

## **Pre Departure Seminar and Networking Evening, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

On 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018 a seminar combining a Japanese class for beginners and information about preparations for a research trip to Japan was organised by JSPS London. Participants included recent awardees of several types of JSPS Fellowships. The seminar started a Japanese language class for beginner's level given by staff of the Japan Foundation London Office and included information from them about the activities and funding schemes of their organisation for intellectual exchanges with Japan. The teachers were Mr. Makoto Netsu, Chief Japanese language Advisor and Ms Kanako Ukai, Assistant Japanese Language Advisor. This lesson covered words and phrases for practical everyday situations both for living and working in Japan including self-introductions in order that fellows are able to simply explain about their research area. An introduction to reading hiragana and katakana was also given.

After a short break, the next segment of the seminar began and included formal presentations on pre departure preparations from JSPS staff and Alumni. This session started with welcoming remarks from the Director of JSPS London, Professor Nobuo Ueno and was followed by a short self-introduction from each participant. The purpose of these self-introductions was for fellows to link similar areas of research and institutions being visited overall. In this group JSPS research fellows will be visiting a varied array of departments at top universities and research institutions all over 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. Chika Itoi, gave an essential introduction to JSPS, the preparation JSPS researchers need to make, the expectations JSPS has of its research fellows and the kinds of assistance available from JSPS. Mr Ryo Satomura, International Programme Associate at JSPS London, gave the next presentation about preparations specifically for the Summer Programme and also included generic information on the procedure for booking flights, receiving funds and travel insurance applicable to all JSPS Fellows. Two JSPS UK & RoI Alumni Association members spoke next about their experiences of research environments and living in Japan. Mr Neil Fuller from the University of Portsmouth and a JSPS Summer Programme Fellow in 2017, gave advice about getting the most from this fellowship by being well prepared and open minded to trying new things and approaches both to daily life and research. Professor Andrew Quantock from Cardiff University, spoke about his long and impressive research track record with Japan and how being awarded several sources of JSPS funding has helped to build his research networks in Japan as well as the importance of being actively involved with the UK and RoI JSPS Alumni Association to maintain these links.

JSPS London was also pleased to have in attendance guest speakers Ms. Susan Meehan from the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and Mr. Rory Steele from the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation. Both gave presentations on the activities of their organisations to make seminar participants aware about further funding opportunities they offer to do research in Japan.

After the pre-departure seminar, the UK & RoI JSPS Alumni Association held a networking evening to include Japanese researchers based in the UK as well, that allowed for networking among members and new JSPS fellows in a relaxed atmosphere. The evening started with a presentation from the Chair of the UK & RoI JSPS Alumni Association, Dr. John Fossey, based at the University of Birmingham, to explain about the recent and future activities of the Association, including recent awards made under the BRIDGE Fellowship and Symposium Scheme as sources of funding available exclusively to Alumni Association members. This presentation was followed by a drinks reception and buffet to allow for networking and the chance for further information exchange between new fellows, Alumni and Japanese researchers in preparation for their trips to Japan.

#### **Comments from attendees:**

*"The event was very well organised and useful. Plenty of tips were provided (i.e. remember socks with no holes, carry cash, bring gifts etc.) that could help us to better prepare for our research trips. Many former JSPS fellows also attended the evening reception providing opportunities for us to get to know them and ask questions. The event was a great success ending with a delicious Japanese buffet dinner which was without a doubt one of the highlights of the event."*

**Professor Kim Tan (University of Nottingham), JSPS Long Term Invitation Fellow**

*"The JSPS pre-departure seminar was of considerable benefit to me, particularly the short presentation given by one of last year's JSPS Summer Programme fellows. There were many "tips and tricks" I had not thought of and I feel my experience in Japan will be all the better for having been made aware of these. Also of great benefit was the opportunity to discuss JSPS alumni activities. It's easy to think that being a JSPS Summer Programme fellow is only for 3 months and then it's over, but I realised there are long term benefits to doing a JSPS fellowship and keeping in touch with JSPS, which offers a variety of further funding opportunities, that can shape one's whole career for the better."*

**Mr Ben Chapman (University of Warwick), JSPS Summer Programme Fellowship**

*"The pre-departure seminar was really enjoyable. I had the opportunity to talk to other academics that had travelled to Japan, as well as Japanese academics working in UK. It was also nice to meet others that were going to Japan soon, and to hear the experiences of those who are now JSPS alumni. The JSPS personnel were really helpful and we had fantastic sushi for dinner. The event was really well organised and it made me feel part of a prestigious institution. I would recommend future JSPS research fellows to attend if they can, as it was a really fun and welcoming event."*

**Dr Matteo Fabbretti, (Cardiff University), JSPS Standard Postdoctoral Fellowship**

*"The pre-departure meeting at JSPS London was a great chance to meet the friendly people of JSPS, as well as many of the other fellows who will soon be heading to Japan. Comprising of a quick-fire Japanese lesson, useful talks about life in Japan and a reception with JSPS alumni and sushi, the day gave me a great idea of what to expect from my upcoming fellowship. I'm thankful to JSPS for the invite and look forward to conducting research in Japan with my new found sushi cravings."*

**Mr Daniel Billett, (Lancaster University), JSPS Short Term Pre/Postdoctoral Fellowship**

*“The opportunity to revise some elementary Japanese grammatical structures was great and I will definitely use the sentences I learned during the Japanese lecture. I very much appreciated the session where colleagues shared their experiences in Japan as well as the final networking session. I also learned of funding opportunities I was not aware of. Back from Japan, I hope I will be able to contribute to a future event.”*

***Professor Enrico Scalas, (University of Sussex), JSPS Short Term Invitation Fellowship***



***Japanese Language Lesson***



***Evening reception participants***