



# Vice-Chancellor's Professional Excellence Program

Class of 2022

Tuesday, 8 November 2022

# Welcome to the DeakinTALENT Vice- Chancellor's Professional Excellence Program (VCPEP) End of Year Celebration Event 2022.

The VCPEP is a personal and professional development program for students awarded the Vice-Chancellor's International and Academic Excellence Scholarships, encouraging them to reach their potential, make a significant contribution to their community, and be empowered for the careers of the future.

The VCPEP End of Year Celebration Event is our opportunity to celebrate the year's achievements, and build connections between scholars, employers and industry partners, and Deakin staff.

Thank you for joining us!

## The scholars

Since inception in 2016, 319 scholars have engaged in the VCPEP alongside their studies.

Scholars hail from metropolitan and regional Australia and around the world, coming together to study across all of Deakin's five campuses from the Cloud to Geelong and Warrnambool to Burwood.

In addition, study areas are broad. From Health to Business, Education to Engineering and beyond, scholars are completing a variety of courses within each of Deakin's four faculties.

## The VCPEP

The VCPEP includes a series of tailored activities to encourage scholars' personal, professional, and academic development.

Annually scholars have various touchpoints with the program, including workshops, meetings and social events, in addition to broader DeakinTALENT services.



Key program components include:

### Academic Mentoring

Scholars are partnered with an Academic Mentor from their faculty to meet with each trimester for the duration of their course. Discussions range from study habits to major selection and discipline-specific niches, to the world of internships and careers beyond university.

### Development Planning

Each trimester, scholars also meet with DeakinTALENT staff for development planning. Meetings provide the opportunity to reflect on their journey to date, while discussing achievements and challenges, and setting personal, professional, and academic goals.

### Personal and Professional Challenges

Scholars also complete annual Personal and Professional Challenges to develop their skills and build experience in new and unfamiliar environments. In first year, Deakin-arranged Personal and Professional Challenges offer insights into authentic leadership and collaborative problem solving. From second year, scholars design their own, aligned to their personal and professional development needs and aspirations.

# 2022 Graduating VCPEP Scholars

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Alex Vuong</b>          | Master of Data Science                              |
| <b>Anne Elias</b>          | Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry      |
| <b>Binay Mahat</b>         | Master of Business Administration (International)   |
| <b>Breanna Bucca</b>       | Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Midwifery           |
| <b>Dan Pham</b>            | Bachelor of Commerce                                |
| <b>Daniel Barac</b>        | Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws               |
| <b>David Nguyen</b>        | Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry      |
| <b>Dhanishta Lallchand</b> | Bachelor of Commerce                                |
| <b>Emily Nguyen</b>        | Bachelor of Commerce                                |
| <b>Emma Peacey</b>         | Bachelor of Computer Science                        |
| <b>Grace Kidd</b>          | Bachelor of Arts                                    |
| <b>Harrison Hayes</b>      | Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Business Analytics |
| <b>Julia Arrighi</b>       | Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws               |
| <b>Kai Nguyen</b>          | Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry      |
| <b>Kellie Stevens</b>      | Bachelor of Nursing (Clinical Leadership)           |
| <b>Ly Do</b>               | Bachelor of Psychological Science                   |
| <b>Madelyn Rothe</b>       | Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws               |
| <b>Michael Killen</b>      | Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)                       |
| <b>Michaela Pascual</b>    | Bachelor of Business (Event Management)             |
| <b>Muhammad Saqline</b>    | Bachelor of Computer Science                        |
| <b>Prosper Sandral</b>     | Bachelor of Psychology                              |



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|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Reema Seshadri</b>       | Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science/Bachelor of Business (Sport Management) |
| <b>Reinhard Onggowijaya</b> | Master of Communication  |
| <b>Riya Sharma</b>          | Bachelor of Biomedical Science   |
| <b>Sachitha Dissanayake</b> | Bachelor of Commerce   |
| <b>Sammi Faulkner</b>       | Bachelor of Arts   |
| <b>Samuel Philp</b>         | Bachelor of Arts- Advanced (Honours)   |
| <b>Sanika Chandrachud</b>   | Master of Engineering (Professional)   |
| <b>Sarah Green</b>          | Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science   |
| <b>Sarah Wilkes</b>         | Bachelor of Criminology/Bachelor of Psychological Science                      |
| <b>Shah Asef Aktab</b>      | Master of Engineering  |
| <b>Shannan Welsh</b>        | Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws  |
| <b>Sophie Heath</b>         | Doctor of Medicine   |
| <b>Stephanie Sorraghan</b>  | Bachelor of Occupational Therapy   |
| <b>Taylah Williams</b>      | Bachelor of Biomedical Science   |
| <b>Tessa Mornane</b>        | Bachelor of Human Resource Management (Psychology)                             |
| <b>Thuy Linh Cao</b>        | Bachelor of Commerce   |
| <b>Tiara Shrestha</b>       | Bachelor of Commerce   |
| <b>Tri Nguyen Van</b>       | Bachelor of Computer Science   |
| <b>Xue Li</b>               | Master of Accounting and Law   |
| <b>Zach Martin</b>          | Bachelor of Construction Management (Honours)                                  |

# Alex Vuong

## Master of Data Science

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Lei Pan; Sutharshan Rajasegarar*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/alex-anh-vuong](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alex-anh-vuong)



Alex completed internships at Ford, the DeakinTALENT FreelancingHUB and Prism. He is now working at Prism as a Data Scientist, where he delivers insights for users and system managers with dashboard data analytics. Alex loves his job and is motivated to help businesses become smarter.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most worthwhile activity was collaborating with my academic mentor to elevate my thesis work. The regular meetings, advice and encouragement helped me to succeed in my studies.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Be hungry for knowledge, grateful for any challenges and learn from successes you have achieved. Seek help when you need it! There are great people to help you.

### **My next chapter:**

I'm working full-time as a Data Scientist and I love it. This journey started from a small dot of opportunity during my last year and it flourished into something I'm very grateful for.



## Anne Elias

Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry

Faculty of Health

Geelong Waurin Ponds campus

*Academic Mentor: James Armitage*

Anne valued her clinical placements as they gave her firsthand experience working as an Optometrist. She loves to give back to her community, having volunteered at many organisations such as Glaucoma Australia, NOMAD, Royal Children's Hospital, HeartKids Victoria, and Moonee Valley Council. Anne is now enjoying work as an Optometrist.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most rewarding part of the program was attending in person events. These allowed me to meet many like-minded individuals, many of whom I may not have crossed paths with outside of the program.

### **Advice to scholars:**

My advice to others in the program is to work closely with, and take advantage of, the mentorship side of the program. Your mentor is a wealth of knowledge and is always willing to help answer any questions or organise internship opportunities.

### **My next chapter:**

After my studies, I took a break to spend time with friends and family. Now, I am enjoying working as an Optometrist.

# Binay Mahat

Master of Business Administration (International)

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Jane Menzies*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/binay-mahat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/binay-mahat)



Binay volunteered as a Student Mentor at Deakin in the Faculty of Business and Law and achieved the Outstanding Contribution Award for Peer Mentoring. Binay is passionate about entrepreneurship and has completed internships with the DeakinTALENT FreelancingHUB and Common Ground, as well as working casually for various technology start-ups in both Melbourne and Nepal. He is currently working full time in business administration for a car subscription start-up, Carbar Autos.

## **VCPEP highlight:**

The most memorable experience was the development meetings with Ross and Nina. The assistance with resume building and setting up the challenges was extremely helpful to keep on top of my personal and professional development.

## **Advice to scholars:**

My advice to other scholars is to make use of this program. Be organised and remember that time management is the most important key!

## **My next chapter:**

I am currently working full time in Business Administration for a technology start-up, which provides a car subscription service. I am also working on marketing strategy and content for a local podcast, and in the future I hope to explore further opportunities in marketing.



## Breanna Bucca

### Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Midwifery

Faculty of Health

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Jo McDonall*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/breanna-bucca](https://www.linkedin.com/in/breanna-bucca)

Breanna was an Executive Committee Member for the Deakin University Nursing and Midwifery Society and Peer Mentor for the Faculty of Health. In addition to her placements, she has also worked as a Registered Undergraduate Student of Midwifery (RUSOM) at Eastern Health and Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing (RUSON) at Austin Health. A highlight for her was travelling to the Philippines for the Deakin International Nursing Study Tour. In 2023, Breanna will begin her Nursing & Midwifery Graduate Program at Eastern Health.

#### **VCPEP highlight:**

Having access to Jo McDonall as a dedicated mentor from my field has been an invaluable aspect of the program, as her advice throughout the course was incredibly valuable and has guided me in my development as a Registered Nurse/Midwife.

#### **Advice to scholars:**

My advice to other scholars is to make the most of all personal and professional opportunities in the program. Many of my best opportunities have come from the connections I have made in the experiences in this program.

#### **My next chapter:**

Next year I will be completing a combined nursing and midwifery graduate program. In the future I have a desire to complete further postgraduate study and eventually establish a career in midwifery education.

# Dan Pham

## Bachelor of Commerce

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Micaela Spiers*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/danpham212](https://www.linkedin.com/in/danpham212)



Dan is a proud member of DeVISE - Deakin Vietnamese International's Students & Extension, and is currently working as a Communication Officer with SVAU - Vietnamese Students in Australia. She is proud of overcoming the challenges of studying in a foreign language and constantly changing learning environment during the pandemic. Dan intends to reflect on her future career options and seek full-time work after graduation.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

Due to COVID-19, I had been prevented from participating in some activities of the VCPEP program. However, through the program, I have been equipped with the necessary knowledge before entering the professional working environment and useful networks.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Despite whatever insecurities you have about yourself, your imperfections, your definition of success will change as you go so don't be scared to fail and learn from every bump in the road.

### **My next chapter:**

After graduation, I am going to look for a full-time job and at the same time work with myself to identify what I want, what are my strengths/weaknesses in order to clarify my direction and my goal for the future.





# Daniel Barac

## Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws

Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Kannan Thuraisamy*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/daniel-barac](https://www.linkedin.com/in/daniel-barac)

Daniel had an incredible experience studying International Human Rights Law abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Alongside his degree, Daniel was the Director of Social Justice and Equity for Deakin's Law Students' Society, and Treasurer of UN Youth Victoria. He also completed multiple internships and seasonal clerkships at King & Wood Mallesons, Maddocks, Allens, and WISE Cyber Law Consulting. He currently works as a Paralegal at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers and will be starting as a Graduate Lawyer at Allens next year.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The highlight of my time in VCPEP is the friends I have made while in the program. It was worthwhile to work alongside other scholars, sharing our ideas and experiences and connecting as friends.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Try to start forming your networks early and use people 1-4 years ahead of you as a guide for where you want to (or don't want to) end up when you get to that stage of your study, career or life.

### **My next chapter:**

Next year, I'll be starting as a Graduate Lawyer at Allens in Melbourne, and I hope to rotate through the foreign sanctions and bribery team.



# Pragya Singh

Class of 2018

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/pragya-singh10](https://www.linkedin.com/in/pragya-singh10)

### Could you please introduce yourself?

Hello! My name is Pragya Singh, I am a proud Deakin alumni and the winner of the NDTV Deakin Scholarship 2015.

### Tell us about your current role. What do you do?

I am just about to start a role as a Project Officer with the NSW Government. It is an extremely exciting role! One of my key projects is the Safer Cities Commission which aims to make NSW cities safer for women.

### In what ways are you leading a bold and exciting career?

I have been extremely fortunate to have the chance to work across a variety of fields. I started my career in the Marketing sector and then moved to the Philanthropy sector where I have been for almost 2+ years. I worked with the McGrath Foundation and led one of their biggest national campaigns, raising close to a million dollars to fund breast cancer nurses in Australia. It was a role I was extremely proud of. Following this I was working at UNSW in their Development Team raising funds for the science and engineering sectors, helping tackle issues like climate change. However, women's safety is something I have been the most passionate about since childhood and so I am extremely excited and humbled to have received the chance to work in the state government.

### **Has there been a pivotal experience in your career to date you would like to share?**

I think the biggest experience or realisation rather for me was when I quickly realised what it was I was truly passionate about and went for it. As we graduate we often chase the jobs with the biggest salaries or biggest company names, however if you know where your passion lies and you work towards that, everything else slowly falls into place.

### **How did Deakin and the VCPEP set you up to succeed?**

I don't shy away from saying that I am where I am today because of my Deakin experience. It is something I will always be extremely grateful for, and will hope to always make my alma mater proud. The skills that I honed in my three years at Deakin fostered my independence and understanding of how to face the challenges of the real world. Deakin also gave me a network of the most amazing friends and acclaimed professors who I am in touch with to date. Everything from the VCPEP challenges to my study abroad opportunity, helped shape the trajectory of my career.

### **What advice would you provide to current scholars in the program?**

The one thing I tell any scholar is to make the VERY MOST of your networks. Reach out to people, let them know about you. Don't be scared to take up space and most importantly always be proactive. Some of the biggest opportunities I have gotten have been through word of mouth or just because I took a step forward. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, make the best of it! At Deakin, the world is your oyster, truly.



# David Nguyen

## Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry

Faculty of Health

Geelong Warrnambool campus

Academic Mentor: James Armitage

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/davidnguyen99](https://www.linkedin.com/in/davidnguyen99)



David enjoyed completing regional placements in Darwin and Shepparton. Alongside his studies, David was a Peer Mentor with the Faculty of Health and volunteered with Glaucoma Australia. He was also part of the Student Leadership Program 2022 with Optometry Australia. David is now a Graduate Optometrist at Specsavers and hopes to further his knowledge in Optometry and Public Health in the future.

### VCPEP highlight:

I think the highlight of my VCPEP experience was the group activities alongside the other scholars, particularly during our trip into the city in my first year of university and being able to chat and network with people from a variety of courses!

### Advice to scholars:

Make the most of any opportunities that come your way as a student, and try to extend yourself because this is the time for you to really experiment and expose yourself to new experiences. You will never know what you're passionate about until you try!

### My next chapter:

I will be starting my work as a Graduate Optometrist at a Specsavers practice in Sunshine, Melbourne, and I hope to do additional study in the health field to further my knowledge in both optometry and public health in the future.



# Dhanishta Lallchand

## Bachelor of Commerce

Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Sutha Kanapathippillai*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/dlallchand](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dlallchand)

Throughout her studies, Dhanishta was actively involved in university life as the Online Editor of the Deakin WORDLY Magazine. She was also a Peer Mentor and a Success Coach, helping new students transition smoothly. Dhanishta put her learning in to practice through internships with Grant Thornton, LHH and Deloitte. She is now working full-time in a graduate role in Audit & Assurance at Deloitte.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

My most memorable activity from my VCPEP journey was participating in the musical number 'Learnalilgivilinanlovin' for the VCPEP End of Year Celebration 2020. It allowed me to connect with fellow scholars and appreciate their musical talents.

### **Advice to scholars:**

My advice to other VCPEP scholars is to make the most of the resources available in our community and to not be afraid to step out of your comfort zones to immerse yourself in different experiences.

### **My next chapter:**

After completing multiple auditing internships, I have landed a full-time graduate role at Deloitte in the Audit & Assurance department which aligns with my career aspirations.



# Emily Nguyen

## Bachelor of Commerce

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Allison Ringer*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/emilynguyen9](https://www.linkedin.com/in/emilynguyen9)



Joining Deakin from Vietnam, Emily developed her skills in marketing, consulting, and e-commerce through internships with Deloitte, Kowil Fashion, DeakinTALENT FreelancingHUB and Lovisa. Her internship experience led to ongoing work at Lovisa as an Online Visual Merchandiser and Digital Trade Coordinator, where she discovered her passion for the fashion and beauty industry. She is now an E-commerce Specialist at Michael Hill and will continue to develop her skills and experience in this sector.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

Successfully landing my first office job after my internship ended in the midst of COVID-19 thanks to my Academic Mentor's advice and encouragement, and then realising that Fashion was indeed my passion!

### **Advice to scholars:**

The greater the network you build, the more opportunities await you. Trust the process and believe in yourself. You will get there!

### **My next chapter:**

I will be moving to Brisbane, which is super exciting! I am currently an E-Commerce Specialist in the Fashion (Jewellery) industry and I am eager to continue to develop my skills and experience in this sector.





# Emma Peacey

## Bachelor of Computer Science

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Cloud campus

*Academic Mentor: Kerri Morgan*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/epeacey](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epeacey)

In 2021, Emma worked as a Telehealth Support Officer for the Tasmanian Department of Health, which led to a Business Analyst internship in early 2022. She continues to be involved in her local community through volunteering at Libraries Tasmania and playing the oboe in multiple community ensembles. Emma has recently started working at the CSIRO and is looking to further her education in research. Eventually, she plans to move to Europe to study Brain-Computer Interfaces and expand on her volunteering by joining the United Nations Volunteers program in 2024.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The highlight for me was volunteering. I was encouraged and supported by the VCPEP to begin volunteering for Libraries Tasmania. The experience pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me understand my personal values.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Do as much as you can, in whatever interests you. The time goes fast and before you know it, you're graduating. So take up a sport, volunteer, go on a study tour, or pick up a new hobby. The earlier you start doing things, the more you can do.

### **My next chapter:**

I have recently started working at CSIRO, and am looking to further my education with the intention of moving into research. I am interested in the interactions between people and computers, and plan to eventually move to Europe to study Brain-Computer Interfaces. I also intend to expand on my volunteering by joining the United Nations Volunteers program in 2024.

# Grace Kidd

## Bachelor of Arts

Faculty of Arts and Education  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Clare Corbould*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/grace-kidd](https://www.linkedin.com/in/grace-kidd)



Grace majored in International Relations and History, where she enjoyed a study-abroad experience in the UK at the University of Exeter. Grace in addition to interning in the Deakin Archives, also volunteered as a DUSA O'Camp Leader in 2021 and 2022. Grace is currently a Campaign Support Officer with Amnesty International Australia. She plans to complete an Honours in International Relations next year, before completing a Master of International Relations in the UK the following year.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most memorable activity in the program was completing a study-abroad experience as my professional challenge in the UK. I stepped outside of my comfort zone by going alone and made incredible connections with people from all around the world.

### **Advice to scholars:**

The most important thing is to put yourself out there! Don't sell yourself short by thinking you might not get that internship or that pre-graduate position - take every opportunity because every experience is worth it, regardless of the outcome.

### **My next chapter:**

I plan to complete my Honours in International Relations next year, before completing a Masters of International Relations in the U.K. After my further study, I hope to go into the research field, working for an NGO or Think Tank.



## Harrison Hayes

Bachelor of Commerce/  
Bachelor of Business Analytics

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Prasad Bhattacharya*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/harry-james-hayes](https://www.linkedin.com/in/harry-james-hayes)

Alongside his studies, Harrison worked at ANZ Bank as a Financial Verification Officer and received the FY22 Half Yearly Kudos Award from ANZ for upholding company values. He also captained an eSports team, as part of Paradox Gaming, which developed his skills in mediating conflict and collaborative problem solving in high pressure situations. Harrison has recently secured a graduate role as a Data Analyst at ANZ, where he will continue to build his skills and experience in banking and finance.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

I stood on a chair and I rapped an Eminem verse in front of a room full of people I barely knew, during the Authentic Leadership workshop at the Reach Foundation. It helped me to become a lot more confident speaking publicly when the only feedback I got from other people was 'That was brave' or 'That was good as'.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Spend this time trying to figure out what you want out of life. It's hard, but you will have the opportunity to meet with and talk to people who are a lot further ahead of you. Figure out how they got there, and how you can get there.

### **My next chapter:**

I am currently applying for graduate roles in the banking, financial and insurance space, and at the time of writing this am about to go into an interview for a Data Analyst position at ANZ Bank, where I currently am working.

# Julia Arrighi

## Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Firew Tiba*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/julia-arrighi](https://www.linkedin.com/in/julia-arrighi)



A highlight for Julia was studying abroad at the University of Leeds in the UK. She also completed seasonal clerkships at Allens and King & Wood Mallesons, and currently works as a Paralegal at Corrs Chambers Westgarth. In addition to this she volunteered as an Education Officer with the Deakin Law Students' Society, and participated in the LawWithoutWalls Student Hackathon to develop a product focused on destigmatising mental health issues within the legal profession. Next year she will commence as a Law Graduate at Allens in Melbourne.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most worthwhile activities have been those where I have been able to connect with other scholars. Not only has it been extremely beneficial in building my professional network, but I have also made some genuine, lifelong friendships!

### **Advice to scholars:**

Be kind to yourself. You don't have to (and won't always) have your future career planned out, achieve perfect grades and constantly remain up to date on coursework- and that's okay!

### **My next chapter:**

After completing Seasonal Clerkships, I am now a Paralegal at Corrs Chambers Westgarth. Next year I will be commencing a law graduate role at Allens in Melbourne.



# Kai Nguyen

Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry

Faculty of Health

Geelong Waurin Ponds campus

*Academic Mentor: James Armitage*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/kainguyenhung](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kainguyenhung)

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a break in study in 2020 for Kai, however, that didn't stop him, as he used that time to volunteer in Vietnam with Brien Holden Vision Institute and Pham Ngoc Thach University of Medicine, contributing to the development of the profession of Optometry in the country. Kai has also volunteered at Glaucoma Australia and the Brien Holden Vision Institute. He now works as a full-time Optometrist at OPSM in Perth.

## **VCPEP highlight:**

My Academic Mentor, Professional Development Mentors and fellow scholars have always been my continuous source of inspiration and support throughout my student life and upcoming professional life.

## **Advice to scholars:**

Your own perspective, background and life experiences are stimuli to great changes. Never underestimate yourself! Embrace your uniqueness.

## **My next chapter:**

Previously I volunteered at Glaucoma Australia, Pham Ngoc Thach University of Medicine and BHVI. Now, I am working as a full-time optometrist at OPSM.



# Henry Austin Stone

Class of 2019

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/henry-austin-stone](https://www.linkedin.com/in/henry-austin-stone)

### Could you please introduce yourself?

Hi there, I'm Henry – I was a VCPEP scholar between 2016 and 2019, during which time I completed my Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Hons). I completed my degree online from Tasmania, where I still live – I love it down here.

### Tell us about your current role. What do you do?

At present I am kept busy with a few different roles, which I enjoy because they give me some variety. I am the Managing Senior Associate and Practice Leader for Dispute Resolution and Litigation at Wise Law, which operates out of Melbourne, where I am responsible for managing a diverse and busy legal practice area where I deal with a variety of high stakes and interesting legal matters. Currently, I am seconded to Australian Army Headquarters as a Legal Officer, where I act for the Department of Defence in matters such as work health and safety, personal injury, administrative law, discipline law, humanitarian law and coronial inquests. I am also a serving Army Reservist.



### In what ways are you leading a bold and exciting career?

I've been very fortunate to have been provided with opportunities to work in a range of diverse and niche areas of legal practice, where I have been able to establish a profile and develop constructive relationships with other practitioners and the community. Being responsible for significant matters such as a multi-million dollar dispute concerning a cybersecurity breach, driving the Army's response to legislation proposed by a new federal government, through to acting for vulnerable people in criminal proceedings, has provided me with the opportunity to obtain a wide variety of exposure and experience which I have thoroughly enjoyed.

### Has there been a pivotal experience in your career to date you would like to share?

I've been fortunate to have a diverse and high tempo career to date, but there have been a few moments which have been quite special. One of those moments was when I set a precedent in Tasmania when I was a prosecutor working for Tasmania Police. The decision related to a new legislative provision which had not yet been considered by the courts – and I was able to convince the magistrate that my interpretation was the preferable one! The decision was published and is now regularly relied upon by criminal lawyers in Tasmania in drink driving cases.

### How did Deakin and the VCPEP set you up to succeed?

I owe a lot to Deakin and the VCPEP. The networking was a key benefit. As a distance student, it is easy to feel isolated and separated from your peers due to the geographical separation and due to pre-existing notions that distance students are somehow lesser than on-campus student. I'm very proud to say that I didn't experience that when I studied at Deakin. I was able to network with my peers, academics and industry professionals through VCPEP events and experiences, which was very valuable.

### What advice would you provide to current scholars in the program?

Remain agile and don't be afraid to jump into an opportunity that may seem a bit left of field. You might love it, or you might hate it; but no experience is a wasted experience. It is just as valuable to know what you don't enjoy as to what you do enjoy. My final piece of advice is to use LinkedIn and use it regularly! If you are reading this now, feel free to shoot through a connection request.



# Kellie Stevens

## Bachelor of Nursing (Clinical Leadership)

Faculty of Health

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Jane Walker; Jayne Porter*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/kellie-stevens](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kellie-stevens)



Kellie completes a Bachelor of Nursing (Clinical Leadership), where she was highly involved with the Deakin Nursing and Midwifery Society (DNMS). Currently she works as a Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing (RUSON) at Eastern Health on a surgical ward. Next, she plans to begin her career as a Registered Nurse through a graduate year program at Eastern Health in 2023.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

Becoming a student COVID vaccinator as my 2021 self-arranged Professional Challenge was my most worthwhile activity, as it allowed me to positively contribute to the community whilst in lockdown and helped my confidence grow as a student nurse.

### **Advice to scholars:**

This program provides so many unique valuable opportunities to network and grow as an individual, even though mine were limited during covid, so my advice would be to make the most of all opportunities provided.

### **My next chapter:**

I will be begin my career as a Registered Nurse through a graduate year program in 2023. I am currently in the process of applying for graduate years so am unsure where I will be completing this program at the moment, but I am hoping to obtain a position with Eastern Health.



## Ly Do

### Bachelor of Psychological Science

Faculty of Health

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Anna Klas*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/lydo](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lydo)

Ly completes a Bachelor of Psychological Science, majoring in organisational studies. During her studies, Ly volunteered as a Peer Mentor at Deakin and as a Research Assistant with Vietnam National University (VNU) Hanoi. She also completed internships in Human Resources and People and Culture Consulting at EY and Asian Australian Organisational Psychology. Ly is passionate about Organisational Psychology and currently works as a Talent & Leadership Support Officer for the Level Crossing Removal Project. She plans to pursue an Honours degree in Psychological Science next year.

#### **VCPEP highlight:**

Volunteering for the not-for-profit organisation AAOP as part of my VCPEP Professional Challenge, from which I have learned and grown tremendously as a professional and gained valuable mentors throughout the experience.

#### **Advice to scholars:**

When you're starting to build your experience, don't be bound by the limits of your ideal industry or technical roles. Opportunities that help develop important soft skills are just as valuable as those that build your technical capabilities.

#### **My next chapter:**

I'll be pursuing an Honours degree in Psychological Science while finishing up my current role as a Talent & Leadership Support Officer.

# Madelyn Rothe

## Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws

Faculty of Business and Law  
Geelong Waterfront campus  
*Academic Mentor: Karen Powell*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/madelyn-rothe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/madelyn-rothe)



Madelyn completes a Bachelor of Commerce/ Bachelor of Laws, majoring in Finance. During her studies, Madelyn was highly involved with Deakin's Law Students' Society in multiple roles including Functions Officer, Career Officer, and Treasurer. Another highlight for her was duxing the cohort for International Financial Law at the London School of Economics and being selected to compete in the International Vis Moot. She now works as a Paralegal and intends to complete Practical Legal Training to begin working as a solicitor at Nevett Wilkinson Frawley (NWF) in her hometown of Ballarat.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The highlight of VCPEP was travelling to London to study International Financial Law for three weeks. It was an amazing opportunity during which I met so many people at different points in their careers.

### **Advice to scholars:**

My advice is to reach out to your peers and mentors for support as often as you need it. University can be a really challenging time when balancing work commitments and other pressures, but know you aren't alone. There are so many people to help!

### **My next chapter:**

I am currently working as a Paralegal in the Litigation and Commercial team at Nevett Wilkinson Frawley (NWF) in Ballarat. After graduation, I am excited to complete my Practical Legal Training and begin working as a solicitor at NWF.



# Michael Killen

## Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)

Faculty of Arts and Education

Cloud campus

*Academic Mentor: Zim Nwokora*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/killen-michael](https://www.linkedin.com/in/killen-michael)

Michael completed a Bachelor of Arts (Psychology), with a major in politics and policy studies. During his studies Michael was a Residential Leader for Deakin University Residential services, developing his event planning skills. He also volunteered at Moyne Shire Council and was awarded Young Citizen of the Year. He currently works as a Student Central Concierge at Deakin and plans to study Honours in Psychology next year, and work towards clinical registration as a Psychologist.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

For me, it was the first time I had a development plan meeting, and I was asked all kinds of questions about myself and my progression that really made me think about my academic and career journey, and helped me become more introspective as a person.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Make sure to engage with your fellow scholars as much as possible. Everyone else in the program is incredible, and are all embarking on their own personal journeys, and due to the pandemic, it became a lot more difficult to maintain these networks.

### **My next chapter:**

My next goal is to secure part-time graduate employment while I prepare for my fourth year of study of Honours in Psychology during 2023, after which I hope to study for my masters and aim for clinical registration as a psychologist.

# Michaela Pascual

## Bachelor of Business (Event Management)

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Fara Azmat*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/mijiepascual](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mijiepascual)



Michaela majored in Project Management, and did not let closed borders keep her from developing her skills in global business, participating in a Strategic Management Virtual Exchange Program with Hanyang University in South Korea, and WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management's European Summer Program. A memorable experience during her studies was completing an internship through Deakin's Consultancy Experience Program, where she worked closely with Walt Disney's French Retail Consumer Products, Games, Publishing & Marketing division. She also gained experience working in Market Research for EY and is now working full-time as a Project Coordinator at Coles.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

My most worthwhile VCPEP activity was the Development Plan meetings with Ross and Nina. As a full-time worker and student, these meetings have kept me in check and provided me with insightful advice that helped my personal and professional growth.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Make the most out of your journey in Deakin and VCPEP. Hang out on-campus more even though Cloud classes are more convenient, attend that networking event even though you're an introvert, and be comfortable approaching and asking Qs to your mentors.

### **My next chapter:**

I have always had a growing passion for project management and have recently secured a full-time role as a Project Coordinator for Coles.





# Muhammad Saqline

## Bachelor of Computer Science

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Richard Dazeley*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/muhammad-saqline-computerscience](https://www.linkedin.com/in/muhammad-saqline-computerscience)

During his studies, Muhammad supported new students as a Peer Mentor in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment. He also completed internships with Insta Web Works and the DeakinTALent FreelancingHUB developing his skills in web development, data analysis, mentoring, and project work. This experience helped him land a professional role as an Information Technology Developer at Mahony Transport Services.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

My most memorable moment has been my Development meetings with Ross. He has been extremely supportive and engaging throughout the course of the program and was a major part of some of my successful endeavours.

### **Advice to scholars:**

I would suggest anyone starting off to make use of the meetings and resources available. It is a great program for your life and career, so be engaged and get involved.

### **My next chapter:**

I am currently working as an IT Development Officer and hopefully will continue to gain as much experience from this role as possible.



# Emily Grundy

Class of 2018

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/emily-grundy](https://www.linkedin.com/in/emily-grundy)

### Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Emily and I'm passionate about using high-quality evidence to address big problems. I studied a Bachelor of Psychological Science at Deakin and then Honours in Psychology at the University of Melbourne. Now, I work as a Research Officer at BehaviourWorks Australia, the largest applied behaviour change research unit in Australia. I'm also actively involved in Effective Altruism – a community that's dedicated to finding (and actioning) the best ways to help others. Outside of that, I love learning languages and hiking (next year I'll be doing the Pacific Crest Trail, so wish me luck!).

### Tell us about your current role. What do you do?

At BehaviourWorks, we work with government and industry to find behavioural solutions to social, environmental, and organisational problems. A client will come to us with an issue – maybe they want to reduce workplace discrimination, or accelerate their organisation's transition to net zero emissions – and we help them to explore the problem and trial solutions. My work involves meeting with clients, designing surveys, conducting literature reviews, facilitating workshops, and disseminating research findings.

### **In what ways are you leading a bold and exciting career?**

So far in my career, I've had the opportunity to influence organisational decisions, state-level policies, and the allocation of millions of dollars of research funding. But, I think the most bold and exciting parts of my career lay ahead. There are so many problems to work on that are big in scale and solvable, but which are currently neglected. From improving animal welfare to helping institutions make better decisions to reducing risks from artificial intelligence – the list can be daunting, but also motivating. The exciting part is figuring out where I can do the most good.

### **Has there been a pivotal experience in your career to date you would like to share?**

A pivotal experience in my career occurred before my career even started. In high school, I read Peter Singer's essay, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'. Singer argues that if we can stop something bad from happening, without a major sacrifice, we should do so. This really resonated with me and led me to discover Effective Altruism, which has a huge influence on my career decisions.

### **How did Deakin and the VCPEP set you up to succeed?**

One of the greatest parts of the VCPEP was being connected to my mentor, Nicole Rinehart. An incredible applied academic and clinical psychologist, Nicole helped kickstart my research career (and offered sage advice along the way).

Studying abroad with Deakin was also an important experience. My time in Costa Rica provided me with friendships, memories, and taught me how much I value balancing a focus on impact with my love of adventure.

### **What advice would you provide to current scholars in the program?**

Think big, and then get concrete (in that order). You're in this program, so I know you must be extremely capable. What incredible things do you want to do for the world? How do you want to have an impact? And if that all sounds a bit vague, it usually starts that way. Dedicate some time to making your vision more actionable. One amazing resource for this is 80,000 Hours ([80000hours.org](https://80000hours.org)) – they have in-depth guides on how to pursue a high-impact career. Lastly, remember that taking care of yourself will help you take care of others, and the world.



# Prosper Sandral

## Bachelor of Psychology

Faculty of Health

Cloud campus

Academic Mentor: *Tim Chambers*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/prosper-sandral](https://www.linkedin.com/in/prosper-sandral)



Prosper completes a Bachelor of Psychology (Honours). Alongside his studies, he established the Fit Farmer Mental Health Initiative in his local community. He also worked as a Learning Support Officer at Corowa Public School, Fitness Instructor at Refuel Fitness and Nutrition and completed an internship through the DeakinTALENT FreelancingHUB. He currently works as a Disability Support Worker at Social Plus, and will be traveling to Brisbane later this year to complete training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention through his work. Prosper intends to continue working in the disability sector and complete his Honours and Masters in Clinical Psychology.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The relationship I built with my academic mentor Dr Tim Chambers was an extremely beneficial and rewarding aspect of the VCPEP program. I discussed various aspects of my academic journey and found the support and advice invaluable.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Engage in as many of the activities and learning experiences that are offered to you through the VCPEP program. There won't be another chance to do it again so use it to your full advantage!

### **My next chapter:**

I am planning to continue working in the disability sector and complete my Honours and Masters in Clinical Psychology.



## Reema Seshadri

Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science/  
Bachelor of Business (Sport Management)

Faculty of Health + Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Eric Drinkwater*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/reemaseshadri](https://www.linkedin.com/in/reemaseshadri)

Reema has developed her skills in Exercise and Sport Science through internships with Align Outdoor Fitness, Archery Victoria, Deakin ACTIVE and Invictus Performance Lab, and pre-graduate work at Gymnastics Victoria and the T20 Women's World Cup. Reema has also completed ASCA's Level 1 Strength and Conditioning certification and is currently the Head Sports Trainer for the Deakin Animals AFL Club. Next year she intends to enrol in the Master of Physiotherapy, and her long term goal is to work in human performance at the Australian Defence Force.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

My most memorable and worthwhile activity was speaking with my academic mentor. Speaking to him gave me the confidence to branch out and speak to other lecturers about my career prospects and future goals.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Immerse yourself in this experience and use all the resources that are available to you! This will open up multiple opportunities for you and provide you with key tips for your future.

### **My next chapter:**

My long term goal is to either become a Personal Training Instructor or Physiotherapist for the Australian Defence Force. My next step is starting my Master of Physiotherapy next year.

# Reinhard Budiman Onggowijaya

Master of Communication

Faculty of Arts and Education  
Melbourne Burwood campus

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/reinhardbudiman](https://www.linkedin.com/in/reinhardbudiman)



Reinhard specialised in Digital Media. During his studies, he completed an internship at the FreelancingHUB where he led the Brand Awareness team to conceptualise and design social media strategies and content for non-for profit, A Helping Hand. Reinhard's passion lies in dance and wellness; he is currently a Professional Dance Teacher and Choreographer. He plans to combine this passion with his experience in psychology and digital media.

## **VCPEP highlight:**

The VCPEP Personal Challenge helped me kickstart my project on educating Indonesian LGBTQ+ youth regarding sex and gender through social media. Learning how to set goals and achieving milestones have been a huge part of my VCPEP journey.

## **Advice to scholars:**

Remember that you only get out what you put in. Stay curious, stay engaged, and give it your best. Be involved, and use the help available to you.

## **My next chapter:**

In the long run, I am aiming to build a dance and wellness centre. I will use the knowledge and experiences I've gained from my Psychology and Digital Media studies as the pillars of the business.





# Riya Sharma

## Bachelor of Biomedical Science

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Mark Guthridge*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/riya-sharma-biomedicine](https://www.linkedin.com/in/riya-sharma-biomedicine)

During her studies, Riya volunteered as an Orientation Ambassador and DUSA Crew Member at Deakin, as well as acting as the Secretary for the Deakin Science Society. In addition to this, she also completed an internship with Ambulance Victoria and worked as a Laboratory Assistant at Australian Clinical Labs. She recently started a full-time graduate role with Eurofins, and plans to undertake honours in 2023, where she will be researching Genetic Sequencing.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The highlight of the VCPEP was my Development Plan and Academic Mentor meeting. These meetings helped me to set goals and motivated me to achieve them. It was amazing to track my progress and see the goals I set become reality.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Make the most of student life and participate in as much as you can at the university. There are so many opportunities out there, don't limit yourself!

### **My next chapter:**

I am currently working full-time at Pharmaceutical company, Eurofins. Next year, I intend to complete my Masters in Research with a focus on genetic sequencing.

# Sachitha Dissanayake

## Bachelor of Commerce

Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Thusitha Dissanayake*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/sachitha-dissanayake-](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sachitha-dissanayake-)



Sachitha majored in Accounting and in addition to his course, has undertaken a wide variety of experiences, including completing an Economics Internship with Verite Research, working as an Assistant Accountant at Singer Sri Lanka and Data Entry Assistant at Billson Advisory in Melbourne. He has also developed his leadership and communication skills through serving as the Director of Finance and Economics in the Deakin Commerce Society, and Content Writer at Deakin University. He now works as a Graduate Accountant at the EPA Group and will commence as an Auditor at Grant Thornton in 2023.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

One of my favourite memories was the welcome lunch for incoming VCPEP students. It gave me an opportunity to converse with highly accomplished peers and motivated me to do my best too.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Set yourself ambitious goals in your personal and professional challenges. These act as motivation to take yourself out of your comfort zone and provides a checkpoint at the end of every trimester to help yourself gauge how much was accomplished.

### **My next chapter:**

I am currently working with an Accounting firm as a Tax Accountant and will commence as an Auditor at Grant Thornton in 2023. A lot of my work surrounds the management and administration of self-managed superfunds. My current goal is to obtain further experience and embark upon obtaining my professional qualifications.



## Sammi Faulkner

### Bachelor of Arts

Faculty of Arts and Education

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Joanne O'Mara*

Sammi completed a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Literary Studies and Visual Arts. During her studies, Sammi explored her keen interest in education through working in various tutoring and academic support roles. She is currently a full-time Assistant Educator at the Children's House of Early Learning. Sammi is exploring her career options and plans to do further study in 2023.

#### **VCPEP highlight:**

My fondest and most memorable activity would have to be the initial VCPEP induction day at Deakin Downtown back in 2019. I got to meet some incredible undergraduate students who would go on to progress through the program beside me.

#### **Advice to scholars:**

Doing uncomfortable and intimidating things are always more worthwhile than those you do in your comfort zone. This has been especially true for me as I've progressed through the program and within my professional journey.

#### **My next chapter:**

I'm currently in a bit of an in-between stage of my career. Since graduating, I've continued on with my current position in Education, but plan to return to study in 2023.

# Samuel Philp

## Bachelor of Arts - Advanced (Honours)

Faculty of Arts and Education

Melbourne Burwood campus

Academic Mentor: Marilyn Stendera

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/samuelphilp](https://www.linkedin.com/in/samuelphilp)



Samuel completes a Bachelor of Arts - Advanced (Honours), majoring in Philosophy and Creative Writing. During his studies, Samuel completed an internship with the FreelancingHUB, gaining skills in leadership, communication, and professional writing. He had his short story published in the Deakin Digital Anthology: Nudus Vir and gained employment as a school tutor. He plans to undertake academic research by completing an honours year at Deakin University in Philosophy, focusing on a cross-cultural analysis of personal identity.

### VCPEP highlight:

Completing my personal challenge. In 25 days I had to complete 3318 push-ups to raise money for mental health. This experience taught me the importance of focusing on the bigger picture. I raised \$341 for the Push for Better Foundation.

### Advice to scholars:

You can only grow as a person when you encounter new and challenging circumstances, so: face your challenges head-on. Remember that there is no effort without error or shortcoming.

### My next chapter:

In 2023, I plan to undertake further academic research by completing my honours study at Deakin University in the philosophy discipline. My research will focus on a cross-cultural analysis of personal identity.

After the completion of my thesis, I hope to share my research and demonstrate how a greater understanding of one of the fundamental aspects of human experience can be strengthened by comparing East and West philosophies.



# Sanika Chandrachud

## Master of Engineering (Professional)

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Geelong Waurin Ponds campus

*Academic Mentor: Tim Hilditch; Mike Yongjun Tan*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/sanika-chandrachud](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sanika-chandrachud)

Sanika completes a Master of Engineering (Professional), specialising in Mechanical Engineering Design and Additive Manufacturing. During her studies, Sanika interned and worked for Dassault Systèmes in 3D modelling, process optimisation, C++ and Object Oriented Programming. She also worked as a Design Engineer and is a Certified Solidworks Professional. Sanika plans on pursuing roles related to her two majors and pursuing her engineering product ideas through the ManuFutures Ignite program.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

My most memorable activity was the only one that has happened offline. It was a meetup at Waurin Ponds Estate. I had a great time interacting, learning about everyone's journeys and just talking with the other VCPEP students.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Welcome aboard to the most amazing time of your life! Make sure to network a lot, learn things from your peers and most importantly, enjoy yourself.

### **My next chapter:**

I am trying to pursue one of my engineering product ideas as a part of the ManuFutures Ignite program, which is a 12-week workshop to rapidly mature business ideas. Alternatively, with a dual specialisation in the fields of Mechanical Engineering Design and Additive Manufacturing, I'm hoping to land a job in one of these fields!



# Phyllida Hayes

Class of 2018

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/phyllida-hayes](https://www.linkedin.com/in/phyllida-hayes)

### Could you please introduce yourself?

I'm Phylli. I graduated Deakin University in early 2019. I studied literary studies, criminology and international relations finishing with a Bachelor of Arts, as a Cloud student living in sunny Queensland. The running joke has been that my first day on campus was my graduation. Even then it was after I'd started my graduate program with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (QLD).

### Tell us about your current role. What do you do?

I'm a strategist, policy analyst and intelligence professional working in the justice and public safety portfolios of the Queensland Government (for nearly 4 years now). Currently I work for the Department of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, specialising in developing fiscal strategies and policies. I write our department's budget papers, pitch funding initiatives to Cabinet committees and create products that help decision-makers... make decisions. I'm in a team of 2 that works directly with the Commissioner, Chief Financial Officer, and the Chief Strategy Officer to help keep our department running to respond to emergencies and disasters not only within Queensland but internationally. I also deploy to work in state-level disaster coordination centres during floods, a pandemic, and fires – so I've seen firsthand how administering public funding efficiently and effectively delivers services to everyone in Queensland when they need it – at their most vulnerable.



### **In what ways are you leading a bold and exciting career?**

I never thought of myself as being bold until I read the Queensland Government's response to a particular Commonwealth Government policy proposal that they emphatically didn't support. Under the gold coat of arms were very familiar words. I had written them. I couldn't get my superiors at the time to care about what I hypothesised would result in a future catastrophe. They didn't want to see it and instead suggested I use nicer words to the Commonwealth. I declined. The result was that Cabinet met one Monday morning and sat around a board room discussing the problems with this policy that a 20-something had found, scrutinised, and presented. They got it. Approved. Being bold to me, means being frank and fearless in providing advice. That's something I practice every day with everything that I write, because my words may just determine decisions that effect everybody.

### **Has there been a pivotal experience in your career to date you would like to share?**

In 2021 I was working as a criminal intelligence analyst in Queensland and had been offered a job with the Australian Federal Police in Canberra. I was very excited. I got my clearance and was just about to move when my mother passed away unexpectedly. For the first time I thought about my life as being defined by elements outside of my career – what did I truly care about? What would make me happy? How employers and teams support you/ or don't support you through major changes in your life is so important. I stayed in Queensland (with my amazing team) and that opened different doors and new ways of looking at what I want my life to look like beyond a job title.

### **How did Deakin and the VCPEP set you up to succeed?**

Being a Cloud student has proven an absolute advantage in the last couple of years. I conducted most of my development meetings via Skype and was rocking PJ pants and a nice blouse with pearls long before the pandemic. The team never made me feel like I was missing out and I got to travel to Melbourne to participate in-person which I am very grateful for. VCPEP gave me some accountability regarding my development plan and stretching myself to take opportunities that otherwise I may have put off.

### **What advice would you provide to current scholars in the program?**

Get comfortable with people not immediately understanding your chosen path and how it all connects but learn how to market yourself. I've spent years telling people a story, much like a joke where the disciplines of criminology, international relations and literary studies all walk into a bar together and come out having influenced change in the world. Develop a clear sense of what fascinates you and how all of the skills you are learning will make you the best person for your dream job – then pitch it – and give everyone that "ah-ha" moment.



# Sarah Wilkes

Bachelor of Criminology/  
Bachelor of Psychological Science

Faculty of Arts and Education  
Geelong Waurun Ponds campus  
*Academic Mentor: Emma Ryan*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/sarah-jane-wilkes](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarah-jane-wilkes)



During her studies Sarah volunteered with the Deakin Psychology Student Society, Headspace, and as a Deakin Peer Mentor. Sarah enjoyed her internship experience with the Deakin Freelancing Hub, acting as a Team Manager and was also an Executive Committee member for the Hult Prize at Deakin. She recently undertook a student placement with Community Correctional Services Victoria leading to a graduate role as a Community Corrections Case Manager. In 2023 she plans to complete an Advanced Graduate Diploma in Psychology and pursue a career in Forensic Psychology.

## **VCPEP highlight:**

Visiting different companies around Melbourne CBD as the 2019 professional challenge. I remember feeling out of my depth in the professional world. Now I am proud to say I am a part of that very profession sphere and enjoying every moment thanks to the VCPEP.

## **Advice to scholars:**

Do not be afraid to reach out to your fellow scholars and VCPEP staff who are there to support you and provide you with the guidance and tools to succeed and overcome any challenge.

## **My next chapter:**

I am currently entering the workforce as a Community Corrections Case Manager supervising offenders on community-based orders through case planning, risk assessment, and intervention coordination services. In 2023 I aim to complete an Advanced Graduate Diploma in Psychology and pursue a career in Forensic Psychology that intersects the justice and mental health systems.



## Sarah Green

### Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science

Faculty of Health

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Liz Bradshaw*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/sarah-green-exercisescience](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarah-green-exercisescience)

Alongside her course Sarah has worked as an Advanced Women's Artistic Gymnastics Coach at Melbourne Gymnastics Centre, as well as completing internships in Strength and Conditioning at ACE Performance and as a Biomechanics Research Assistant at Deakin University. Sarah developed her leadership skills, as a student representative on the Deakin University Exercise and Sport Science Advisory Board. She is currently a Jumpstart Gymnastics Program Co-ordinator at Melbourne Girls Grammar, and Performance Analysis and Skill Acquisition Intern at Essendon Football Club. Next year, Sarah plans on completing an honours project in partnership with the Essendon Football Club.

#### **VCPEP highlight:**

Having Liz Bradshaw as my academic mentor has been very rewarding over the past few years. I have been able to regularly catch up with her to discuss my studies and future career, and seek her advice and expertise in these areas.

#### **Advice to scholars:**

Make the most out of the opportunities provided in this program, such as the personal and professional challenges, and other networking events.

#### **My next chapter:**

I will be completing an honours project in 2023. I will be looking at performance analysis and skill acquisition, and have been offered the opportunity to complete my research with Essendon Football Club.

# Shah Asef Aktab

## Master of Engineering

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Geelong Warrnambool campus  
Academic Mentor: Siva Krishnan

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/asefaktab24](https://www.linkedin.com/in/asefaktab24)



Since arriving in Geelong in 2020, Asef has volunteered at Study Geelong, served as a Student Ambassador for Engineers Australia, and supported new students at Deakin as a Peer Mentor. He also completed a Student Instructional Designer internship with the School of Engineering, as well as developing and leading the co-design of gamified learning resources with an industry practitioner on risk management that has been implemented into a post-graduate capstone unit. Asef will now look toward pursuing a professional role in Mechatronics within production/design.

### VCPEP highlight:

The highlight for me was the sessions with my academic mentor. This connection led to opportunities to work with the School of Engineering as an Instructional Designer.

### Advice to scholars:

My advice would be to connect with your fellow VCPEP scholars. It is a great opportunity to network, make friends and learn from others.

### My next chapter:

Having completed internships, contract work and volunteering, my next step is to find a professional role in Mechatronics within production/design.



# Shannan Welsh

## Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Laws

Faculty of Business and Law

Geelong Waterfront campus

*Academic Mentor: Jean du Plessis*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/shannanwelsh](https://www.linkedin.com/in/shannanwelsh)

Shannan was the recipient to the highly competitive New Colombo Plan Scholarship, which allowed her to complete a semester abroad at National University of Singapore, where she also undertook a legal internship with Eng & Co., and volunteered at the Singapore TechLaw Fest. In addition to this, she also completed study abroad in Denmark, and in India at O.P.Jindal Global University Centre for India-Australia Studies. Through volunteering with the RSPCA, she discovered her true passion lies within the animal industry and is transitioning into this area by studying a Cert II in Animal Studies. She plans to become a Zookeeper or work in wildlife conservation.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

Working closely with the DeakinTALENT team to develop my resume, LinkedIn, and career ambitions was a very worthwhile part of VCPEP, and is something I may have neglected had I not been a part of this program!

### **Advice to scholars:**

If I can recommend one thing, it would be attending the events and meeting the other VCPEP scholars. The networks, friendships and connections I've formed have been one of the most valuable aspects of the program.

### **My next chapter:**

I'm currently working as a Litigation and Intellectual Property Paralegal but have decided to start pursuing a more hands-on career- swapping the court room for the zoo! I will be beginning an animal studies course, hoping to get into zookeeping or wildlife conservation.



# Sophie Heath

## Doctor of Medicine

Faculty of Health

Geelong Waurin Ponds campus

Academic Mentor: Ross Carne

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/sophie-heath-med](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sophie-heath-med)



Sophie attended the PRIDOC Conference in Vancouver, a program for Doctors from different First Nations groups around the world. She also completed an internship with Voice for our Children (SNAICC) where she wrote a research project showing evidence for the effectiveness of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. Sophie completed a Cadetship at an Aboriginal Health Service. She has secured a graduate role at Western Health, her first preference hospital, where she will complete her medical internship next year.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

Completing a cadetship at Rumbalara in Shepparton. It provided a genuine opportunity to work as a Doctor in the GP setting. When my patients learn I am Aboriginal and going to become a Doctor, there is such a shared excitement and sense of pride.

### **Advice to scholars:**

It may sound cliché but be kind to yourself. If you are here, you are already excelling at chasing your dreams and the next achievement. Stop to think and appreciate how far you have come!

### **My next chapter:**

I have received an internship offer at Western Health. It was my first preference, so I am very pleased and excited.





# Stephanie Sorraghan

## Bachelor of Occupational Therapy

Faculty of Health

Geelong Waterfront campus

*Academic Mentor: Genevieve Pepin*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/stephaniesorraghan](https://www.linkedin.com/in/stephaniesorraghan)

Stephanie has developed her skills as an Occupational Therapist through pre-graduate work as an Allied Health Assistant at Jibber Jabber Allied Health, and volunteer positions with Blind Sports VIC and Elder Rights Advocacy. Stephanie has also served as Treasurer for the Deakin Occupational Therapy Society and as a Student Representative on the Deakin University Occupational Therapy Advisory Board. Her most memorable placement was with the Homeless Outreach Mental Health Services team, where she worked with people experiencing homelessness and complex mental illness. She has recently joined the North Western Mental Health Pre-Graduate Occupational Therapy Employment Program, where she will continue to build her skills.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The program motivated and pushed me to pursue professional opportunities that I otherwise would not have sought out, including taking on new jobs, volunteer roles relevant to my field of study, and lots of professional networking.

### **Advice to scholars:**

I think sometimes it is easy to think that certain opportunities are too challenging or not in your reach yet. However, I have now learnt that you are more capable than you think and it never hurts to have a go or take a chance.

### **My next chapter:**

I have decided to move back to my hometown to be nearer to family and friends, and will pursue a career in occupational therapy there. I am fortunate enough to have some choice over where I work and am still deciding this, but hope to go into mental health, and progress from there!



# Akash Punjabi

Class of 2016

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/akashpunjabi](https://www.linkedin.com/in/akashpunjabi)

### Could you please introduce yourself?

Hi – I am Akash JP Punjabi. I graduated from Deakin in 2016 with a Dean’s Merit List Award. I have completed three levels of the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Program in 2019. Currently, I work as a Senior Consultant at KPMG AU in Brisbane. I am also a Business Collaborator with Four Nations Football Consulting (4NFC) – a Barcelona based boutique football consulting firm. In my spare time, I enjoy mentoring, volunteering, learning tennis, investing and writing sports business articles.

### Tell us about your current role. What do you do?

I work in the Management Consulting division of KPMG AU with a focus on Sports related clients. I also do general government advisory as well as work with some private clients. To provide an example – early this year, I worked on a project where we evaluated the funding programs for Sport & Recreation Victoria (SRV) and provided a business case to support the need for further funding. Our work assisted SRV in obtaining \$88m of funding in the 2022-23 VIC State Budget. This would be used to invest in community sports infrastructure which will be amazing for the Victorian community. As we know, sport and recreation have tremendous health benefits for all ages. So, our work helps the government in decision making and eventually benefits our community.

### **In what ways are you leading a bold and exciting career?**

I worked at Deakin in accounting and finance for a couple years and then in audit for KPMG for about three years. A few years ago, I realised that I could work in sports and combine my passion for sports and business together. So, I started talking to industry professionals, gained insights about the industry and started writing sports business focussed articles. It was only last year that I got into a sports advisory role. For me it hasn't been a straightforward to understand and pursue my passion. I've had to take a step or two back to go forwards and that's been alright for me.

My current team has already played a crucial role in ensuring the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics comes to Brisbane. And because of which we will continue to have amazing opportunities in the next 10 years and beyond. As they say the 'green and gold' runway is up and running. Working on sports related projects and continuing to do so has been the most exciting part of my career so far!

### **Has there been a pivotal experience in your career to date you would like to share?**

Interestingly, the most pivotal experiences in my career so far have been those that relate to some of the most challenging times in my personal life. The support, understanding and concern that I received from my colleagues (right from Graduate level to Partner/Director level) in Deakin as well as in KPMG (both audit and consulting teams) has been phenomenal. One lesson from my manager at Deakin that I shall always remember is that you cannot probably give back, but you can always pay it forward. Whilst I don't wish for someone to go through life's challenges but if I have the opportunity then I'd be more than willing to step up and be of assistance.

### **How did Deakin and the VCPEP set you up to succeed?**

I've gained a lot from Deakin. Particularly, my experiences with DeakinTalent were most crucial in my professional life. I learnt about writing CVs, cover letters, interviewing skills, being comfortable to show your personality, organising informational interviews and so much more. My first internship in Australia was thanks to the DeakinTalent team, which kick started my professional career here. I am very grateful that we had, and continue to have, such a division that is really changing student's lives like my own.

### **What advice would you provide to current scholars in the program?**

It is going to be a journey that you'll probably remember all your life so be there for each other and have a lot of fun! And because you're probably part of the elite group (VCPEP) – be inspired but don't take too much pressure or compare yourself with others. We all have our own journeys, commitments, issues and priorities. Most importantly do what gives you contentment. Whether that's family, career, society or something else. To each their own, but I'd suggest maintaining a balance between ambition and life!



# Taylah Williams

## Bachelor of Biomedical Science

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment

Geelong Warrnambool campus

Academic Mentor: Bernhard Dichtl

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/taylahwilliams](https://www.linkedin.com/in/taylahwilliams)



Taylah was awarded the Deakin 2021 Associate Dean Research Summer Project Prize and gained a scholarship for a student vacation placement at the Hudson Institute of Medical Research, where she is now currently volunteering. During her studies, Taylah held numerous leadership roles including Residential Leader, SEBE Peer Support Network Mentor, Orientation Ambassador and Secretary of the Deakin Biomedical Science Society. In recognition for her achievement in these roles she received the Student Helping Students Award for Outstanding Contribution to Peer Support Initiatives. She plans to complete an honours year working with the Hudson Institute of Medical Research.

### VCPEP highlight:

My VCPEP highlight was volunteering at the Hudson Institute of Medical Research for my professional challenge and discovering my passion for endometriosis research. This has led to my honours program.

### Advice to scholars:

My advice to other Vice-Chancellor's scholars is to undertake every opportunity that presents itself, you will learn a lot about yourself and what you are truly passionate about.

### My next chapter:

I will be completing an honours year at the Hudson Institute of Medical Research through Monash University, where I will be placed at the Ritchie Centre focusing on endometriosis research.



## Tessa Mornane

### Bachelor of Human Resource Management (Psychology)

Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Huw Flatau Harrison*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/tessamornane](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tessamornane)

Tessa is currently completing an internship through the FreelancingHUB and is valuing the experience. She has also gained extensive experience in the health sector through her work as a Disability Support Worker. She has recently secured a HR position at a disability support organisation. She hopes to continue working in HR and potentially complete further study in psychology in the future.

#### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most challenging part of the program was getting out of my comfort zone and completing the personal and professional challenges. From these, I learnt how to get out of my comfort zone and try new things.

#### **Advice to scholars:**

Go into the program whole heartedly, and do not hold back or only put half of your effort into it. My younger self definitely would have benefited from this advice early on.

#### **My next chapter:**

I have just started a two month contract position in HR at a disability support organisation. After this, I hope to trial a few more HR positions. Then, I may keep studying and complete the psychology aspect of my degree in a Master of Clinical Psychology.



# Thuy Linh Cao

## Bachelor of Commerce

Faculty of Business and Law  
Melbourne Burwood campus  
*Academic Mentor: Joshua Newton*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/thuylinhcao](https://www.linkedin.com/in/thuylinhcao)



Thuy Linh majored in marketing and has completed numerous internships in sales, human resources, and digital marketing, with experience spanning UK, Vietnam and Australia. She has also held several leadership positions as a President for Deakin Vietnamese Student Club and as a Student Mentor. She currently works as a freelance marketer and plans to apply for marketing graduate positions.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most rewarding and challenging aspect of this program was the annual professional and personal challenges. As a result of that I was more confident in getting out of my comfort zone to achieve more. Memorable highlights would definitely be the global internships.

### **Advice to scholars:**

My advice would be to get involved and reach out to your mentors and Nina. Make the most out of VCPEP's support and opportunities!

### **My next chapter:**

I'm currently a freelance marketer. My next step is to apply for Marketing Graduate positions.





# Tiara Shrestha

## Bachelor of Commerce

Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Vincent Bicudo De Castro*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/tiara-shrestha](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tiara-shrestha)

Tiara completed a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Accounting and Finance. She has held numerous leadership positions at Deakin University, such as Senior Orientation Ambassador, DeakinTALENT Team Leader, DEAP Mentor, Student Partner and Peer Support Mentor. In addition to this she also worked as Market Research Interviewer with Roy Morgan, Campus Brand Ambassador for the Commonwealth Bank and completed an accounting internship with Regional Development Australia Riverina. Her most recent internship experience with PwC led to her current role with them as Associate in the External Audit Team.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

One of my VCPEP highlights was receiving the opportunity to be a guest speaker in front of a new batch of VCPEP scholars. It was a wonderful platform where I could connect with new scholars, talk about my journey and help them through my experiences.

### **Advice to scholars:**

Get involved and take full advantage of the amazing opportunities the VCPEP program offers, grow your network through your academic mentor, development mentor and the fellow VCPEP scholars.

### **My next chapter:**

I am ecstatic to have started my career in Accounting as an External Auditor – Assurance at one of the Big4 Accounting Firms (PwC). I am grateful to the VCPEP program and the mentors for helping me achieve this wonderful opportunity to kickstart my career.

# Van Tri Nguyen

## Bachelor of Computer Science

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment  
Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Chandan Karmakar*

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/tri2820](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tri2820)



Alongside his studies in Computer Science, Tri has completed internships at Ubisoft and Future Super. He also has participated in Deakin SPARK, an entrepreneurship program, and in 2022 won the "Most Innovative Idea" Award in the Codebrew Hackathon. He currently works as a Junior Software Developer and intends to continue working in this role after graduation. Eventually he would love to start his own business.

### **VCPEP highlight:**

My first month in Australia was during COVID. I had to get accustomed to the culture, find accommodation, study, and looked for a job all at the same time. Thanks to the VCPEP's connections and my mentor's advice it all turned out alright.

### **Advice to scholars:**

I enjoyed talking with recruiters. I'm not good with chit-chat but through the job hunt I met so many talented people and expanded my network in a meaningful way. As an international student, an opportunity like that is a blessing in disguise.

### **My next chapter:**

I'm working as a Junior Software Developer for a company. I intend to continue working there after I graduate because it's such a good fit. One day, I'd love to open my own business.



## Xue Li

### Master of Accounting and Law

Faculty of Business and Law

Melbourne Burwood campus

*Academic Mentor: Rami Hanegbi*

Xue Li joined Deakin having already completed an undergraduate degree in International Business, and with previous experience as an Assistant Accountant, Insolvency and Corporate Restructuring Intern and Loan Administrator at AMP. Alongside her Master of Professional Accounting & Law she worked as a Tax Consultant at H&R Block, where she assisted in preparing more than 200 individual tax returns in 2020. Last summer, she also completed an internship in Assurance with EY. Since graduating, she has joined the ACCA Accelerate Program, and aims to pass all ACCA units before she begins her graduate role in Tax with PwC in Shanghai, later this year.

#### **VCPEP highlight:**

The most worthwhile experience in the VCPEP program was the End of Year Celebration. That was a memorable night that I had the honour to sit with other scholars, professors and industry speakers. Their insights were so inspiring.

#### **Advice to scholars:**

Plan your annual professional challenge and personal challenge wisely, and stick to it! Make good use of the Development Plan meeting to set goals and plan your next steps.

#### **My next chapter:**

In October I will be starting a full-time role in Tax at PwC, China Shanghai office. I'm aiming to pass all ACCA units before I'm formally on board.



# Matias Sellanes

Class of 2020

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/matias-sellanes](https://www.linkedin.com/in/matias-sellanes)

### Could you please introduce yourself?

Hi there! I'm Matias, a purpose-driven sustainability professional passionate about using the power of business as a force for good. I joined Deakin after growing, studying, and working for 6 years in South America, Uruguay specifically. I completed a Master of Sustainability (Environmental Management) and graduated from the VCPEP Class of 2020.

### Tell us about your current role. What do you do?

I'm currently a Principal Consultant at Ndevr Environmental. This is a climate change and human rights advisory firm, focused on accelerating the economy's transition to a sustainable, net-zero future, by contributing to climate action for the earth and its people.

### **In what ways are you leading a bold and exciting career?**

At Ndevr Environmental I'm leading the responsible investment and B Corp services. The former's objective is to assist the financial sector with the journey of aligning their activities to the Paris Agreement goal- to limit global warming below 1.5° Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. Through the latter we aim to create a new inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economic system that works for all people and the planet. Exhilarating work!

### **Has there been a pivotal experience in your career to date you would like to share?**

COVID! It has made me realise that I can live the life I want. For me, hybrid work is now possible due to COVID and thanks to this I can live by the ocean at a beach town enjoying early-morning surf sessions before going to work (and sometimes even in between!). It's a dream come true for me.

### **How did Deakin and the VCPEP set you up to succeed?**

On the one hand, Deakin has given me a tailored education that accommodated my needs. On the other hand, the VCPEP has given me the confidence and tools required to enter the Australian professional sector. I'm extremely grateful for this.

### **What advice would you provide to current scholars in the program?**

Follow your gut and be coherent with yourself! Don't let the busy mind take control of your life, be bold to follow your instincts and passions and you will live an amazing career and life.



# Zach Martin

## Bachelor of Construction Management (Honours)

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment

Geelong Waterfront campus

Academic Mentor: Stewart Seaton

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/zach-martin221](https://www.linkedin.com/in/zach-martin221)



During his studies, Zach has worked in different roles from tutoring and sports coaching to administrative. He has also been a DeakinTALENT Student Ambassador and Student Advisor at Deakin University. Last year Zach completed a virtual internship at John Holland, and participated in the Good Home Internship program through the School of Architecture and Built Environment where he contributed to a sustainable housing project in the local area. Zach will be commencing a graduate role in construction at Harris HMC next year.

### VCPEP highlight:

The mentorship has been the most beneficial. Both academic and professional mentors have been extremely supportive when making big decisions such as course transfers and selecting job opportunities.

### Advice to scholars:

Be open to any and every opportunity whether it be professional, academic or social. Having a tunnel vision mindset, for example, on a specific job role can restrict you from other opportunities and discovering new passions.

### My next chapter:

Having completed various roles and internships, I will now be commencing a graduate role at Harris HMC in January.







For further information,  
please visit the DeakinTALENT website at  
[deakintalent.deakin.edu.au](https://deakintalent.deakin.edu.au)

Deakin University  
221 Burwood Highway  
Burwood VIC 3125  
Australia

**[deakintalent.deakin.edu.au](https://deakintalent.deakin.edu.au)**

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