

The Japanese text is the original and the English text is for reference purposes. If there is any conflict or inconsistency between these two texts, the Japanese text shall prevail.

## Basic Guidelines for Promoting Gender Equality in JSPS Programs

September 2023

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

### 1. Fundamental Principles

It is researchers who, by boldly challenging the frontiers of science, generate the excellent genres of knowledge that contribute to a nation's societal development while strengthening its international competitiveness. Toward strengthening further Japan's research prowess, it will be important to improve an environment in which researchers, irrespective of their age, gender, research field, or affiliated organization, can give full expression to their skills and abilities. Such an environment must allow researchers to steadfastly pursue their work across various life events such as childbirth, childcare and caregiving.

Regarding gender, the number of female researchers within Japan's research community has year-on-year been steadily increasing, reaching 17.8% in fiscal year 2021.<sup>1</sup> As of FY 2022, the percentage of female students registered in doctoral programs was 34.2%.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of female researchers is expected to increase in the future. Regarding life events, it's observed that female researchers are far more likely to take parental leave than are male researchers.<sup>3, 4</sup>

While progress is gradually being made in reducing gender disparities, accelerating this process will require a collective effort across society, one that provides researchers a work-life balance and a vision of their life paths. Toward this end, concrete strategies for promoting gender equality in academia have been established and included in Japan's government policies, including its 6<sup>th</sup> Science, Technology and Innovation Basic Plan (enacted March 26, 2021) and 5<sup>th</sup> Basic Plan for Gender Equality (enacted December 25, 2020).

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) works to advance science by funding research, fostering researchers, and supporting the establishment of research centers. Exerting a significant influence on Japan's research community,

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<sup>1</sup> "Survey of Research and Development (FY 2022)," Statistic Bureau of Japan.

<sup>2</sup> "Basic School Survey (FY 2022)," MEXT.

<sup>3</sup> "The 5th Large-Scale Survey of Actual Conditions of Gender Equality in Scientific and Technological Professions," EPMEWSE (2022).

<sup>4</sup> "The first survey report on gender equality in humanities and social sciences," Gender Equality Association for Humanities and Social Sciences (GEAHSS) and the Gender General Research Committee of SCJ (2020).

JSPS has in the past and will all the more in the future place importance on promoting gender equal participation in all areas of science, while initiating programs to support the development of researchers' career paths across various life events.<sup>5</sup> This effort was given particular weight in JSPS's 4<sup>th</sup> Mid-term Plan and Objectives (FY 2018 through FY 2022), which called for the proactive implementation of new initiatives to balance research with life events, while working to advance and improve existing initiatives embedded in JSPS's various programs. JSPS's 5<sup>th</sup> Mid-term Plan and Objectives (FY 2023 through FY 2027) established these Guidelines for the purpose of further advancing those initiatives and more fully achieving gender equality in all areas of science.

## **2. Target Period**

These Guidelines cover the period from the start of the Guidelines to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mid-term Plan and Objectives (to March 31, 2028). After this period ends, work to obtain gender equality will continue to be advanced based on the fundamental principles of these Guidelines until new guidelines are established.

## **3. Concrete Measures**

Based on the fundamental principles of these Guidelines, JSPS will take the following initiatives.

### (1) Establish an environment for obtaining work-life event balance

To provide seamless support for researchers experiencing life events, JSPS will need to design and implement systems to accommodate life events within its various programs. Accordingly, JSPS will implement the following initiatives.

- Implement schemes within the JSPS's various programs that allow researchers experiencing life events to suspend and extend their periods of research. Provide support for researchers who have experienced life events.
- The period of leave taken for life events is not counted when setting age limits or eligibility based on the number of years since obtaining a doctoral degree in the application requirements for JSPS's various programs.

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<sup>5</sup> During its 4<sup>th</sup> Mid-term Plan and Objectives, JSPS took various initiatives to promote gender equality, including launching the "CHEERS" website, disseminating information via symposiums, and establishing a program to support the continuation of a fellow's research during and after maternity leave. For details on JSPS's female-researcher support systems, please see the following site:

<https://cheers.jps.go.jp/support/>.

- Implement and enhance systems for supporting researchers who suspend their research for childbirth and for supporting the accompaniment of family members of researchers on long-term overseas research stays.
- To promote the active participation of male researchers in life events, consider strategies to facilitate their taking childcare leave, for example.
- Other: Establish and work to improve systems for balancing research and life events within JSPS's various programs.

## (2) Support Efforts to Achieve Gender Equality in Universities and Research Institutions

Achieving gender equality within the research community will require going beyond support for individual researchers to establishing gender-balanced environments within the universities and research institutions where researchers work. Toward achieving this objective, JSPS will take the following measures.

- Use various media, including JSPS's website and symposiums, to disseminate the contents and concepts of innovative approaches taken by research institutions to promote gender equality in their organizations, and share these good practices to help advance the creation of gender-balanced environments in other research institutions.
- Encourage research institutions to proactively advance in various ways gender equality in their organizations, including by persuading them to actively recommend female researchers as candidates for JSPS's commendation programs and by requiring them to take steps toward attaining gender balance when executing JSPS programs aimed at improving their research environments.
- Urge universities and research institutions that employ PD, RPD and CPD fellows to establish researcher-development policies inclusive of initiatives and environments that are conducive to the active participation of female researchers.

## (3) Take initiatives to convey the attractiveness of scientific research

To advance and achieve gender equality over the long term, it will be important to secure diversity among young researchers who will go on to shape the future of the research community. Towards this end, it will be necessary to promote a wider understanding of scientific research across the whole of society while carrying out programs that imbue students from elementary through high school a concrete vision of themselves as being future researchers. Toward achieving this end, JSPS will take the following measures.

- Give students opportunities to interact with researchers working on the frontlines of cutting-edge science.
- Provide role models for students by giving them opportunities via various media to hear the personal stories of senior researchers and learn about their research endeavors and by recognizing excellent researchers.

#### (4) Proactively promote female researchers and reporting their status

To secure diversity in JSPS's programs, it will be necessary to incorporate a perspective of diversity in JSPS's organizations and operations and in the implementation of its programs. To grasp gender-based issues within the research environment, it will also be important to see things from the perspectives of both male and female researchers. JSPS set a goal in its 5<sup>th</sup> Mid-term Plan and Objectives of attaining a ratio of about 30% female members in its operation committees. Since then, JSPS has been taking the following measures.

- Not stopping at the 30% called for in the 5<sup>th</sup> Mid-term Plan and Objectives, a goal is now set to attain a ratio of about 50% in future years.
- So as to make visible the state of JSPS's progress in this area of gender equality, an annual report is issued on the ratio of female members in committees governing JSPS's operations.

#### (5) Provide information and promote exchange

The research environments in which researchers work are not all the same; they differ by research fields, researchers' age and other factors. Therefore, to solve issues affecting individual researchers, information that encompasses various aspects needs to be gathered and used. Toward imbuing researchers with diverse perspectives, JSPS is working in the following ways for providing information on other countries and diverse fields.

- Using JSPS's overseas offices and other sources, an effort toward attaining diversity is made by collecting and disseminating information on various fields of research carried out in Japan and other countries.
- Two-way information exchange and network building are fostered by providing opportunities for researchers to carry out exchanges that transcend their fields.
- Information on JSPS's (1)-(4) initiatives are circulated to a wide audience by bolstering JSPS's dissemination capacity.

#### **4. Establish a Structure for Promoting Gender Equality within JSPS**

JSPS is taking the following measures to raise the effectiveness and improve the results of the above-stated initiatives, including taking into account the views of the scientific research community and making effective use of the PDCA cycle in advancing gender equality.

- Using a gender-equality advisory system within JSPS, the views of active researchers are ascertained and information is collected on initiatives being taken by other research institutions.
- Through a gender-equality promotion committee within JSPS, a cross-departmental assessment base on these Guidelines is conducted to ascertain the state of gender equality within JSPS's organization, and system enhancements are made. While working to improve systems and programs, revising these Guidelines is considered, as deemed necessary.
- After the execution period of these Guidelines ends, JSPS will continue to advance gender equality in each of its programs based on the fundamental principles of the Guidelines, while conducting a comprehensive review of the Guideline's implementation status in formulating the next-phase guidelines.