

Pre Departure Seminar and Alumni Evening on 25th October 2013

On 25th October 2013 recent awardees of JSPS Fellowships were invited to the JSPS London offices for a pre departure seminar to help them prepare for their upcoming research visits to Japan. The seminar began 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 Animal and Plant Sciences Department at Tohoku University in the north to the Foreign Language and Acquisition and Education Facility at Kyoto University in the South. 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. Mary Redfern from the University of East Anglia and member of the UK-JSPS Alumni Association, next gave a presentation about her experiences of living and doing research in Japan. She gave very thoughtful tips about getting the most out of a JSPS Fellowship and covered a wide range of topics from accommodation to working practises in Japan and money saving offers concerning budget air travel and non-contract mobile phone options. This presentation gave a wealth of advice 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 Mr. Hal Parker, Programmes Officer from The Japan Foundation to speak about further funding opportunities his organisation offers to do research in Japan.

Pictures from the event: Pre Departure Seminar



Self Introduction by participants: Mr. Richard Tomsett (Newcastle University), Short Term Postdoctoral Fellow



Ms. Mary Redfern (University of East Anglia), UK-JSPS Alumni Association

After the pre-departure seminar, the UK-JSPS Alumni Association held an alumni evening for networking among members and new JSPS fellows in a relaxed atmosphere. Dr. Che Connon, Executive Committee member of the UK-JSPS Alumni Association, gave an opening speech in which he talked about the work of the UK-JSPS Alumni Association for the benefit of the newest fellows present. He mentioned in particular the progress of the alumni re-visitation scheme and the alumni symposium scheme which are funding programmes exclusive to members. He also mentioned the string of events that recently took place to commemorate the JSPS' 80th Anniversary in 2012 and plans for a JSPS London 20th Anniversary Event in 2014. Dr. Connon's presentation was followed by the Alumni and JBUK Research Promotion Session. This consisted of three, ten minute presentations from UK-JSPS Alumni Association members to give the chance for Alumni to advertise current research, seek advice from peers or complimentary expertise for new research areas and investigate opportunities to collaborate with other alumni members. These three short presentation themes and the presenters were:

1. "New treatments for corneal endothelial disease"
Professor Andrew Quantock, School of Optometry and Vision Sciences, Cardiff University.
2. "What we can learn from Japan: Exploring the determinants of healthy ageing"
Dr. Noriko Cable, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London.
3. "Bugs, Colours and Potions: having fun with chemistry and biology"
Dr. Rudi Marquez, School of Chemistry, University of Glasgow.

The final guest speaker of the Alumni evening was given by Professor Kuniaki Yamashita, Director of the JSPS Bangkok office who talked about the new international strategy of JSPS and the future work our organisation must do to support the global challenges facing researchers. These presentations were followed by a drinks reception and buffet to allow for networking and the chance for further informal discussion with the presenters.

Later in to the Alumni evening an award ceremony took place for those granted a UK-JSPS Alumni Association award in FY 2013. These were either for the re-visitation programmes called the Furusato Award or Bridge Fellowship which supports individual long and short research trips to Japan or the Symposium Scheme award, that supports a UK-Japan event at institutional level. During the ceremony, each awardee was invited to comment on their achievements made using one of these sources of funding. In Fiscal year 2013 6 FURUSATO awards, 3 BRIDGE Fellowship and 4 Symposium Scheme awards were made.

Pictures from the event: Alumni Evening



JBUK Research Promotion Session Speaker, Dr. Noriko Cable, University College London



FY2013 BRIDGE Fellowship Awardee, Dr. Goran Vladislavljevic , Loughborough University

Comments from attendees:

"The Pre-Departure Seminar and Alumni Evening was an excellent opportunity for me to learn from and meet with current and former JSPS fellows of all academic backgrounds and interests. It was also my chance to thank the team at JSPS for allowing me the chance to conduct my research in Japan, and to make contacts with whom I could meet up again during my fieldwork."

Miss Miriam Grinberg (University of Warwick), Short Term Postdoctoral Fellow

"I found the pre-departure meeting very useful, it was a great chance to meet the JSPS representatives, all awarded candidates, researchers who have returned from Japan after their fellowship and other interesting guests. From all given talks I learnt something important: how to live/work in Japan, what to expect, the connections made between UK-Japan and great possibilities for funds in Japan in the future. Overall, the organisation was excellent, I also enjoyed a lot the networking part."

Miss Joanna Sacharz (Queen Mary, University of London), Short Term Postdoctoral Fellow

"The Pre Departure Seminar and Alumni evening event was great and incredibly valuable! The event was very well organised and the amount and quality of information that I gained will irrefutably support me in the beginning of my Fellowship in Japan. Attending this event gave me plenty of opportunities to network and meet other fellows as well as UK- JSPS alumni. The atmosphere instilled a level of comfort to discuss openly with others and solve any questions you might have with regards to your fellowship and your trip in Japan. Everyone was very friendly and kind!"

Miss Elena Koudouna (Cardiff University), Short Term Postdoctoral Fellow

Finally, JSPS London would like to wish all of our new fellows a successful research trip to Japan and we hope they will join the UK-JSPS Alumni Association on their return to the UK.

