

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
GRADUATE STUDENT ELECTED MEMBER OF COUNCIL ELECTION

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

The list is below in alphabetical order by candidate's family name. The voting platform uses the Robson rotation method to randomly determine the order in which candidates' names appear for each voter.

Ali Al Lawati

I am committed to ensuring every student feels heard, represented, and supported throughout their university journey. My experience in governance, finance, and community leadership has taught me not only how to navigate decision-making spaces, but also what meaningful representation and effective advocacy truly look like.

I currently serve as Chairperson of the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVIC), Victoria's peak body for young people and the organisations that support them, and work at the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY). Through these and other leadership and board roles across youth, multicultural, and community organisations, I have gained valuable experience that I want to bring to University Council.

If elected, I will focus on reflecting what matters most to students, strengthening support for disadvantaged students, and working collaboratively with Council to deliver tangible outcomes. These priorities are not fixed. A key part of my role will be continuing to listen, learn, and respond to students' needs.

I believe representatives should be approachable, transparent, and accountable. Our university deserves leadership that listens and acts. I would be honoured to earn your trust and advocate for our shared interests with integrity, dedication, and purpose - the way I've been advocating for young people every day.

Sakina Amani

I am a Master of Creative Writing, Publishing and Editing student at the University of Melbourne.

I come from a background of public service governance and international journalism, having managed media and communications for the Victorian Government. My work centres on strategic stakeholder engagement, institutional communications, and high-impact writing.

I hold a Graduate Certificate in Strategic Communications from the University of Technology Sydney and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from Kabul University. I am running to bring my skills in media, communication, and writing, along with a strong graduate perspective, to the University Council.

Ewan Bezzobs

Hi all, I'm Ewan,

I have studied at the university for five years across my undergraduate BArts and currently in the Melbourne Law JD. I am super excited to continue my graduate studies at the university and would be honoured to be your Graduate Representative to University Council in that time.

Unimelb Graduate Students face a myriad of different discipline specific challenges that stem from our vastly different circumstances, we are young, old, full-time, part-time or unemployed. We are coursework students, research students, future doctors, doctorates or masters of our chosen education. We study entirely in-person, entirely online, or something in between and yet despite that all we are brought together by our shared experience as graduate students of the University of Melbourne.

As your graduate representative, I will place fairness and student advocacy at the centre of every decision University Council makes. Some of the issues I care about are:

- Mandatory student placements are paid accordingly.
- Every research student has a desk and a space to work at.
- Assessment feedback is clear, timely and available.
- Appropriate regard is given to student safety, health and wellbeing.

Vote [1] Ewan Bezzobs for Graduate Representative to University Council

William Burgess

William Burgess is a PhD student in the Department of Infectious Diseases at the Doherty Institute, researching HIV cure. In his BS and MS degrees, he specialized in ecological microbiology. William previously served both student government and university leadership at St Francis Xavier University in Canada: his peers elected him three times as Graduate Student Representative to the Student Union and he concurrently served as University Senator. In those roles, he assessed budgets, strategy documents, governance reform, and the performance of both peers and senior university leadership.

Asking open questions, recognizing stakeholders for the appropriate decisions, and the prioritization of commitments are skills he polished in this time. He also found that anyone can be a leader, insofar as they can communicate.

Also as a proud queer and international student, William believes his combination of experience and outsider's perspective may be of service to the University.

Rosemaree Calabro

I am a mature age student with extensive experience working within the university sector and a strong commitment to the student experience. I hold a Diploma of Management and Bachelor of Commerce, and I am currently completing a Master of International Business at the University of Melbourne.

My professional experience has given me a practical understanding of how universities operate, while my experience as a current postgraduate student gives me a direct and contemporary perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing students.

If elected to the University Council, I would bring a balanced, practical and real world perspective to discussions and decision making, while ensuring that the student voice remains at the heart of my contribution. I would be committed to representing the diverse interests of graduate students and constructively contributing to the University's future.

Azada Hussaini

I am a Juris Doctor student at Melbourne Law School, having graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and Politics & International Relations.

I am nominating for University Council because I believe every graduate student should have a genuine and equitable opportunity to participate in and succeed at Melbourne. Graduate students come from diverse academic, financial, cultural and personal circumstances, and these different experiences should be meaningfully represented in University decision-making.

If elected, I would seek to strengthen the connection between Melbourne's graduate student community and Council by listening to students' experiences and bringing their perspectives into discussions at the University's highest level of governance. Through peer mentoring, I have particularly valued connecting with students and understanding experiences beyond my own.

My studies in law, politics and criminology have strengthened my interest in governance, institutional decision-making and equity. I would bring this perspective to Council with an open mind, a willingness to listen and a commitment to constructive engagement.

I hope to contribute to a graduate experience that continues to become more accessible, inclusive and equitable for all students.

Danielle Kanatas

LISTEN. ADVOCATE. CONNECT.

Graduate students are not one type of student. We balance study with work, family, caring responsibilities and the rising cost of living. I believe University processes and policies must recognise these realities and serve students as people, not simply as numbers.

I am standing for Council because students deserve a genuine voice in the decisions that shape their University. My experience of higher education has shown me how transformative university can be, but also how easily students can feel disconnected from the systems designed to support them. I want to help bridge that gap.

As a student representative, I would listen, advocate and bring students' lived experience directly to the Council table. I would work to ensure student concerns are heard, processes are responsive, and decisions reflect the diversity of students' circumstances and experiences.

I bring experience across business, governance, research and higher education, including AICD governance training, previous university board experience, owning and operating businesses, and completing an Honours thesis at The Royal Children's Hospital.

I would bring an independent, practical and approachable voice to Council, with a commitment to advocacy, inclusion and ensuring students remain at the centre of University decision-making.

Gaurav Khandelwal

My name is Gaurav Khandelwal, a Master of International Business student at the University of Melbourne. Before returning to study, I worked as an Audit Senior Assistant at Deloitte, where I developed a disciplined eye for rigour, transparency, and accountability. These are the exact qualities I want to bring to Council.

Graduate life at Melbourne comes with its own set of pressures: juggling coursework against career transitions, navigating financial strain, and for many of us, building an entirely new life in this city as international or postgraduate students. If elected, I want to be a direct and reliable conduit between the graduate student body and Council, ensuring our priorities around affordability, academic support, and post-study career pathways are not just heard but acted upon.

I bring a strong grounding in financial literacy, attention to detail, and a collaborative approach gained through my professional and academic experience. I would be honoured to represent you on Council and to help ensure decisions made at that level genuinely reflect the interests of the graduate student community.

Maria Law

As a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS) and a researcher at the Florey Institute, I am committed to ensuring that student and graduate researcher perspectives are meaningfully represented in the governance of the University of Melbourne.

My research in neurodevelopment has given me insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by graduate researchers, while my leadership roles have strengthened my commitment to advocacy and community engagement. I served as the Honours Representative on the Florey Student Committee, representing student interests and fostering engagement within the Institute. I currently serve as Events Officer for Students of Brain Research, a national neuroscience student network supporting the development of emerging researchers.

Beyond academia, I bring leadership, financial management, and stakeholder engagement experience from owning and operating a cafe. I have also volunteered at university open days and participated in fundraising initiatives, including running the Melbourne Marathon for the PURA Foundation and undertaking a fundraising walk supporting SCN2A research and advocacy.

If elected to Council, I will advocate for transparent governance, student wellbeing, research excellence, and meaningful engagement between students and University leadership, helping ensure the University remains an inclusive, innovative, and globally leading institution.

Kevin (Enzhe) Li

Hi, I'm Kevin. I'm running for re-election as your Graduate Student Member of Council, a role I was involved in advocacy for.

For most of the last two years I was the only student in the room. You learn fast how much gets decided about us, without us. Students now have two seats on Council, and there is more to do.

As UMSU General Secretary and a special consideration working group member, I helped deliver document-free 3-day extensions. When the extension system advertised a six-day wait while students waited months, I raised it and published wait times were corrected. When unrest hit Indonesia mid-semester, I raised it, and support reached over two thousand students. As an UMSU representative, I brought the student perspective to rewriting the Academic Integrity Policy. Through UMSU, I helped organise our first Mid-Autumn celebration and bring back the campus bar.

If re-elected, I will continue to advocate for real, lasting cost of living support, not one-off vouchers gone by week three. I bring a Chinese perspective and lived experience of disability to a table where neither is common, because decisions about adjustments, special consideration and multicultural intersectionality need true lived experience.

Feng Liang

I am currently a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, developing functional ingredients for pet food and building AI-driven molecular screening pipelines to support next-generation nutrition research.

My connection to Melbourne began during my Master of Agricultural Science (First Class Honours, WAM 85.67, Dean's Honours List 2025), where my research focused on preservative applications for goat colostrum. Alongside coursework, I worked as both a student and research assistant across multiple research groups, including an industry-partnered project on goat colostrum preservation with Meredith

Dairy and a poultry nutrition and stress-resilience study, giving me first-hand insight into the graduate research community and the challenges it faces.

I was also selected as a student case study for the Master of Agricultural Science program, with my story featured in promotional videos on YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram to represent the graduate student experience at Melbourne.

Having engaged with this University as a coursework student, a research student, and a public face of its programs, I want to serve as Graduate Student Member of Council to bring an informed, grounded voice to University governance and ensure graduate researchers' needs are genuinely heard.

Vidhi Mandhyan

I have decided to stand for election as Student Elected Member of University Council because I want to be able to contribute positively in the process of decision-making that impacts the student experience of our University and its future.

Being a student myself, I know that the student experience is about much more than education, it involves many other aspects, including the quality of education, support, opportunities and decision-making at the institutional level.

What I can offer as a Council member is my perspective as a student who is curious and inquisitive. I want to hear the voice of the students and incorporate their ideas into decision-making on matters relevant to them.

In addition, I want to be able to take an active part in discussions while recognizing the responsibilities of being a Council member and working for the benefit of our University as a whole institution.

For me, this is an opportunity to listen and make a contribution.

Hanan Mohammed Abed Sahnoud

I am running for Graduate Student Representative on the University of Melbourne Council because I believe every student deserves to see themselves represented in the decisions that shape our university.

As a woman of colour and graduate student, I understand the importance of having diverse voices in spaces where decisions are made. The experiences of people of colour, culturally diverse students, international students, women and other minority communities can too often be overlooked or treated as an afterthought. Representation should not simply mean having a seat at the table; it should mean having a voice that is genuinely heard and valued.

I bring experience in law, governance, advocacy and community leadership. These experiences have taught me the importance of listening to different perspectives, questioning decisions that affect our communities and advocating for fairness and accountability.

If elected, I will work to strengthen the voices of diverse and minority students, promote meaningful consultation, improve transparency and accountability, and advocate for an inclusive and respectful university environment.

I want to be a representative who listens before speaking, who brings students' concerns into Council, and who is not afraid to ask difficult questions. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

Holly Morrison

My name is Holly, and I have chosen to run for Graduate Representative as I am passionate about providing genuine feedback and perspective as a student. I am currently studying the Doctor of Medicine, after having completed the Bachelor of Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne, giving me a well-rounded understanding of the graduate student journey from both a research and clinical perspective.

I will bring proven experience to this role having served on my residential college council at the University of Melbourne during my time as President of St Hilda's College and as a year level representative on the Outlook Rural Health Committee for several years. These roles have taught me tenacity, resilience and how to effectively advocate for students and individuals across a large scale.

I have a real passion and interest in providing equitable and genuine opportunities in education. Coming from a rural background myself, I understand firsthand the importance of ensuring all students, regardless of where they come from or what they are studying, have equal access to support and opportunity.

Jeanette Nkrumah

Universities are at their best when good governance turns ambitious ideas into meaningful outcomes.

As a Master of Social Policy student, my perspective is shaped by my journey through a bachelor's, diploma, and graduate certificate, along with over eight years of professional experience across policy, governance, and inclusion in government and higher education. I enjoy asking difficult questions, bringing different perspectives into decision-making, and have a demonstrated record of finding practical ways to turn good policy into better outcomes.

Outside of work and study, I run a community book club and host absurd parties with my friends (mock conclave anyone?) and had a Guardian article published about my TikTok use. I suppose organisation and discussion have always been my idea of fun.

My postgraduate journey hasn't been linear. After stepping away from an earlier masters, I have returned with renewed purpose, making space for ambition, joy, and a deeper appreciation of the circumstances graduate students balance alongside university.

If given the opportunity, I will bring the voices of my fellow graduate students to the council to shape the decisions about our university's future. Because institutions matter, but the people who bring them to life matter more.

Farnaz Pirasteh

Hi! I'm Farnaz Pirasteh, a PhD candidate in Computing and Information Systems and an academic tutor within the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (FEIT) at the University of Melbourne.

Over the past two years, I have represented graduate students as GSA Research Officer, and previously as the FEIT Representative at GSA. These roles have given me direct experience engaging with University leadership, navigating institutional decision-making, and bringing graduate student perspectives into important University discussions.

As Research Officer, I advocated on issues affecting graduate researchers, including equitable access to PhD workspaces and research stipends. For me, effective representation is a two-way process: bringing student perspectives into the room where decisions are made, while making those decisions and discussions more visible and understandable to the students we represent.

My background in research, teaching, data analytics, journalism and community engagement across different countries gives me a broad perspective on our diverse University community.

As a Council member, I would listen to diverse student perspectives and bring them into University-level discussions, while approaching decisions thoughtfully, independently and in the best interests of the University as a whole. I would also work to strengthen the connection between graduate students and University governance.

Belinda Pitt

I am a part-time graduate student of the University, currently completing a Master of Science in Mathematics and Statistics. I am motivated to join University Council to contribute the perspectives and experiences of myself and my peers, to help positively shape the University's future.

Following my undergraduate degree, I have worked across information technology, project management, and quality assurance roles in both the private and public sectors. These experiences have given me a strong understanding of effective governance, risk management, transparency and accountability, providing a solid foundation for contributing to Council.

As a part-time graduate student, I understand the opportunities and challenges faced by students balancing study with work, family and other commitments. Having completed a semester of university exchange program in my undergraduate degree, I also have perspective on the difficulties of attending university away from family and support systems. I would seek to ensure that the perspectives of part-time, mature-age and international students are represented, recognising the diversity of the wider student community.

I believe my professional background, study experience, and commitment to integrity would enable me to make a valuable contribution as a student member of University Council.

Radhik Rammohan

I am Radhik Rammohan, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, standing to represent graduate students on the University Council.

Balancing study, work, living costs and personal responsibilities can be demanding. We deserve support that reflects our lives and a strong voice in shaping our future.

For coursework students, I will advocate for accessible learning support, practical skill development and stronger links between study, placements and future careers.

For researchers, I will advocate for reliable supervision, access to research resources and career preparation for opportunities within and beyond academia.

Across our graduate community, I will push for affordable meals, accessible financial assistance and effective student consultation.

I will advocate for support for students affected by policy changes and a university where everyone is valued and treated fairly, regardless of background, nationality or identity.

I will defend an independent student voice and policies that protect freedom of expression, while scrutinising whether University priorities and spending reflect students' needs.

My commitment is to listen with care, raise your concerns with conviction and work with fellow Council members to keep student welfare central to decisions.

I would be honoured to represent you.

Our voices must shape our university.

Rayyan Rizwan

As a postgraduate student of the University of Melbourne, I have witnessed issues ranging from the suppression on organising protests; student surveillance and student wellbeing being either ignored or partially addressed. My motivation to run is because I do not accept this, and wish to advocate for many other students who feel similarly.

My vision is to fully represent the views of students on campus on any issues (big or small) which will not fade in silence. My promise to you is I will not shy from tough conversations, and will take whatever lawful action to best represent your concerns.

Lea Rose

I am a PhD graduate researcher, Faculty of Science, Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, seeking to serve as graduate student member of University Council.

I have had a long-standing relationship with the University of Melbourne, as an undergraduate in the 1990s through to the present day. This enduring connection has given me a deep appreciation of the University, its community and its role in shaping future generations.

I'm a current committee member of University House and have developed experience in student representation, consultation, governance and community leadership. This role has strengthened my ability to listen to diverse perspectives, engage constructively and work collaboratively towards outcomes.

As a Council member, I would bring an independent, thoughtful and student informed perspective while contributing fully to Council's responsibilities, including strategic direction, governance, financial sustainability and accountability, compliance with University statutes and regulations and fostering a positive institutional culture grounded in integrity, inclusion and responsibility.

I would contribute not only as an advocate for students, but as a committed Council member focused on the long-term success of the University. I would be honoured to serve with integrity and a genuine commitment to the University's future.

Carl Sciglitano

Carl Sciglitano is a current PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, having commenced his research in 2024. He previously completed a Master of Science in Astronomy in 2019 and a Graduate Diploma in Arts (Advanced) in 2023.

Alongside his studies, Carl works as a Senior Product Manager in the technology industry and has more than 15 years' experience working across technology, research, education, and complex stakeholder environments. He has also contributed to teaching and academic activities at the University of Melbourne, including tutoring and research writing.

As a postgraduate researcher, educator, professional, and parent, Carl understands the practical challenges of balancing academic commitments with work and family life. He would bring to Council a constructive, experienced, and student-focused perspective, with a particular interest in ensuring that postgraduate students' diverse circumstances are understood and represented in university decision-making.

Natalie Smith

I am currently studying a Master of Environment, after completing my Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne. Having experienced the University as both an undergraduate and graduate student, I understand the opportunities it offers, as well as the challenges of balancing study, work and university life.

I am also President of Robogals Melbourne, a student-led organisation that delivers free robotics and coding workshops to encourage girls and gender-diverse students to explore engineering and STEM. Over four years with Robogals, I have helped lead volunteers, manage industry partnerships and make decisions about strategy, finances, risk and volunteer wellbeing. This experience has shown me how important student communities are in helping people feel connected, supported and excited to participate in university life.

My background in environmental policy, sustainability, politics and communications would allow me to bring a broad perspective to Council discussions. If elected, I would listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions and bring the experiences of graduate students into the room, while recognising my responsibility to act in the best interests of the University as a whole. I would approach the role with curiosity, integrity and a genuine commitment to making the University a better place for its entire community.

Barnaby Smith Major

I am a proudly progressive graduate student completing a Masters of Environmental Science degree. I have been an active member of student life on campus for several years across bachelors and masters, holding executive positions requiring ethical practice in two clubs and interacting across others, responding to student needs and building a wide awareness of student experiences. During my time as Vice-President of a graduate student society, I have helped provide a link between the students of my course and our administering body, and am very keen to extend this advocacy to the wider graduate student network at the university. As an environmental sciences student, I am passionate about environmental issues and hope to use this position to push the university to strengthen its commitments to environmental programs. I hope that graduate students will send me to the University Council so that I can be a voice for you on the university's governing body.

Asnaf Saraf Souvi

Hi everyone! I'm Asnaf and I'm running to be your Graduate Representative on the University of Melbourne's University Council. I am a Master of Architecture student and former President of the Melbourne University Bangladeshi Student Society. I am a baker and a coffee addict and love crafting.

The University Council is the highest governing body within the institution; a key character in shaping student experiences. If elected, I will fight to place student voices and experiences at the core of every decision.

Postgraduate tuition fees continue climbing - I will fight to ensure that every single dollar is spent supporting students, not being diverted towards weapon manufacturers or major corporations. I will advocate for a fossil-fuel free campus and will take a stand to protect all students' freedom of speech and the right to protest.

As an international student, I have experienced first-hand what challenges we face moving abroad emotionally and financially. I am determined to advocate for streamlining and expanding welfare services while fighting unfair tuition fee hikes and increasing funding opportunities.

I will put forward the issues that matter to you, ensuring these are front and centre in all University Council conversations.

Peter Spring

I am nominating for Graduate Student Member of University Council because I believe postgraduate students deserve a meaningful voice in the decisions that shape our university experience.

I am a graduate of the Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Communication Studies and Visual Arts from Victoria University and the Master of Contemporary Art at the University of Melbourne. I am currently completing a Master of Dance at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), giving me a unique perspective across different disciplines and postgraduate experiences.

My commitment to student representation extends beyond my studies. I have served on the VCA Executive Committee as a student representative, where I advocated for student perspectives and contributed to conversations about our university community. My professional experience in IT at Victoria University and People and Culture at Western Health has also given me insight into organisational systems, communication and workplace culture.

Alongside this, I am a practicing artist and have been selected to participate on a judging panel for Hobsons Bay City Council, further developing my experience in community engagement and decision-making.

If elected, I would bring these experiences together to listen to graduate students, advocate for their needs and contribute constructively to Council.

Shakti Suresh

My aim as a potential member of the university council is to push for agendas that are pertinent to student welfare. This includes measures for those in Melbourne who have to travel using Public Transport and pay full price going forward. Public Transport Victoria (PTV) while currently running half priced fares, this concession is only till the end of 2026. I shall speak for extending concession prices for all students, irrespective of level of study. Furthermore, one my agenda points is to include Stop 1 and Parkville stops in the free tram zones for students.

Additionally, I shall speak for a cap on increase of visa costs for international students. Its increase while not only more than double, it has also been untimely. This not only has put significant strain on those here on how regulations can change that quickly, it also makes it doubly worrisome for those wanting to pursue their education in Australia.

I aim to uphold the values of the student and the university and abide by the motto of UniMelb, Postera Crescam Laude, to grow with the esteem of future generations and always put the needs of the students first.

Georgia Vuckovic

I am running for the University of Melbourne Council so I can contribute my graduate student perspective to decisions that affect my peers and the wider university community. I am currently undertaking a Master of Environment and have also completed my Bachelor of Science at Melbourne, giving me a strong understanding of the breadth of experiences and backgrounds of our student body.

At Melbourne, our university is strengthened by embracing the lived experiences and diverse viewpoints that make up our multicultural community. While academia is central to tertiary studies, I also believe extracurricular, sporting and social engagement are important parts of university involvement. Environmental action, international experiences and sport have consistently been part of my life, with Melbourne providing opportunities to explore each.

I am pursuing a career in ecological restoration and hope to bring an environmental perspective to Council, informed by my experiences as both a domestic and international exchange student. I want to serve on Council as an inclusive, independent and outspoken representative. I understand the highs and lows of student life and would approach the role with a commitment to listening to students and acting in the best interests of our community.

Sisi Wang

Hello everyone, my name is Sisi Wang. I am a Master of TESOL student and an international graduate student at the University of Melbourne. As an international student, I understand the diverse experiences, opportunities and challenges that shape graduate student life at Melbourne.

I am currently involved in the Education Student Advisory Committee (EdSAC), where I contribute to student discussions and help organise initiatives for students. I am also involved as an International Ambassador of UMSUintl, through which I engage with and support the university's international student community. These experiences have strengthened my belief that students should not only be consulted, but also have a meaningful voice in university decision-making.

I am standing for University Council to bring the perspectives of international and graduate students to the university's highest level of governance. I hope to listen to students from different backgrounds, understand their concerns and experiences, and contribute these perspectives constructively to Council discussions.

I would be proud to represent graduate students if selected and contribute to making our university an even better place to study, learn and belong.

Cindy Wong

Hey there! I'm Cindy, a third-year Doctor of Medicine student. I grew up on the other side of the country in Western Australia and moved to Melbourne for undergrad where I studied a Bachelor of Biomedicine and a Diploma in Languages majoring in Japanese. In my time at university, I've been involved in various communities, clubs and societies as well as in student representation. Among the different hats I wear, I am the current General Secretary of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), where my role involves ensuring robust governance within the organisation so that GSA can support graduate students like yourselves. I've had the privilege of meeting many amazing students throughout my university journey and it would be an honour to represent you on University Council.

I'm nominating myself for University Council because I care about student voice, representation and accountability, and I have a deep understanding of the governance and decision-making structures within the University. If elected, I will remain committed to ensuring that the graduate student voice is represented authentically, transparently and reliably at the highest decision-making level at the University. After all, it is my firm belief that students should sit at the core of the University.