

## Class of 2022 Graduation

18<sup>th</sup> July 2022

### Graduate Speaker Dr Steven Toh

Vice Chancellor, distinguished guests, friends, family, it is my honour to stand before you here today and speak to you on behalf of my fellow graduates.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Class of 2022 on this incredible achievement. In a few weeks' time, we will be set loose on our very own patients. How exciting is that? And, I'll admit, a little nerve wracking too.

Getting to this moment, especially under such unprecedented circumstances, is a testament to your hard work, resilience, and triumph over the adversities you have faced. As student doctors in the COVID pandemic, we had to deal with the uncertainties that it sprung on us. From waking up to learn that placement was cancelled indefinitely, to taking our clinical examinations in a hybrid online and face-to-face method, we have persevered through it and emerged more resilient than before. Many of you also answered the call to action by stepping up to the plate, contributing your expertise as covid swabbers, vaccinators, and healthcare assistants, going above and beyond expectations to reduce the strain on the NHS. You should all be incredibly proud of yourselves.

University has been an unforgettable experience for me. The people you met and the memories created together makes your journey to graduation unique and personal. I can still vividly remember when I first dipped my toes into research working on an obstetrics and gynaecology project over the summer, with the goal of escaping on holiday with some extra cash. Fast forward three years later, my passion for research has led me to be elected as the President of the UoL Student Surgical Research Society, published several papers in high-impact scientific journals, secured grants and scholarships, and will soon begin work as a doctor on the Specialised Foundation Programme doing what I am most passionate about. Opportunities often present themselves in mysterious ways, sometimes just seemingly out of reach. Get comfortable with the uncomfortable and you might be surprised where it takes you.

I am incredibly proud to be part of such a talented and driven group of people that is the Class of 2022. Not only did you achieve academic excellence in your studies, many of you also racked up amazing accomplishments outside of university. Whether it is fundraising for a cause that you are passionate about, winning prizes in the sporting arena, or performing in musical shows - you have knocked it out of the park. I am truly excited to see what the future has in store for you.

As you leave the haven that is the School of Medicine and step onto the wards in your fresh scrubs, you will also be carrying the responsibility of caring for people who are often in their most

vulnerable state. There will be patients who will stick in your mind. Allow me to share with you one of mine.

As a fifth year student doctor on my Emergency Medicine placement, I was asked to clerk a woman in her late 60s who presented with dark stools. Grace lay as comfortably as she could in bed and was happy to speak with me.

I presented my findings to the consultant and stood aside to complete other tasks while we waited for her to be seen by a senior doctor. Suddenly, within minutes, she began coughing up buckets of bright red blood and lost consciousness. The medical team tried to resuscitate her to no avail and she died shortly after. I sat across from her husband who cried uncontrollably as we broke the news to him. He was reassured that we tried our best and appreciated that we spent time explaining the situation to him despite the never-ending line of patients waiting to be seen.

The realities of practising medicine can be unforgiving at times, and not all patients who enter the hospital will leave fully recovered. Grace reminded me that, to quote Dr Edward Livingston Trudeau, our duty as clinicians is to cure sometimes, to relieve often, and to comfort always.

On behalf of all graduates today, I would like to thank our families, mentors, friends, and loved ones, many of whom have joined us here today. Without your guidance and the sacrifices you have made, we would not have made it this far. You have shaped who we are as a person today and will continue to inspire us in our journeys ahead.

I would also like to thank Professor Scott, our tutors, School staff and teams across the Trusts who facilitated our learning. They, and the course itself, have prepared us for what we are about to face not just in terms of medical knowledge, they have also trained us to be excellent communicators and to practise medicine as an art and not just as a science.

Congratulations to the Class of 2022 once again. I hope that you will enjoy the celebrations today and wish you all the best in your bright futures ahead.