

Press release from the British Sociological Association

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Mentoring scheme set up for women theology researchers

A new mentoring scheme for women in academia researching religion has been launched in the wake of a report which highlighted the significant lack of women in senior academic positions.

Gender and Career Progression in Theology and Religious Studies, released last year, noted that while women outnumber men among undergraduates in the two disciplines, they make up only about a third of academic staff and one in six professors.

The report said that part of the reason was that the drop-out rate for female postgraduate students studying theology or religious studies was more than twice that of other subjects it had studied.

Now the British Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion study group has launched a mentoring scheme led by one of the report's authors, Dr Sonya Sharma.

The scheme is open to women who conduct research on religion. Women who apply will be matched with a mentor in a more senior position, for example an early career scholar would be placed with a senior lecturer. This is normally for one year or more.

Those mentored receive support and advice on job applications, guidance on preparing publications, funding bids, returning to work after a career break and navigating promotion.

"A key objective of the scheme is to support the career progression of women in academic disciplines that continue to be male-dominated, and to promote good practice in relation to equality and diversity," said Dr Sonya Sharma.

The scheme is open to women in the UK and Ireland, from first-year PhD students to Readers. Both mentors and mentees should be study group members – membership costs £30 a year, with discounts for students and the low waged.

The scheme's organisers are asking for potential mentors, as well as those wanting support, to come forward. Contact Dr Sonya Sharma: sonya.sharma@kingston.ac.uk

• *Gender and Career Progression in Theology and Religious Studies* is written by Dr Mathew Guest, Dr Sonya Sharma and Dr Robert Song.

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