academic research (resulting in a lack of PR journals)	More emphasis required on critical thinking & mental agility	Promoting education as important for employers
Links with digital marketing, advertising & media studies		Teaching digital literacy	
Links with journalism			

Other interviewees attribute the demise of the BA/BSc public relations degree to the introduction of student fees and changing university commercial drivers that raised the minimum numbers required to run a course. Fees may also have led to students becoming more discerning about studying other courses with perceived better employment prospects. The cost of student living is a factor that was also highlighted in this context.

Some interviewees commented on what they saw as limited support from institutes for their course compared to the support provided by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) for marketing degrees. One interviewee emphasised the importance of building local networks with schools, colleges, and employers so that potential students had a better understanding of what a public relations degree is about.

Many interviewees said that public relations had 'lost out' to marketing in undergraduate degree programmes, and that this trend was set to continue. One interviewee made the strong point that public relations has established a relatively strong position in global academic research as a distinct subject at the same time that it has been subsumed into other topic areas in degree programmes in the UK. It was suggested by some that public relations might be a more appropriate 'pure' discipline to study at Master's level when students have more experience of life and work that can be linked to teaching and when critical thinking may be embraced more willingly by students. One interviewee pointed to The Bologna Process that seeks to bring more coherence to higher education systems across Europe which suggests greater specialisation at Master's level.

Key points were raised about how public relations should be taught. Several interviewees highlighted the fundamentals of stakeholder relationships and storytelling that underpin practice whatever the technical developments in the field. Some emphasised the importance of critical thinking and the ways that this is embedded into both teaching and assessment. One lecturer argued that public relations is a naturally better fit with media studies than with marketing where it becomes very much a 'third cousin'. This interviewee also reported that many students who study PR as an undergraduate module alongside media say that 'this is the first time I've actually thought about what I could do after I finish my degree'. Another interviewee argued that public relations and journalism can be taught together perfectly well.

Although different perspectives exist, it is clear from our interviews that the demise of the single honours public relations degree is attributed to the convergence of four factors: student fees, commercial drivers in the higher education sector, limited support from professional bodies, and the lack of understanding of what PR is amongst school or college leavers.

On a positive note, two lecturers have observed small signs of changes within some business schools who are actively reviewing the importance of public relations, partially as a result of reflecting on the limitations of previous approaches to teaching business studies and partially in response to the ways that public relations activity was heightened during the pandemic.



Key points were raised about how public relations should be taught.





THE BREADTH OF TRAINING AVAILABLE

A review of the training provided by PRCA and CIPR for this report indicates that practitioners have access to a very wide range of courses.

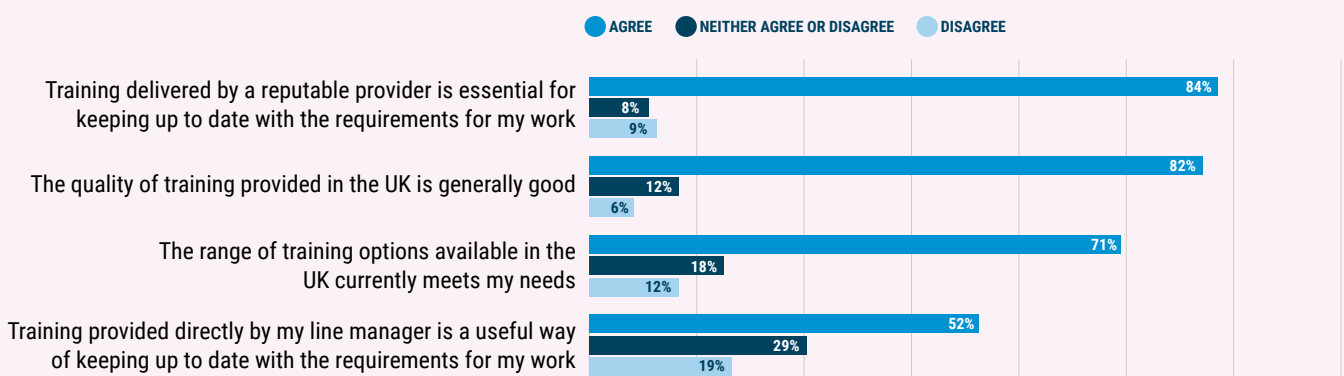
We identified 124 PRCA and 73 CIPR training courses listed on their websites as at October 2022. Many of the courses are focused on personal development, such as:

- Growing your own gravitas: confidence and credibility for women in PR and communications
- How to manage your time and workload more effectively
- Making better decisions under pressure
- Managing an agency
- Managing an in-house team
- Managing conflict and tough conversations
- Mastering persuasion and influence
- Motivating and leading PR and communications teams
- Personal branding
- Positive influencing skills

Other courses are focused on strategy, writing, digital, crisis communication, change communication, public affairs, internal communication, measurement, and storytelling.

A full list of the courses offered is included at Appendices D and E. There are, of course, other providers of public relations training courses. The intention of providing an overview of training and listing the courses offered by PRCA and CIPR is to illustrate the growing range of training options now available to practitioners.

FIGURE 6: The role of training and satisfaction with courses



The vast majority of respondents in our survey (84 percent) believe that training delivered by a reputable provider is essential for keeping up to date with the requirements for their work (see Figure 6) and a total of 5527 paid training courses were completed with PRCA and CIPR in 2022.

There is a notably lower endorsement for training provided directly by a line manager (52 percent). This highlights the perceived value of high-quality courses provided by training experts. Although the role of line managers in supporting development and training is, of course, very important in ensuring the transfer of knowledge to practice is effective.

Respondents reported that the quality of training provided is generally good (82 percent) and the range of courses meets their needs (71 percent). This point is illustrated by the following open comments in the survey:

“I recently attended a PR writing skills training course and was really impressed with how much the quality of the training has stepped up. We were also provided with useful handouts which I still do refer to.”

“Attended virtual training - really good, the tutor/facilitator was great as were my fellow students. Content and pace was relevant to my role.”

Although, as for professional qualifications, there is a small but important group of respondents (12 percent) who do not feel that courses currently meet their needs.

58 percent of respondents said they regularly (at least once a year) undertake training and 67 percent agreed that it is important that training is recorded on a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) log. This is a strong endorsement for CPD schemes provided by PRCA and CIPR, although participation in these schemes remains relatively low at 2378 people who recorded CPD in 2022.

We also asked survey respondents to rank the general capabilities that are relevant for public relations training for people in the early years of their career, from a list provided (see Table 4).

This revealed that writing skills, long-established as a fundamental capability for public relations, clearly remains the priority. Strategic thinking also ranks highly, second in our list. Perhaps surprisingly, digital content production and social media platform content management rank far less highly.

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58 percent of
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regularly (at least once a
year) undertake training



TABLE 4: General capabilities that are relevant for public relations training for people in the early years of their career, ranked in order of importance

RANK	CAPABILITIES
1.	Writing skills (news releases, social media content, speeches, proof-reading)
2.	Strategic thinking (research, planning, measurement)
3.	Personal (presentation skills, time management, effectiveness, collaborative working, resilience, wellbeing)
4.	Media and influencer management (relationship building, selling-in stories)
5.	Digital content production (podcasts, imagery, videos)
6.	Social media platform content management (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and livestreaming)





CHARTERSHIP AND ACCREDITATION

Since 2005, when the CIPR became a chartered institute, it has offered members the opportunity to become chartered practitioners.

Chartership is neither a qualification nor training. It is a validation of professional knowledge, practice and conduct which is then tied in to ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) that is recorded by CIPR.

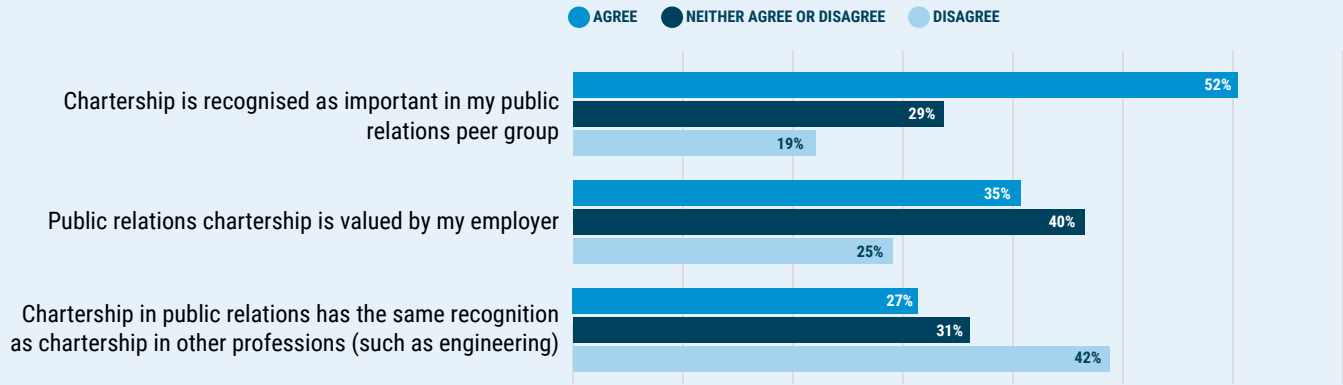
A total of 71 CIPR members became chartered in 2022. In total there are now 508 chartered practitioners, which is 5 percent of the membership.

Responses to three questions about chartership in our survey suggest that it is seriously under-recognised and under-valued by both practitioners and employers (see Figure 7). Only 35 percent of respondents agreed that chartership is valued by their employer and only 27 percent agreed that it has the same recognition as chartership in other professions. Even amongst peers, only just over half of respondents said that chartership is recognised as important.

There are a number of possible explanations for the relatively low value attributed to public relations chartership. For example, according to a joint CIPR and Chartered Institute of Marketing report, marketing also has a similar, relatively low, level of chartership at 10% of membership, so it is possibly simply that 'newer' professions are not judged in the same way by employers as more established professions such as engineering or accountancy.

We asked survey respondents for their views on chartership. This generated 63 comments, more than for any other open question in the survey. Of these, 23 comments referred to chartership not being valued or recognised, as the quotes in Box 3 illustrate.

FIGURE 7: The recognition of chartership



There is a strong sense from these comments that much remains to be done to explain the value of public relations chartership to employers if it is to become a stronger component of professional development. This point is illustrated by the following long comment from a respondent:

"In my view, the PR industry is perhaps the least successful in promoting chartership to general industry and business. Why? Well, it could have something to do with the general view of public relations as a 'dark art' which still persists to this day – a skill based on mystical powers and individual strategizing, rather than the development of professional skills and an aptitude to consistently apply knowledge and methodologies within a working context."

Respondents who are chartered (or who want to become chartered) highlighted the following benefits:

"It's a good way to ensure you undertake continuous L&D and I also think it shows that you take your career seriously"

"Chartership adds a level of professionalism and validation like it does for other professions"

"It's a kitemark of quality and the only benchmark to professionalise all the experiences and qualifications earned and learned over the course of one's career however long or short"

"It's a valuable option which should be taken, but only by those with the relevant experience"

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In my view, the PR industry is perhaps the least successful in promoting chartership to general industry and business.



BOX 3 COMMENTS ABOUT CHARTERSHIP

"I'm not sure it holds much value as many people don't know what it is or don't value it"

"Its value needs to be understood more by employers"

"I think it's an important part of my professional education, however I don't think this is appreciated by employers in the same way"

"Too many organisations don't understand the value of it and therefore do not support their employees to complete it"

"Since I belong to the public relations profession, I value chartership in the field, but I believe that not everyone accepts our chartership as compared to accounting and engineering"

"My current employer doesn't support me financially for my membership and so they do not see chartership as valuable"

"I think chartered engineers and those high level scientific/mathematical fields will always receive higher acclaim"

"PR/comms still isn't a recognised profession - unlike journalism or marketing, etc. I believe that if more PR people achieve chartered status, then the reputation of industry as a whole will improve."





THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION

Our research indicates that professional qualifications have become firmly established in the UK and currently include many of the core capabilities expected by practitioners. There is evidence that these qualifications currently meet practitioner expectations and they are highly valued because of a focus on applying theory to practice. There is a very good range of subjects available at both a general public relations level and at specialist levels. Qualifications are also accessible as many are taught online. Future syllabi updates should incorporate greater emphasis on data analytics, knowledge management, the psychology of PR, and EED&I.

At BA/BSc level, public relations has largely become subsumed into wider programmes and there is a serious risk that it is being marginalised as a short-term tactical activity rather than being taught as a critical reputation management discipline. For school or college leavers or people looking to switch career into public relations, the traditional undergraduate degree entry route is now very limited. The PR Apprenticeship is less costly for students and tied closely to work experience. It could therefore be a strong route into a PR career. It does however rely on awareness of the programme and support from employers willing to take on an apprentice.

At MA/MSc level, public relations is increasingly positioned as strategic communication. There is greater potential to incorporate higher levels of critical thinking in the teaching at MA/MSc level. However, there is evidence that the growth in these courses is largely attributable to international students with the number of UK students remaining static. Alongside the growth of Master's level programmes, there is perhaps an opportunity for academic public relations research to expand too.

Training opportunities for practitioners have now become extensive, covering many of the topics that practitioners are looking for. It is clear that training is undertaken regularly by many practitioners and CPD is a valued process for some.

Chartership is an accreditation process that has become firmly established for CIPR although the take-up, as with marketing, remains relatively low.

In general, there is more professional development choice for practitioners than ever before. There is one exception to this, which is the demise of the single honours public relations BA/BSc degree. This appears to be an unfortunate outlier in the maturity of the educational field and, as our interviewees said, it is difficult to see it being reversed.

In summary, how far have degrees and professional qualifications contributed to professionalism in public relations? In broad terms, we estimate that between 27,000 and 32,000 practitioners have studied at this level in the UK. We acknowledge that this is a broad estimate only as firm data is very difficult to obtain. It is also over a reasonably long period. However, this is out of a total UK public relations workforce estimated by PRCA to be 95,000 in 2019. As a result, we believe that public relations can justifiably proclaim to be well on the path to becoming a qualified profession – where a significant number of practitioners (more than 50 percent) hold a qualification.

Looking forward, this report raises some important points about the professionalisation of public relations in the UK. One interpretation of the findings is that they reflect the evolution of public relations into two distinct, but closely related, fields:

1. Content production and channel management: The Paid-Earned-Shared-Owned (PESO) approach
2. Strategic planning and advising: The management consultant approach

This differentiation (or versions of it) is, of course, not new and has been researched and discussed extensively. However, it might partially explain why public relations is increasingly offered at undergraduate degree level alongside marketing and advertising and why professional diploma qualifications are popular for practitioners looking to develop specialised strategic planning capabilities.

A key finding that requires deeper consideration is the under-valuation of PR education by employers. Again, this is not new. It would, however, be useful for further research to explore the reasons for this.

Many lecturers who we contacted highlighted the importance of critical thinking and reflexivity in PR education so that organisations are better able to address complex contemporary communication and stakeholder engagement challenges. This highlights the importance of ensuring that teaching at all levels is constantly updated to reflect changing organisational and societal demands.

Although largely anecdotal from discussions with lecturers, it seems that PR educators (trainers, teachers, lecturers, and researchers) often plough relatively solitary paths and there is limited knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and thought leadership on PR education. There is therefore scope for institutes and providers to re-establish an informal interdisciplinary Public Relations Education Forum in the UK where different and new approaches to teaching and learning are shared and reviewed.

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PR educators (trainers, teachers, lecturers, and researchers) often plough relatively solitary paths.



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APPENDIX A: PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AWARDED BY CIPR, PRCA AND AMEC

There is more information about the range of qualifications delivered by PR Academy, including most of the courses listed below, at: <https://pracademy.co.uk/>

CIPR Qualifications

Professional PR Diploma
Specialist Diploma: Internal Communication
Specialist Diploma: Crisis Communication
Specialist Diploma: Digital Communication
Specialist Diploma: Public Affairs
Specialist Diploma: Sustainability Communications
Professional PR Certificate
Specialist Certificate: Internal Communication
Foundation in PR

PRCA Qualifications

Diploma in PR & Communications Management
Diploma in Change Management and Communication
Diploma in Public Affairs Management
Diploma in Integrated Communications Management
Advanced Certificate
Foundation Certificate

AMEC Qualifications

International Certificate in Measurement & Evaluation
Foundation in Media Measurement and Evaluation



APPENDIX B: UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE COURSES LISTED ON THE UCAS WEBSITE FOR JAN 2023 START

Undergraduate

University of the Arts, London: BA (Hons) Public Relations

University of the Arts, London: BA (Hons) Fashion Public Relations and Communication

University of the Arts, London: BA (Hons) Media Communications

University of Bedfordshire: BA (Hons) Media, Marketing and Public Relations

Birmingham City University: BA (Hons) Public Relations and Media

Birmingham City University: BA (Hons) Marketing with Advertising and Public Relations

Bournemouth University: BA (Hons) Marketing Communications with Public Relations

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Public Relations & Media/Psychology

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Public Relations and Media/Sociology

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Public Relations and Media/Theology

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Business Management/ Public Relations and Media

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Creative Writing/ Public Relations and Media

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Digital Media/ Public Relations and Media

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Film, Radio and Television/ Public Relations and Media

Canterbury Christ Church University: BA (Hons) Public Relations and Media/ Religion, Philosophy and Ethics

Cardiff Metropolitan University: BA (Hons) PR and Marketing Management

Coventry University: HNC/HND Marketing and Public Relations

Coventry University: BA (Hons) Marketing and Public Relations

University of Derby: BA (Hons) Marketing, PR and Advertising

Edinburgh Napier University: BA (Hons) Mass Communications, Advertising and Public Relations

University of Gloucestershire: BA Communications and Media

Goldsmiths, University of London: BA (Hons) Promotional Media: PR, Advertising and Branding

Leeds Beckett University: BA (Hons) Marketing & Public Relations

London Metropolitan University: BA (Hons) Advertising, Marketing Communications and Public Relations

Middlesex University: BA (Hons) Advertising, Public Relations and Branding

Northumbria University: BA (Hons) Mass Communication with Public Relations

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh: BA (Hons) Public Relations and Marketing Communications

Richmond, The American International University in London: BA (Hons) Communications: Advertising and Public Relations

University of Salford: BA (Hons) Journalism with Public Relations

Sheffield Hallam: BA Marketing with Public Relations

Sheffield Hallam: BA (Hons) Journalism, Public Relations with Media

Swansea University: BA (Hons) Public Relations and Media

Swansea University: BA (Hons) Welsh, Media and Public Relations

Ulster University: BSc (Hons) Communication Management and Public Relations

University of West London: BA (Hons) Advertising and Public Relations

University of Worcester: BA (Hons) Marketing, Advertising & Public Relations

POSTGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE COURSES LISTED ON THE UCAS WEBSITE FOR JAN 2023 START

Postgraduate

Amity University London: MBA (Marketing and Public Relations)

Birmingham City University: MA Public Relations

Brunel University: MA Media and Public Relations

Canterbury Christ Church University: MA Media, Communications and PR

Cardiff University: MA International Public Relations and Global Communications Management

Coventry University: MA Global Journalism and Public Relations

University of Gloucestershire: MA Communications, PR and the Media

Goldsmiths, University of London: MA Promotional Media: Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing

University of Hertfordshire: MA Public Relations and Digital Communications

University of Huddersfield: MSc Strategic Communication and Leadership

University of Huddersfield: MSc Strategic Communication, Leadership and Sustainability

King's College, London: MA Strategic Communications

Kingston University: MA Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Leeds Beckett University: MA Public Relations and Strategic Communication

University of Leeds: MA Corporate Communications, Marketing and Public Relations

University of Leicester: MA Media and Public Relations

University of Liverpool: MA Strategic Communication

London School of Economics and Political Science: MSc Strategic Communications

Newcastle University: MA Media and Public Relations

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh: MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh: MSc Political Communications and Public Affairs

Richmond, The American International University in London: MA Public Relations

Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen: MSc Corporate Communications and Public Affairs

Royal Holloway, University of London: MA Media, Power

and Public Affairs

University of Salford: MA Public Relations and Digital Communications

Sheffield Hallam University: MA Public Relations

Solent University: MA Internal Communication Management

University of Stirling: MSc Strategic Public Relations

University of Stirling: MSc Public Relations and Strategic Communication

University of Sunderland: MA Public Relations

University of Surrey: MPA Public Affairs

Swansea University: MA Communication, Media Practice and Public Relations

Ulster University: MSc Communication and Public Relations

University of Westminster: MA Advertising & Public Relations

University of Wolverhampton: MA Public Relations and Corporate Communication



APPENDIX D: PRCA TRAINING COURSES

There is more information about PRCA training courses at: <https://prca.org.uk/training/15-prca-qualifications>

Account Management	Developing the best version of yourself
Advanced Public Affairs	Digital Landscape for PR and Communications
An Introduction to the Public Affairs	Diversity & Inclusion for PR and Communications Managers
An Introduction to the Public Affairs Code	Earning the profit you want
Becoming Confident and Assertive	Effective Leadership - Skills and behaviours needed to deliver efficiency and results
Behavioural Economics – The science behind successful PR	Employee Change Communications
Better Pitching	Exemplary People Management
Beyond Emotional Intelligence	Gaining Coverage in a Digital Media World
Brand and Brand Storytelling	Getting Maximum Impact from a Disappearing PR and Communications Budget
Budget Management	Getting to Grips with Grammar
Building an Internal Communications Campaign that Works	Good B2B Media Writing
Building Resilience: Understanding Your Own Wellbeing & Mental Health	Growing Your Own Gravitas: Confidence and Credibility for Women in PR and Communications
Business Development Planning and Strategy	Harnessing AI Ethically for Competitive Advantage
Client Management: A strategic guide to successful client relationships	Having the clients you deserve
Climbing the PR and Communications Career Ladder	Honing Your Copywriting Skills
Communicate for Impact: Get better results from all your meetings, video calls, and emails	How does SEO work? A guide for PR and Communications Practitioners
Confidence, Clarity, Control – How to become a brilliant spokesperson	How to Communicate about Climate Change Accurately and Effectively
Content Marketing: Creative Strategy Tips to Drive Conversation	How to Manage your Time and Workload more Effectively
Controlling Over-Servicing	How to Nail the Creative Process from Start to Finish
Creating a High-Performing Team in the Digital Age	How to PR Crypto
Creating Great B2B Social Media Campaigns	Implementing A Social Media Audit
Creativity - transform your capability	Improving your Proofreading and Editing Skills
Creativity in B2B PR and Communications	Influencer Relations
Crisis Communications Management	Internal in-house communication
Crisis Management – Practical tips for reputation, recovery and rebuilding	Introduction to Google Analytics for PR and Communications
Crisis Management in a Complex, Global Environment	Introduction to Management
Crisis Management Secrets from an Editorial Lawyer	Introduction to Marketing
Developing a Communication Strategy	Introduction to PR and Communications
Developing a digital strategy	Introduction to Public Affairs
Developing an Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy	Introduction to Writing for PR and Communications Practitioners

Issues & Crisis: Putting the human imperative front and centre

Lead Generation - Panning for gold

Leadership Communications – Inspiring and enabling leaders to drive successful outcomes

LinkedIn for PR and personal branding

Making Better Decisions Under Pressure

Making Change: How Corporate and Brand Activism Works

Managing an Agency - Part 1

Managing an Agency – Part 2

Managing an In-House Team

Managing an Integrated Communications Campaign

Managing Clients

Managing Conflict and Tough Conversations

Managing Performance to Improve Productivity

Mastering Measurement for More Effective Communications

Mastering Persuasion and Influence

Mastering the Art of Memorable Moderation & Facilitation

Measuring and Evaluating PR Campaigns

Media Training and Media Interview Skills

Motivating and Leading PR and Communications Teams

Narrative by Numbers: How to tell powerful and purposeful stories with data

Navigating the Paid Marketing Landscape in 2023 and Beyond

Parliament and Public Affairs

People and performance management

Planning a Strategic PR Campaign

PR Agency Finances for Account Managers

Presentation Skills

Producing Engaging Content in Public Sector Communications

Producing Thought Leadership that actually works

Productive Conflict and Difficult Conversations

Project Management

Purposeful Communication and Communicating Purpose

Reddit: Tips and Trends for Digital PR and Social Media Campaigns

Running an Effective Political Campaign

Self-Knowledge, Emotional Intelligence, and Resilience Masterclass

Selling into the Media

Smarter Prospecting

Social Media 3.0: exploiting the latest tools and techniques

Social Media in Public Affairs

Social Media Metrics

Speechwriting made Simple

Stakeholder Relationship Management

Successful B2B Client Relationships

Successful Media Messages

Successful Media Relations

Successful Meetings

Successful Networking

Successful New Business Pitching

The Diversity Dividend: Beyond the tickbox to business performance and self-knowledge

The Power of Emotions in PR and Communications

The Power of Podcasting

The Right Way to use Facebook for PR and Communications

The Savvy Account Director

The Trusted Advisor: How to Win and Retain Clients' Confidence

APPENDIX E: CIPR TRAINING COURSES

There is more information about CIPR training courses at: <https://cipr.co.uk/content/training>

Account Management
Agile Thinking
British Politics in a Time of Change
Building Resilience
Change Communication
Communication & Culture
Content Management
Creating a PR Strategy
Creating Your Crisis Communications Plan
Creative Thinking
Crisis Communication
Cyber Security and Crisis Management
Data Protection & GDPR
Designing your ESG Communication Strategy
Digital Media Relations
Disinformation, Misinformation & Malinformation
Diversity Awareness in The Boardroom
Driving Organisational Focus and Efficiency
Effective Board Decision Making
Effective Media Relations
Effective People Management
Employee Engagement
Ethics & PR
Google Analytics
Grammar & Proofreading Skills
Handling Media Interviews
High Performing PR Leadership
Introduction to Data Analysis
Introduction to Digital Photography
Introduction to ESG
Introduction to Internal Communication
Introduction to Podcasting
Introduction to PR
Introduction to PR Research
Introduction to Speechwriting
Lead Generation
LinkedIn for PR Professionals
Live Video Streaming
Marketing for PR Professionals
Mastering the Art of Copywriting
Measuring & Evaluating PR
Mental Wellbeing at Work
Organisational Leadership Skills
Paid Media Management
Personal Branding Masterclass
Pitching for Business
Positive Influencing Skills
PR Campaign Planning
Practical Public Affairs
Preparing for the Directors Role
Public Speaking & Presentation Skills
Reputation Management
Risk Issues Management & Crisis
Shooting Smartphone Videos
Social & Digital Crisis Management
Social Media Essentials
Social Media Management
Social Media Strategy
Stakeholder Engagement
Storytelling
Strategic Internal Communication
Strategic Thinking & Decision Making
Strategic Thinking in PR
Sustainable Strategies
The Role of Psychology in Campaign Design
Time Management & Personal Effectiveness
Video Editing
Virtual Presentation Skills
Writing Better Press Releases
Writing Content for Company Media
Writing for Impact & Creativity
Writing for Online Audiences
Writing Skills for PR

