

#Mondaymotivation: Melanie Jensen (Class of 2010)



Putney High School alumna and Cambridge graduate Melanie Jensen has surpassed the successes of her top A level results and has managed to trump her first class degree from Cambridge University...by being named as the top ranking medical student out of more than 1,600 in London!

Melanie was awarded the prestigious University of London Gold Medal Viva after being nominated by UCL, having graduated from the university with a distinction.

The century old annual competition is held for the top 20 medical graduates in London and was won by Alexander Fleming, who in 1908 went on to discover penicillin. Melanie explained: "I was put through my paces with a series of quick-fire questions from a panel of six experts in their medical field: a challenging but academically stimulating experience." Melanie gave an outstanding performance and was the highest-ranking candidate throughout the competition.

Melanie was always destined for success, leaving Putney High School with fantastic A Level results and a place to study medicine at Cambridge's oldest college, Peterhouse. *Melanie recalls, "The prospect of leaving the school that had nurtured my potential was daunting, but Putney prepared us well for the challenges of university. My teachers had equipped me with a love for learning which was to stand me in good stead for my medical studies."*

At Cambridge, Melanie was thrown in at the deep end experiencing a year-long lesson in the mechanics of a human body. Melanie explained, "My first year was spent darting between dissection classes, physiology supervisions, and pharmacology labs." For her final two years at Peterhouse, the "degree focussed on what happens when your body's delicate balance goes awry, learning about pathology and disease." Melanie graduated with a double first and went on to complete her clinical studies at University College London.

Melanie said: "Clinical studies introduced us to the chaotic world of hospital medicine, I rotated through various specialities: cardiology, neurology, general surgery and paediatrics, where we were taught the skills needed in assessing, diagnosing, and managing patients. I found it challenging to see the vulnerability of the human condition in disease and grappled with understanding how patients come to terms with often life-changing diagnoses." Melanie humbly said: "I felt privileged to learn from patients first hand, their stories bought my studies to life".

So what is next for Melanie? "I plan to return to Cambridge to complete an MPhil in neuroscience, for which I have been awarded a full scholarship, but ultimately I hope to pursue a career as an academic clinician in neurology or neurosurgery.

"My advice to current Putney pupils thinking of a career in medicine is to gain as much work experience as possible and to make the most of the events at Putney for example PIE talks and Medical Society.

"As a teenager I wasn't sure whether I wanted to be a doctor. However, through my work experience in a hospital and by talking to Putney old girls studying medicine, I realised that medicine offered me the unique opportunity to gain a scientific understanding of the human body whilst learning to care for patients at a vulnerable time in their lives."