

Visiting Research Scholars Program

Institute of Social and Economic Research
Osaka University

Revised July 2011

The Institute administers a Visiting Research Scholars Program, funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, to promote international collaborative research in economics and related disciplines. To implement its Visiting Research Scholars Program, the Institute maintains two rotating faculty positions, carrying the title Visiting Research Scholar. Japanese citizens are not eligible for a Visiting Research Scholar's post. A Visiting Research Scholar receives monthly stipends according to the same Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Salary Schedule that applies to all regular faculty members of the Institute. The salary schedule is based on the appointee's academic seniority, tenure and age. The Institute provides a Visiting Research Scholar the same privileges and access to research facilities and services as it does other regular faculty members of equivalent rank. The academic residency requirement for a Visiting Research Scholar is a minimum of three months and a maximum of twelve months at the Institute. In what follows, Visiting Research Scholar will be abbreviated as VRS.

1. Eligibility

A VRS applicant must demonstrate an established record of research, preferably with publications in refereed academic journals, and must hold a position at least equivalent to Assistant Professor at the applicant's home institution. A VRS applicant may be asked to submit reference letters. Japanese citizens are not eligible for the VRS post.

2. Application

A prospective VRS applicant should mail an application letter together with an up-to-date c.v. to

Committee for Visiting Research Scholars
Institute of Social and Economic Research
Osaka University
6-1 Mihogaoka, Ibaraki
Osaka 567-0047 JAPAN

Fax: +81-6-6878-8583 (81 = Japan, 6 = Osaka)
Email: vrs@iser.osaka-u.ac.jp

The application letter should state (1) the research topic that the VRS applicant plans to conduct at the Institute, and (2) the starting date and duration that the VRS applicant wishes to spend as a resident scholar at the Institute. As a part of the application, an applicant's c.v. should state all higher degrees earned including their completion years, fields and institutions, and should also list publications, recent working papers and the names of at least three references.

The VRS Program has routinely covered economy air fare for one round trip between Osaka and the VRS's home-institution city. In the unlikely event of severe budget austerity, however, the VRS Program may lack funds to cover air fare. Even though this is merely a theoretical possibility, the applicant should indicate whether he or she would be willing to accept an offer lacking travel funds.

A prospective VRS is asked to spend a minimum of three months as a general rule and a maximum of twelve months academic residency at the Institute (it is possible to stay at the Institute less than three months, but a prospective VRS is expected to stay at the Institute at least three months). A prospective VRS may start the required residency period at any time. An application not indicating a desired starting date and duration will be considered incomplete and may not receive further consideration. An applicant may give a prioritized list of starting dates and residency periods. Please note that no visit can begin or end on a weekend or national holidays in Japan.

The Institute accepts applications to the VRS Program throughout the year. Because a minimum six-month lead time is required to complete approval procedures both at the University and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Institute cannot fill a VRS post on short notice. If a VRS post remains unfilled, however, the Institute will accept applications to the vacant post until the lead-time requirement makes the appointment administratively infeasible. Ideally, the Institute should receive an application at least twelve month prior to the intended starting date. No application will be formally reviewed until the 18th month prior to the proposed starting date.

3. Selection

The appointment of a VRS is on a competitive merit basis. Since the purpose of the VRS Program is to promote collaborative research, at least one faculty member must be willing to serve as the host for a prospective VRS and conduct joint research. An Institute member may nominate VRS applicants to the Institute Committee on Visiting Research Scholars. A prospective VRS need not identify or communicate with potential research collaborators prior to applying. A prospective VRS is encouraged to apply directly to the Institute. Decisions regarding VRS appointments are by vote of the Institute faculty members. The Director will notify each applicant of the selection outcome as soon as a decision has been reached.

4. VRS Duties and Obligations

Besides conducting research, a VRS's obligations include the authorship of at least one ISER Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper must be the VRS's own research paper, but may be co-authored, as long as it is original and unpublished. At least one ISER Discussion Paper must be submitted preferably during residency or within twelve months of the VRS residency starting date. The Institute Discussion Paper Series has an established worldwide distribution list and a VRS may supplement it with an individualized mailing list. A VRS may contribute as many papers as he/she would like as long as they are submitted to the Institute within three months after the VRS residency expires.

In carrying out research functions, a VRS has same privileges as regular Institute faculty members in terms of access to office use, library, computing, secretarial services, supplies and facilities. A VRS is expected to observe general and specific rules that govern the everyday conduct of the Institute staff employees and faculty members. A VRS's appointment may be terminated in case of gross misconduct unbecoming a research scholar.

5. Residency Requirements

A VRS is expected to honor the academic residency requirements. The duration of residency is synonymous with the duration of a VRS appointment. The minimum VRS appointment is three consecutive months as a general rule, except for special cases, and the maximum twelve consecutive months. To emphasize, no VRS appointment of less than three months is allowed as a general rule, and the VRS funding rule stipulates the minimum of three months' residency to cover all aspects of a VRS's appointment, except for special cases. A VRS may, however, ask for a termination of his/her appointment short of the originally agreed date for a cause. For example, a family or medical emergency may necessitate an early return home. If an early termination results in less than the three months' residency, however, regardless of a cause a VRS will have to accept a pro-rated reduction in the VRS stipends and to forfeit the return air fare.

A VRS is free to travel within Japan, but for the duration of the VRS appointment, he/she is asked to refrain from traveling outside Japan except on weekends, national holidays and paid leave days. A VRS who has less than six months appointment at the Institute has no paid leave days, but the last day of a VRS should not be the paid leave day. A VRS may, however, request a trip home if family, financial or medical exigencies occur. Travel expenses incurred on such emergency overseas trips will not be covered by the VRS Program. Further, if a VRS fails to meet the minimum three months residency requirement due to any trip overseas, the VRS may accept pro-rated reduction in stipends as well as forfeiture of the return air fare.

6. Stipends

The VRS Program provides monthly stipends, paid on the 17th day of each month. Any fraction of a month of residency will be paid on a pro-rated basis. A VRS is exempted from paying Japanese social security taxes on the VRS stipends. A VRS' stipend can be exempt from the Japanese income taxes if a bilateral tax treaty exists between Japan and the VRS's

tax-home country. VRS stipends are generally subject to the tax rules of the VRS's tax-home country and may be subject to income taxes in the VRS's tax-home country.

The stipend amount is determined by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Salary Schedule that governs all faculty appointments at the Institute. The Salary Schedule classifies faculty appointments into salary classes and grades based on academic seniority, years of academic career, level of education (degrees received), and age. That will be more or less \$5600 to \$8500 (in case of 85 yen to the dollar exchange rate).

7. Travel Grants

The VRS Program normally covers one round-trip economy class (coach class) air fare between Osaka and the city of the VRS's home institution. The VRS Program does not cover the ground transportation associated with round-trip air route between Osaka and the VRS's gateway city. The VRS Program, however, pays nominal per diem expenses on the VRS travel days to and from the VRS' home institution in addition to the air fare.

The Program further stipulates that the VRS fly the most direct route between the home institution city and Osaka. A detour or intermediate stop other than that implemented by a regularly scheduled airline as a normal layover arrangement can result in cancellation of travel reimbursement, either in part or in whole. The VRS Program reimburses one way air fare upon the VRS' arrival, and return air fare upon the VRS' submission of an exit proof. Again, please note that in case an early termination, the VRS Program will not cover the VRS's return air fare.

8. Research Funds

In addition to the travel grants and monthly stipends, a VRS is provided with a discretionary research fund which may be used to purchase equipment, books, software, and various consumable supplies that the VRS needs to conduct research. These research funds can also be used for domestic research travels or used to hire part-time help or research assistants, commonly referred to as "arbiters." The VRS's mail, postage, Xeroxing/duplication, phone, and fax charges are automatically debited against the individual VRS's research fund when they are related to the VRS's research activities. A VRS may take back consumable supplies that were used in research functions. A VRS is not allowed to remove any equipment from the Institute. Accounting rules dictate that any equipment purchased using Institute research funds becomes the permanent possession of the Institute. The VRS research budget for a three month appointment can be as large as \$2,300 (in case of 85 yen to the dollar exchange rate) and will be larger for a longer appointment.

9. Medical Insurance

The VRS Program does not provide medical insurance coverage. VRS may enroll in National Health Insurance, administered by the Government of Japan, and pay a monthly

premium. Normally, pre-enrollment medical examinations are not required. National Health Insurance enables a VRS to use Osaka University Hospital (conveniently located on campus) and many other medical facilities throughout Japan. The coverage is comprehensive and becomes effective on the day of enrollment. Co-payments are usually 30% for medical treatment and examinations and 20% for prescription drugs. Without National Health Insurance, a VRS will be asked to pay requisite fees as out-of-pocket expenses, which the VRS's own insurance carrier may later reimburse. If a VRS does not wish to enroll in National Health Insurance, the University administration requests that the VRS carry adequate medical insurance coverage comparable to that of National Health Insurance.

10. Housing

The VRS Program does not have its own housing program and Osaka University does not provide special residence facilities for VRS. Housing is ultimately a VRS's own responsibility although the Institute will do its best to assist its VRS in finding suitable housing. Osaka University maintains Kasugaoka House and I-House. Located right near the Suita Campus, Kasugaoka House is originally intended for international researchers/students staying one month or more, but also available for researchers as well as university hospital (out-) patients and/or their family members on a weekly basis. For long stay, there are single, couple and family type units available. Units are fully furnished and a caretaker is available for 24 hours a day. Admission is on a first-come first-serve basis and applications are accepted in advance of your planned occupancy by the same number of days as the length of your planned occupancy. I-House is an International Exchange Lodge, commonly referred to as International House or I-House for short, as a residence complex for foreign graduate students and scholars. International House is located the Osaka University's Toyonaka Campus, about 30 minutes from Osaka University Suita Campus where the Institute is located. International House has a couple dozen furnished apartment units for foreign researchers available in three sizes: single, couple and family. Admission is on a first-come first-serve basis and applications are accepted only 6 months in advance of the VRS's arrival date. The quality of an International House apartment is roughly equivalent to that of married-student housing in the US. Due to their heavily subsidized rental fees, excess demand exists for International House accommodations. Other dormitory-type accommodations may be available on campus, but their quality is generally lower than that of Kasugaoka House and International House. If a VRS cannot use a Kasugaoka House or an International House apartment, making other housing arrangements becomes the VRS's responsibility. The Institute will help a VRS find accommodations in the rental market, but apartment rental rates are very expensive. For many foreign scholars, finding suitable housing arrangement can be the most difficult aspect of their stay in Japan.