

Each year, JETAA Auckland runs sections of the orientation events for departing JETs, at the request of the Consulate-General of Japan. These events are the primary way that JETAA members can give back to the JET programme. They have been consistently described by the Consulate as the most important of all JETAA Auckland events as they have the most direct impact on the JET local community and contribute most significantly to supporting the JET Programme and are highly rewarding for JETAA members, and are by all accounts greatly appreciated by new JETs.



There are two orientation events JETAA is involved in: the Q&A session, and the pre-departure orientation. The format for both events is for 10 to 15 minute presentations from different JETAA members. This time limit helps to keep the day fresh and gives some variety. The presentations are purposely informal and open. The purpose of these two events, even though they are both orientation events, is quite different.

The Q&A session is held about 6 weeks before the new JETs depart. The purpose is two-fold: firstly to answer any and all questions / concerns that the new JETs have, and secondly to make sure they know what they need to do in the 6 weeks before they depart in order to prepare properly. This is a great opportunity for JETAA members to help improve the JET programme by better preparing the new JETs. Examples of topics at the Q&A session are: question brainstorming session (to ensure we answer all of them!), team-teaching demonstration (in Japanese), practical items to pack, teaching resources that would be useful, websites to look to for further advice.

The second event is the pre-departure orientation, which is held on the day before the new JETs leave for Japan. By this time the new JETs have already made their preparations as discussed in the Q&A session, and are now either very nervous, sad, agitated, excited, or moving into panic mode. The focus of this event is therefore to help them hit the ground running at Tokyo orientation and their host institutions, and not to talk about life after the first month of arriving.

Examples of topics at the pre-departure orientation are: what happens at the Tokyo orientation, making a good first impression, office politics, support organisations for JETs in Japan, resilience.

Staging the orientation events into these two separate days allows us to focus on two very separate goals, instead of having an information overload in one sitting. Weeks before the departure the JETs are concerned about preparation, but the day before they tend to be well prepared, but unsure of what to expect. We believe that getting the new JETs into a good frame of mind just before they depart is an important part of the orientation process.

Stakeholders

Departing JETs: they need to be as prepared as possible.

The Consulate-General of Japan: they want the new JETs to be as successful as possible.

JETAA Auckland: this is a great way to give back to the JET programme. Also, by JETAA running the orientations it shows the new JETs that the JET programme is not just a 1 to 3 year deal; the friends you make from JET endure long after your return home.

Factors that made the event a success

Enthusiasm and team-work from JETAA executive members is an absolute must.

A dedicated orientation events organiser.

Consultation and support from the local Japanese government organisation (in this case the Consulate-General of Japan.)

The small size of the orientations makes for an informal open atmosphere where new JETs are confident in asking questions.

Tips for other chapters who do it

Make orientation events a high priority for JETAA. This means having a dedicated orientation events organiser, and involving the whole executive in the planning process: the more buy-in the better.

If a lot of JETs are departing from your area, investigate the possibility of splitting the orientations into smaller groups. A relatively small group gains a lot more from an orientation than a large group that is more formal.

Make sure you maintain a balanced upbeat and positive approach. There will ALWAYS be some who REALLY don't want to be there and others who appear to be submerging into panic attacks... the majority, however, are keen to learn more about what lies ahead. Either way, we are there to support and inform – we've been [figuratively] EXACTLY where they are, etc...

Email address if others want more info:

The JETAA Auckland orientation events coordinator is Peter de Valda, who you can contact for further information at: peterdevalda@xtra.co.nz

