

Baseline Competencies for Writing a Compelling Narrative CV

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Outline

- Introduction to narrative CVs: the “what”, “why”, basic principles and general guidance
- Components of a narrative CV, examples, and tips for each section
- Q&A

Introduction to Narrative CVs: The “What”, “Why”, Basic Principles and General Guidance

What is a narrative CV?



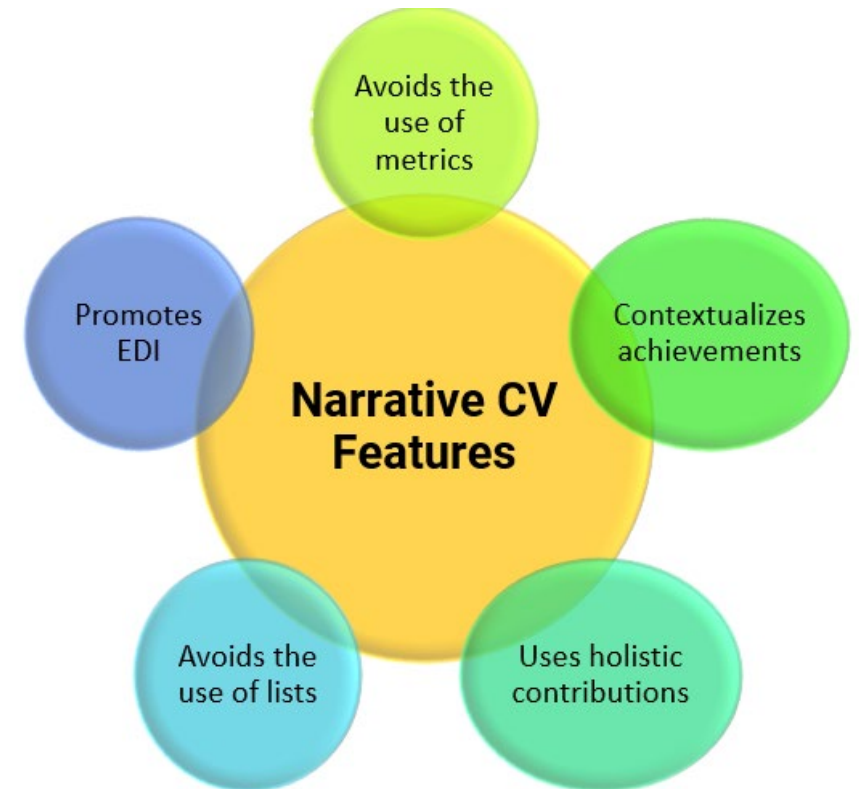
Source: UKRI

The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)'s recognition of the need to improve the way in which funding agencies and other parties evaluate the outputs of scientific research.

A CV type that provides the opportunity for researchers to use a structured, yet flexible, storytelling approach that is inclusive of a broad range of relevant skills and experience to demonstrate their contributions to research.

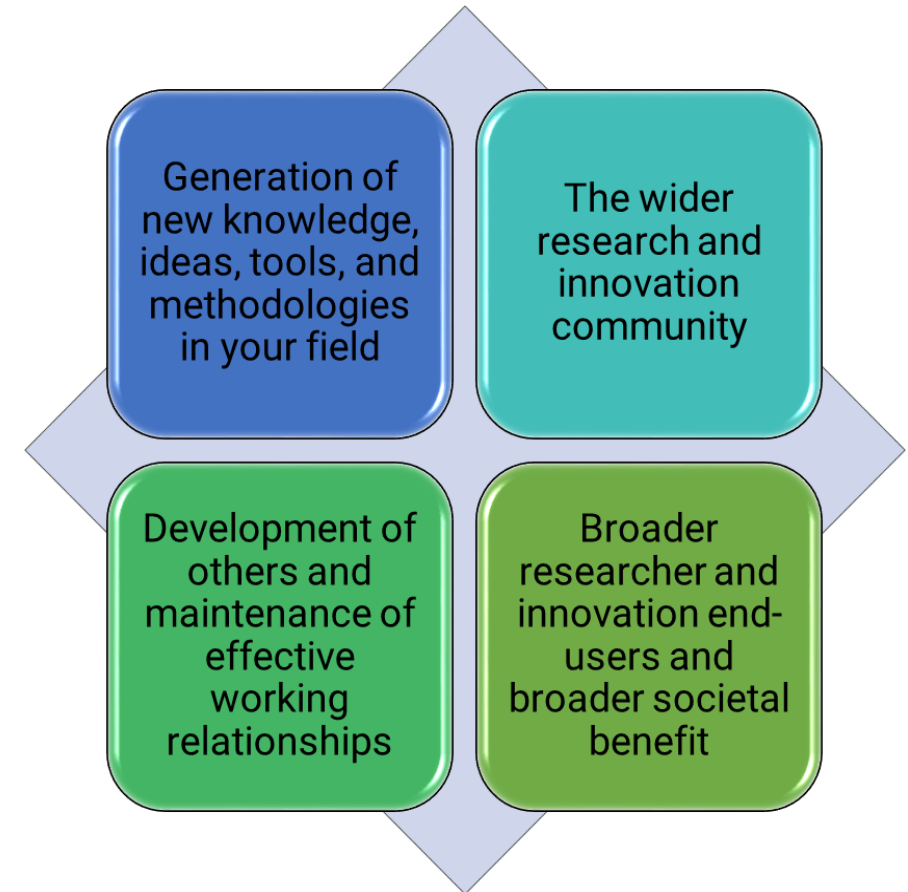
Why use a narrative CV?

- Recognizes and rewards many worthy aspects of research, allowing researchers to demonstrate holistic contributions.
- Gives consideration for different career paths and personal circumstances
- Provides the opportunity to explain the relevance of certain achievements to a specific proposal.
- Promotes equity, diversity, inclusion in science/research.
- Supports meaningful research achievements and responsible use of metrics.



Unlike traditional CVs...

- Allows researchers to show “who they are” in addition to showcasing “what they did”.
- Offers a qualitative approach to measuring a broad range of skills, experiences, and impact.
- It is not focused on **WHAT** you have done .
- Rather, it is focused on the impact of your work i.e. **HOW** what you have done has contributed to these 4 areas



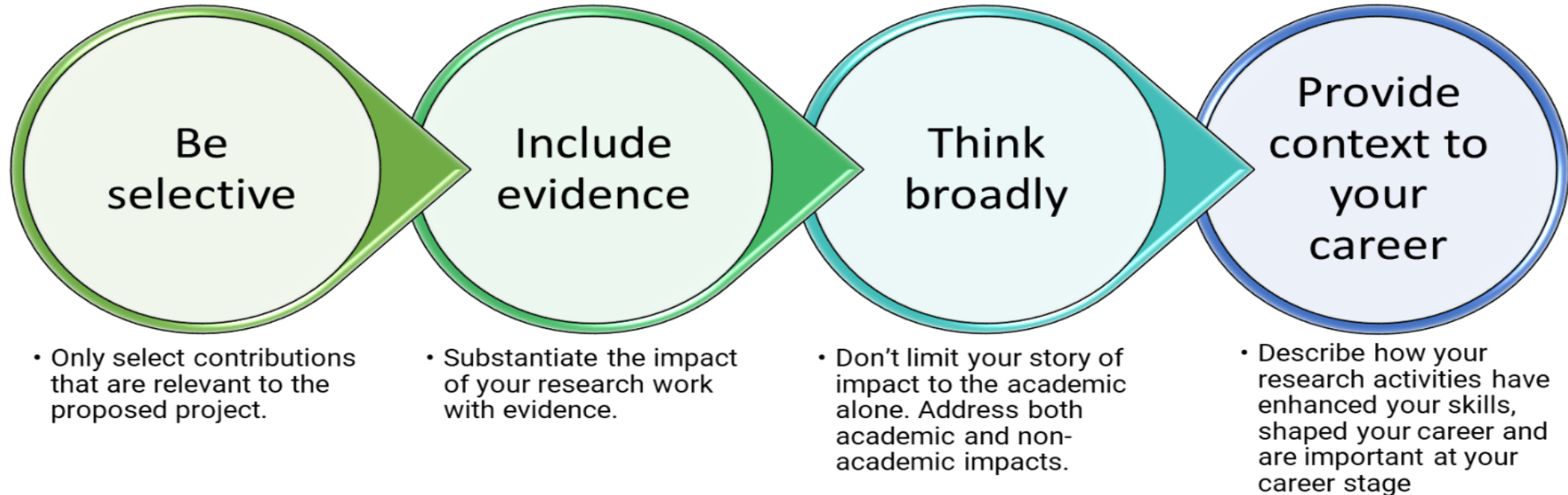
Since it is a HOW question...

- It can't be answered with a list. There is a need for a balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- Write explanations backed up with examples
- It has to be short and concise (4-6 pages depending on the funder).
- It has to be 'tailored' to the research you are seeking funding for.
- Narrative CVs are written in the first person.
- Need for a balance between demonstrating your accomplishments without appearing to be boastful.



Image source: Vector Portal
<https://vectorportal.com/vector/man-with-sheet-of-paper/31856>

Basic principles for writing a narrative CV



For Early Career Researchers (ECRs): State how long you have been working in research or in a particular role so your CV can be assessed in the context of your research stage

General guidance

- Focus on your past achievements to show that you are capable of delivering on future projects.
- Focus on your strengths and what is most applicable to the proposal and the funding program.
- Be succinct. Do not exceed the specified number of pages.
- No limit to the volume of information for each section.
- Avoid vague statements.
- Update your online presence (LinkedIn [ORCID](#), Google Scholar, university directory, etc.)
- **Unless requested by the funder, do not attach a separate publications list or change the funder's template.***
- **References to journal-based rankings in isolation is not allowed as this is not compliant with DORA principles.***

Getting started

- **Give yourself time:** don't leave this to the last minute as it may take time to prepare.
- **Don't try to reshape a traditional CV** to a narrative CV. It is not a listing of research outputs
- **Check the funder's instruction/template:** While the overall goal of a narrative CV may be the same across multiple funders, the sections may differ. Length and format may also differ depending on the funder.
- **Think carefully** about the research activities you have undertaken that is relevant to the current grant application.
- **Collect evidence** of the impact of your research activities.

Components of a Narrative CV, Tips, and Examples

1. Personal statement: Description of why you are well suited for your proposed role in the funding application

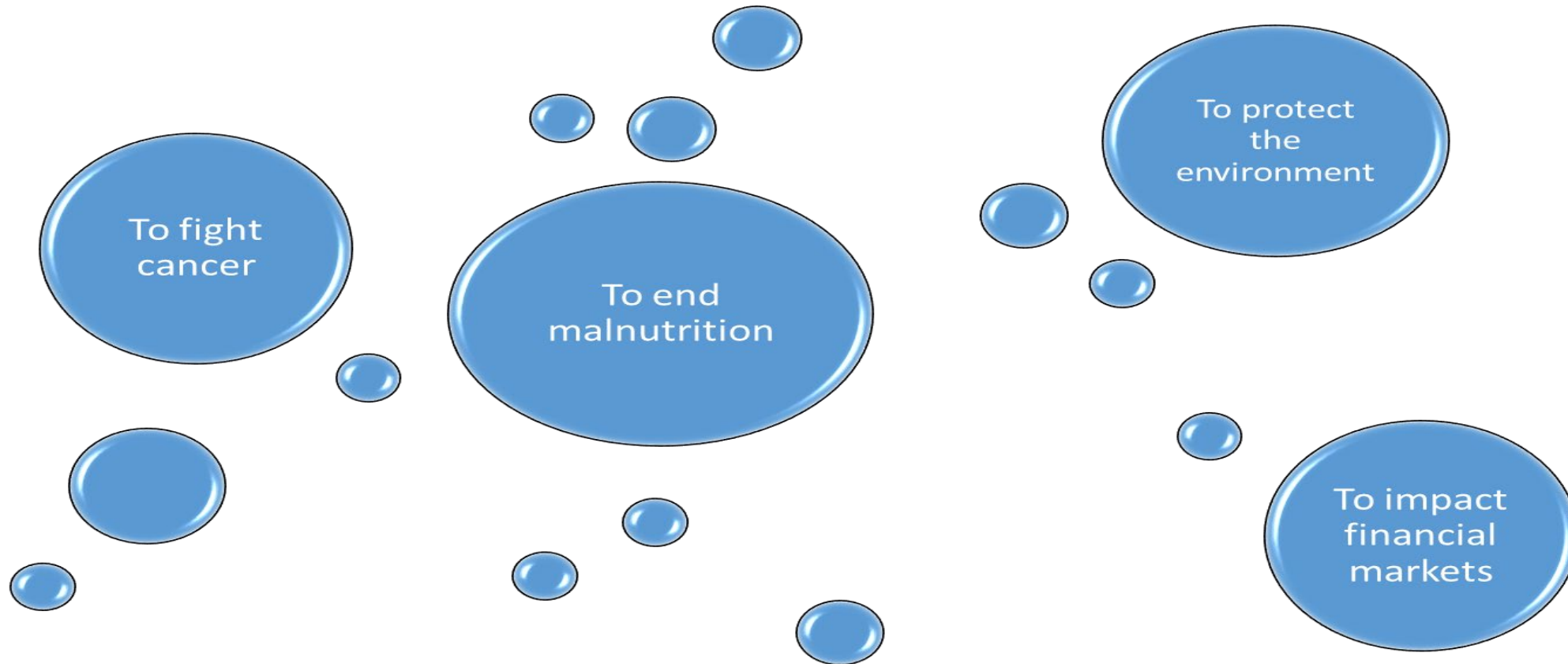
May include:

- Expertise
- Collaborations
- Impact of your research
- Leadership activities and skills.
- Lived or living experience.
- Recognitions (e.g., prizes, awards, community letters).

Your research vision, motivation for your activities, values, career goals, what drives you to do the reach you do etc.

Some funders may not require this section

Examples of ways to think about personal statement



Personal statement sample

Expertise

Benefits to end-users

“I’m a **polymer chemist** with a passion for solving complex drug analysis and delivery problems within the pharmaceutical industry. During my PhD, I developed a new methodology to analyze low-levels of x drug within plasma (DOI or publication title), which is now undergoing **further testing with industrial partners**. Combining these polymer synthesis skills with (other techniques), I applied this within the context of xyz (the first known instance of this application), working across a **collaboration with three institutions** and two industrial partners. Preliminary data demonstrates the efficacy of this. **I won a visiting scholarship to Japan** for 3 months to apply these skills in collaboration with material scientists (DOI; with full datasets available).

Collaboration

Recognition

Source: University of Dundee’s “Writing a Narrative CV”

https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/114334931/Dundee_narrative_CV_workbook.pdf

Personal statement sample 2

Research focus
and vision

As a [Your Research Area] researcher, I have dedicated my career to [Briefly state your research focus, e.g., understanding the role of islet cells in the development and/or treatment of diabetes, investigating the molecular basis of neurodegenerative diseases]. My research vision is to [State your long-term research goals, e.g., alleviate the global burden of diabetes, develop novel therapies for debilitating diseases].

Expertise

My expertise lies in [List 2-3 key techniques/methodologies, e.g., islet biology, advanced microscopy techniques, molecular biology]. I have successfully applied these skills to [Highlight a specific research achievement, e.g., the development of novel approaches to understanding the islet microenvironment, identifying novel therapeutic targets for a specific disease].

Collaborations

Throughout my career, I have fostered strong collaborative relationships with x number of institutions and industry partners including [Mention 1-2 key collaborators and their institutions, e.g., researchers in biophysics, clinicians, international research groups]. These collaborations have been instrumental to xyz [Describe specific outcomes].

Impact

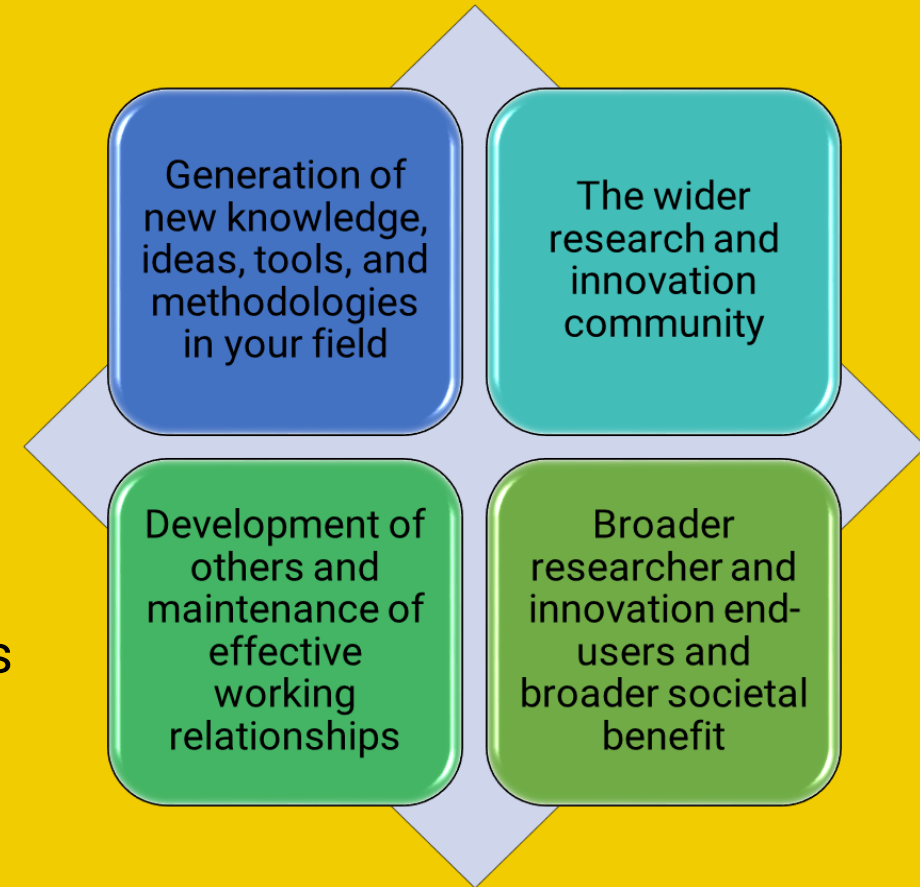
My research has had a significant impact on the field of [Your field] by [Describe 1-2 key impacts, e.g., providing new insights to the etiology of diabetes, contributing to the development of new diagnostic tools, translating research findings into potential therapeutic interventions]. My research was the basis of a clinical trial that improved patient diabetes management.

Awards/
Recognitions

I have received x number of awards (mention specific awards or recognitions that you have received) including the prestigious abc award for my contribution to the development of xyz. These awards and recognitions are testaments to the quality and impact of my work.

2. Most significant contributions and experiences: Description of contributions or experiences relevant to the funding application

- Contributions described in the personal statement section are applicable
- Aimed at understanding the impact, significance, usefulness and your role in each contribution or experience
- Does not have to be a single publication or report, it can be a collection of publications
- Contribution is not necessarily a publication, rather, it is more of a completed work that has some kind of scholarly, social, cultural, environmental or economic impact.



2. Most significant contributions and experiences - contributions to consider



Others:

- Contributions to the advancement of EDI
- Training and mentorship of HQP
- Professional association membership and roles (journal and conference review, funding assessment)

2. Most significant contributions and experiences - tips

Describe achievements and outcomes through a broad range of outputs

Provide evidence and not a list

Only select contributions that are relevant and be clear on why they are relevant

Use the [CRediT](#) authorship contribution statement to communicate your contribution to collaborative projects and publications

Describe the outcomes and impacts of the contribution including how the research has advanced the field.

It is okay to mention the number of times a publication has been cited.

Don't undersell yourself, it is your opportunity to shine!

2. Most significant contribution and experiences sentence structure sample for contribution to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodology etc.)

My research, published in [List 1-3 journals], has [Describe key findings and their significance, e.g., challenged existing paradigms, identified novel therapeutic targets, provided new insights into disease mechanisms]. This work on [Specific research topic] has been cited extensively in the literature, demonstrating its influence on subsequent research in the field.

Instead of saying

“ In the last 10 years, I have published 10 first-author articles, mainly in high-impact journals.”

You can say

“ My research has contributed to a revised understanding of {phenomenon A} through and in depth analysis of the effects of {B &C} on D. The work is reported in {DOI/Journal}.”

Source: University of Oxford

https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/researchsupport/documents/media/narrative_cv_guide_oxford_june_2023_0.pdf .

2. Most significant contribution and experiences (contribution to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodology etc. sample)

“My research in the last 10 years has underpinned the translation of beta-cell replacement therapy into clinical application for the treatment of type 1 diabetes. My early research published in (**Journal name**) led to the discovery of **abc** which has helped to modify the knowledge about **xyz**. This work was identified as a Research Highlight in (**Journal name**). Further research demonstrated for the first time, that there is an increased phenomenon of **abc** as a result of **xyz** thereby identifying new therapeutic targets and treatments for type 1 diabetes. This publication was selected as the editor’s choice in the Journal of (**name of journal**), the foremost journal in the diabetes research, has been cited **x** number of times in the last **y** years and has inspired **x** number of follow-up studies, demonstrating its impact on subsequent research and the trajectory of the field”.

Adapted from: REF Impact Case Studies University of Brighton and University of Essex
<https://impact.ref.ac.uk/casestudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=39754>.

2. Most significant contribution and experiences (contribution to policy sample)

1. My research program has not only advanced scientific knowledge in the field of diabetes but also translated into tangible policy changes with the potential to significantly improve the lives of individuals living with this condition. My research on (**mention specific research area**) published in (**journal name or citation of the article**) has been cited **x number** of times in policy documents relating to (**state policy changes**)”.
2. I actively engage with policymakers through (**describe specific actions, e.g. presenting research findings to policy-making bodies, collaborating with patient advocacy groups**). This engagements have raised awareness about the critical need for (**mention the specific policy need, e.g. improved access to diabetes treatment**) contributed to the development of evidence-based policies in diabetes treatment.
3. My research on (**mention specific research area**) published in (**DOI or citation of your research publication**) was cited in (**mention the specific policy document**) and provided critical evidence that informed (**specific policy or policy change**).

2. Most significant contribution and experiences (contribution to research and innovation end-users/ broader society sample)

1. My research findings have been disseminated through [**Channels, e.g., public health campaigns, media outlets, social media, blogs, webinars**] and have contributed to raising public awareness about diabetes prevention and management strategies. This has empowered individuals to make informed decisions about their health and has contributed to a broader societal understanding of this complex disease.
2. I am regular speaker at public awareness events including (**mention examples**). These events provide research updates and opportunities for families affected by diabetes to talk with researchers and understand how researchers are working together to prevent or find a cure for diabetes. Recent events have led to donations to my lab to the tune of (**\$x**).

2. Most significant contributions and experiences (conference presentation sample)

In 2023, I presented my research at the **[Name of Conference]** in **[Location]** where I shared my findings with a global audience of diabetes researchers. My unique expertise in **[Specific area 1, e.g., computational modeling]** and **[Specific area 2, e.g., clinical trial design]** allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of **[Specific research area, e.g., the impact of lifestyle interventions on glycemic control]**. My presentation sparked interest from leading researchers in **[Countries]**, resulting in valuable knowledge exchange and an invitation to join an international collaborative network focused on **[Specific area of research, e.g., developing personalized diabetes management strategies]**. This network will be invaluable for the proposed research project on **[Briefly state your research project]**.

Adapted from: Crafting a Compelling Narrative CV. Concordia University

https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/research/docs/Workshops/2023/Narrative_CV_Workshop_2023.pdf

2. Most significant contributions and experiences: samples of contributions to the research and innovation community

Sample 1:

“I am an active member of the (insert professional body) and I have been an active STEM Ambassador since 2016. I have reviewed for a range of life science and biomedical journals, including X, Y and Z. I am currently a Guest Associate Editor of the xxx. I have been invited to be the external examiner of two international PhD vivas (Place, date), as well as one of the expert evaluators of another two (Place, date). I was also the first to establish, within my group, a partnership with national charities with the idea of developing a tool that will allow the public to understand xyz.”

Source: University of Oxford

Sample 2:

“As a member of the department x EDI committee, I initiated and led a working group on neurodiversity, resulting in several practical changes such as good practice guide for organizing departmental events and training opportunities for HR staff.”

Source:University of Glasgow Pilot and Training Course

2. Most significant contributions and experiences: samples of contributions to the research and innovation community

Sample 3:

“Beyond my research findings, I am committed to fostering a vibrant research and innovation ecosystem. I have actively contributed to the research and innovation community through **(list 2-3 activities, e.g. organizing conferences, serving as a reviewer, etc.)**.” I have served as a reviewer for **[List 1-2 journals]**, ensuring the quality and rigor of published research.”

Sample 4:

“My contributions to **[Name of professional body]** have helped to shape the future of cell biology research by **[Describe specific contributions, e.g., advocating for increased research funding, promoting interdisciplinary collaborations]**.”

Sample 5:

“As an editor for **[Name of journal]**, I have played a crucial role in disseminating high-quality research and shaping the scientific discourse.”

3. Supervisory or Mentorship Activities: Description of how you have helped to mentor and/or train future generation. It could be formal and/or informal



Source: Wikimedia
Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hinh_Anh_choi.jpg

3. Supervisory or Mentorship Activities

Can include, but not limited to:

- Supervision of HQP.
- Formal or informal mentoring.
- Contributions supporting indigenous research training.
- Development and delivery of training workshops outside of research or course requirements.
- Establishment of safe, equitable and inclusive research environments, practices and norms.
- Outreach activities

Source: CIHR Tri-Agency CV <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/53574.html#c>

3. Supervisory or mentorship activities - tips

- Go beyond numbers
- For ECRs who have not had leadership roles, how did you contribute to the success of a team or the development of others?
- How has your teaching/supervision of others contributed to their development?
- Include success stories
- How have your EDI strategies created an inclusive environment for your students and mentees?
- Include the training strategies you have used.
- Identify the demographic group that is underrepresented in your discipline.

3. Supervisory or mentorship activities - sentence structure sample

I have supervised/line-managed/mentored [**X numbers of students, staff roles etc.**] who went on to [**example achievements of supervisees and mentees**]. I supported their development through [**examples of specific ways you supported development, such as providing opportunities (e.g. through sponsorship, resources, sharing of contacts, offering roles with responsibilities) for learning skill A or experiencing B**].

3. Supervisory or mentorship activities samples

Sample 1:

“I have supervised or co-supervised over XX PhD students and post-doctoral researchers. I gave opportunities to many of these early career researchers to visit other laboratories (e.g. in X and Y), to learn new techniques (such as X) and broaden their research horizons, and I give early career researchers priority in attending conferences. All team members are supported to identify PD opportunities to further their career goals. They have obtained positions in academia, industry, business, education, and medicine, and have won awards including [XX].”

Source: University of Oxford

https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/researchsupport/documents/media/narrative_cv_guide_oxford_june_2023_0.pdf.

Sample 2:

“Throughout my postdoctoral career, I have taken on leadership responsibility within the labs I have worked in, informally at first at the University of x, by providing pastoral support, mediating conflict and training new lab members. I also assisted faculty in selecting winners of the PhD Prize for three years running. In 2012, I organized an event at which final year PhD students could present their results, which later became the annual departmental conference. Later, at x institution, I developed a comprehensive Lab Manual for my group, which covered everything from safety to guidance on the accurate and complete publication of research data. I also managed the opening of a new lab space and ran seminars for the organic-minded group on inorganic techniques and fundamentals.”

Source: University of Glasgow

https://rise.articulate.com/share/NyPk_PNIENd/RS5R5catqgiJzs3woS3Y#/lessons/a0G1S8sChDT93JCgMIM5HquP42vRwqG

3. Supervisory or mentorship activities sample

Sample 3

“Multi-layered mentorship starts on day one in my lab. I mentor and co-publish with each of the students I supervise, grounded in initial one-on-one discussions about their career aspirations, work-life balance needs, and progress benchmarking. I ensure equitable and inclusive networking and conference opportunities and have supervised 1 Banting post-doc, and 5 PhD and 12 Master’s students to completion. Two of these students won best conference paper awards, and among my former PhD students three are now professors at Canadian and international universities, and two were recruited as researchers for major pharmaceutical companies in the US and Germany.”

Source: Crafting a Compelling Narrative CV: Concordia University

https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/research/docs/Workshops/2023/Narrative_CV_Workshop_2023.pdf

To summarize ...

When writing a narrative CV:

- Focus on explaining HOW and not WHAT.
- Focus on quality and impact of your contributions rather than on quantity.
- Refer to outcomes/impacts rather than simply listing activities.
- Be selective with the information you include. Only select relevant information. Tailor your CV to suit the proposal.
- Provide evidence: include different supporting examples for each section.
- Funders using narrative CVs will most likely not ask for a full list of your publications as they have made the commitment not to use journal-based metrics.

Contacts

For competition-specific support: Research Partner Network

- CNAS: Kelly Maher (kdmaher@ualberta.ca)
- CHS: Mark Taylor (mtaylor4@ualberta.ca)
- CSSH: Heather Young-Leslie (Heather.YoungLeslie@ualberta.ca)

For general guidance and baseline competencies: Research Development Services (ibironke@ualberta.ca)

Information sources

Tri-Agency CV - CIHR <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/53574.html#c>

Writing a Narrative CV. University of Dundee https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/114334931/Dundee_narrative_CV_workbook.pdf

Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) - Narrative CV Approach . University of Surrey <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-05/R4R-like-CV-annotated-for-guidance-purposes.pdf>

Narrative CVs for Funding and Job Applications. University of Glasgow.
https://rise.articulate.com/share/NyPk_PNIENdfRS5R5catqqiJzs3woS3Y#/lessons/a0G1S8sChDTr93JCgMIM5HguP42vRwqC

A Short Guide to Narrative CVs. University of Glasgow <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/ris/researchinitiatives/resources/shortguides/shortguidenarrativecv/>

Writing a Narrative CV: Few Tips. University of Glasgow https://articulateusercontent.com/rise/courses/4JM_aDS1iKt0s4OmdAudnxqyf2rQW8lQ/wMISUGj9W23xnB9G-Narrative%2520CV%2520presentation%252017June21.pdf

Crafting a Compelling Narrative CV. Concordia University https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/research/docs/Workshops/2023/Narrative_CV_Workshop_2023.pdf

Developing a Narrative CV: Guidance for Researchers. University of Oxford <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/learn-more-about-developing-a-narrative-cv>

Narrative CVs: How to Write Them: Agent Majeur. <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/learn-more-about-developing-a-narrative-cv>

Time to Rethink the Scientific CV: Fresh Formats Showcase Researchers' Work More Effectively: Nature 604, 203-205 (2022)<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00928-4#ref-CR1>

Narrative CVs. Cancer Research UK <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/applying-for-funding/narrative-cvs>

Guidance for Writing Narrative CVs for Canada Research Chair Applications. University of Winnipeg. <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/research/docs/guidance-for-narrative-cvs-for-uwinnipeg-crc-applications.pdf>

Resume for Research and Innovation: Guidance. UK Research and Innovation. <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/develop-your-application/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/#:~:text=The%20R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9%20for%20Research%20and,applying%20for%20UKRI%20funding%20opportunities.>

Narrative CV Workshop. Luxembourg National Research Fund.

<https://storage.fnr.lu/index.php/s/rsJNTBMxlw7X9Lr#pdfviewer>