Nonsy
I live with my boyfriend and his family in Southport and I'm studying Childhood and Youth Studies via distance learning. Living with the boys, I get to spend quite a lot of time with them. I try and do a bit of reading with them as well, where they don't feel that pressure to like, I have to do well or do this, but just try and enjoy things. My sister, she's 16 years younger than me, and seeing her develop right before my eyes, I became so fascinated, and so I thought, "Do you know what, I want to know more," and then I embarked is a module with my university, from there it developed into what is now my Childhood degree.

My boyfriend's kidneys failed when he was about 22 and he's been on dialysis since, so he goes Monday, Wednesdays and Friday evenings after work, so he comes home from work, quickly gets changed and I take him to dialysis.

I've also been suffering with fibromyalgia for the last five or six years now. When your nervous system doesn't respond as it should: it's sending pain signals to your brain. So it affects my whole body, as it were, but mainly my back, and my fingers, they start to hurt. I get like fibro-fog, so I can't concentrate.

Tried all the medication that I could, I got a bit of side effects with quite a few of them: anxiety, depression, so I don't take any medication now, and I started running as well, and when I was more active, it seemed to keep the pain at bay for a bit longer, so now I'm more focussed on doing things that are natural and that won't be as harmful to my body.

I think distance learning with my fibromyalgia has been good for me: it's more flexible, and also I'm not as anxious because I know that what I miss, I can always make up. On the bad days I sort of have to email my tutor and say, "Can I just have an extension?" and they've always known, because every time I register for a new module, they're told that I've got this condition so just be a bit more supportive, I suppose.

So in my modules my assignments were mainly just, your normal 3000-word assignments. I used to use the P-E-E format to do my assignments and it's point, example and explanation. So any time you make a point, you have to have an example, and you have to explain how it relates to the question. So I used that literally religiously with all my assignments, and it helped me just stay on track.

I always had a plan. So I'd split up the word count so if it's four paragraphs then I'm going to do 400 words here 400 there, 200 for the intro, 200 for the conclusion. I had a little list of like words I could use, just to jog my memory 'cos when you're writing an assignment, you can't think of all those things, and if I wanted to add another point, there would be 'additionally', 'furthermore' or if I was contrasting that point, 'however' or…
Each time I did an assignment I’d pin up my list of words, my plan and everything else, and little key words or like bubble points of what I needed to put in so any time I got stuck, I’d just think, "Right, look at your plan." I used to write trigger words as well, so for each paragraph, there were trigger words – things I’d have to include which I got from the assignment sheet.

Whenever I needed help, whenever I was stuck with my assignment, I’d email my tutor and then I’d say 'Can we arrange a call?' and within less than a day, literally, she’d come back to me.

I did enjoy academic writing, I think more so in the end because I was starting to get grasp of it. My top tips to anyone who was starting to do academic writing, I would say: be patient; don’t be so hard on yourself. You can’t possibly get it from the beginning, but be open to feedback, and also, just give it a go.

Go the distance.