

Narratives on Career Development:

A Reading Guide for Supervisors

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These guidelines provide support for those assessing academic staff using narratives in the EUR Development cycle. The guidelines provides a series of questions to guide reflection and decision-making. Assessing narratives allows to appreciate a wider range of contributions in academic work and expand focus on quality, which is in line with the principles of Recognition & Rewards.

Who can primarily benefit from this tool?

EUR academic staff who have a supervisory role.

In which context is this tool useful?

Before or during Development conversations. Consult the 'Suggested approach' section to become acquainted with the narrative format and components. Consider questions in each narrative part and information per area of scholarly contribution when reading employee's narrative reflection.

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Narratives for the EUR Development Cycle

These guidelines are intended to support supervisors in assessing the development of their team members when using career narratives in the context of the Development conversations.

In the EUR Development cycle, reflection takes the form of a narrative which then becomes a basis for the development conversation.

Moving towards a narrative approach for the Development conversations fits with the transition we make as a University in which opportunities are created to diversify talents and recognise and appreciate multiple contributions. 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 and where your strengths lie in a more holistic way.

First, this guideline introduces the structure of the narrative and how it can be incorporated in the Development conversation. Then, they provide a series of questions to be inspired by when reading the narratives of those you supervise. The questions are grouped first around the structure of the narrative (Looking back, Looking forward), then around areas of scholarly contribution team members may have written about.

The narrative is not intended to replace the Development conversation but rather as a conversation starter and to give an opportunity to the team members to provide insights on their work and achievements in a concise yet comprehensive way. It is designed to support and inform people in supervising roles and decision making on the performance and development of team members.

There are various tools available for the Development cycle. Below the three steps of a D-cycle conversation are visualised with corresponding tools available.



The aim of a narrative

The narrative, in context of the Development cycle, is intended to demonstrate what people are passionate about, their (planned) achievements, and (expectations for future) development. The narrative tells the story behind their development and achievements, and shows their drive, vision, and values. Written 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.

As a supervisor, when reading through the narrative, look for evidence of personal development that can inform the conversation. Investigate if there are points for you to provide positive or constructive feedback that may help them understand and reflect on their development and performance.

Be aware that 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. These can be cultural and gender differences, extroversion vs introversion, internalizing vs externalizing failures, etc. For example, people from collectivist cultures may find it hard to use “I” and describe their personal role in team achievements, even when they played a crucial role. Consider exploring these issues in the conversation if you feel this might have happened.

The narrative is an academic’s personal story and consists of three parts: reflections on the past year, and an outlook to the coming years based on their vision and ambitions, and wellbeing and engagement. It will illustrate their (planned) ambitions, contributions, and challenges.

A narrative consists of three parts:



“Looking back”

Which invites reflections on the past period of your development cycle in all domains of academic work, including leadership;



“Looking forward”

Which requests your reflections to the coming years based on your vision and ambitions, in all domains of academic work, including leadership;



“Well-being and engagement”

Which invites your reflections on how you are experiencing work and your connection with your team.

Suggested approach & reflective questions

A suggested approach

Academics are suggested to use the following 6 narrative components.

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Personal drive
Personal values and vision that inform actions |  Benefits & outcomes
The results of actions and activities |
|  Activities & Results
What the person did and accomplished in the past period of time (also negative experiences) |  Evidence
Examples and proof that illustrate positive results of activities |
|  Skills & competences
Capabilities that enable someone to be effective in their role |  Erasmian values
Shared organisational values for all employees of EUR |

A narrative can be build using and combining these components to build their narrative as suggested in the structure below.

- Begin with your **personal drive** and how it links to your **activities/plans**
- What **skills/competences** do you plan or aim to develop?
- What are the expected **benefits/outcomes** of these activities?
- What kind of **evidence** can indicate success? What are the goals?
- Optional: How will they relate to the shared **Erasmian values**?

Reflective questions

This tool includes reflective questions which are captured in these boxes. The questions help to reflect on the narrative written by your supervisee. We propose questions for the three parts of the narrative, looking back, looking forward and wellbeing & engagement.

Also we propose some extra reflective questions related to scholarly work, developed by the [Royal Society](#), drawing from established and internationally recognised biosketches , assessment matrices and application forms. We propose questions for **Generation of Knowledge; Development of Individuals and Collaborations; Supporting the Academic Community; Supporting Broader Society**. [Go directly to the reflective questions related to scholarly work.](#)



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 any 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? For example, 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?

Looking back



Reflection of 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 the person drive of your supervisee 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 Development cycle conversation? Were there barriers or missed opportunities that can be addressed in this conversation for the next Development 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?

Looking forward



Outlook for the next period

In this second part of the narrative, 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 their next cycle, setting the tone for their development. In doing so, they again address competences and 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/career accent, which profile/accents and why may also be present.

Results-oriented questions

- How is your supervisee 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/career accent (if they do not have it yet)?

Development-oriented questions

- In line with their career stage and profile/accents, (if applicable) 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?

Well-being and engagement



Well-being at work

In the third part of the narrative, your supervisee writes about personal development needs and how their School and Department could support them with those. Pay attention to the personal circumstances that may impact them or their work (for example, parental leave or long-term absence through illness).

Well-being related questions

- What does the narrative reveal about what energizes or drains this person in their work? How do these factors influence their motivation, engagement, and development?
- Does the supervisee show signs of a healthy balance between work and personal life? Are they working in a sustainable way that supports long-term wellbeing and employability?
- How does the supervisee describe handling work pressure or challenges? What kinds of support or resources might help them sustain their performance and wellbeing?
- Does the narrative suggest that the supervisee feels safe, respected, and supported in the workplace? How can you foster greater psychological safety and openness in your relationship or team?

Engagement related questions

- What does the narrative reveal about how the supervisee experiences the working atmosphere, collaboration, and practical conditions in their team or organization? Are there signals of satisfaction, frustration, or unmet needs?
- Does the supervisee express a sense of connection to their team or community? What factors seem to strengthen—or weaken—their feeling of belonging and engagement?
- How does the narrative reflect the supervisee's experience of inclusiveness, respect, and being able to bring their authentic self to work? Are there indications of barriers or positive practices worth reinforcing?
- Does the supervisee feel heard, valued, and safe to express opinions or challenge existing practices? What might you do as a supervisor to foster a more open and trusting environment?

Additional considerations per area of scholarly contribution

The [Royal Society](#) Identified 4 areas of Scholarly contributions that we suggest academics to consider using for their narrative. The following questions help you to reflect on the narrative of your supervisee.

Generation of Knowledge

- 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?
- 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?
- How do they embed open and responsible science into their research practice?

Supporting the Academic Community

- 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/ambition and ambitions been considered in the vision of your team?
- 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 of Individuals and Collaborations

- 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/School? As their supervisor, can you facilitate any of these collaborations?
- Are your ambitions for the team being met by their intended development? Can you suggest an increased alignment between those if needed?
- 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/ambition?
- Have they engaged in networking within and beyond the team? Can you discuss which people they could get involved with in their network and which relationships should be reinforced?

Supporting Broader Society

- 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 research and education activities and outputs?
- 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?

References and additional resources

References

These guidelines have been developed using as inspiration the following resources. We have adapted the Researchcomp and RIF models in the writing guidelines, incorporating perspectives from the 'University Job Classification' (UFO) system and the Competence Instrument for the Dutch Universities:

- The European Competence Framework for Researchers https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7da29338-37bf-4d51-b5eb-a1571b84c7ad_
- The Career Framework for University Teaching <https://www.teachingframework.com/>
- Researcher Impact Framework: Building Audience Focused Evidence-Based Impact Narratives (RIF) <https://doi.org/10.25546/98474>

Resources

- EUR Development cycle: <https://my.eur.nl/en/eur-employee/hr/learning-career-centre/learning-development/development-cycle>
- Recognition & Rewards at EUR: <https://my.eur.nl/en/eur-employee/hr/recognitionrewards>
- Erasmian Leadership Profile: <https://my.eur.nl/en/eur-employee/hr/leadershipdevelopment#profile>
- Narrative CVs: https://rise.articulate.com/share/NyPk_PNIENdfRS5R5catqqiJzs3woS3Y#/
- 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/inclusiveeducation>
- Goals and competences as per the University Job Classification (UFO) system and the University Competence Instrument: https://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/en_GB/job_classification_ufo.htm
- Royal Society: <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/research-culture/tools-for-support/resume-for-researchers>

Related tools

- Narratives on Career Development: A Writing Guide for Academics <https://doi.org/10.25397/eur.29590130.v1>
- R&R Academic Activities Catalogue <https://r.erim.eur.nl/r-apps/academicactivitiescatalogue/>
- View all R&R tools in the R&R Toolbox: <https://www.eur.nl/en/about-university/vision/recognition-rewards/recognition-rewards-toolbox>

Colophon

These guidelines were put together for academics who are supervising academic work at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) in the context of the Development cycle. These are generic and discipline agnostic, intended to help understand competences, outputs and outcomes in relation to diverse areas of academic work that could be reflected upon during development conversations.

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Contributors

Writing original draft:	Dr. Giovanna Lima
Writing review and editing:	Bálint Hardy, Alise Scerbinina, Eveline Braber, Anna Smulders
Design:	Anna Smulders
Project management and Supervision:	Dr. Bianca Langhout



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**Erasmus
University
Rotterdam**