

Pre Departure Seminar and Evening Reception on April 24th 2014

On 24th April 2014 recent awardees of JSPS Fellowships were invited to a pre departure seminar organised by JSPS London and hosted at the Japan Foundation London building, to help them prepare for their upcoming research visits to Japan.

The seminar was well attended and started with welcoming remarks from the Director of JSPS London, Professor Kozo Hiramatsu. This was followed by a short self introduction by each participant so similar areas of research and institutions being visited in Japan could be linked. In this group our fellows will be visiting a varied array of departments at universities and research institutions all over Japan. From the Department of Law and Letters, University of the Ryukyus in the South to the Department of Functional Brain Imaging, Tohoku University in Northern Japan. The seminar was presided over by Ms. Polly Watson, International Programme Coordinator of JSPS London, who at first explained the purpose of the event and about the different presentations that were to follow.

The first presentation by Mr. Hideyuki Matsumoto, Deputy Director of JSPS London, gave an essential introduction to JSPS, the preparation JSPS researchers need to make and kinds of assistance available from JSPS. Ms. Polly Watson then explained about the further preparations and procedures that were specific to Summer Programme fellows.

JSPS Alumni were also invited to talk about their experiences of living and research environments in Japan. These speakers included Mr. Andrew Strangeway from Imperial College London and Dr. Wim Van Rossom from the University of Southampton. Both gave very thoughtful and practical advice about getting the most out of a JSPS Fellowship and using the experience to advance their careers on return to the UK. They covered a wide range of topics from Japanese customs, mobile phones and budget airlines for domestic travel to the atmosphere of research environments in Japanese research institutions and building networks with Japanese counterparts. The purpose of these presentations was to put to rest any anxieties and to get the new JSPS fellows looking forward to going to Japan.

JSPS London was also pleased to have in attendance two guest speakers from other distinguished funding organizations to speak about further funding opportunities they offer to do research in Japan. They were Mr. Hal Parker, Programmes Officer of the Japan Foundation, London and Mr. Stephen McEnally, Chief Executive of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

Pictures from the event: Pre Departure Seminar



Self Introductions by participants: Professor Alexei Kornyshev (Imperial College London), Invitation Fellow



Mr. Andrew Strangeway (Imperial College London), Summer Programme Fellow, 2013



Dr. Wim Van Rossom (University of Southampton), JSPS Alumnus

After the pre-departure seminar, JSPS London organised an evening reception for JSPS Alumni, Japanese Researchers Based in the UK (JBUK) and other distinguished guests with an interest in advancing UK-Japan Academic Links. Over 100 guests attended. This evening reception was the last to be hosted by the current Director, Professor Kozo Hiramatsu and the event opened with remarks from Mr. Hideyuki Matsumoto who thanked Professor Hiramatsu for his dedication to advancing and effectively raising the profile of JSPS London over the past four years. Then Dr. Ruth Goodridge, the newly appointed Chair of the UK-JSPS Alumni Association, spoke about the progress of the Association through its BRIDGE re-visitation scheme and symposium scheme which are funding programmes exclusive to members. Dr. Goodridge also talked about the important development of the full inclusion of former JSPS fellows based in Ireland into this Association and as a result explained the articles of the Charter and the name of the association has recently changed to “The JSPS Alumni Association of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.” After this, researchers who have worked closely with Professor Hiramatsu were invited to talk about these projects and reflect on the achievements made. Such speakers were Professor Angus Carlyle from the University of the Arts, London and Dr. Rupert Cox from the University of Manchester who spoke about the art installation and symposium called “Air Pressure” co organised with Professor Hiramatsu. Another invited speaker was Dr. Simon Kaner from the University of East Anglia who spoke about the symposium on university museums he formulated with Professor Hiramatsu. These presentations were followed by remarks from Professor Hiramatsu himself who gave heartfelt thanks to all colleagues who had contributed to his productive and enjoyable tenure as Director of JSPS London. In response, Professor Shin-Ichi Ohnuma from University College London, representing the JBUK community, gave a toast and wished Professor Hiramatsu well for the future. A drinks reception and buffet then followed to allow for networking, the chance for further informal discussion with the invited speakers and to bid farewell to Professor Hiramatsu.

Pictures from the event: Evening Reception



Dr. Ruth Goodridge, Chairperson of the JSPS Alumni Association of the UK and the Republic of Ireland



Invited Speakers: Professor Angus Carlyle (University of the Arts, London), Dr. Rupert Cox (University of Manchester) and Dr. Simon Kaner (University of East Anglia)



Farewell speech from Professor Kozo Hiramatsu



A toast from Professor Shin-Ichi Ohnuma (University College London)

Comments from attendees:

“I was delighted at attending the event. Even for somebody like me who has been to Japan before, I found the event to be excellent in introducing JSPS awardees to the scientific environment of the country as well as to the customs and culture of it, aspects that will certainly turn up to be extremely useful during the upcoming placements. The seminar was also an occasion to learn in depth of the work of JSPS and the Japan Foundation (as well as of the JSPS Alumni Association and other agencies). Finally, it enabled the awardees to effectively establish a network of relations that will hopefully continue even beyond the Japanese experience.”

Professor Stefano Moretti (University of Southampton), Invitation Fellow

“I would like to say a big thank you for inviting me to come along to the Pre-departure Seminar and the Evening Reception on the 24th April 2014. I found both events very useful with lively speakers and good interaction from the participants whom, from a very early stage, were put on the spot to introduce themselves and say a few words about their host and research in Japan. This was a good opportunity to 'break the ice' and made people feel more at ease with each other. The Pre-departure Seminar was well structured and offered participants, particularly for those who have never been previously to Japan, appropriate information and tips for the preparation of their visit. The Alumni Evening gave the opportunity to listen to some interesting speakers who shared their success as JSPS fellows/Alumni members, but also to networking and enjoying some nice food and drinks. Thanks a lot to everybody and particularly to Polly, who contributed to the organisation of these events and made everybody very welcome indeed. Without their efforts and support this will not have happened.”

Dr. Carmen Hubbard (University of Newcastle), Invitation Fellow

“The pre-departure seminar and Evening Reception began with introductions. All the attending JSPS fellows were asked to introduce themselves, their research and their destination. Thus we could find out who may be working nearby when we arrive in Japan. Fellows working in the same Japanese city were quick to seek each other out to chat over tea and (many different types of!) biscuits. This was followed by a number of lectures to prepare JSPS fellows for life as a researcher in Japan. The lectures were informative and gave a tangible sense of the exciting opportunity that awaits. Talks from previous JSPS fellows aimed to get across many practical hints and tips for life in Japan. Finally, speakers from other funding institutions described the opportunities they provide to build on existing UK-Japanese research collaborations. All in all, a very useful afternoon.”

Dr. Jack Wells (University College London), Short Term Postdoctoral Fellowship

“The JSPS Pre-departure Seminar gave invaluable insight into life in Japan, giving practical advice on day to day living. This event was a good opportunity to form links with other JSPS scholars. The Evening Reception allowed me to gain a better understanding of the role of JSPS within the global scientific community, through discussion of JSPS' s interaction with other funding bodies and by hearing the scope of alumni research. The presentations on the JSPS Alumni scheme outlined the extent of opportunities open to JSPS scholars and emphasised the value of these research visits. ”

Ms. Mhairi Matheson (University of Glasgow), Summer Programme Fellow

Finally, JSPS London would like to wish all of our new fellows a successful research trip to Japan and all the very best to Professor Kozo Hiramatsu in his future endeavors.

