

Narratives on Career Development:

A Writing Guide for Academics

These guidelines support academic staff in writing professional career narratives in the context of the EUR Development cycle. Narrative writing allows to showcase 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. These guidelines were developed with examples relevant to mid-career level academics; junior and senior academics are encouraged to adapt it to their needs.

In which context is this tool useful?

Before or during Development conversations. Parts of these guidelines are also applicable in writing narratives for grant funding applications and promotions. Consult the 'Suggested approach' section for inspiration on the format and components of the narrative, illustrated by a colour-coded example. Use information in the 'Areas of Scholarly Contributions' for more reflective questions and activity examples.

Tip: This is an interactive document. Open it in Adobe Acrobat.

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Tip: This is an interactive document. Open it in Adobe Acrobat for optimal usage.



Narratives for the EUR Development Cycle

Academics are increasingly being asked to develop these narratives in the context of career opportunities, including grant proposals. In this tool we provide more information on what you could include in your narrative reflection.

Also, in the new EUR Development cycle, we ask academic staff to write a narrative reflection in preparation for the Development conversation. 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.

The standard narrative consists of three parts: reflection on the past ("looking back"); view for the future ("looking forward"); and reflection on wellbeing and engagement. On page 5 you can find more context to the three parts of a narrative.

Academic staff is invited to reflect on activities and achievements in different areas, including: generation of knowledge; development of individuals and collaborations; supporting the academic community and broader society.

It is the intention to keep the narrative concise, however you can always add attachments to the form in the system. The narrative can be written in English or Dutch, depending on what you and your supervisor decide about this.

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



An introduction to narratives

A 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 and qualitative) indicators and additional information, a professional career narrative contextualises your more traditional resume.

The career narrative for the yearly Development conversation supports you in telling your professional story, in a holistic, clearly structured way. This fosters a meaningful Development cycle process for both supervisors and supervisees.

A good narrative:

- 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.

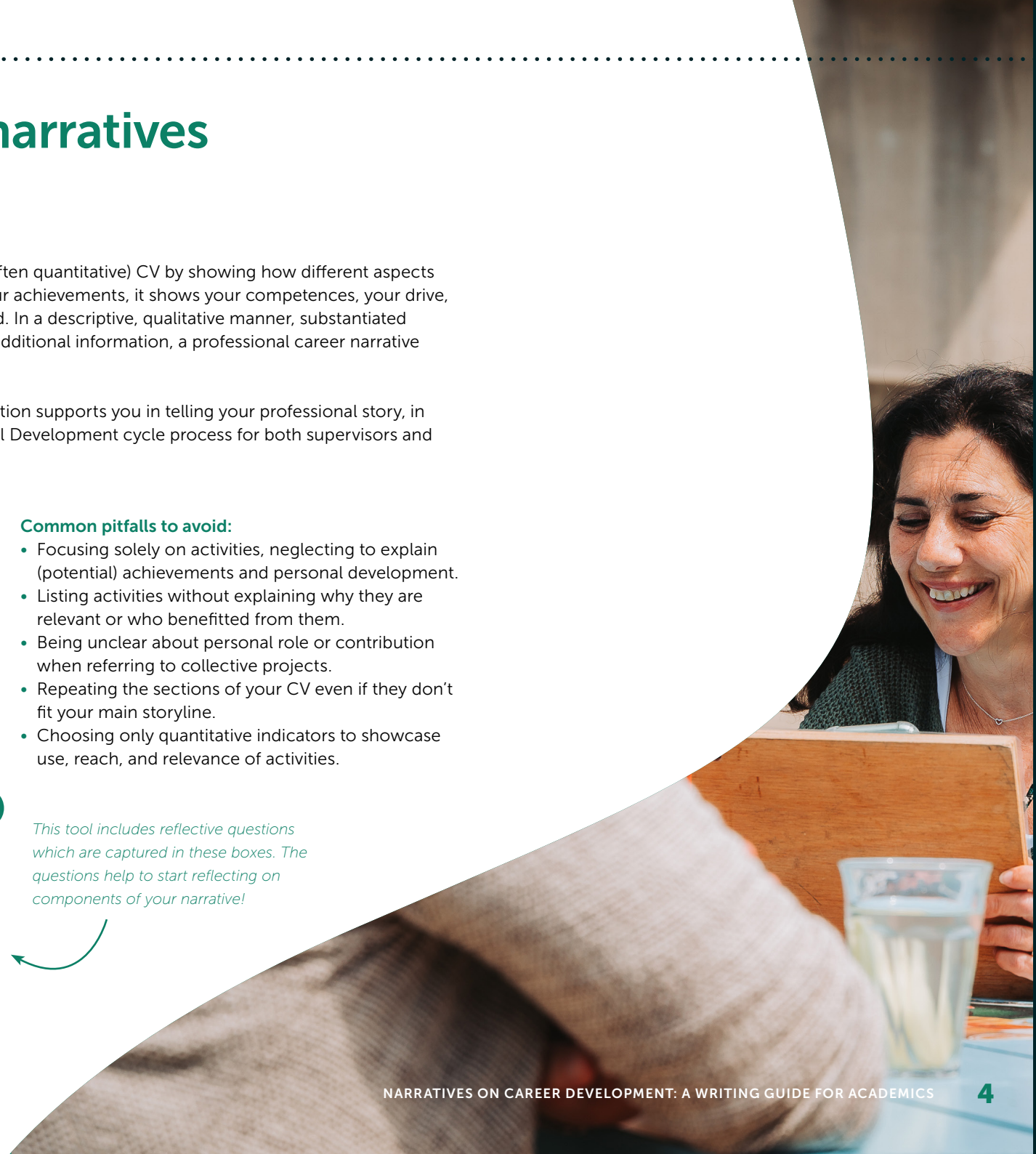
Common pitfalls to avoid:

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



- 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?

This tool includes reflective questions which are captured in these boxes. The questions help to start reflecting on components of your narrative!



The three parts of a D-cycle narrative



Looking back

Reflection of the past year

In the first part, you reflect on your development and results in the past year, and how they relate to your personal ambitions and your current context. The aim is to provide a clear impression of your work, integrating the relevance of your achievements across different key areas.

You can substantiate the reflection throughout the narrative and add attachment(s). For example, appreciative emails of your supervision and teaching activities or positions in internal committees and their relevance. The form also allows you to request feedback from colleagues you have worked with. You and your supervisor may make use of the activity tracker to monitor your tasks.



Looking forward

Outlook for the next period

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 the next cycle, setting the tone for your development and performance for the next 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.



Wellbeing & engagement

Wellbeing at work

In this third part, you are invited to mention personal development needs and how your School and Department could support you with. If relevant, mention personal circumstances that may impact you or your work (for example, parental leave or long-term absence through illness). If that applies to your position, mention if you are interested in a focus profile/career accent, which profile/accents and why. If not, why not.



- Which result of your work in the past year made you proud, and which (if any) made you unhappy?
- How did the different parts of your work cohere and how did they reinforce each other?
- Which cooperations with colleagues have you been part of and how did that work out?
- Which leadership roles did you fulfill, and how would you describe your style and effectiveness?



- What do you want to develop in the next few years?
- What do you want to achieve in the next few years?
- What do you need to be effective in this?



- Which factors influence your wellbeing and engagement?
- What do you need from the organisation and/or your supervisor?

Suggested approach & reflective questions

A suggested approach

Next to the three parts, looking back, looking forward and wellbeing & engagement has the proposed format 6 components. Use and combine these components to build your narrative as suggested in the structure below and the definitions of these components.

- 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**?

Personal drive your personal values and vision that inform your actions

Activities & Results what you did and accomplished in the past period of time (also negative experiences)

Skills & competences capabilities that enable you to be effective in your role

Benefits & outcomes the results of your actions and activities

Evidence examples and proof that illustrate positive results of your activities

Erasmian values shared organisational values for all employees of EUR.

How to use the reflective questions

Reflective questions, focused on development and results, can give guidance and support for the Looking Back and Looking Forward parts. You may want to choose one or a few of the questions to address in your narrative. The questions, competences, and activities can be grouped in four areas of scholarly work, developed by the [Royal Society](#), drawing from established and internationally recognised biosketches, assessment matrices and application forms. **Generation of Knowledge; Development of Individuals and Collaborations; Supporting the Academic Community; Supporting Broader Society.**

Within each area, you will also find examples of competences you may consider developing, activities you could mention within different areas of scholarly contribution, and potential indicators you can use to substantiate your narrative.

Please do not feel that all of them should be covered as they may not all be relevant to your current journey. While the examples split contributions and activities in different areas, **you should aim for an integrated story in which the relation and interaction between activities in your key areas becomes visible.**

When needed 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.

Illustrative Example

← Looking back

Throughout my teaching career, I have taken on educational leadership within my team. In 2023, this has included e.g., sharing my educational expertise through professional development program A, which e.g., encouraged colleagues X and Y to redevelop their curricula to make them more impact-driven. In line with my educational leadership philosophy, I have e.g., engaged in disseminating scholarship in teaching and learning through organizing conference B, which e.g., has created a peer network, providing a structure space for meaningful conversations with colleagues. The network is now established with Z colleagues having joined in the past 3 months.

→ Looking forward

To improve the visibility and impact of my results, I will engage with societal groups A and B, which are relevant to my topic X. To ensure these mutually beneficial collaborations, I will also apply for funding which includes resources for societal actors, like grant programmes C and D. This will increase my reputation within the field and allow me to advocate on behalf of groups A and B and my topic X.

Legenda

Personal drive

Activities & Results

Skills & competences

Benefits & outcomes

Evidence

Erasmian values

Generation of Knowledge

Generation of knowledge refers to activities that result in creation of new information and insights, either as a single researcher or in diverse groups. This refers to both quantitative and qualitative output.

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?
- Why are these research results 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 the strengths you want to build on?
- What development opportunities will you take?
- How will you generate academic and societal impact with your projects?

Competences and Skills

Open and responsible science, inter- and transdisciplinary research and innovation are increasingly relevant in our academic environment. You can use this section to explain how you have developed or plan to develop novel approaches that support your ambitions, complementing your UFO profile.

Competences and Skills questions

Inter- and Transdisciplinary Interactions:

- Are you aware and account for the diversity in disciplinary perspectives and understandings of concepts and terms?
- Have you developed or are interested in new approaches to perform research and education across disciplines?

Promoting open scholarship and citizen science:

- Are you knowledgeable about the (dis)advantages of (not) engaging with citizens for academic purposes?
- Are you able to integrate citizens at diverse stages of the education and/or research cycle?

Managing intellectual property rights:

- Do you know what copyright, intellectual property rights, and licensing are? Do you use open-source software and repositories?
- Have you considered engaging with the technology transfer office?

Managing data:

- Are you confident in how to safely produce, store, analyse and maintain data?
- Do you understand legal and ethical issues regarding storage and use of data?

Activities, Results and Evidence

When reflecting on your development and describing your achievements in generating and mobilising knowledge, reflect 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, (c) are used in relevant contexts and (d) embed openness where possible as the norm.

Outcomes associated with 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.

Scholarly Activities and Results

- 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 in an open and responsible manner
- 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
- Supporting community publishing models e.g., Diamond Publishing

Evidence: reach, use, relevance data

- 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

Potential Sources

- 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



Development of Individuals and Collaborations

Development of individuals refers to activities that contribute to the growth of skills and competencies of others, for example of colleagues and/or students, through formal and informal leadership positions and behaviours. Development of collaborations refers to contributions to formal and informal networks which an academic belongs to in the areas of research, education, and impact.

Results-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?

Development-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 collaboration(s) and networks within your organisation? Contributions in terms of project tasks, role in the team, leadership, etc?

Competences and Skills

Developments in team science and team working, and impact-driven education, are driving new approaches across a different range of activities in developing individuals and collaborations. You can explore what you have learned or wish to develop in these areas.

Competences and Skills questions

Working in teams

- Do you understand own priorities and those of coworkers?
- Can you leverage the strengths of different team members?
- Have you worked on creating a cooperative work environment?

Perspective taking

- Are you able to trust others?
- Have you built empathy to understand what others need?
- Do you regularly explore the perspective of the other?

Cooperating across disciplines

- Have you engaged with and learned from academics from other disciplines?
- Are you interested in leading an inter-disciplinary research group/course?

Facilitating learning processes

- Do you practice giving/receiving advice?
- Have you acted as a mentor to less experienced colleagues?

Activities, Results and Evidence

Your narrative can 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 University.

Scholarly Activities and Results

- Developing and teaching a new open access course
- Advising / Supervising students and PhD candidates
- Hiring, training, or supervising student assistants
- Analysing societal demand in terms of education and the learning needs of students
- Writing letters of recommendation
- Providing feedback and support to new or less experienced colleagues
- Supervising and assess students' work placement assignments and final projects and theses

Evidence: reach, use, relevance data

- Student / beneficiary feedback
- Number of modules and students taught
- Number of 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

Potential Sources

- Your own data
- ORCID
- LinkedIn
- Course provider data
- Institutional websites
- Testimonials
- from colleagues and beneficiaries
- Acknowledgment in publications
- Awards
- Scopus
- Dimensions



Supporting the Academic Community

Supporting the academic community includes activities that promote wellbeing of peers, encourage safe and productive work environment, and contribute to an overall positive atmosphere at all levels of the organisation.

Results-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?

Development-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 community?
- How your role as a team leader shaped the team's direction, organisation, and strategy?

Competences and Skills

According to the Erasmian Leadership Profile, a leader is someone who directs their energy and the energy of their followers to the achievement of a common goal. A manager at EUR is a formal role which contains many aspects of leadership. Management is about organising and facilitating resources, especially people, to effectively deliver results. Being a good supervisor also requires leadership skills and ability to support, lead, and inspire on a personal level.

Competences and Skills questions

Being a role model

- Do you operate from your personal and organisation's values?
- Are you able to bring your whole self to work?
- Have you considered the unintended negative consequences of decisions?

Inspiring vision

- Do you dare to think outside of the box and experiment, learn, and iterate?
- Do you support and encourage entrepreneurial ideas from team members?
- Do you stimulate reflection on the progress within the team?

Driving achievement

- Are you able to set priorities and have clarity on roles and responsibilities?

- Do you recognise and reward people appropriately?
- How have you facilitated information to be shared in a timely manner?

Promoting inclusion, diversity & belonging

- Do you acknowledge the importance of and practice giving/receiving advice?
- Have you acted as a mentor to less experienced colleagues?

Applying and fostering ethics and integrity principles

- Are you confident in how to avoid and report misconducts?
- Have you provided advice about ethical issues to peers?
- Do you engage actively in the works of various ethical committees?

Activities, Results and Evidence

In your development narrative, you can describe your contributions to the department, such as department plan, research programme, and curriculum. Other reflection points can be:

- How you perform managerial and/or administrative tasks that go beyond the department;
- How you provide leadership for collaborations in education/research with external parties (society, government, business)

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.

Scholarly Activities and Results

- 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
- Communicating with the public via sources that are openly accessible and widely available, without paywalls or other barriers

Evidence: reach, use, relevance data

- 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

Potential Sources

- 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



Supporting Broader Society

Supporting broader society refers to research, education, and impact activities that engage with stakeholders beyond own University and world of academia. You can read more about how EUR defines societal impact at [Defining societal impact at EUR | Erasmus University Rotterdam Employees | Erasmus University Rotterdam](#).

Results-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?

Development-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?

Competences and Skills

Academics at EUR are creating novel, impactful and groundbreaking research, and deliver solid and inspiring education that enables students to be game changers who are ready to create positive, lasting impact. Some competences are particularly relevant for these impact-related scholarly activities.

Competences and Skills questions

Expressing a collaborative learning attitude

- Do you show openness for exchange and learning from good practices elsewhere
- How have you critically analysed information and ideas from diverse sources?

Reflexivity

- Are you aware how your activities may impact society: who/what will be affected in terms of e.g. health, politics, economics, social structures, etc.?
- Have you reflected upon the normative components of societal urgencies and your personal and professional values of being an Erasmian?

Communicating to audiences beyond academia

- Do you understand value of public engagement in research?
- Have you used different communication forms to reach different audiences?

- Are you able to communicate in a clear way in different channels?

Promoting use of science in policy-making

- Do you understand the policy relevancy of your field of research?
- Have you considered building networks to inform policy-making?
- How have you contributed to science-for-policy outputs?

Promoting open (social) innovation

- Are you willing to identify ideas from societal partners and engage in transdisciplinary co-creation?
- Do you understand process of exploitation of research and turning research into ventures?
- How have you pursued opportunities to create societal value with your research and education activities?

Activities, Results and Evidence

Your Development narrative can also showcase your contributions to creating scientific knowledge that is transparent, open and accessible, understandable, applicable for a broader audience, and (in)directly contributes to addressing societal challenges.

You can share how you encourage and establish meaningful relationships beyond academia. For example, explain your interest in influencing policy and practice with enterprise, government, and other non-academic stakeholders and settings. This can be through research, teaching, and engagement activities. You can also highlight 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.

Scholarly Activities and Results

- 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

Evidence: reach, use, relevance data

- 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

Potential Sources

- 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



References & 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>

- 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>

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>

Related tools

- Narratives on Career Development: A Reading Guide for Supervisors <https://doi.org/10.25397/eur.29590124.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 undergoing development reviews at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) in the context of the Development Cycle. These are generic and discipline agnostic, intended to help understand competences, activities, and outcomes in relation to diverse areas of academic work that could be reflected upon during development conversations.

These guidelines stem from the collaboration between the EUR strategic project Recognition & Rewards (R&R) with the Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences (ESSB). We thank and appreciate the collaboration with the ESSB team, especially Prof. Victor Bekkers and Regina van der Linden. Any errors or omissions remain our own.

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