

Pre Departure Seminar and Alumni Evening 7th October 2016

On 7th October 2016 a seminar combining a Japanese class for beginners and information about preparations for a research trip to Japan was organised by JSPS London and hosted at The Daiwa Foundation Japan House. Participants included recent awardees of several types of JSPS Fellowships. The seminar started with the Japanese language class. The teachers were Mr. Makoto Netsu, Chief Japanese language Advisor and Ms Kanako Ukai, Assistant Japanese Language Advisor, both from the Japan Foundation London. 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.

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 our fellows will be visiting a varied array of departments at top universities and research institutions in Japan, mostly in the areas of Kyoto and Tokyo. The rest of 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. Chigusa Ogaya, 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. This was followed by a presentation from Mr Taro Mita, International Programme Associate, who gave an overview of JSPS funding programmes so participants were aware of further funding opportunities offered by JSPS to help build wider research networks on a longer term basis with Japan. Ms. Polly Watson then took questions from the audience about the presentations so far, giving answers to various topics such as applying for a visa, obtaining a personal insurance policy and taking leave during a JSPS Fellowship.

Dr Iain Crowe from the University of Manchester and JSPS UK & RoI Alumni Association member, spoke next about his recent experience of research environments and living in Japan. In his presentation he gave very thoughtful and practical advice in preparing for a research trip and settling in to surroundings, touching on a wide breadth of topics including travel, accommodation, Japanese language study and getting use to the climate and differences in culture. JSPS London was also pleased to have in attendance guest speakers Ms. Julie Anne Robb from the Japan Foundation and Ms Susan Meehan from the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese 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 an alumni evening to allow for networking among members and new JSPS fellows in a relaxed atmosphere. The evening started with a presentation from Dr. Alessandra Devoto based at Royal Holloway, University of London and Executive Committee member of this JSPS Alumni Association, 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 was followed by an award ceremony for Alumni and JBUK members granted in FY2016 either a BRIDGE Fellowship or new JBUK Japan Award that supports short research trips to Japan or the Symposium Scheme award that supports a UK-Japan academic event at institutional level. During the ceremony, each awardee was invited to comment on their achievements made using one of these sources of funding and received a congratulatory certificate and gift. In FY2016, 5 BRIDGE Fellowships, 2 JBUK Japan Awards and 5 Symposium Scheme awards were made. This ceremony was followed by a group photo, drinks reception and buffet to allow for networking and the chance for further information exchange between new fellows and Alumni in preparation for their trips to Japan.

Comments from attendees:

“As well as the opportunity to ask questions to a real person about everything from language barriers, to visa issues, it is a real chance to meet the other people who are going to be in Japan, both at similar or different institutions, over some really nice food and drink. The extra funding information was also quite valuable for the future from the different organisations who attended.”

Dr Paul Harvey (Queen’s University Belfast), JSPS Standard Postdoctoral Fellowship

“The Pre-departure event hosted by JSPS London was very interesting and helpful for me. As I have no prior experience with the Japanese language, the introductory Japanese lesson was very welcome. The meeting also provided information about what to expect while living in Japan, as well as the opportunity to meet past and recent awardees; it was interesting to learn about the breadth of research activities that the JSPS funds as well as the experiences of those that have previously held JSPS Fellowships. I am greatly looking forward to moving to Japan next month.”

Dr Matthew Edmonds (Newcastle University), JSPS Standard Postdoctoral Fellowship

“This event gives the chance to researchers to become familiar with the Japanese language and culture. Valuable information was given about life in Japan; interesting tips about accommodation and traveling were offered from alumni. The fellows got a first impression of how Japanese people behave and how they communicate with each other. It was a very welcoming event which made me proud for the fact that I can consider myself now as part of this community. The event ended with an informal reception, where delicious Japanese food was served. I totally enjoyed it and found it very useful.”

Dr Panagiotis Andriotis (University of the West of England), JSPS Short Term Pre/Postdoctoral Fellowship

“The event was very useful for several reasons. First, I had the chance to meet other people who got the JSPS fellowship. Some of them are going to the same city I will go, so we could exchange emails and phone numbers to meet up once there. Then, the introductory Japanese lesson was really interesting. I could learn very useful and basic expressions. Besides this, also the presentation from a JSPS Alumnus gave me the opportunity to understand the importance of being part of the JSPS Alumni Association. Finally, a lot of doubts about the fellowship was solved by asking questions directly to the people who were there.”

Dr Nicolo Lo Piparo (University of Leeds), JSPS Standard Postdoctoral Fellowship

“I enjoyed attending the JSPS London pre-departure seminar. The event offered the possibility to meet other scholars that will go to Japan around the same time, and also some that had just come back. It was great to be able to speak about our experiences we already had in Japan as well as the plans for the future! I also found it interesting to learn about funding opportunities for UK-Japan projects, I discovered many options that I was not aware of. Finally, I also liked the Japanese class, although it felt very short, gave us a head-start in learning some Japanese. I'm looking forward to use all we have learnt in Japan!”

Mr David Marti-Pete (The Open University), JSPS Standard Postdoctoral Fellowship



The Japanese language lesson



“Preparations for a research trip to Japan”, presentation from Iain Crowe



Evening reception participants (Recipients of prizes from the award ceremony are seated in the front row with JSPS London Director, Professor Nobuo Ueno, in the centre)



Networking time