



# Round 2 Narrative CV Survey 2023 - 2024

**Users' experience and resulting changes to the template**

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As part of the HRB's commitment to creating an optimal process for capturing essential information in applications for funding, we require a narrative-style CV to be submitted.

This CV was developed in consultation with stakeholders, the results of which are published below. An initial survey was conducted in 2021 – 2022, which can be found [here](#).

**Round 2 survey 2023-2024: Users' experience of the updated CV template**

In this second survey the users experience was assessed on the updated version of the HRB narrative style CV. This survey was based on the Joint Funders Group evaluation framework, so the questions were somewhat different that in round 1 of the survey.

The HRB surveyed applicants and mentors and reviewers (peer and panel) from two funding schemes, targeting individuals from two career stages:

1. Individuals post PhD (or PhD equivalency) applying for postdoctoral research fellowships.
2. Postdoctoral researchers transitioning towards research independence.

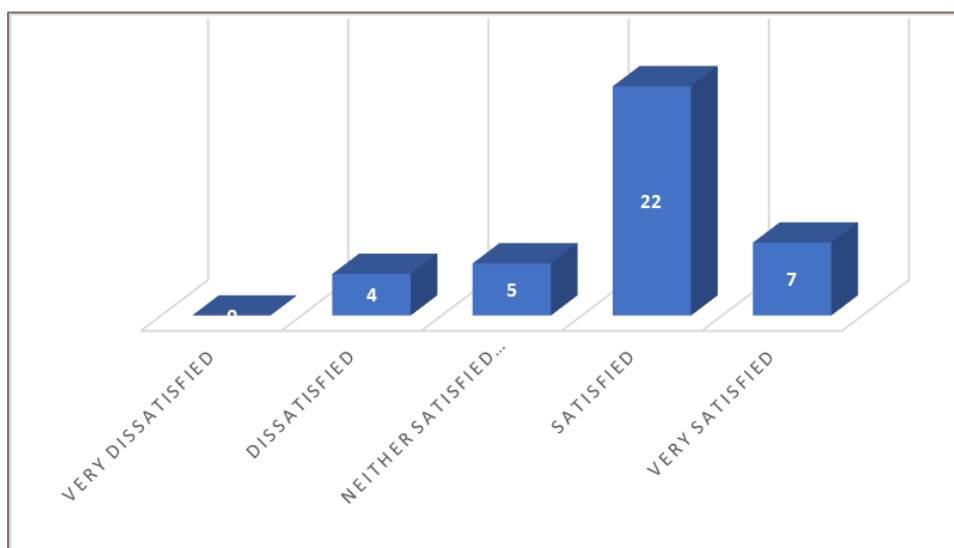
Based on the analysis of this and the previous survey, we think the users' experience is positive. This is in line with the experience of other international funder, for example [FNR Luxembourg](#).

The key findings are summarised below.

### The HRB researchers' perspective (applicants and mentors)

We had a low rate of 26% among lead applicants and mentors, with overall 38 responses. Across questions, there was no significant difference in responses between health and social care professionals and academics, or based on career stage or gender.

- 69% of respondents had previous experience in filling a narrative like CV because they applied to other funding agencies, such as HRB, Research Ireland (previously SFI and IRC), Wellcome, Royal Society, NIH, other EU countries.
- 76% were satisfied or very satisfied that the CV gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, experience and set of contributions, while 23% were dissatisfied or neutral. Nobody answered that they were very dissatisfied.

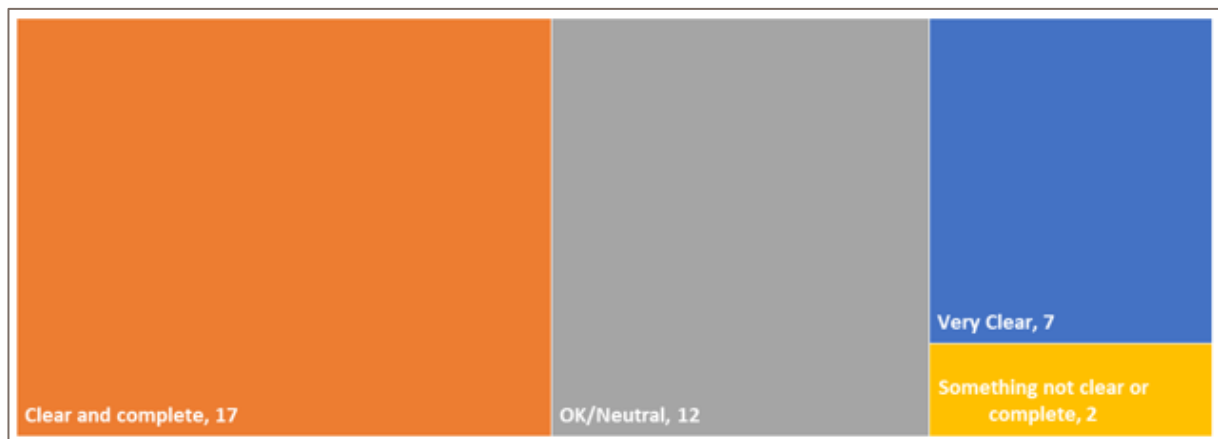


Among the 10% (4 people) who were dissatisfied, 3 selected that English was their first language but 1 declared prefer not to say. They did not have any disability.

- 61% thought that the length of the CV was about right, while 32% thought it was too short and 8% too long. At the same time, some comments also highlight some rigidity of the word count in some sections, which made completion of the CV more difficult. Some mentors questioned why it the requirement of this type of CV for them as mentors.

About right	23
Too long	3
Too short	12
	<b>38</b>

- 63% of respondents thought that the guidance provided were clear and complete, while 32% were neutral to this question and only 5.2 % thought something was not clear. Some comments highlight that the applicants do not have clarity on how the qualitative information will be assessed and translated and what data would be best to demonstrate excellence or the appropriateness of the applicant to the funding scheme.



- When asked if they received any support to complete the CV, 55% of respondents said they received some support, 21% that the support was available, but they did not seek it, 21% said they did not have any support available. One responded that it was not applicable.
- Finally, among those with experience of different CV formats, there are mixed views on the length of time required to complete the CV. 12 thoughts it required the same time than assessing a more traditional CV and 13 that it required at least 20% or more time.
- In terms of gender, 61% of respondents were women.
- 29% of all respondents declared they had some breaks from research such as parental or maternity leave, caring responsibilities and contract ending.

- In terms of disability, two people (out of 38) declared to have some disability and one declared prefer not to say.

### The reviewers' perspective

The response rate among reviewers, which included peer-reviewers and panel members, was very low, only 15.1 percent (17 out of 112 contacted). The majority were panel reviewers.

- 53% stated that they were somewhat familiar with the DORA declaration while 47% said they were.
- 59% had previous experience in assessing a narrative like CV.
- 82% thought that the guidance provided were useful or very useful, while the remainder were neutral. Nobody was dissatisfied.
- When asked if they were taking in consideration outputs other than peer-reviewed publications, 76% answered yes and 24% said somewhat. The key explanation for the response 'somewhat' was:
  - sometimes the detail provided by the applicant made it hard to judge the quality/significance of other outputs
  - it is always hard to determine individual contribution to team or unit activities. Some units are more outward focussed than others, others focus on specific subjects and others are funded to do public engagement. But all in all, there are useful mentions of activities that are much more helpful than a list of articles
  - some applicants have non-standard outputs - e.g. data sets, government reports etc. It is good to be able to assess these, but the relative weight is rather discipline specific and this can be hard to judge. For example, in public health national and international reports tend to be valued compared to conventional publications in laboratory science - guidance for panel member colleagues is important for context here
  - the amount of instruction may be distracting, which could be improved by formatting.
- 64.7% sought further information on the applicant e.g. via ORCID/PubMed/Google Scholar. This was most commonly to corroborate information provided in the CV, to check the rigour of the publication, look for information that was too recent to be in the application, or to understand the relationship between the applicant and their group.
- 88% thought that the length of the CV was about right and only two thoughts it was too short.
- 41% thought it was a bit easier to assess compared to more traditional CVs, 23% thought it was about the same, and 35% thought it was a bit more difficult.
- When asked how long it took to review these CVs compared to more traditional ones, 53% responded that it was about the same, 35% stated it was a bit more time and 1 respondent each answered that they could not compare as it was the first experience or it required more time.

**When asked what they find useful? They indicated that**

- The CV provided a slightly wider perspective and more comprehensive picture.
- It allowed the individual to say something about (1) what their role is/was in the output and (2) the significance of the output.
- The CV provided a better context for the applicant.
- The CV linked research outputs to impact.
- The CV gave the opportunity for the candidate and mentor to highlight outputs most relevant to the application.

**When asked what did they find less useful or redundant? They indicated that**

- Some applicants made fuller use of the opportunity to give narrative than others.
- In some instances, the CV included information that was less relevant to the proposed application.
- Some reviewers would have liked to also see a fuller list of publications.
- Some suggested to include a ratio of the effort spent on research/teaching/service and mentorship.
- The structure was difficult to follow (in the beginning).
- One person thought that it failed to provide a rounded picture of the applicant.

**What next?**

Based on this analysis, the HRB does not envisage at this stage any major changes to the CV. However, will further review the guidance to applicants and reviewers, the length of the CV and the readability of the PDF for reviewers.

Other HRB actions are:

- Work with other national/international funders through sharing survey questions and survey results to glean better insights from larger numbers and more subgroups.
- Continue to engage with national/international funders in various fora to examine the benefits and challenges of using a narrative-like CV for the assessment of teams, e.g. for leadership teams or networks.
- Liaise with other funders via the Joint Funders Group to examine the issue of guidance, especially for reviewers, and training resources which could be tailored to research support offices, applicants and reviewers.



**ENDS**