

Report on the JPS Informal Meeting (organized by the Director Board)
“How to make the JPS a comfortable place for foreign students and researchers”

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Do you know how many foreign members there are in the JPS? Do you know how they feel about the JPS, as they do not speak much Japanese? Many Japanese members are probably aware that they do not feel very comfortable in the JPS. However, because they are a minority, they have not been able to speak out and few concrete measures have been taken to deal with them.

From the year 2022, the Gender Equality Promotion Committee changed its name to the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Committee, and a new mission was added to consider the issue of foreign members. However, as there were no foreigners within the committee, it was deemed necessary to first directly listen to the voices of foreign members. Therefore, the English informal meetings (IFM) were organized for the first time by the director board twice, at the 2023 annual meeting and the 2024 spring meeting, where international students, post-doctoral fellows, international faculty members, and even Japanese faculty members who hosted international students were invited to speak and we heard various opinions and suggestions.

At the 2023 Annual Meeting at Tohoku University, the IFM was held during the lunch break. After the JPS President's address, three people spoke: a doctoral student (from China), an assistant professor at a private university (from Indonesia), and a Japanese professor at a national university. A total of 55 Japanese and foreign members attended the IFM, and a wide range of opinions were expressed after the three speakers' talks. At the 2024 Spring Meeting (online), the meeting was held in the evening after the scientific sessions to facilitate participation, and talks were given by an associate professor from a private university (mathematical physicist from Germany), an associate professor from a national university (experimentalist of condensed matter physics from Indonesia/Netherlands) and a post-doc fellow (theorist of particle physics from USA). There was a lively exchange of views among the general audience.

A total of about 50 foreign members have participated in the two IFMs. Since the percentage of foreigners in the total membership of JPS is 2% (about 300 members), it can be said that the participation rate of foreigners in the IFMs is quite high. That must mean that they are highly interested and have a lot to say to the JPS. As it was not possible to collect all opinions in the short time available, questionnaire surveys were also conducted before and after each IFM, and responses were received from a total of 26 foreign members.

The results of these surveys and the opinions at the two IFMs were organized and possible actions were suggested, as listed in Table 1. These were discussed at the board meeting in April 2024, and measures were considered to respond to them. Some of the requests can be addressed immediately and others require some time to be considered, but in any case, positive action was taken on almost all of them. The future course of action will be monitored.

What we have learned in planning the IFMs is that it is impossible to know unless you ask the people concerned. Of course, some things could have been predicted before these IFMs, but there are also some irrationalities and unfairness that we only became aware of at this time. In this sense, we strongly felt the need to create a system to continuously listen to the voices of foreign members.

Table 1 Proposals based on the requests from foreign members and the Board's responses

item	Proposals	Board responses (April, 2024)
Biannual JPS meetings	1 Promoting the use of English for presentation slides and posters	Call for cooperation to the JPS members and the division committee
	2 Improving the English language pages of the biannual meeting web pages (providing the same information as the Japanese pages)	under improvement
	3 Creating English abstracts	Call for cooperation to the JPS members and the division committee
	4 Increasing the number of English-language sessions and symposiums	Call for cooperation to the JPS members and the division committee
	5 Considering foreign members as potential chairperson	Call for cooperation to the division committee
	6 Introducing simultaneous interpretation subtitling functionality at online meetings	under consideration for implementation in March 2025
Publicity and JPS webpage	7 English-language annexes to all the JPS emails	done
	8 Improving the English language pages of the JPS website (in particular, addition of missing information on open positions, awards, grants, meetings, etc.)	partially addressed, and improvements ongoing
Bulletin "BUTSURI"	9 Creating the English version of JPS Bulletin (At least English abstracts. The information on open positions, awards, grants, meetings are also important.)	To be considered by the directors in charge of publicity and the Editorial Board of the JPS Bulletin
Others	10 Creating an English-Japanese dictionary of Physics terms (Countermeasures against incorrect automatic translations)	Planned as a project for the 150th anniversary of the JPS
	11 Assistance for students from developing countries to continue their membership after they return home	To be considered by the directors in charge of financial affairs
	12 Creating mechanisms for mutual exchange, such as get-togethers for foreign members at biannual meetings	To be considered by the directors in charge of biannual meetings
	13 Creating a "JPS Guidebook (or webpage)" for foreign members	To be considered by the directors in charge of biannual meetings