

Question and Answers from the ATA Mentoring Program Webinar

Q: I am an ATA certified freelance translator. Is it appropriate, as a prospective mentee, to approach ATA-certified members with mentoring requests without prior acquaintanceship?

A: Yes, of course. The worst that can happen is that they will say no. Feel free to tell the people you have in mind that they can approach us with questions if they are unsure of what will be expected of them. Also encourage them to watch the free [ATA Mentoring Program webinar](#).

Q: As a potential mentee, can I list translators I would like to work with as mentors in my short essay?

A: Yes, and there are two possibilities here: (1) Approach the person you'd like to work with and see if the two of you can set something up before you submit your statement and worksheet. Then apply as a "ready-made pair." (2) Include the names of possible mentors in your essay. We will make an effort to match you with one of your choices. If a proposed mentor is not able to participate, or if we come to the conclusion that the person named is not a good match for you within the program guidelines, then we will suggest a mentor we think would be better suited.

Q: Would the program also work to create a mentoring relationship for a new business owner? For example, matching me with a member of the ATA Translation Company Division?

A: Yes. This is an excellent suggestion and we will support it in every way we can. Please be sure to mention this in your essay.

Q: I am a Japanese-English technical translator and would like to have a mentor who specializes in a technical field. Is it possible to match me with a technical translator?

A: Yes, certainly. Although we will not try to find a mentor in your language pair, we can look for a mentor to help you with the specific business challenges facing technical translators. A similar question was asked by someone working in the legal field, and the answer is the same.

Q: I will submit the application this week, but when does the program actually start? Is there a time limit to the mentoring program?

A: The "Class" year starts April 1 and ends March 31 the following year. The deadline for applying for a spot in the Class of 2013 is March 15.

Q: I am interested in translating English into Spanish and vice versa. These are fairly widespread languages. Will I be able to obtain a mentor?

A: If you qualify for the program, yes. Please note, however, that we do not match mentoring pairs by language, so make sure to tell us about your fields of interest and your goals for the program so that we can find an appropriate mentor for you.

Q: Can a mentor give advice on how to prospect and get more clients?

A: Yes. If your goal is to find and win direct clients, we will match you with someone who has experience in this area.

Q: Are there any fees to be a mentee in the ATA program?

A: The ATA Mentoring Program is free for all association members. The only expense an applicant may face is the cost of having a sample translation evaluated. *(See the next question for additional details.)*

Q: In what situations would mentees be asked to provide the translation evaluation that was mentioned earlier?

A: If the ATA Mentoring Committee sees that an applicant has very little actual translation experience, or if correspondence with the individual person shows a limited ability in English, we may ask the applicant to get a sample translation evaluated by a third party. If the sample translation is unsatisfactory, we will recommend that the applicant spend a year honing his or her skills before applying again.

Based on an estimate from a representative of the Translation Company Division, we have given a ballpark fee of \$100 for the evaluation. The actual amount will depend on the translation company involved. They set their own rates, and we have no influence on how much they will charge. The applicant arranges and covers the cost of the evaluation.

Q: Can I volunteer to be a mentor? What are the requirements?

A: Yes. Please fill out the Mentor Statement Worksheet (available on the ATA website) and state what skills and knowledge you are able to share with a mentee. We'll then determine whether you are a good match for any of the mentee applicants.

Q: Can I get a mentor who would advise me how to start in literary translation?

A: Yes. Make sure you include this in your application as one of the goals you would like to accomplish.

Q: Do the mentor and mentee need to be in the same language pair?

A: No. In fact, in most cases they will not share the same language pair.

Q: Does the ATA Mentoring Committee monitor the progress of individual mentees?

A: No. The Mentoring Committee will stay in touch with mentors and mentees, but we do not keep track of mentee goals or achievements. Mentees are the prime movers in the mentor-mentee relationship.

Q: What if I find that I find that I just don't get along with my mentor?

A: Mentees are free to decide not to follow their mentor's suggestions or even to leave the program if they so choose. But before you throw in the towel, whether you're a mentee or a mentor, please contact a Mentoring Committee member. We can all learn from the situation, and your experience will benefit the program in the long run. We hope it is obvious, but we'll take this opportunity to say it anyway: professional and courteous behavior is expected of all program participants.

Q: I'd love to be a mentor, but am not sure if I'm qualified. How can I tell if I have the right skills and experience? Should I just apply?

A: Start by looking at the Mentor Statement Worksheet and see if this gives you ideas about what you have to offer. If you are still unsure, think about what you do well and where you feel you can improve your own skills. Once you've identified areas where continued learning would be of value, pursue those areas. When you've mastered them, you may feel better prepared to mentor someone.

Q: How do you judge whether a potential mentor's experience is sufficient or not?

A: We look at the applicant's Mentor Statement Worksheet. We may call the person and ask questions about qualities we value highly and others we missed seeing on the form.