

Visit of the President of University College London to the International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University (2023/10/5)

Theme : International Collaboration , Disaster Science
Place : IRIDeS, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan

On the 5th of October 2023 (Thursday), Dr. Michael Pence, the President of University College London (UCL), a strategic partner and a university with which we hold an inter-university agreement, visited Tohoku University together with Prof. Alan Thompson (Dean of the UCL Faculty of Brain Science and Pro Provost for London), Prof. Nigel Titchener-Hooker (Dean of UCL Engineering), Mr. Ciaran Moynihan (Director of Global Engagement, Office of the Vice Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement), Mr. Nick Marsden (Associate Director of Development (Faculties), Office of Advancement), Ms. Tania Trosini (Head of External Engagement and Operations, Office of the President and Provost), and Ms. Keiko Tsunekawa (Global Engagement Manager, Office of Vice Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement)).

During this visit, a meeting was held between Dr. Pence and Prof. Hideo Ohno, the President of Tohoku University. It reaffirmed the crucial partnership between UCL and our university within the framework of our International Excellence Research University System. Building on discussions held in March this year with Prof. Toshiya Ueki, Executive Vice President for Co-creation Strategy, and Prof. Geraint Rees, Vice-Provost of UCL, this visit provided an opportunity to exchange ideas regarding the future development of collaboration between two institutions. Notably, the partnership in disaster research between UCL and IRIDeS has continued since the Great East Japan Earthquake, with researchers from both universities actively engaging in not only joint research but also educational collaboration.

A meeting was also conducted between the UCL delegation and the IRIDeS. Prof. Shinichi Kuriyama, Director of IRIDeS, emphasized the significance of collaboration with UCL in disaster medicine and inclusive disaster prevention. Furthermore, discussions took place on the continued utilization of medical data established since the Great East Japan Earthquake, exploring the potential for diverse collaborative research spanning fields such as medicine, particularly neurology, research on the elderly, engineering, and humanities.

In addition, a British student currently enrolled in our institute as a doctoral candidate, having completed a Master's program at UCL, participated in the discussions. Specializing in tsunami engineering, the student highlighted the importance of collaboration between sociology and tsunami engineering, particularly in the context of risk communication. Moreover, the student underlined the significance of fieldwork conducted in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which helped establish a trusted relationship with the IRIDeS.

Through this visit, the importance of collaboration between UCL and the IRIDeS was reaffirmed. Under the leadership of our new director, Prof. Kuriyama, discussions were held on the direction to advance disaster studies internationally, encompassing diverse fields such as medicine, engineering, humanities, and involving stakeholders in disaster-related areas.

The visit and the meetings strengthened collaboration between the institutes, advanced disaster research, and fostered lively discussions on student cooperation. As a result, the outlook for future joint projects and collaborations has become clearer. The collaboration between UCL and the IRIDeS holds the promise of further achievements.

Report by Miwako Kitamura (International Research Collaboration Office)
Anawat Suppasri (Tsunami Engineering Lab)

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The exhibition space on the 1st floor of the IRIDeS



The special exhibition “Commemorating the 100th Memorial of the Kanto Earthquake”



The meeting held at the IRIDeS



Commemorative photo with the UCL President and the visiting delegation at IRIDeS