



STUDENT PROFILE

Name: Sunmeet Kandhari

Age: 23

University: King's College London
fourth-year dental student

Interesting fact: I work as a quad bike/activity instructor in a kid's day camp during the summer, and am a fencing coach for the KCL Fencing Society.

I live in Elephant and Castle during term time, but am from Feltham. If my flatmate doesn't wake me up with her loud elephant feet, I usually wake up around 8 a.m. each morning, and depending on the mode of transport, it's a five-minute drive, 10-minute sprint and a 20-minute walk to University. Or, eight if I take Peter with me—he's my penny board. I live in a flat with three other people I met in halls from my first year. Aside from those poor life choices, I also have some plants.

My breakfast is usually whatever I can put into my mouth as fast as possible without choking. It's taken some time to finesse the routine but as it stands right now it's 1 cup of lukewarm tea (you can't down hot), peanut butter toast, a banana and an apple. As for where I eat it, the first two in my flat while I pack my bag, the last two while I'm on my penny board. It's a good thing my jacket has big pockets; they really don't make banana-shaped holes in pants like they used to. Shame, really.

I decided to go into a career in dentistry because it was the best jack-of-all-trades. I knew I wanted to do something involving people, a heavy scientific element and the ability to use my hands. Four years in, I think I made the right choice. Then again,

I am still in my student bubble; no one's made me extract 30 teeth in one day yet! If anyone is reading this and would like to have a fourth-year dental student do such a thing, please let me know—I have quotas to meet. I sat on the King's Dentistry interview panel a while ago and all I could think was, 'That was me four years ago, and now here I am on the other side, helping to make a life-changing decision'. The candidates weren't the only ones with butterflies in their stomach that day.

Some of the topics we've been lectured about have been quite interesting—human disease for example. But it's hard to top being on the clinic: practicing on your own patients, problem solving when things don't go to plan. Last year I treated one of my friends; she, being a medical student, was surprised by how practical our degree was. For her, most of her time on clinic was spent shadowing doctors, taking histories, doing some bloods here and there. But with her I went through diagnosis, investigations and even early treatment. That kind of "hands-on" element isn't on the agenda with many other courses.

The course is challenging but quite rightly so—it wouldn't be a five-year degree otherwise! But if I had to pin it down to one thing which is the bane of my life: secondary impressions for C/C. Zinc oxide eugenol is not my friend!

I'm not sure about what I wish to go into after I qualify. Even now I juggle my extracurricular activities alongside the degree and I think those are the only things that stop me from burning out. I'd like to take that same ethos forward in my practicing career—one day hospital, one day teaching, one day practice. Who knows? I do like the idea of being a teacher, and running the DentEd scheme in King's has only solidified that ambition. On the flip side, I'm in the process of joining the army as a dentist. Two conflicting careers on the surface, but if you dig deeper you'll find they do share a lot of similarities.

I am the president of the KCL Fencing Society, where I get the privilege of legally stabbing people with swords—what's not to like? I started for the first time in university a few years ago.

As far as achievements go, I wouldn't really consider myself that athletically 'able'. I wasn't that sporty in school—just a bit of cross-country here and there, not the first pick for a team by any means. Thanks for that, asthma. And then I started fencing, not exactly sure what changed. But I wasn't terrible, shock horror. I think part of it's because fencing isn't all about how fit you are, it's known as a 'physical game of chess' for a reason and I couldn't agree more.

After training, I usually get back around 11 p.m. Not really much left in the evening then. Usually I just shower off my fencing sweatiness, warm up the frozen meal I prepped over the weekend (yes I'm a meal-prep-Sunday kind of guy) and reply to my emails. It's not all doom and gloom though; I have Wednesdays and Friday evenings off from fencing, so usually I spend those making enemies with my liver. It's a turbulent relationship.

Depends on your definition of exciting. Currently, some of my friends and I are in the process of organizing a pilot scheme within the dental school. We're looking to assay the effect of emotional intelligence on communication skills, and whether or not it can be changed. We just got approved for some funding, so hopefully we can get that project off the ground.

Other than that, there are lots of other things going on in the King's sphere, and it's one of the things I love about university life really. There's so much to do, and if you don't find your niche you can always start it; with so many people around, you're bound to find someone as like-minded as you. Just this year I was involved in planning a sports day between all the dental schools in the country, organising events for over 1,000+ people. That same term I acted in a performance show about teeth—a surreal experience to say the least.

Now, if you were to ask me what I had planned in fourth year, I probably wouldn't have mentioned either of those. I think it just goes to show how you can end up surprising even yourself. So that is why I genuinely don't know what the future holds for me. And I think there's some excitement in that. ■