

Tips for approaching a potential mentor

- Explain what you mean by 'mentoring' (don't assume s/he will be familiar with it) and your specific reasons for choosing him or her.
- Be flexible with the time(s) that you suggest for your meetings. Meeting over lunch might allow you both to kill two birds with one stone. Also, be prepared to negotiate around how much time you'd like your mentee to give to you – would you like just one meeting to discuss a very specific issue, one meeting per semester, one every 8 weeks, one every three months, etc...
- If your first choice turns the invitation down, it may be worth asking if they could recommend someone else that you could approach.
- Be clear about the area that you wish to discuss and set a time limit on each meeting – having an end-time for the discussion is likely to reassure mentors that their participation will not entail a huge commitment and will help them to manage their diary, and having an agenda allows the mentor to ensure s/he is comfortable with the topic of the meeting.
- Try to plan in advance – academics' diaries can fill up fast.
- Don't anticipate further support from the mentor – don't expect him/her to agree to write you a reference or to introduce you to colleagues. Equally, it is up to you whether or not to accept any further help that is offered.

Preparing an agenda:

In order to ensure that you make the most of the limited face-to-face time that you will have with your mentor, it is essential that you prepare and agree an agenda beforehand. The template below is intended to provide some guidance on preparing the agenda – you should, ideally, answer all of the questions and share your answers with you mentor.

What is the main question or issue that you would like to address in the meeting?

What related issues do you need to address?

What other sources of information or advice have you already used?

Are there any *specific* pieces of information you would like from your mentor?