

Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies
Mentoring Policy
October, 2015

1. Composition of the Mentoring Committee

Two tenured faculty, one from within the department and one from outside, are to be appointed by the Department Chair, in consultation with the junior faculty member during his/her first semester at Columbia. The committee may be changed periodically in accordance with junior faculty needs and senior faculty schedules, but continuity is also beneficial, and a two-year term might be considered minimal.

2. Charge

- help orient the junior faculty member within Columbia (e.g., on finding available resources for research and teaching)
- provide support and advice on how to succeed at Columbia and in academia
- serve as a sounding board and advocate (if necessary)
- provide feedback on research

Topics mentors might discuss with mentees include:

- What to expect in the first few years of the appointment regarding teaching, service, and reviews
- General research agenda and how to prioritize among research projects
- What to say “no” to
- Obtaining funding and/or opportunities for research leaves
- Suitability of publication outlets and formats
- Gaining visibility in the field
- Balance of research, teaching, and service, strategies for teaching, and for advising graduate students
- Work/life balance issues (including “infrastructure” issues such as dealing with the Columbia housing office, schools, etc.).

3. Meetings

Mentors meet twice annually with the junior faculty member (all together, or individually, as the junior faculty member prefers), beginning with the incoming faculty member’s first semester.

Mentors will inform the department chair that this meeting has taken place, but **not report on the substance of the meeting, nor provide an evaluation of the junior faculty member.** The

junior faculty member should feel free to ask mentors for feedback and advice at other times when needed.

Mentoring meetings should be informal and collegial conversations. Confidentiality is assumed and must be maintained.

Appendix: Sample list of questions to guide meetings between mentors and junior faculty members.

Research:

- What books/papers are under review? Where?
- What specific plans do you have to submit work for review in the future? Where?
- Are there infrastructural problems (e.g., IRB approvals, need for RAs or travel money, need to identify research assistants) that are making progress on research difficult?
- Do you have questions about whether it's better to write a book or a series of articles?
- If you are writing a book, what are the best mechanisms for getting feedback on drafts? Dept colloquia,, book manuscript workshops, etc? .
- What efforts have you made (and do you plan to make) to seek outside support for your research? Do you have questions about the process of seeking outside support or have you faced issues in doing so?
- What opportunities have you had or will you have to present your work outside Columbia (in department seminars, major conferences, small-scale conferences, etc.), and how much time should be committed to such activities? When to say "no"?
- What do you see as the overarching theme or contribution of your research?
- Who do you think is the main audience for your work, and based on this who do you think are likely external evaluators should you come up for tenure at Columbia?
- What do you hope to have achieved vis-à-vis concrete research outputs by the time (a) of your next A&S review, and (b) you are scheduled to come up for tenure
- Are there particular parts of your work that you would like more substantive feedback on from your mentor and/or from other faculty?

Teaching:

- What courses have you taught?
- What has been the feedback from the students? (Consult course evaluations where available)?
- How many grad students are you advising formally? How many informally?
- During the past semester, what proportion of your work time do you estimate was devoted to any aspect of teaching?
- Are there aspects of your teaching assignments that you feel are unduly burdensome? If so, why?
- Have you had an issues or problems in working with TAs (or know how to utilize them)?
- Have you had any issues or problems in assigning grades to students?
- Are you able to use a portion of your teaching to help further your research goals?

Service

- What service have you provided in the department?
- What service have you provided at Columbia but outside the department?
- What service have you provided outside the University, including reviews for journals?
- Are there any specific requests for service that you would like to say no to or that you worry are putting undue burden on your time?
- More generally, do you feel you can say no to service requests when you need to?

Other

- What are your leave plans in the coming years? What should they be?
- Are there issues not covered above that affect your ability to achieve your goals?
- Are you facing any work-life issues (housing, schooling, day care, etc.) that make it difficult for you to do your job well?