

JSPS London Japan-UK Research Promotion Conference, 16th November 2016

On 16th November 2016, the first research promotion conference organized by JSPS London was hosted at the Japan Embassy in London. The purpose of the event was to provide an important opportunity for networking between JSPS Alumni who have experience of taking part in a JSPS international funding programme in Japan, and members of JBUK, Japanese researchers Based in the UK, as well as their colleagues and students. There were over 120 attendees from institutions and funding organisations based in the UK. The symposium began with welcoming remarks from the Director of JSPS London, Professor Nobuo Ueno, who expressed his hope for participants to get to know new potential collaborators from a variety of research fields and for the event to have long ranging benefits in terms of obtaining research grants and job hunting. A further set of opening remarks was made by From Mr Atsushi Hashizume, Director, Strategic Programs Division (Research and System Reform), MEXT who commented on how he was looking forward to the conference and the possibility and importance of facilitating collaboration based on strengths or difficulties and a diversity of research areas brought together. Following this, Ms. Polly Watson, International Programme Coordinator at JSPS London, explained about the format for the rest of the conference.

Research areas were broadly divided into the Humanities and Social Sciences, Medical and Life Sciences and Engineering and Physical Sciences, each comprising of one session area. Sessions took place in parallel and there were two sessions to include 10 presentations each that were preselected based on an abstract submission. All researchers were allocated a space in the session area they requested on registering for the event and guests from other organisations were welcome to attend any session they felt appropriate. Each session had one moderator responsible for keeping each 5 minute presentation to time and to facilitate discussion with any time remaining. In between the sessions there was a coffee break with a chance for poster viewing and networking. During the second coffee break poster presenters were asked to stand by their poster to receive questions. At the end of the second session participants in their session area were asked to vote for the two best presentations they have heard in terms of appeal of research area and possibility of collaboration. Those selected were asked to give their presentations again during the final cross disciplinary session for which all participants gathered together. Those presentations selected included in the humanities and social sciences from Dr Peter Matanle, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield and Mr Stelios Andreadakis, Leicester Law School, University of Leicester. In the medical and life sciences presentations from Dr Yoshifumi Itoh, Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology, University of Oxford and Dr Ruth Goodridge, Additive Manufacturing & 3D-Printing Research Group, University of Nottingham were chosen. And those with the highest number of votes in the Engineering and Physical Sciences were presentations from Dr Pontus Stenetorp, Department of Computer Science, University College London and Dr Edmund Harbord, Centre for Quantum Photonics, School of Physics, University of Bristol.

At the end of the cross disciplinary session Ms. Polly Watson explained about a new £1,000 collaboration prize for a pair of researchers who have met at this research promotion conference to work together. Prize money is to be used for meetings and visits to research facilities in the UK, to discuss long term projects and preparation for writing larger joint research grant proposals. It is hoped this prize will facilitate new interdisciplinary collaboration between attendees. The symposium was then brought to a close with remarks from Mr Hiroshi Matsuura, Minister (Economic), Embassy of Japan in the UK and Dr Jane Nicholson, Associate Director, Impact & International, EPSRC. Both expressed how stimulating, diverse and engaging the conference was on many levels and their hope for deeper and long lasting research collaborations between Japan and the UK.

The event finished with a reception to allow for networking and the chance for further exchanges between participants.