

HOW TO CHOOSE A MENTOR FOR THE BRITISH ACADEMY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP SCHEME?

The issue of choosing a mentor can be tricky: should it be someone working in the same field? Someone you may have known for ages or someone you have never met?

Generally, a mentor should be an established member of staff at the host institution as their main purpose is to help the Fellow settle into the (new) academic community. Mentors are not expected to give advice on the research the Fellow is conducting (although they can of course choose to do so). Having chosen a formal mentor does not preclude you to approach other academics for advice and guidance on your research.

Thus, when choosing a mentor, you can approach your current DPhil supervisor (if you are staying at the same institution and faculty for example), or someone from your professional network, perhaps someone you met at a conference or someone with whom you collaborated on some prior work. You can also approach someone you have not met before because you are interested in their work or would like to establish a closer collaboration. It is also possible to choose either your external or internal examiner of your thesis as mentor (provided they are employed at your chosen host institution).

The guidelines from the British Academy state the following:

- The mentor should be an established and experienced member of staff, if possible in an academic field close to that of the PDF, whose role is intended primarily to provide moral and practical support and advice.
- **It is not suggested that the mentor should act in a supervisory capacity. Rather, mentors should be asked to take a particular interest in the PDF, showing concern for his or her welfare, and making themselves available for consultation on such matters as personal and career development, research and teaching opportunities, approaches to potential publishers and the presentation of work for publication. Mentors would only be expected to read material to be submitted for publication if specifically asked to do so. They should also be prepared to give advice about job applications, drawing the attention of the PDF to suitable opportunities which may present themselves.**
- In relation to retired academics: it does not seem to be very appropriate to have a mentor who is retired or otherwise not actively involved in the relevant department etc. Hence the advice is that, in the best interests of the award-holder, the formal mentor ought to be someone actively employed by the relevant institution.