

NEWSLETTER

Introducing New Faculty Members for Spring 2025, Part 2

【August Edition】 Summer break is also a research period for professors.

Classes and exams have finished, and the university welcomes summer break! Professors, who are very busy every day with teaching, student support, and other administrative activities, will now be turning to domestic and international travel for research trips during this period. We hope this will be a fruitful period of research!

Now, in August's newsletter, we would like to introduce three of the new professors.

Self-Introduction :

Starting my position as Assistant Professor at the College of Asia Pacific Studies in April 2025, I am doing research on international law as well as teaching relevant subjects.

Prior to the appointment at APU, I was working on my PhD thesis at the Faculty of Laws, University College London, United Kingdom.

I am enjoying a new life in Beppu which, in contrast to the metropolitan city of London, is surrounded by mountains and sea. My hobby is travelling, though I would like to try numerous hot springs in Beppu as well.



Assistant Professor
ITO Shinya
College of Asia Pacific Studies

Research Topic(s):

While international law regulates a variety of issues, my research mainly focuses on international human rights law and international economic law.

My PhD thesis has explored the relationship between international human rights law (the right to food under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and international economic law (the World Trade Organization Agreement on Agriculture) with a particular focus on global hunger. My other publications have analysed topics such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and business and human rights from a perspective of international law.

I have actively delivered presentations at international academic conferences, including the European Society of International Law and the Asian Society of International Law.

Messages to Students:

Undergrad:

I hope that students gain knowledge and skills that are essential for their future global career in this cosmopolitan environment at APU, and it would be such a pleasure if I could become part of that journey.

Graduate:

I hope that graduate students conduct original research that builds upon existing scholarships and benefits from lively discussions with APU academics and peers who come from various parts of the globe.

Prospective Students:

APU is such a stimulating environment in which you can interact with people from various parts of the world every day. Why don't you join us?

Self-Introduction :

Originally from Italy, I began my academic path in the UK, where I completed a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology and Behavioural Neuroscience at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Since then, my career has taken me across the globe — from postdoctoral work in Japan, to faculty positions in Malaysia, Cyprus, the UK, and Australia. In 2025, I returned to Japan to join APU as a tenured Associate Professor in the College of International Management.

Outside of work, I'm a keen road cyclist and enjoy spending time with my family.



Associate Professor
AQUILI Luca
College of International Management

Research Topic(s):

My core research examines how dopamine, a key neurotransmitter in the brain's reward system, shapes learning, decision-making, and behavioural adaptation. I use a combination of pharmacological interventions, non-invasive brain stimulation (tDCS), and behavioural tasks based on reinforcement learning to investigate how individuals respond to feedback and adjust their actions in dynamic environments

Alongside my primary work, I have contributed to a range of multidisciplinary studies examining neurobiological mechanisms in Alzheimer's disease, depression, and related neuropsychiatric conditions, with a focus on translational and systems-level approaches.

At APU, I plan to extend this research toward value-based decision-making, with a particular interest in how the dopaminergic system contributes to economic biases such as the sunk-cost effect. I have recently applied for a KAKENHI Start-Up Grant to study this phenomenon using a novel combination of dopamine receptor manipulation and tDCS. This builds on my earlier work in reinforcement learning and opens up a new interdisciplinary direction linking neuroscience with financial decision-making.

Messages to Students:

Undergrad:

Grades matter, but they are not the whole story. University is one of the few times in life where you can explore ideas simply for the sake of learning — without needing a direct outcome or career justification. Use these four years to take intellectual risks, try subjects outside your major, and challenge your assumptions.

Graduate:

By this stage in your academic journey, you likely have a clearer sense of what genuinely interests you. Use this time to actively engage with professors who share those interests, ask questions, and seek out opportunities to deepen your expertise.

Prospective Students:

Everyone talks about the multicultural environment at APU — and it's true. But what often gets overlooked is just how enjoyable life on campus can be. APU is surrounded by natural beauty, and the atmosphere among students and professors is genuinely welcoming.

Self-Introduction :

Hello, I'm Michal Mazur. Originally from Poland, I am currently an Assistant Professor at APU's Educational Development and Learning Support Center (EDLSC). My academic journey began with a Master's in teaching language and literature from the Pedagogical University of Krakow, followed by a PhD in Information Science from Hokkaido University, where I specialized in Natural Language Processing. Having lived in Japan for over 15 years, my career has centered on the intersection of education, communication, and cultural exchange. Prior to APU, I contributed to faculty development and international education at Hokkaido University, designing programs on intercultural communication, English Medium Instruction (EMI), and inclusive teaching practices. I am passionate about supporting both students and educators in navigating diverse learning environments. Outside of work, my interests include hiking and discovering the hidden corners of Japan's everyday life. I've also been involved in video game journalism for over 28 years, which continues to be a meaningful creative outlet for me.



Assistant Professor
MAZUR Michal Maciej
 Education Development and Learning Support Center

Research Topic(s):

My research explores how we can foster intercultural competencies and global readiness through education — both inside and outside the classroom. My work focuses on key areas vital for global higher education: intercultural communication, global leadership development, and faculty development. Within this, I pay particular attention to English Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts and curriculum innovation. Drawing directly on my practical experience designing programs in intercultural communication, EMI, and inclusive teaching practices at Hokkaido University, my research investigates how strategies like classroom-based reflection, student feedback, and technology-enhanced learning environments (including games and e-learning tools) can specifically support deeper intercultural understanding and inclusive pedagogy. To make this research practical, my approach bridges theory and practice, using insights gleaned directly from classroom interaction—often informed by my past work applying Natural Language Processing to understand language use—to refine teaching methods, build inclusive learning spaces, and effectively prepare learners for global contexts. I actively contribute to research communities and regularly present at academic conferences, with recent talks covering topics like generative AI in education and language choice in diverse settings.

If you're interested in intercultural communication, digital media (especially game studies), or global education, I'd love to connect. I'm also passionate about supporting students' career goals—especially when they use education and media to tell meaningful stories or create positive change. Feel free to reach out if you'd like to chat or explore ways to collaborate.

Messages to Students:

Undergrad:

University isn't just about classes and assignments — it's about discovering who you are and how you want to engage with the world. At APU, you're surrounded by people from every corner of the globe, each with a story to share. So take that chance: start a conversation with someone new, join a club you've never heard of, ask the question you're afraid might sound silly. This is your time to be curious, bold, and grow. The most meaningful experiences often begin when you step beyond what's familiar. APU is full of those possibilities — make them yours.

Graduate:

Graduate school is a dedicated space for depth – for refining your voice and shaping your vision within your field. It's also a period to challenge yourself intellectually and develop the skill of communicating complex ideas with clarity and precision. Remember to reach out to faculty, build interdisciplinary connections, and regularly reflect on your goals. Research is never solely about the topic; it's profoundly about who you become through the process.

Prospective Students:

At APU, studying international topics is an immersive experience – you truly live them. For those who are curious about people, captivated by cultures, and keen to see the world through different eyes, APU is an exceptional place to **grow and transform**. Bring your unique self – your curiosity, your open mind, and your adventurous spirit. The world needs more people like you, equipped and eager to engage across differences.



Research Paper Spotlight



Saunders, M., & Takeuchi, O. (2025). Exploring perspectives of language advisors and advisees about language advisors' roles in a Japanese university context. Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal, 16(2), 342–359.

Author: SAUNDERS Misato (Lecturer, Center for Language Education)

Misato Saunders is a full-time lecturer at the Center for Language Education. She teaches English and also serves as a Language Advisor (LA) at the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC). In her master's program at Kansai University, she conducted research on the roles of LAs and witnessed how learners grow autonomously through "reflective dialogue." Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral studies at the same university, focusing on relationship-building through dialogue and the well-being of language teachers.

Paper Overview

The roles of language advisors (LAs) at Self-Access Learning centers (SALCs) are multifaceted and often overlap with those of teachers, mentors, and coaches. This study employed Thompson's (2017) Coaching Impact Model and explored role perceptions through interviews with both LAs and advisees at a Japanese university. The findings revealed that as learners became more autonomous, their perceptions of LAs' roles also shifted. The study suggests that LAs need to flexibly navigate among the roles of advisor, teacher, mentor, and coach depending on the context.

Message to APU faculty, staff, students, and graduate students

Through dialogue, we as faculty and staff work together with students to explore the direction of their learning, encouraging them to take ownership of their studies and make meaningful choices. In doing so, we support their transformation into autonomous learners and their growth into lifelong learners. Language learning is not something to be done alone—it is nurtured through interactions with others. Let us share our joys and struggles, and grow together through learning.

The Community of Advising Practice (CAP)

CAP was launched in 2024, led by Language Advisors (LAs) at SALC. Currently, around 20 faculty and staff members from APU and Ritsumeikan University participate in this community. Meetings are held via Zoom on the second Tuesday of each month from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. Through hands-on practice, we learn dialogue skills and tools to facilitate smoother conversations with students and promote autonomous learning. If you have any questions or are interested in joining, please feel free to contact me at misato@apu.ac.jp.

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