

Pre Departure Seminar and Alumni Evening October 28th 2015

On 28th October 2015 a seminar combining information about JSPS funding opportunities and preparations for a research trip to Japan was organised by JSPS London. Participants included recent awardees of several types of JSPS Fellowships to help them prepare for their upcoming research visits to Japan. The seminar started with welcoming remarks from the Director of JSPS London, Professor Kunio Takeyasu. 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 top institutions all over Japan. From the Department of Regenerative Medicine and Biomedical Engineering, Saga University in the south to the International Research Institute of Disaster Science at 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 Ms. Chigusa Ogaya, 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. This was followed by a presentation from Mr. Takafumi Okada, International Programme Associate. He explained about the various funding opportunities seminar participants can be involved in on their return to the UK as ways to further develop their academic links in Japan. These include the JSPS international programmes at an individual, departmental and institutional level as well as the funding schemes of the UK & RoI JSPS Alumni Association. Dr. John Brazier, a JSPS Alumnus based at the University of Reading, spoke next about his experiences of research environments and living in Japan. He gave very thoughtful and practical advice about getting the most out of a JSPS Fellowship and how he has used the experience to advance his career on return to the UK. Dr. Brazier's presentation 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 this presentation 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 a guest speaker from the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, Ms. Susan Meehan, to make seminar participants aware about further funding opportunities this distinguished organisation offers to do research in Japan. The presentations were followed by a Q+A to formally discuss any pre departure issues the seminar participants were experiencing. After the pre-departure seminar, the UK & RoI JSPS Alumni Association held an alumni evening for networking among members and new JSPS fellows in a relaxed atmosphere. The evening started with an award ceremony for Alumni granted in FY2015 either a BRIDGE Fellowship that supports short research trips to Japan or the Symposium Scheme award that supports a UK-Japan academic event at institutional level. During the ceremony, each awardee was invited to comment on their achievements made using one of these sources of funding and received a congratulatory certificate and gift. In FY2015, 5

BRIDGE Fellowship and 5 Symposium Scheme awards were made. The award ceremony was followed by a drinks reception and buffet to allow for networking and the chance for further information exchange between new fellows and Alumni in preparation for their trips to Japan.

Comments from attendees:

“This event provided a great opportunity to meet JSPS staff and previous fellows, who gave insights into life in Japan as well as what they did next, and were available for discussion and questions. It was also very good to hear about the advantages of becoming JSPS alumni and what further support JSPS has to offer. Attending the event prepares us for both visiting Japan and for starting to plan what to do next upon our return.”

Dr. Ana Verissimo (University of Leicester), Short Term Pre/Postdoctoral Fellow

“The Pre-Departure Seminar and Reception presented everything that a British academic venturing to Japan for the first time would want to know. Whether in formal Q&A or through casual chats over sushi and a beer, abstract knowledge that I was going to Tokyo for a year became a more confident reality as everything from the complexities of opening a Japanese bank account to surfing and skiing at the weekend were covered. As well as meeting others going out there this year, finding that once you were part of the JSPS you were part of the community for life as an alumni member was a pleasure to learn.”

Mr. Max Lau (University of Oxford), Short Term Pre/Postdoctoral Fellowship

“Although I’ve lived in Japan before, the event gave me the opportunity to find out new information about living in Japan and about JSPS itself. It was also valuable and fun to meet everyone at JSPS and the other fellows, and especially to see the wide range of topics being supported.”

Dr. Cornelia Lawson (University of Cambridge)

“The JSPS Pre-departure Seminar provided an excellent occasion to learn more about moving to Japan. It helped me to think through some aspects of moving that I may not have otherwise considered and also to discover more about my future opportunities, both during my time in Japan and after. Combined with the Alumni evening, there were also excellent chances to speak to previous JSPS fellows and to gain from their past experiences.”

Dr. Tom Ducat (University of Warwick), Standard Term Postdoctoral Fellowship

“The Pre-departure Seminar and Alumni evening held by the JSPS London Office was well organised. The members of staff in the JSPS London office were very friendly. The event was very informative, from covering topics such as travelling, accommodation, opening a bank account, health insurance, to Japanese culture and seasonal attractions. Dr John Brazier’s talk in particular imparted a lot of very good information on these things. His experience both in Japan and after he completed his Fellowship was very useful to know. In addition, the event provided us an opportunity to get to know other Fellows before going to Japan. Overall, this event was excellent.”

Professor Wuqiang Yang (University of Manchester), Short Term Invitation Fellowship



Opening of the pre departure seminar from Professor Kunio Takeyasu, Director of JSPS London



“Experiences as a JSPS Fellow,” presentation from Dr. John Brazier, University of Reading



Dr. Gorana Pobric, University of Manchester making an acceptance speech for a JSPS BRIDGE Fellowship during award ceremony



Participants of networking reception