

FY2021 AJET Opinion Exchange Meeting
CLAIR's Answers to AJET's Supplementary Questions

Question 1.

CLAIR has stated that they are unable to provide us with any numbers or data regarding the number of JET Program participants. Does that mean that CLAIR, which oversees the JET Program, does not know how many JETs are currently working in Japan? If CLAIR has this information, is there a reason it has not been shared?

Answer:

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, since last fiscal year we have not published the number of JET participants currently working in Japan. This information will be published through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications when the operation of the JET Programme has returned to normal, so please wait until that time.

Question 2.

The transfer deadline is considerably earlier than other reappointment deadlines. Can CLAIR publicize this by including information about the transfer deadline in CLAIR monthly emails and the General Information Handbook?

Answer:

We are not currently planning to align the deadlines for the transfer procedure between Contracting Organisations with the deadlines for regular reappointment procedures. The process of transferring between Contracting Organisations involves an agreement being reached between the source and target organisations through consultation, which requires a certain amount of time. For this reason, the deadline must be set early.

Please also understand that transfers between Contracting Organisations are special cases and therefore the transfer procedure is not widely publicised as a standard part of the reappointment process.

Question 3.

Regarding the response to question 2: it seems that if JET participants do report harassment/assault to their CO, and they investigate and agree that an incident has occurred, the CO can consider giving a transfer. However, there is no wording in the transfer rules that expresses this, nor is this made clear to JET participants. Is there any way CLAIR can include this wording in the transfer conditions or General Information Handbook? We believe this would help motivate people to report incidents.

Answer:

A self-report of harassment or assault is not necessarily enough to warrant a transfer to another Contracting Organisation. Only after the Contracting Organisation has investigated the facts and confirmed the facts of the matter, can it begin to consider appropriate measures. Ultimately, whether a transfer to another Contracting Organisation is possible depends on the individual case. Reasons other than harassment or assault are also judged on a case-by-case basis, and a transfer to another Contracting Organisation is only possible if it is truly unavoidable. The process of such individual decisions cannot be described in manuals such as the GIH.

Please also understand that a transfer between Contracting Organisations is only a special treatment and is not of a nature that should be widely publicised as a general procedure.

Question 4.

CLAIR said that transfer procedures are the responsibility of the CO to share with JET participants. What if a CO purposely withholds this information in order to deter or prevent their JETs from transferring? Some JET participants have reported such treatment, and consider this a loophole that unfairly puts the burden on them to obtain information without the cooperation of the CO.

Answer:

Every Contracting Organisation distributes documents regarding reappointment procedures to their JET Programme participants, which also includes transfers between Contracting Organisations, so participants should be informed about the transfer system. It is possible that supervisors at some Contracting Organisations may not be aware of details concerning the transfer system, but JET participants who wish to inquire about the transfer procedures must do so through their Contracting Organisations or Host Prefectures/Designated Cities.

Reappointments are in principle made to the same Contracting Organisation and in the same JET Programme role, and transfers between Contracting Organisations are treated as special cases. Therefore, JET participants should understand that arrangements to transfer between Contracting Organisations cannot always be made, and even if arrangements are being made, the desired transfer to another Contracting Organisation and/or desired reappointment may not always be possible.

If the situation is such that the Contracting Organisation is deliberately withholding this information to prevent the transfer of JET participants, please contact us individually to discuss the situation. Even if a JET participant obtains information about a transfer to another Contracting Organisation by themselves without the cooperation of their Contracting Organisation, the transfer will not ultimately take place without the approval of their Contracting Organisation. If there are genuine and compelling reasons for transfer, the JET participant should first consult with their Contracting Organisation.

Question 5.

Regarding the response to question 3: Council members have thoroughly looked through all of the information that CLAIR provides to JET participants regarding the mental health subsidy. The only information given in the guide and online is, "if you want to receive the mental health subsidy, you must contact your CO". There is no information at all about the process itself and what kind of information is necessary to apply. It would be helpful to provide this information to JET participants.

Answer:

The outlines for subsidies, such as support for the acquisition of English teaching methods and for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test grant, are posted on the JET Programme website. However, we will also examine the content of the information you recently provided to us about the mental health subsidy, and we would like to add the information that can be included.

Question 6.

COs are required to appoint PAs to support their JET participants. However, some COs appoint PAs in name only and do not give them the time, resources, or training they need to perform their duties. Can CLAIR help with this problem?

Answer:

CLAIR requests that the Host Prefectures/Designated Cities appoint PAs. Every year, CLAIR also provides training to ensure that PAs have the basic level of knowledge required for their PA work. This is the extent to which CLAIR can be involved. It is up to the Host Prefecture/Designated City to decide how much time, resources, and training will be allocated to the PAs to carry out their duties. CLAIR cannot request that they do so.

Question 7.

Regarding the response to question 3: Can CLAIR check in with COs/prefectures to confirm whether or not they have PAs and encourage them to appoint some if not? It would be helpful to have CLAIR remind contracting organizations of the necessity of providing functional PAs for their JET participants.

Answer:

The appointment of PAs is the responsibility of the Host Prefecture/Designated City, not the Contracting Organisation. On an annual basis, CLAIR does request that the Host Prefectures/Designated Cities appoint PAs and also receives information on the PAs who have been appointed. In addition, CLAIR carries out training for PAs every year on their role and their knowledge of their work, and conveys the importance of the PA role during the training. This is the extent of CLAIR's authority.

Question 8.

Regarding the translation/interpretation course: is the one-week intensive course even being held this year? Last year it was canceled due to the pandemic, and whether it will be held this year has remained unclear.

Answer:

We are planning to hold the one-week training course at JIAM. However, this may be subject to change due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. (The one-week training course was cancelled in 2020, but it was held at JIAM in December 2021.)

Question 9.

We understand that CLAIR does not have jurisdiction to contest reappointment decisions or provide information on financial information due to issues caused by the pandemic. We also understand they cannot provide additional funds to a given CO because these funds are determined by national government policy.

However, there are at least 2 major points of concern that remain:

1. Right now, there are many vacant JET placements across the country. Simultaneously, some COs have refused to recontract their JET participants (who would like to continue teaching in Japan on the JET Program) due to budget constraints. However, as things currently stand, these JET participants cannot be transferred to fill one of the many vacancies across Japan. Is this indeed the case? Can these ALTs be granted late transfers?

2. Some JET participants who have been laid off or decided to not renew their contract, such as those from New Zealand, are unable to return to their country, potentially for months, according to the current situation of the pandemic and border closures. It may be impossible for them to return to their country even half a year or more after their contract ends, and many of them cannot speak much Japanese and so will likely have difficulty securing another position in Japan. They had no warning or time to prepare for this situation. While this situation was not created by CLAIR, many JET participants believe that it is CLAIR's responsibility to address these cases to preserve the JET Program's reputation as an organization that cares about international employees in this extremely difficult time for them. Does CLAIR have any ideas to help improve this situation? Is it possible to request a small number of late transfers due to this extremely unprecedented situation?

Answer:

Since it is the aim of the JET Programme to promote international exchange, as many people as possible should have the opportunity to participate. Therefore, as a general rule, when a vacancy occurs within a Contracting Organisation, it should be filled by a new invitee, rather than by a current participant.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet fully under control, the JET Programme is progressing with the sequential arrival of new invitees to Japan under the Government's border measures. However, if the COVID-19 infection situation worsens again and it becomes almost impossible to receive new invitees in Japan as occurred in 2020, resulting in a situation where there are no participants in certain positions for a long period of time, we will be looking into the feasibility of a system whereby participants whose appointment periods have expired can be reappointed by another Contracting Organisation.

Question 10.

From NAJET special interest group JETs of African Descent (JETs AD): During a previous Opinion Exchange, JETs AD discussed racial issues as they affect JET participants and made several suggestions in the form of a "Support Letter." Has CLAIR implemented any of these? For example, one idea was to have sessions regarding racial discrimination at various events; could you give any information on whether this was done at any events arranged by CLAIR, virtual or in-person? Some of the new JET participants from November 2021 have said they received no information regarding racial discrimination or general xenophobia. Instead, they received tips on assimilating into Japanese society as seamlessly as possible. We hoped there would be an effort to brief incoming ALTs on racial discrimination to prepare them, and on the existing support systems in case they experience it. Will this be added for future cohorts?

Answer:

We created the syllabus for the online orientations back in 2020 before the opinion exchange last year. Due to the intermittent arrival of JETs from the same programme year and the ongoing orientations, we have not been able to update these since then. However, we are looking to reassess these materials, and potentially add or update information about various forms of discrimination, including racial discrimination, which might be encountered by JET Programme Participants to orientations and materials such as the General Information Handbook, in the upcoming fiscal year. In addition, we hope to make efforts to promote understanding of different cultures at Contracting Organisations through conferences and training. We will take into consideration the diverse backgrounds and experiences of JET Programme participants when planning future content.