

BAFA/CPAF research mentoring scheme

The scheme offers research career development support on a 1-2-1 basis, primarily to ECRs (with a PhD gained in the last 5 years) and current PhD students¹. It is being led by CPAF, with help from BAFA/CDAF in promoting the scheme, identifying and encouraging ECRs to apply. No professional service fees are paid, so BAFA is not contractually responsible for the quality or performance of the role. Rather, the aim is to attract mentors who are willing to help ECRs for other reasons, i.e. recognition (contributes to REF environment for their own dept.) and/or co-authorship.

BAFA may award an annual prize for best mentor (rather like journals do for best reviewers). For PhD students, participation in the scheme would need their supervisor/DoS awareness/agreement, to avoid any conflict. Indeed, most post-doc academic staff in REF-able departments will have an internal mentor/coach, so again we should avoid any conflict. The scheme could also be used to recognise informal mentoring arrangements already in place. Transparency is key in operation of the scheme.

A. Mentoring

What is it? – the role may be defined as working (meetings could be face to face or on-line) with the ECR to support their research career development, e.g. by (not necessarily or exclusively):

- Reading and commenting on draft journal papers prior to (1st) submission
- Reading and commenting on journal reviews/response to reviewers prior to re-submission
- Reading and commenting on draft funding bids prior to submission
- Guiding through the process of the ECR acting as a journal reviewer (i.e. reading through the submitted paper and draft review and offering advice on the tone and content of the review)

Why would a non-ECR volunteer to do this (unpaid)? – as an altruistic way of putting something back into the academic community (that may have supported them when they were ECRs), to be acknowledged (formally in published papers and via recognition by BAFA) and/or by being named as a co-author on papers they have spent significant effort on refining for publication.

B. Matching

Who is it for and how will it work? – the process should be as simple as possible

Demand – ECRs, newcomers or returners to research may apply by sending a short biographical note and a personal statement outlining their needs and objectives, (max 1 page each) to admin@BAFA identifying their special interest area. These would be sent to the CPAF scheme leader.

Supply – BAFA members to be surveyed to identify who would be willing to act as a mentor, promoting the scheme and its potential benefits (to the mentee, mentor and the academy). CPAF scheme leader to identify a match and request a prospective mentor (predominantly drawn from BAFA membership and related networks, e.g. TRN and MCA, then to notify the applicant, cc'd to admin@BAFA, of the match they have tentatively arranged. Mentors asked to commit to 12 months in the first instance.

3. Monitoring

Monitoring and review – CPAF scheme leader to notify admin@BAFA of the outcome of applications and maintain a simple log (in a spreadsheet) of mentees and mentors. CPAF to conduct an annual survey of the participants (using the BAFA log) to get feedback from mentees and mentors and to manage the annual prize for best mentor (based on best rating by mentees). CDAF to promote the scheme via HoDs by an annual message to members explaining the scheme to newly appointed staff.

¹ may include academic staff on teaching focussed or professional practice contracts ('hidden assets').