

Guidelines for writing a narrative – Mid-Career Academics¹

<School>² P&D Cycle 2023

In the <School> P&D cycle of 2023 (assessment over 2022), we 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. The narrative will be visible to the same people as is the original P&D form.

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 show who you are in a more holistic way.

The narrative consists of two parts: reflections on the past year and an outlook to the coming years based on your vision and ambitions. It is intended to provide insights on your work and your achievements in the areas of generation of knowledge, development of individuals and collaborations, supporting the academic community and broader society in a comprehensive way.

It is the intention to keep the narrative concise. The guideline is that narratives sum up to 750 words, totaling 1.5 pages, excluding annexes, for both parts. The narrative can be written in English or Dutch, depending on how you and your supervisor decide about this.

The narrative for your P&D conversation will illustrate your (planned) contributions in development and delivery of academic course components for a wide range of target groups that meets societal and student needs and developing recognised scientific knowledge and insights within this field of research and to apply and valorise these for the benefit of science, society and - where possible – the government and the corporate world. It will exemplify how you (will) applied our shared Erasmian values and the core competences of environment orientation, persuasiveness, managing for results and vision into your activities in the different result areas³.

Retrospective: Reflection on the past year (2022)

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

Prospective: Outlook for the next period (1-4 years)

In the second part, you show what your vision, ambitions and (concrete) plans are for the coming period. The aim of this section is to articulate your general vision and ambition, and concrete plans for 2023, setting the tone for your performance for the next P&D conversation. In doing so, you can again address your activities in various result areas to contextualise what personal development you envisage in the coming years. Mention personal development needs and how the School could support you. If relevant, mention personal circumstances that may impact you or your work (for example, parental leave or long-term absence through illness). Mention if you are interested in a focus profile, which profile and why. If not, why not.

¹ Guidelines have also been developed for early- and late-career academics. The career level informs the appropriate skills and competences and the activities that are suggested to be showcased in the narrative according to different UFO profiles.

² Ideally these guidelines should be adapted to School specificities, including but not limited to (societal) impact ambition and disciplinary practices. These differences would be reflected particularly in the activities, and examples. These template guidelines are not adapted to patient care focus profile.

³ Goals and competences as per the University Job Classification (UFO) system and the University Competence Instrument. See more at https://www.universiteitenvanonderland.nl/en_GB/job_classification_ufo.html

Writing a professional career narrative for P&D

You are an academic at EUR and your resume is outstanding. It tells us what you have achieved in your field of science and your activities in teaching, leadership/management or creating (societal) impact. The CV lists facts, milestones, and achievements in your career. But how did you get to where you are, what are you passionate about and what are your expectations/wishes for future development? For you to be able to share your story, the career narrative for the yearly P&D conversation has been developed. Through encouraging a self-reflexive story line, it helps to ensure your P&D is clearly structured while depicting your journey so far, to foster a meaningful P&D process for everybody included.

The narrative is your personal story. It complements your (often quantitative) CV by showing how different aspects of your career come together. It tells the story behind your achievements, it shows your competences, your drive, and your vision, and the barriers and challenges you faced. In a descriptive, qualitative manner, substantiated with suitable (quantitative) indicators and additional information, a professional career narrative contextualises your more traditional resume.

Initial questions to consider

- Vision and ambition: who are you, what motivates you and where do you want to go?
- What do you find difficult? What do you find easy?
- How do you experience the balance between your scholarly activities?
- What reflection do you have on your (personal) development so far?

Characteristics of strong narratives

- Showcases personal drive and passion, putting forward vision, ideas, and/or opinions.
- Has a storyline and exemplifies personal insights through concrete experiences.
- Links personal ambitions to those of the team and the School.
- Focuses on the 'how' of achievements and your role in those.
- Relates past achievements and ambitions for the future to the current context.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Listing activities without explaining why they are relevant or who benefitted from them.
- Repeating the sections of your CV even if they don't fit your main storyline.
- Focusing solely on activities, neglecting to explain (potential) achievements and personal development.
- Being unclear about personal role or contribution when referring to collective projects.
- Choosing only quantitative indicators to showcase use, reach, and relevance of activities.

A suggested approach to consider

The narrative for the School P&D cycle aims to underpin the conversation on your personal and professional development with your supervisor. It should cover your specific performance and attainment of goals, and your past and intended growth at personal and career level.

As a proposal to consider, we suggest the narrative should interrelate your PERSONAL DRIVE, linking it to your 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 provide some structure and examples below based on this approach.

Substantiating your narrative

Below you find what examples of kind of achievements and activities you could mention within different areas of scholarly contribution, and potential indicators you can use to substantiate your narrative⁴. Scholarly activities are grouped in four areas developed by the Royal Society⁵, drawing from established and

⁴ Adapted from the Researcher Impact Framework (Lima & Bowman, 2022). See more at <https://doi.org/10.25546/98474>

⁵ See more at <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/research-culture/tools-for-support/resume-for-researchers/>

internationally recognised biosketches⁶, assessment matrices and application forms. These areas combined provide a concise overview of an individual's scholarly contribution and have been adopted by funders worldwide on grant applications. Note, this is not an exhaustive list of activities / indicators.

We encourage you to use qualitative indicators (e.g., quotes from evaluations / peer-reviews) and select quantitative indicators that fit your story (preferably using article-level metrics and altmetrics, rather than journal-based metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) or H-index).

While the below segregates your contributions and activities in different areas, you should aim for an integrated story in which the relation/interaction between activities in your key areas becomes visible. Below, we also propose some reflective results-oriented and development-oriented questions to help identify potential development opportunities and needs. You may want to choose one or a few of those to address in your narrative. Please do not feel as all of them should be covered as they may not all be relevant to your current journey.



Figure 1 - USING NARRATIVES CAN HELP FOCUS ON DIFFERENT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

⁶ A biosketch documents an individual's qualifications and experience for a specific role in a project, commonly used in funding applications, providing detailed information on why a scholar is uniquely qualified to do the research proposed.

Generation of Knowledge

When describing your achievements in generating and mobilising knowledge, focus on how the activities and outputs are (a) relevant contributions to your discipline and beyond, (b) reach intended and unintended audiences within and outside academia, and (c) are used in relevant contexts.

Outcomes associated with the activities in this area can be framed as relevant or contributing to:

- progress of knowledge, the formation of disciplines, training, and capacity-building;
- changes in research focus or development of new areas of study;
- development of innovative methodologies, equipment, techniques, technologies, and cross-disciplinary approaches.

Activities and their substantiating evidence in this area may include:

Scholarly Activities	Evidence: reach, use, relevance data	Potential Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Publishing articles and books → Presenting a paper or poster at a conference → Editing a collection of essays → Serving as a peer-reviewer → Formulating a research plan → Submitting a request for ethical approval → Applying privacy safeguards and security measures to data → Managing and sharing research data → Applying for / encouraging / securing grant funding → Integrating research interests or results into the curriculum → Take part in internal working groups and discussions on course evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Quotes from reviewers and students → Number of downloads, accesses → Number / quality of scholarly / policy citations → Wikipedia citations → Reference in news / blog articles → Indications of data reuse → Number of libraries that hold the publication → Use in syllabus in other Universities → Number and diversity of speakers and attendees at events → Disciplines present at events → Number of submitted grants → Amount of funding received → Student / beneficiary feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Publisher's websites → PlumX / Dimensions → Google Scholar → Overton → Altmetric → Publons → Subject and/or institutional repositories → Own data → Press releases → Web search → WorldCat → Open Syllabus → Conference organisers → Website traffic data → Funder website → Patents office → Dimensions

Results-oriented questions

- What one or two recent research results (e.g., research articles, grants, initiated collaborations, impactful publications in professional journals) are *you most proud of* and *why* are these significant to the field(s) you work in (scientific impact)?
- Have you faced any challenges with dealing with ethical and privacy issues in your research? What have you learned?
- How would your colleagues on projects describe your personal contributions (in terms of project tasks, role in the team, leadership, etc)?

Development-oriented questions

- What future development(s) do you see in your academic discipline, what is needed to achieve this and what role would you like to play in it?
- What are strengths you want to build on and development opportunities you will take?
- How will you generate academic and societal impact with your projects?

Development of Individuals and Collaborations

Your narrative associated with this area demonstrate how you engage in supportive practices and relationships with others, nurture talent, and help develop skilled researchers. You can focus on the quality, diversity, and consequences of such collaborations and relationships, both nationally and internationally, and how these benefitted the individuals and communities you engaged. Evidence will primarily take the form of qualitative descriptions. Personal stories (with due respect to individuals' privacies and applicable ethical requirements), for example, help showcase contributions that often can be hard to evidence. A testimonial or first-hand account from a beneficiary offers a powerful and substantiating narrative.

An impact focus on these activities highlights how they contribute to:

- enhancing the research capacity, knowledge, and skills of the next generation of researchers;
- increasing access to state-of-the-art knowledge by leveraging extra-institutional expertise; and
- international relations and the international profile and reputation of Erasmus Universiteit.

Activities and their relevant indicators and sources for Development of Individuals and Collaborations include:

Scholarly Activities	Evidence: reach, use, relevance data	Potential Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Developing and teaching a new course open access course→ Advising / Supervising students and PhD candidates→ Hiring, training, or supervising student assistants→ Writing letters of recommendation→ Providing feedback and support to new or less experienced colleagues→ Analysing societal demand in terms of education and the learning needs of students→ Supervising and assess students' work placement assignments and final projects and theses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Student / beneficiary feedback→ Number of modules and students taught→ Number hired / trained / supervised→ Diversity of roles created→ Student / beneficiary feedback→ Number of connections supported→ Career / scholarly progression→ Number or percentage of publications that are co-authored	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Your own data→ ORCID→ LinkedIn→ Course provider data→ Institutional websites→ Testimonials from colleagues and beneficiaries→ Acknowledgment in publications→ Awards→ Scopus→ Dimensions

Results-oriented questions

- What impact have you had on students, PhDs, and/or the people you supervise? Where do your students and mentees work now (academia, society, industry, other)?
- How did you manage your team/colleagues, recognise individual contributions, share credits for success? What feedback did you receive on your leadership skills?
- How have you contributed to collaborations(s) and networks within your organisation?

Development-oriented questions

- How your activities as a team member will influence/shape the team's work?
- To what extent do you want to cooperate within or across the boundaries of your team/department/faculty? How will you develop those cooperations?
- Are you conscious of gender differences, cultural differences or other differences within a team and the impact they can have? Are you conscious of any prejudices you may have?

Supporting the Academic Community

As a mid-career academic, your contributions to the department and its accomplishment of the research programme, curriculum and department plan can be brought to fore; how you perform managerial and/or administrative tasks that go beyond the department; or how you provide leadership for collaboration ventures in the field of education with external parties originating from society, government, or the business community.

Your activities and outputs can be connected to important outcomes including:

- contributing towards the health of academic disciplines, to innovative methodologies, and cross-disciplinary approaches;
- contributing to the existence and strength of networks of people and organisations who understand and can make use of the research;
- promoting a culture of responsible research and innovation.

Examples might include project management, line management contributions to the success of a team or advancement of colleagues, involvement in collaborations/networks within your organization and/or beyond. Activities and their relevant indicators and sources may also include:

Scholarly Activities	Evidence: reach, use, relevance data	Potential Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Serving on a conference or symposium committee→ Taking part in committees or working groups→ Managing equipment, resources, and facilities needed for carrying out research→ Serving on the editorial board of a journal or press→ Serving as an expert or peer reviewer for a publication or funding agency→ Serving in an elected position within an association or scholarly society→ Conducting teaching and learning reviews at peer institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Attendees and speakers' feedback→ Number and diversity of speakers and attendees at events→ Different disciplines present→ Networks created or enhanced→ Number / quality of access to training and supports facilitated→ Number / quality of internationalisation connections facilitated→ Changes in open access data, instruments, and outputs→ Changes in equality, diversity, and inclusion data→ Diversity of participation→ Innovations in supported institutions and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Your own data→ Terms of reference for the position→ Annual progress reporting→ Testimonials by colleagues, peers, or beneficiaries→ Awards→ Agreements→ OpenDOAR→ News articles→ Organisation and programme data

Results-oriented questions

- What leadership roles have you taken on? What feedback did you receive on these?
- How have your activities (e.g., on committees/boards/panels) contributed to the wider scientific research and innovation community?
- How your role as a team leader shaped the team's direction, organisation, and strategy?

Development-oriented questions

- What leadership or management related ambitions do you have, and what do you need to achieve them?
- What issues arising outside your team will affect your project / team / department in the coming year? The next four years? How do you prepare for these expected changes?
- How do you participate in developing a vision for your project or team or department?

Supporting Broader Society

Your narrative can also convey your contributions in making scientific knowledge that is transparent, understandable, and applicable for a broad audience, (in)directly contributing to addressing societal challenges. You can share how you encourage and establish meaningful relationships beyond academia and is interested in influencing policy and practice with enterprise, government, and other non-academic stakeholders and settings through your research, teaching, and engagement, and the (potential) significance of your contributions to the communities you engage with.

Your positive societal impact, through your teaching, research, or societal engagement, can take multiple forms, including:

- contributing to increasing public awareness and understanding of science, economic, and societal issues;
- influencing public policies and legislation at a local, regional, national, and/or international level;
- influencing and informing practitioners and professional practice.

Activities and their relevant indicators and sources may include:

Scholarly Activities	Evidence: reach, use, relevance data	Potential Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Writing an article for a news media outlet→ Blogging or podcasting→ Discussing research on social media→ Being quoted or interviewed on radio, 'TV, or in print journalism→ Leading community service or community engagement projects→ Representing/advocating on behalf of a research area→ Consultancy→ Designing prototypes→ Initiating and promoting networks with external partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Testimonials from engaged publics→ Shares on media→ Number of citations, downloads, accesses→ Readers' feedback→ Number and quality of engagement (followers, comments)→ Changes in practice and policy→ Reductions in costs or increased savings and efficiencies→ Achievements delivered by institutions you lead→ Amount secured for societal partners→ Diversity of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Own data→ Institutional webpage→ Press releases→ Altmetric→ PlumX→ Publisher's website→ Web search→ Google Scholar→ Website traffic data (e.g. Google Analytics)→ Social media analytics→ Official documents on governmental websites→ Overton→ Funder's webpage→ Awards

Results-oriented questions

- How are your results (potentially) being used in public, private, or other sectors?
- How have you included different stakeholders, academic and non-academic, in your research and/or teaching?
- What is your contribution to the societal impact reputation of the department?

Development-oriented questions

- What kinds of collaboration do you wish to have with different disciplines, fields of research, institutions, or sectors of society?
- How open are you to different perspectives on your teaching and research activities? How can you incorporate them into your teaching and research practice?
- What efforts will you undertake to collaborate and gain local, national, and international exposure for your courses and projects and their outputs?

Illustrative examples of P&D narratives

Retrospective

[DRIVE and ACTIVITY, e.g., I am an advocate for developing topic A and have been invited to contribute to panels on it, including B and C in 2022]. Recently, I have developed an interest in topic B and have [ACTIVITY, e.g., expanded my work into D]. [COMPETENCE / SKILLS DEVELOPED / BENEFIT, e.g., This has increase my awareness in social and political developments that will affect our department and contributed to my participation in committee X]. I have also incorporated this awareness into my research activities and have included [COMMUNITY PARTNER] in my [ACTIVITY, e.g., latest proposal development for funding programme Y]. This has led to [BENEFIT / VALUES, e.g., changes to the scope of the research, making it more socially engaged and open minded by including their situated knowledge into the research question and data collection planning].

[DRIVE, e.g., Throughout my teaching career, I have taken on educational leadership within my team. In 2022, this has included [ACTIVITY, e.g., sharing my educational expertise through professional development program A], which [BENEFIT, e.g., encouraged colleagues X and Y to redevelop their curricula to make them more impact-driven]. In line with [DRIVE / VALUES, e.g., my educational leadership philosophy and our Connecting and being an Erasmian], I have [ACTIVITY, e.g., engaged in disseminating scholarship in education through organizing conference B], which [BENEFIT and EVIDENCE, e.g., has created a peer network, providing a structured space for meaningful conversations. The network is established with Z people joining in the past 3 months].

As part of my continuous development, I successfully completed [NAME COURSE]. The learnings have already benefitted my practice and was recognised through recent feedback by [BENEFICIARY, e.g., students, colleagues]. I am currently one of the initiators of [ACTIVITY, e.g., the working group on sustainability in X], which has already [BENEFIT, e.g., encouraged groups of students to Y]. [ACTIVITY, e.g., With working with groups A and B], I have [DRIVE and BENEFIT, e.g., developed my vision and ambition for educational improvements which have achieved positive (in)formal teaching evaluations by colleagues and students. One quote that encapsulates this is the feedback by Professor A, who has referred to my new course as "a pioneering venture that reflects the embedding of impact awareness in our everyday teaching activities".]

Prospective

[CONTEXT, e.g., Given my previous strong achievements in research and teaching activities and EUR and School's strategies], my focus for the next P&D cycle will be [ACTIVITY PLANNED / COMPETENCE / SKILL TO BE DEVELOPED, e.g., on advancing societal impact, so I am interested in the School Impact focus profile]. [DRIVE, e.g., I generally work in a cross-disciplinary and imaginative way, to synthesise new perspectives and consequently produce novel research]. For this, it would be helpful for the School to [IDENTIFY SUPPORT NEEDED, e.g., clarify its inter- and transdisciplinary approaches when assessing promotion criteria]. This would [BENEFIT, e.g., increase my commitment to engaging with societal partners in my education and research activities, in line with EUR strategy and the focus profile].

[DRIVE, e.g., To improve the visibility and impact of my results], I will [ACTIVITY / PLAN TO BE FOLLOWED, e.g., engage with societal groups A and B which are relevant to my topic X. They are trusted gatekeepers to beneficiaries C and D, which can also contribute to advancing my subtopics Y and Z]. [VALUE, e.g., To ensure these are just mutually beneficial collaborations], I will [ACTIVITY, e.g., apply for funding which includes resources for societal actors, like grant programmes E and F.]. I will also [ACTIVITY and BENEFIT, e.g., serve as a peer reviewer for funding programme G, which will increase my reputation within the field and allow me to advocate on behalf of X].

Tool Summary

What is this?

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

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 your scientific career. With your feedback, we hope to improve how we recognise and value your output 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 mid-career academic staff in preparation for their formal P&D conversation. There were additional guidelines written for early- and late- career academics.

How and when to use it?

These guidelines are developed as a bespoke support tool that can be used before or during the process of writing your narrative in preparation for the P&D conversation. Feel free to consult on it as preferred.

While these guidelines have been developed for the EUR P&D conversation, you may benefit from using parts of it in other processes where narratives are increasingly being requested, such as grant funding applications and promotions. In those cases, be sure to adapt the language and examples to make it appropriate to what is being requested.

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_PNIENdfRS5R5catqgiJzs3woS3Y#/

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.