Guidelines for incorporating narratives in P&D conversations

\<School> P&D Cycle 2023

In the \<School> P&D cycle of 2023 (assessment over 2022), we pilot the use of narratives and ask academic staff to write a narrative in preparation for the Performance & Development (P&D) conversation on all result areas including personal development. The original P&D form has been shortened and the software system updated to give room for this narrative approach.

Moving towards a narrative approach for the P&D conversations fits with the transition we make as a School in which opportunities are created to opt for a specific focus profile and in which we move from a strong individual perspective towards a team science perspective. In addition, moving towards a more qualitative approach for assessment and evaluation is in line with the goals of the EUR Framework on Recognition & Rewards. This is an important step in modernising the system for recognising and rewarding academic staff, as it creates a better opportunity to holistically understand who your team members are.

These guidelines are intended to support you in assessing the development of your team members when using career narratives in the context of the P&D conversations. First, it introduces the structure of the narrative and how it can be incorporated in the P&D conversation. Then, it provides a series of questions for you to be inspired by when reading the narratives of those you supervise. The questions are grouped first around the structure of the narrative (Initial questions, Retrospective, Prospective), then around areas of scholarly contribution team members may have written on.

The narrative is not intended to replace the P&D conversation but be a conversation starter and give an opportunity to your team members to provide insights on their work and achievements in a concise yet comprehensive way. It is designed to support and inform you in your supervising role and decision making on assessing the performance and development of team members.

Career narratives for P&D – structure

The narrative is an academic's personal story and consists of two parts: reflections on the past year and an outlook to the coming years[1] based on their vision and ambitions. It will illustrate their (planned) ambitions, contributions, and challenges. We have provided examples of narratives alongside guidelines to support academic staff in writing their narratives, in line with different UFO profiles and associated competences.

The suggested approach includes a format they can reflect upon and be inspired by. We suggested the narrative should interrelate their PERSONAL DRIVE, linking it to their COMPETENCES and SKILLS, ACTIVITIES and RESULTS, and the consequences or BENEFITS of these results, all corroborated by reasonable, appropriate, and time-bound EVIDENCE, underpinned by shared ERASMIAN VALUES.

We also provided examples of outcomes, activities, and evidence in the areas of generation of knowledge, development of individuals and collaborations, supporting the academic community and broader society, compatible to different career stages. These are not exhaustive, and it is expected that team members will choose relevant and meaningful experiences and achievements to share in their narrative that will illustrate their personal drive, results, and ambitions.

Incorporating a professional career narrative for P&D

The narrative, in context of the P&D, is intended to demonstrate what people are passionate about, their (planned) achievements, and (expectations for future) development. Through a self-reflexive story line, it helps to ensure their P&D is clearly structured while depicting their journey so far, to foster a meaningful P&D process for everybody included. The narrative tells the story behind their achievements, it shows their drive, vision, and values. In a descriptive, qualitative manner, substantiated with suitable (quantitative) indicators and additional information, a professional career narrative also allows academics to reflect on their challenges, struggles, and failures and elaborate on the learnings drawn.

When reading through the narrative, look for evidence of their personal performance and development that can inform your assessment. Investigate if there are points for you to provide positive or constructive feedback that may help them understand and reflect on their performance and development. Be aware that

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[1] The period in the prospective part will be in accordance with their working conditions as per regular P&D process.

there are differences between your team members that influence the way they write their narrative, not only due to their career stages and professional profiles, but also personal characteristics (e.g., cultural and gender differences, extroversion vs introversion, internalising vs externalising failures, etc.). For example, people from collectivists cultures may find it hard to use "I" and describe their personal role on team achievements, even when they played a crucial role.

Initial questions to consider

- Based on their UFO profile, how do you assess their overall personal reflection at work? Do you recognise the activities, competences, and achievements required by their UFO profile? Are there results and skills mentioned that go beyond their UFO profile? Are there any missing?

- How do you see their reflective ability? Do they share past/future challenges and difficulties? Have they been able to adequately identify results and achievements or are they too modest/bold?

- From what you know from them, are there missing developments or results in their narrative you would have included? How can you discuss this during the conversation?

- Are there differences (cultural, professional, personal) that should be considered and acknowledged when reading their narrative? E.g., collectivist backgrounds might make it more difficult for them to explain individual roles and achievements in team projects?

- Are there career breaks or special circumstances that need to be considered in this assessment?

- How do the (planned) activities and achievements fit in with the strategy of the team, department, and/or School?

Retrospective: Reflection on the past year

In this first part, your team member reflects on their results in the past year, and how they relate to their personal ambitions and current work context. The aim of this section is to obtain an overall impression of their work, in which the reasons and relevance of their accomplishments and activities in different key areas are well integrated. They should substantiate the reflection on their achieved results throughout the narrative and possibly add attachment(s). For example, they can mention and add evaluations of their teaching activities or positions in internal committees and their relevance.

Results-oriented questions

- Is their personal drive clear, are their developed competences and skills linked to activities, and are their results evidenced with tangible benefits to themselves and their stakeholders? If not, would some open questions during the conversation help you find the missing links?

- Do they have relevant achievements and results to share in different scholarly contribution areas (e.g., generation of knowledge, development of individuals and collaborations, supporting the academic community and broader society), in line with their career stage, track, and work context? Can you assess how they achieved these results and why they are relevant? If not, consider possible approaches to discuss this during the conversation.

- To what extent does their development and achievements meet their ambitions in the previous P&D conversation? Were there barriers or missed opportunities that can be addressed in this conversation for the next P&D cycle?

Development-oriented questions

- What are you most proud of with this team member? To what extent does their development and achievements meet shared expectations? Can you tell them what (other) expectations were (not) met and why do you think they are important for their (future) development?

- In line with their ambitions and career stage and profile, what feedback can you provide on the decisions they took in the past year? What was your role in supporting them in such a decision?

- Were they aware and able to seize development opportunities that are available to them? How can you support them in their process of development?

Prospective: Outlook for the next period

In this second part, your team member shows what their vision, ambitions and concrete plans are for the coming period. The aim of this section is to articulate their general vision and ambition, and concrete plans for 2023, setting the tone for their performance for the next P&D cycle. In doing so, they again address activities in various result areas to contextualise what personal development they envisage in the coming years. Their personal development needs and how the School could support them should be addressed. If applicable, they will mention personal circumstances that may impact them or their work (for example, parental leave or long-term absence through illness). Their interest in a focus profile, which profile and why may also be present.

Results-oriented questions

- In line with their career stage and profile, do they translate relevant trends and developments into concrete actions and plans? If not, can you list the main developments and suggest alternatives you envision that would fit their personal motivations and drive?

- Are their vision, ambition, and plans well thought through, clear, and realistic in your opinion? Can you ask them to clarify and build upon anything that is unclear?

- Do you feel they are aware and knowledgeable of the longer-term policy for your team/School? Could you share insights that would help them formulate and seize personal opportunities?

Development-oriented questions

- How are they planning on expanding and deepening their competences and skills and integrating it in their planned activities? Can you explore the extent to which these should be intertwined?

- Are their development needs explicit and compatible with their ambition, career stage, track, and work context? Could you explore together their planning for competences / skills development? As a supervisor, what can you do to understand and enable their performance and development?

- Are they interested and do you think they should be eligible for a focus profile (if that's not already the case)?

Additional considerations per area of scholarly contribution

Generation of Knowledge

Results-oriented questions

- Are their results significant to the field(s) they work in? What do you appreciate the most?

- How are they connecting their research and education activities? If that is not yet the case, can you guide them in doing this more effectively?

- Have their contributions been acknowledged and valued by you and the team? What (additional) feedback can you give them on their achievements?

Development-oriented questions

- Are they aware of future development(s) in their academic discipline, and how that affects them? Can you provide insights into this?

- Do they plan their development opportunities in this area? What does that look like?

- Do they know how to generate academic and societal impact with their projects? How can you support increasing their impact literacy and capacity?

Development of Individuals and Collaborations

Results-oriented questions

- Have they positively impacted the people they mentor? What feedback would you give on it?

- How have they invested in their leadership/management skills? What is (would have been) appropriate for their career ambition, stage, and profile?

- Have they engaged in networking within and beyond the team? Can you discuss with which people they could involve in their network and which relationships should be reinforced?

Development-oriented questions

- Have they planned for developing leadership and networking competences and skills? Are they compatible with their career ambition, stage, and profile?

- To what extent are they willing to cooperate within or across the boundaries of your team/department/faculty? As their supervisor, can you facilitate any of these collaborations?

- Are your ambitions for team being met by their intended development? Can you suggest an increased alignment between those if needed?

Supporting the Academic Community

Results-oriented questions

- Have they contributed to the team and their field? Did they face any challenges? What have they learned from it?

- What benefits do they have from contributing to the wider teaching, research, and innovation communities? How can different professional profiles be supported in this type of activities?

- Have you experienced or heard of their role in contributing to the team's/organisation's direction, organisation, and strategy? What feedback can you provide?

Development-oriented questions

- Do they find it easy or difficult to develop leadership or management related ambitions? Do they have a clear sense of what they need to achieve them?

- As their supervisor, what steps can you take to prepare them for changes in the academic community, including the further adoption of team science, open and responsible science, and/or inter- and transdisciplinarity?

- Have their career profile and ambitions been considered in the vision of your team?

Supporting Broader Society

Results-oriented questions

- Have their results been used in public, private, or other sectors? If not, can you provide examples that can inspire them in taking steps towards creating societal impact?

- Are they engaging with different stakeholders, academic and non-academic, in their research and/or education activities? Do they need help to achieve this?

- How have they contributed to the societal impact of the team? Could this approach be taken up by other members of the team?

Development-oriented questions

- What is their motivation in developing collaborations with different disciplines, fields of research, institutions, or sectors of society? How does this fit with their career planning?

- Are they open to different perspectives on their teaching and research activities? What can they do to increase their competences and skills in this area?

- Can you and the team support efforts they will undertake to collaborate and gain local, national, and/or international exposure for their courses and projects and their outputs?

Tool Summary

What is this?

These are generic guidelines for incorporating professional career narratives for the EUR P&D cycle 2023. These guidelines provide additional support for those undergoing this process as supervisors.

This is part of piloting narratives within EUR for academic staff and in the context of Recognition & Rewards. These guidelines initially been developed by an EUR School in collaboration with the R&R and ESI teams. Please note this is a pilot initiative to place increased accent on the qualitative aspects of scientific careers. With your feedback, we hope to improve how we recognise and value outputs and ultimately make the use of narratives the norm within EUR. Contact us via: recognitionandrewards@eur.nl with your ideas for making this a more constructive process.

Who is this for?

EUR uses P&D conversations to work on its employees' performance and development. These supporting guidelines have been developed for EUR academic staff who have a supervisory in preparation for their formal P&D conversation.

How and when to use it?

These Guidelines are developed as a bespoke support tool that can be used before or during the preparation for P&D conversations. Feel free to consult on it as preferred.

Additional information

These guidelines have been developed using as inspiration the RIF: Lima, G. and Bowman, S. (2022). Researcher Impact Framework: Building Audience-Focused Evidence-Based Impact Narratives. Trinity College Dublin. Dublin. https://doi.org/10.25546/98474. We have adapted the RIF model in the writing guidelines, incorporating the 'University Job Classification' (UFO) system and the Competence Instrument for the Dutch Universities.

References and additional resources

EUR Performance & Development: https://my.eur.nl/en/eur-employee/hr/learning-career-centre/leren-ontwikkelen/performance-development

Recognition & Rewards at EUR: https://www.eur.nl/en/about-eur/vision/recognition-rewards/what-recognition-rewards/eur-programme

Narrative CVs: https://rise.articulate.com/share/NyPk_PNlENdfRS5R5catqqiJzs3woS3Y#/

Writing and evidencing impact narratives: https://doi.org/10.25546/98474

Evidencing education related activities: https://www.teachingframework.com/framework/evidence/profskills/#tab-3stacks_in_441_page24

Inter- and transdisciplinary research: https://www.shapeidtoolkit.eu/downloadable-guides/

Inclusive education: https://www.eur.nl/en/impactatthecore/inclusive-education

Version control

Version 1.0, completed on April 06, 2023.