

Pre Departure Seminar and Evening Reception on April 17th 2015

On 17th April 2015 recent awardees of JSPS Fellowships were invited to a pre departure seminar at JSPS London, 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 Kunio Takeyasu who expressed his encouragement and hope that the different perspectives and complementary skills between the UK researchers and their hosts in Japan will produce some excellent results. 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 JSPS fellows will be visiting top institutions mainly in the Tokyo and Kyoto areas representing a wide range of research fields from intelligent robotics and transport and environmental systems to international culture and communication studies. 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. Mr. Takeshi Kamezawa, International Programme Associate, 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 Ms. Christina Wayman from King's College London and Dr. Steven Hayward from the University of East Anglia. Ms. Wayman was a JSPS Summer Programme Fellow in 2014 and in her presentation she gave very thoughtful and practical advice for aspects of both living and working in Japan covering a wide range of topics from Japanese work etiquette to mobile phones, WI FI access and budget airlines for domestic travel. Dr. Hayward, having received 4 JSPS Fellowships to date spoke about the importance and benefits of developing international collaborations and compared research institutions in the UK and Japan. 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 Ms. Susan Meehan, Grants and Scholarships Officer of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and Mr. Rory Steele, Programmes Officer of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

After the pre-departure seminar, JSPS London organised an evening reception for JSPS Alumni and Japanese Researchers Based in the UK (JBUK). Over 80 guests attended. This evening reception was opened with a presentation from Dr. Ruth Goodridge, Chair of the UK and RoI-JSPS Alumni Association, who 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 future events the Alumni Association are planning and encouraged active participation from its members. After this a series of short promotion sessions was given by Alumni and JBUK as a chance for them to advertise current research, seek advice from peers or complimentary expertise for new research areas and investigate opportunities to collaborate with other alumni members. The first presenter was Professor Thomas Wirth from the University of Cardiff. The title of his talk was "Crossing the Boundary to Forbidden Chemistries." The second presenter was Dr. Yasuhiro Yamazaki from Newcastle University. The title of his talk was "How can Palaeoclimate Data Improve Future Climate Projection?" The session finished with a special lecture from Dr. Hiroko Kawanami, a senior lecturer in Buddhist studies at Lancaster University. She gave her recommendation of 5 temples that should be visited and explained about their special features to further the attendees' understanding and appreciation of rituals and traditions of religious temples in Japan. Following an enthusiastic volley of questions and answers after this presentation, the evening was rounded off with a drinks reception and buffet to allow for networking.

Comments from attendees:

"It was useful to gain an understanding of the general position of JSPS London in respect of MEXT and JSPS activity. The main value of the meeting, however, was the opportunity to meet with others who are on JSPS programmes."

Professor John Dawson (University of Edinburgh), Short Term Invitation Fellow

"The JSPS pre-departure seminar was very informative; it provided some good practical information about the departure to Japan and gave an insight into life in a Japanese academic setting. The alumni event was very useful in giving an idea of the type of work undertaken by JSPS fellows, as well as providing an opportunity to network with other fellows and alumni!"

Ms. Lidelotte Snijders (University of Oxford), Standard Postdoctoral Fellow

"I would like to thank the organisers of the JSPS pre-departure seminar and alumni evening. It was inspiring to hear about previous fellow's experiences of doing research and living in Japan and their tips for making the early days of a research fellowship go smoothly. During the event we were given practical advice, an introduction to Japanese culture and customs and also suggestions of places to visit! I would fully recommend JSPS fellows to attend similar events to help them prepare for their research life in Japan."

Dr. Mark Greenaway (University of Nottingham), Short Term Pre/Postdoctoral Fellow

"I found the pre-departure Seminar and Alumni evening a highly useful and positive experience. The event clarified all the questions I had regarding the Summer Programme, and provided a platform to meet and discuss with Alumni about their experiences. The meeting also served as a useful platform for students from my year's programme to meet and share travel plans and research. Furthermore, the event made me aware of the many funding opportunities which are available and relevant to researchers such as myself who wish to do collaborative research with Japan."

Mr. Ben Lowe (University of Southampton), Summer Programme Fellow