

# Launch of UK-Japan University-Business linkage agreement

*Seminar and Reception at the Embassy of Japan, 28th February*

February 28th saw the UK launch of an unprecedented collaborative agreement between the University of Brighton and the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (TUAT) regarding university and business linkages. The agreement was launched at, and with the generous support of, the Embassy of Japan in London.

Both universities are members of the Japan/UK Higher Education Group which allowed the development of a strong and mutually beneficial relationship resulting in the two universities signing a formal agreement for international co-operation in Tokyo in November 2006.

The agreement heralds a unique approach to improving international technology transfer in small new technology companies. Each university will help companies in its own country expand into the markets of the other country.

This is particularly timely as it echoes the intent of the Joint Statement released by the Prime Minister of Japan, HE Shinzo Abe, and Prime Minister Tony Blair at their first summit meeting held in London in January 2007 highlighting science, technology and innovation as a key area for further joint development.

Japan and the UK will work together to share best practice on knowledge transfer, particularly between academic institutions and the private sector.

Present at the launch were UK policy makers, ministry officials, and representatives from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), research councils, foundations and companies. It was also well supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) and the

Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI).

The proceedings began with a seminar on business-university linkages opened by University of Brighton Vice-Chancellor, Professor Julian Crampton.

Dr Takahiko Ono, TUAT's Vice-President for Public Relations and International Affairs, and HEFCE's Alice Frost, Head of Business and Community Team, outlined the national picture in the two countries and the policies in place to support universities as key drivers for socio-economic development through collaboration with industry and the community.

The President of TUAT, Dr Hidefumi Kobatake, and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Brighton, Mr Colin Monk, described current experiences in their respective universities, illustrated by examples of industrial linkages and new technologies already being developed in their institutions. Both universities are committed to building on their growing national success in university-industry collaborations by developing international collaborations and see this agreement as an important step forward in this ambition.

The key elements of the agreement are:

Assisting companies and technologies to transfer to the other country

Establishing an industry liaison office in each country

Identifying opportunities through regular annual research meetings

Attracting companies and ideas into each university

Facilitating staff and student exchanges

Providing systematic language and cultural support to the levels required

A reception followed in the magnificent ballroom of the Embassy to celebrate the agreement with some outstanding sparkling wine from Plumpton Agricultural College, a partner college of the University of Brighton.

The Minister of Economic Section in the UK, Mr Takaoka, reiterated the "fit" of the agreement to the science, technology and innovation section of the statement issued by the two Prime Ministers in January. As a result of further discussions held the day after the launch, the two universities have already identified a number of possible research and business development opportunities to take forward.

A programme has been set out for the next year which will include a visit by Brighton to Japan to exhibit at the TUAT annual business exhibition in November 2007 – the only university in Japan to hold such an exhibition for current and potential business clients. The first annual research meeting will be held in Tokyo in April 2008 to coincide with the UK-Japan 2008 which celebrates the 150th anniversary of the treaty that established diplomatic relations between the two countries. These annual meetings will be the foundation to continuing and building the relationship between the two universities, and identifying opportunities for further development.

The two universities are delighted with the success of the launch and are certain that they will be strengthened by this ground-breaking partnership that may act as an exemplar of best practice in university-industry collaboration.