

Pre Departure Seminar and Alumni Evening on May 25th 2012

On 25th May 2012 a Pre-Departure Seminar for 4 categories of JSPS Awardees; Summer Programme, Postdoctoral Fellowship Short Term and Standard Term and Invitation Fellowship awardees was held at the JSPS London offices.

The seminar was well attended and started with welcoming remarks from the Deputy Director of JSPS London, Mr. Tomo Saito. 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 Neuropharmacology at the University of Hokkaido in the north to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency in Tokyo and Sociology Department 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. Tomo Saito gave an essential introduction to JSPS and was followed by talks from Ms. Naoko Yamaoka about how the JSPS Summer Programme will be conducted and also from Ms. Akiko Sato regarding what was expected of JSPS fellows going to Japan on Postdoctoral and Invitation Fellowships. Ms. Sato also explained about the kinds of assistance available from JSPS for our fellows, especially in emergency conditions after an earthquake and tsunami. JSPS London was very pleased that Ms. Yamaoka and Ms. Sato came all the way from JSPS Tokyo to attend this event and pass on such important information to our fellows.

UK-JSPS Alumni Association members were also invited to talk about their experiences of living and research environments in Japan. These included Mr. Jamie Cameron of the University of Glasgow and Dr. Zenobia Lewis from the University of Liverpool. Both gave very thoughtful and practical advice about getting the most out of a JSPS Fellowship and made great efforts to answer questions from the new fellows to put to rest any anxieties they may be having about their research trip 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 Dr. Claire McNulty, Director of Science at the British Council and Dr. Kimberly Hutchings, Scheme Manager of Grants at the Royal Society.

The seminar ended with a questions and discussion session giving participants the chance to raise questions and concerns about JSPS programmes and living and working in Japan. Areas covered included an update on the effects of the 11th March 2011 earthquake and how JSPS Fellowships would be affected in the event of a another natural disaster. Further advice was given about Japanese etiquette, obtaining visas, accident and sickness insurance coverage, accommodation

options and payment of allowances.

Guest Speakers:



Ms Naoko Yamaoka and Ms Akiko Sato, Overseas Fellowship Division, JSPS Tokyo



Mr Jamie Cameron (University of Glasgow), JSPS Summer Programme Fellow, 2011



Dr Zenobia Lewis (University of Liverpool), UK-JSPS Alumni Association



Dr Claire McNulty, Director of Science, British Council



Dr Kimberly Hutchings, Scheme Manager, Grants, Royal Society



Dr Barbara Marte, Senior Editor, *Nature*

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. Martyn Kingsbury, the Chair 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 two alumni re-visitation schemes and the alumni symposium scheme which are funding programmes exclusive to members as well as the series of events for Alumni that JSPS London will be holding across the UK in 2012 as part of JSPS' 80th anniversary celebrations. This was followed by a drinks reception and buffet and after this JSPS London was very pleased to host a talk from the senior editor of *Nature*, Dr Barbara Marte who spoke about the importance of international collaboration.



Alumni Networking Event

Comments from attendees:

“The pre-departure briefing was very informative as well as fun. It was useful to meet the JSPS staff from Tokyo office in case I need assistance in-country; and it was especially good to hear from alumni. I had no idea about how to prepare for an earthquake, so that was good to know, and their comments have also inspired me to learn a few words of basic Japanese, so I got on to Amazon and bought a second-hand copy of ‘Japanese for Busy People’ for about £2! Domo arigato gozaimasu.”

Professor Alan Hunter (Coventry University), JSPS Short Term Invitation Fellow

“With the impending departure to Japan rapidly approaching, the pre departure seminar and Alumni Evening in London both encouraged excitement and diffused inevitable nerves. It allowed me to meet others JSPS fellows and previous years fellows who imparted their wisdom and tips as to what was in store. Hearing of the fantastic Japanese culture other fellows had experienced only furthered my already growing excitement – it was an invaluable experience!”

Melissa Gammons (University of Bristol), JSPS Summer Programme 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.

