

Getting To Know Our Professors

Associate Professor Vahid Aryadoust



A/P Vahid Aryadoust
is currently an Associate
Professor with the
English Language and
Literature (ELL)
Academic Group

What is your area of expertise, and how did your interest come about?

My area of expertise is in Language Assessment. In my previous job as an English Language teacher, I helped many students prepare for their proficiency exams, and developed an interest in language test preparation as a result. Over time, I realised that test performance is not exclusively dependent upon test takers' language abilities, but that it is affected by a variety of other factors. I decided to embark on a project where I could identify the factors that affect test performance, and from there I started my research career in language assessment.

What courses are you currently teaching?

I am teaching the following courses: Language Testing and Assessment; Oracy Research and Development; and Research Methodology in Applied Linguistics.

Why do you think NIE is a good place for researchers and research students?

There is good support from NIE for staff and students, and the facilities available allow researchers and students to devise innovative research methods. There is a focus on interdisciplinary research and programmes at NIE, which I believe is a forward-looking approach to research and pedagogy. This is supported by a noticeable increase and update of research facilities at NIE. There is also a unique pool of expertise in different fields at NIE. For example, several Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have emerged whose focus on specific research topics can potentially lead to exciting research collaborations.

What are the qualities you look out for in research students whom you work with?

The qualities I look out for include, first and foremost, intrinsic motivation. Research has shown that students' motivation to learn can mitigate the adverse effects of certain unfavourable conditions in educational and household settings. As a believer in social and educational equity, I consider the fact that not every student started out on an equal footing in life. Therefore, if I am convinced that a student has a genuine interest in research, I endeavour to assist them to achieve their goals.

In addition, as my research focus has moved from 'pure' language assessment to interdisciplinary research, my research students should be able to think critically and work effectively in interdisciplinary settings. They should display deep expertise in their research topics and take initiative to design experiments that address gaps in previous research, to contribute to research and knowledge formation. Finally, research students will do well if they exercise resilience and research integrity and are good teammates to their peers.

What do you think is the greatest misconception of a researcher? What advice would you give to those who would like to pursue a graduate degree and a career in research?

In my view, the greatest misconception concerns the ultimate goal of research, which lamentably many misconstrue as achieving publication in research journals and moving up the ladder of fame and ranking. In contrast, a major goal of all research projects should be serving humanity and our planet Earth. I urge students to think about solving real-world problems if they are considering a career as a researcher.

In my field of research, Language Assessment, there are many social and educational aspects of language tests, such as the interplay between test takers' socioeconomic status, cultural capital, the brain, and test performance, to name a few, that are waiting to be addressed. These will affect the careers, educational opportunities, income et cetera, of test takers. This is an example of where research has the potential to have an impact beyond academia.