

Everything we think we know about Narrative CVs

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Objectives

This project aims to create a comprehensive, coherent, community-owned understanding of the implementation of NCVs. We do this so that:

- organisations adopting NCVs can continue to improve them
- organisations considering the use of NCVs can make an informed decision
- those seeking to evaluate NCVs can build on what's already been done and address most pressing gaps

Come and talk to us about our emerging insights

CultureBase SIRS Academic
Evaluation of the Unified Evaluation Procedure and standardised CV format
December 2024
Delivered by CultureBase, Different Angles and SIRS Academic

Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal
Disrupting Academia's Care-Free Narrative: Is the narrative CV just another agent of obfuscation?
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Research careers – changing the narrative for CVs
by Cancer Research UK | Analysis
22 May 2024
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Our approach to the NCV review

Spring 2025

- Collate an overview of evaluations and studies on NCV implementation
- Focus groups with potential beneficiaries to refine focus of analysis
- Collating and review of evaluations and studies on NCV implementation
- Addressing gaps in evaluation
- Insights-led workshop focused on methodological and contextual challenges of studying NCV implementation
- Insights-led workshop focused on mapping 'what we know' against the UKRI Shared Evaluation Framework logic model

Autumn 2025



Insights from our review

Do NCVs change mindsets?

Limited evidence on the introduction of the NCV resulting in mindset changes is mixed: RoRI reports instances where NCV implementation has prompted reviewers to rethink the way excellence is assessed / A study at University of Surrey and feedback collected at the 2023 Dutch Recognition & Rewards festival indicate that the process of completing an NCV invites new ways of reflecting on one's contributions, and hence introducing NCVs may shape new cultures of success among researchers.

Most studies indicate continued heavy reliance of reviewers on traditional, publication-oriented indicators.

Do NCVs change who gets funded?

Limited evidence on changes to who gets funded, when an NCV rather than a traditional CV is used, is mixed:

- The ARRC project reports that, overall, shortlisting based solely on the NCV would only have made little to no difference to the rankings of the candidates.
- Anecdotal evidence across studies does show occasional changes e.g. "one panel member reported that reviewing just the NCV would have changed who they shortlisted" (ARRC); "In the past, I would have said that Rubicon is not for funding people with irregular careers, but now I think this is a great and interesting fit" (RoRI); "one participant described an NCV playing a role in the promotion of people that would have been unlikely to be promoted without" (2023 Dutch Recognition & Rewards festival).

Do NCVs highlight unusual career paths?

Limited evidence shows that the NCV is enabling consideration of **unusual career paths**:

- The ARRC project concludes that NCVs at least partially addressed the problems of those with non-conventional/linear career paths.
- RoRI describes a shift from viewing irregular career paths as problematic to a more intuitive acknowledgement which could suggest that reviewers gradually adapt their practices.
- Research at the University of Glasgow shares an example of applicant finding the NCV helpful in explaining their unusual career path.

What we would like to discuss further...

Are we expecting too much from merely inserting the NCV, and doing too little to embed the principles for its introduction across research assessment and practice?

Several studies recognise that the NCV is no silver bullet e.g. a pre-implementation study by the NIHR mentions "the need to consider its role in wider adoption of narrative CV principles across all of its activities" and a study by Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) mentions that "altering documentation practices does not automatically translate into changes in the valuations of universities. This includes perceptions of what activities and outputs are seen as valuable in each field".

Are we going far enough with the changes that NCVs try to introduce, and doing too little for the format to remove barriers to applicants from non-academic sectors?

A pre-implementation study by the NIHR mentions that "The recognition of transferrable skills (especially those which lie beyond academia) also needs to be considered if NIHR wants to encourage more applicants from non-traditional academic routes who may, for example, have ideas and expertise but not publications" and it is questionable that any NCV formats are going as far as allowing for this currently.

Outputs

We'll be producing a full review paper, as well as a series of briefings, with key insights relevant for:

- Decision-making on whether or not to introduce an NCV
- Improving implementation of NCVs
- Further studies and evaluations of NCV implementation

Contact

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to be informed when outputs are published

