

## EVALUATION OF BBSRC'S JAPAN PARTNERING AWARD SCHEME 2009

### BBSRC RESPONSE TO THE PANEL'S REPORT

This document sets out BBSRC's response to the findings of the Review Panel convened to provide an evaluation of the Japan Partnering Award (JPA) scheme.

BBSRC thanks the Panel members for their hard work and commitment to this exercise. We are pleased to note that the JPA scheme's support for UK-Japan collaborations has been positive and has fostered long-term and lasting partnership links between UK and Japanese researchers. The remainder of this document sets out our response to key aspects of the report.

- *The JPA scheme has enabled UK scientists to add value to their research programmes*

BBSRC welcomes the Panel's assessment that the JPA scheme stimulated the development of partnerships that enabled UK researchers to add value to their research programmes: participating in researcher exchanges; accessing unique or distinctive Japanese infrastructure; and conducting mutually beneficial collaborative research. We are pleased to note that some awards resulted in exceptional outcomes: stimulating excellent research; providing important benefits to the wider UK research base; securing funding from Japanese funding sources; and contributing significantly to realising the goals of BBSRC's wider international strategy.

We also welcome the observation that some of the linkages supported by the JPA scheme show early signs of delivering wider economic and social impact, and that further impact is anticipated in the future. We are pleased that researchers from the UK and Japan were able to overcome issues that may arise when partners from two different countries wish to establish intellectual property and exploitation rights. BBSRC is committed to supporting links between the UK and Japan, and expects that the exchange of ideas and expertise between researchers will ultimately deliver economic benefits to both countries.

- *The most successful achievements of the JPA scheme derived from exchanges where researchers conducted collaborative research in partner laboratories*

BBSRC recognises the tremendous opportunities that arise from collaborative research activity. We share the Panel's view that it is important to provide support for early-career scientists to conduct research in partner laboratories and note the Panel's observation that longer-term visits of one month or more were particularly beneficial. The opportunities for early-career researchers are now emphasised as an important assessment criterion for all Partnering Award applications.

- *The JPA scheme has been successful, but its original objectives are no longer as relevant as they were at its inception*

BBSRC recognises that the international research landscape changes over time. We share the Panel's view that it is now easier for UK and Japanese researchers to establish collaborative links, reducing the need for networking activities designed to initiate new partnerships. Mutual access to research facilities remains an important driver in cooperation activities, but we are pleased that the JPA scheme has fostered a wide range

of activities for mutual benefit. BBSRC believes that fostering partnerships through networking and enabling researchers to access distinctive facilities are still important, and Partnering Award schemes will continue to provide support for these activities. However, neither will be a primary focus of the JPA scheme. BBSRC will encourage researchers to use other schemes, such as BBSRC's International Science Interchange Scheme (ISIS), to initiate partnership links prior to making full Partnering Award applications. In future, the primary focus of the scheme will continue to be on developing long-term collaborative partnerships, with plenty of opportunities for researcher exchanges at all levels.

- *Alignment of BBSRC and Japan Science and Technology Agency partnering schemes*

In September 2008, BBSRC and the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to boost cooperation and to increase links between their respective research communities. As a result, BBSRC's JPA scheme was aligned with the JST's equivalent scheme promoting partnering and exchange of researchers (Strategic International Cooperative Programme), with the JST providing funds for the Japanese partners. The 2008 call focused on systems biology; since 2004, BBSRC has invested over £85 million in different systems biology programmes in the UK, and Japan is a world-leader in systems biology research. BBSRC welcomes the Panel's endorsement of this alignment.

- *Application and administration procedures*

BBSRC shares the Panel's concern that the internal application procedures used by the Partnering Award schemes were not widely understood by the community. We agree with the Panel's assessment that the procedures are appropriate, but should be more transparent. BBSRC will make the internal assessment process more explicit to the research community.

- *Final reporting*

BBSRC shares the Panel's view that it is important to ensure that all award holders submit final reports providing details about the outcomes of their awards. This is a requirement of the award, and BBSRC has adopted the Panel's recommendation that the final award payment should be withheld until the final report is received.