

My name is Saman Bakhtawar, and I am a current PhD student at Victoria University. I hold four master's degrees, including a Master of Education from VU. My academic journey, combined with my background in education, leadership, and international development, has given me a strong understanding of both student realities and the systems that shape decision-making.

My experience at Victoria University has been shaped not just by studying here, but by working closely with students to understand what truly needs to change. I have seen students struggle with unclear communication, last-minute changes, limited access to support, and balancing study with work and life. Through direct engagement, I have supported students in navigating these challenges and advocating for practical solutions.

As a Student Mentor, I work with students managing deadlines, jobs, and personal responsibilities. I help them access extensions, connect with the right services, and stay on track when they feel overwhelmed. These everyday conversations have shown me where the system works - and where it falls short.

As President of the Victoria University Postgraduate Association (VUPA), I have taken student concerns into leadership discussions, advocating for clearer communication, improved support access, and stronger student engagement. Being awarded the Postgraduate Spirit Award 2025 reflects my commitment to building a connected and supportive student community.

Victoria University stands on its WEST values - Welcoming, Ethical, Shaping the Future, and Together. I believe these values should be reflected in every student's daily experience.

If elected, I will focus on:

- Creating opportunities for student voices to directly influence decisions
- Strengthening mental health and wellbeing support
- Advocating for clear, timely, and student-friendly communication
- Improving access to practical academic and support services
- Promoting flexible learning for working and international students
- Ensuring all students including culturally and linguistically diverse communities, students with disabilities, and people of all gender identities - feel respected and included

As an international student and a woman, I understand what it means to navigate a new system while trying to find your place. I have experienced the challenges of adjusting,

accessing the right support, and making sense of complex processes and I know many students at VU share similar experiences.

This is why I am putting myself forward to ensure that student voices are not just heard, but drive meaningful change in the policies, systems, and support that shape our university experience.

**Saman Bakhtawar (s8109465)**