



Equal Opportunities Office

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Mentoring Program 2023-24 for Postdoctoral Researchers at the Faculty of Humanities

The postdoctoral phase poses a particular challenge for many early career scientists on the career path. Postdocs are confronted with a wide range of demands. These include the task of developing an independent research profile and becoming visible in the respective discipline. Even though in most subjects the habilitation is no longer a prerequisite, the requirement to gain further qualifications (“the second book”) and to professionalize oneself, i.e. to teach at the university, to give lectures, to gain experience in committee work and to network, still applies. Competencies in all these areas are usually a prerequisite for a successful application for a professorship. Advice from experienced colleagues and exchange with other early career academics can be helpful in facing these challenges, especially for postdocs who are potentially confronted with structural sexism, racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination in academia.

The Equal Opportunities Office of the Faculty of Humanities has set itself the goal of supporting highly qualified postdocs and junior professors on their career path and is therefore implementing a one-year mentoring program for early career researchers in humanities at the University of Hamburg together with the Cluster of Excellence “Understanding Written Artefacts”. The program is directed at humanities scholars in their early career phase (postdoc and junior professorship) who are potentially experiencing inequalities in terms of gender, sexuality, religion, skin color, social background, and/or care work, to name just a few categories. Within the framework of the mentoring program, the participating mentees benefit not only from the relationship with their respective mentor, but also from professional trainings and process-accompanying group meetings that promote exchange in the peer group and expand the competence profile of the participants. A total of 12 places are available. The official start of the program is scheduled for fall 2023.

The mentoring program comprises the following four (compulsory) core components:

1. Group meetings on the mentoring process

In these one-to-three-hour meetings, all held in-person, mentees as a group and the two program coordinators will prepare for and reflect on the mentoring process (roles, goals, unfolding, perspectives) and, starting from the second meeting, collect feedback on the program. A total of four meetings will be held in the course of the year.

2. One-on-one mentee / mentor meetings

After the first group meeting, participants indicate three potential mentors. The program coordinators contact these potential mentors (in the order of preference indicated by the mentee) and invite them to join the program. Once a mentor is found, the program coordinators put them in touch with their mentee. From now on, mentees and mentors will set up their meetings autonomously and in the form (e.g. online/in-person) they prefer. It will be mentees' responsibility to take the initiative to contact their mentor to set up meetings, set the agenda for discussions, follow up, etc. A minimum of four meetings should take place in the course of the year.

3. Small-group peer-mentoring meetings (“learning tandems”)

Small, 3-person groups are formed among the mentees during the first group meeting and based on individual mentees' expectations for the program (as indicated in their application form). The goal of these groups is to support peer exchange and peer advising. It is up to group members to decide how often and in what format to meet throughout the course of the year.

4. Workshops with trainers / experts

In the course of the year, we will offer a number of four workshops on personal or professional development topics indicated by participants (in their application forms). These workshops will be held by experts or trainers and may focus on knowledge participants would like to acquire (e.g., about German academia, or hiring processes, etc.) or on skills they would like to develop (e.g., self-presentation, time or stress management, leadership, interdisciplinary collaborations, etc.)

In addition, in the course of the year, we will set up three (voluntary) online “role models” meetings open to the entire group of mentees, to all mentors, and to alumni of the program. These meetings will be focused on topics for which mentees expressed interest in an exchange with “role models”. The idea is to facilitate exchange between mentees and people who already developed strategies to cope with some of the challenges or overcome some of the crises that mentees are facing now. During each meeting a small number of mentors and/or alumni will share experiences with the entire group of mentees. These meetings will also open up further networking opportunities for all mentees.

You are interested in joining the program?

Here are the next steps: Please express your interest in the program until May 25th, 2023 by sending a short email to the program coordinator Merle-Marie Kruse (gleichstellung.gw@uni-hamburg.de). Afterwards, an application form will be sent to you with further information.