

Athene Mentoring

A fact sheet for mentors and mentees

Athene Mentoring supports women in the pursuit of academic qualifications, whether they see their future in academia or seek a career elsewhere.

Athene's focus is on the special situation of women in academic life and at the university, and on working to overcome discrimination.

Conceived as 'cascading mentoring', the program usually involves participants acting both as mentors and mentees. This develops into a network of mentees and mentors at every qualification level – from BA student to professor. However, it is also possible to join in just as a mentee or a mentor, if you wish. In addition, male mentors can also take care of a post-doc jointly with a female mentor in a mentoring 'tandem'.

The program is offered in German and English.

Target groups

- BA students
- MA students
- PhD students
- Post-docs
- Assistant professors
- Professors

The Athene Mentoring approach is:

- Cascading mentoring where women from one qualification level are aided by women from the next level up: so Bachelor's students are mentored by Master's students, Master's students by PhD students, PhD students by women in the post-doc phase and post-docs by professors
- Mentoring in a group: a group of 5-6 mentees is overseen by 1 or 2 mentors •
- One-to-One mentoring
- Where necessary, post-docs may receive support from a mentoring tandem consisting of one female mentor and one male mentor
- Networking
- Continuing Professional Development activities

Mentees need to be:

- Interested in the issue of women in academia and science
- Willing to establish and develop the mentoring relationship
- Willing to take part in networking activities

What are the advantages of being a mentee?

Women encounter quite specific problems when they are studying and attempting to gain academic qualifications. Often any difficulties are attributed – even by themselves – as being down to individual failings, although they are really due to their situation as a woman. This

means that whether studying or working in science, women are in a completely different situation to men. They constantly have to prove themselves and their work in the face of a whole range of discriminatory factors. Athene Mentoring can enable mentees to reflect on this situation, share experiences with others and learn strategies for overcoming it.

Besides the support they receive when studying and in an academic career, mentees also have the opportunity to attend or initiate their own choice of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. Mentees receive a certificate recording their participation in the mentoring.

They also have the option of becoming a mentor in the Athene program themselves either straight away or at a later date.

Mentors need to be:

- Interested in the issue of women in academia and science
- Willing to establish and develop the mentoring relationship
- Willing to pass on their own experiences and their own (informal) knowledge to a mentee
- Willing to take part in a workshop for mentors
- Willing to take part in networking activities
- Willing to share thoughts with other mentors on the program and to join in the evaluation of the program

A mentor does not have to know everything about the university, the academic system or their own subject. Quite the opposite: a mentor is an adviser, a guide and a kindred spirit who is one step further ahead in her career and has overcome problems and challenges which her mentees are now facing. So a mentor does not have to be able to answer every question herself; instead, her task is to record any questions and problems that occur, so that the mentoring network can search for solutions together.

What are the advantages of being a mentor?

Many mentors feel that they profit by passing on the experiences they gained when studying and obtaining academic qualifications, and by reflecting on these once again. This at the same time strengthens their own abilities both as a leader and an adviser.

Integration into the mentoring network furthermore helps to raise the issue of the discrimination faced by women every day at university, and to fight against it.

So, mentors gain the same advantages as mentees.

A certificate can also be issued for acting as a mentor through Athene Mentoring.

Workshops for mentors:

Mentors attend workshops to prepare them for their role. Here, they learn skills in relation to the management of the mentoring relationship, information about the situation of women in academic life and gender competence.

Anyone who is interested may first take part in a workshop before deciding if they want to become a mentor.

Can men take part as mentors in the Athene program?

Although the Athene program is designed for women, we welcome the participation of men.

The concept of the program as cascading mentoring and the different ways in which they are affected mean that they cannot be included in the same way. However, female scientists in the post-doc phase may benefit from an exchange with male scientists, from learning about their experiences and points of view.

Furthermore the program offers men the opportunity of discussing issues concerning women in the research system. For instance, supervisors of female PhD students constantly face the practical problem of how to retain them in science. In addition the mentoring program is a place allowing discussion of one's own gender bias as well as those of others in the academic system.

Workshops are offered for male mentors as well, and they are of course a part of the mentoring network.

How much time does participation in Athene Mentoring as a mentee and/or mentor demand?

How frequently mentees and mentors meet is determined individually. We recommend meeting every four to eight weeks. These meetings can of course also take place via video call as well as being complemented by telephone and e-mail contacts.

On top of this, mentors are expected to attend a preparatory workshop. It is also possible to take part in training seminars and other networking events.

How are mentors and mentees matched up?

Mentors are matched up with mentees once they have taken part in the workshop and confirmed that they want to join the program. Interests such as hobbies and leisure activities can be noted on the registration form as a way of identifying common interests. However if either party feels they are not suited, it is possible to change.

Preferences for your match can be noted on the registration form. For instance, under 'Comments' a female mentor can state whether they are happy to work in tandem with a male mentor. Or additional skills such as foreign languages together with a rough idea of the level may be given (e.g. 'French (fluent)' or 'Spanish (first language)'). However it is not obligatory to complete this box.

Mentees are initially taken on for a one year period. It is possible to continue in the same mentoring constellation, or to be matched with someone new, although this depends on there being sufficient mentors. People may leave the program at any time.

Mentors are admitted to the program on a permanent basis, but naturally they can always quit.

Themes for mentoring meetings:

Meetings between mentees and mentors could look at the situation of women in academia and science, as well as at options for combining family life with studies and research or the work-life balance in general. They can also provide insights into the academic system, discuss issues in relation to career planning and management, or means of obtaining funding for studies and academic qualifications. Mentors provide general support by listening, sharing experiences or simply by answering questions. Moreover mentors compile the questions raised by mentees that they are not able to answer fully themselves, and pass them on to the mentoring network for a fuller response. Demand for training and networking events can also be established through the mentoring meetings.

The mentoring network includes:

- mentees,
- mentors,
- support staff at the Gender Equality Office,
- Athene Mentoring student assistants in the faculties,
- and the faculty and subject gender equality representatives.

Further procedure:

If you are interested in participating in Athene Mentoring, please fill out the registration form and send it by email to gleichstellung-mentoring@wiso.uni-tuebingen.de.

Registration begins with the Wintersemester.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact:

gender@equity.uni-tuebingen.de

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Please find the contact persons for each faculty via our website:

[Equality Commission | University of Tübingen](#)