

SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM RIKEN ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC) 2021

17 & 25 November 2021

The meeting of the Interim RIKEN Advisory Council (RAC) was convened on 25 November 2021, and before that, the Pre-Meeting was held on 17 November 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has afflicted the world, this is the first time that RIKEN held the RAC online.

Also, this Interim RAC was the first attempt to report on the progress of the highest priority key recommendations, which were proposed by the 11th RAC in 2019, and to receive feedback from RAC members at the halfway point of the Mid- to Long-term Plan (FY 2018-2024), since the period of the current plan has been extended from five to seven years.

In the meeting, the RIKEN's efforts to implement the highest priority key recommendations of the "Human resource development and diversity" (KR 1/TOR 2.2) and "Co-creation activities with industry (RIKEN Innovation Co. Ltd. etc.)" (KR 7/TOR 4), and also the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were reported and opinions exchanged. In particular, in the session on the "Human resource development and diversity," four young researchers with different centers, positions, employment patterns, specialties, genders, nationalities, etc. gave presentations, and active discussions were held among all members on a better research environment, systems, and support systems for RIKEN, which is responsible for human resource development for young researchers in Japan and abroad, to continue fostering global research leaders. The RAC members expressed many suggestive opinions.

REPORT & DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Responses to 11th RAC KR 1 (TOR 2.2) "Human resource development and diversity"
2. Responses to 11th RAC KR 7 (TOR 4) "Co-creation activities with industry (RIKEN Innovation Co. Ltd. etc.)"
3. Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

KEY OPINIONS

1. Human resources development and diversity

1) Initiatives related to human resource development for young researchers

- We recommend RIKEN's initiatives related to the development of young researchers in cooperation with partner institutions, such as dispatching them to research institutes and companies in Japan and abroad through joint research and internships.
- In Japan, the number of students going on to the doctoral courses is decreasing. Now that the importance of science is being recognized more strongly than ever, we hope that RIKEN will actively use social media and other media to promote science to junior and high school students who will lead the next generation.
- We recommend that RIKEN further enhance its advice and guidance to young researchers in relation

to their career path.

2) Initiatives for promoting the adoption and retention of female researchers

- The current period of use of in-house childcare facilities seems to be set at a maximum of 36 months (3 years), but we hope that discussions will begin with the facility teams regarding more flexible usage standards while considering a balance with facility management.
- We strongly recommend that RIKEN consider extending the employment period associated with childbirth/childcare leave and to take the leave into account in performance evaluations.
- In Japan, the competition for acquiring female researchers is extremely fierce, and maintaining the ratio of female researchers alone requires a great deal of effort. We recommend that the gender balance indicators used by RIKEN be compared with other institutions in Japan. This will lead to the discovery of good practices.

3) Initiatives to promote the adoption and retention of non-Japanese researchers

- Increasing the number of managers with extensive research history at overseas institutions will help foster understanding and atmosphere for the support of non-Japanese researchers and promote diversity.

4) Initiatives related to improvement of the research environment, etc.

- If there is a channel where young researchers can make proposals directly to the executives, this initiative will be an effective means to further improve RIKEN's research environment (e.g., suggestion box).

2. Co-creation activities with industry (RIKEN Innovation Co. Ltd. etc.)

1) RIKEN Innovation initiatives.

- We recommend increasing the ratio of Ph.D. holders among the RIKEN Innovation staff to enable them to effectively promote joint research in partnership with RIKEN researchers.
- We strongly recommend the establishment of a management organization that will coordinate the mission between RIKEN and RIKEN Innovation.
- We hope to expand the range of activities, including not only seeds-oriented activities but also needs-oriented activities based on social conditions.