Charlotte
I'm a writer. I always have a story in me. I would feel like I was missing a limb if I didn't write.

I'm married; I've got two children: one daughter who's about to turn ten, and my son who's eight, and I live in a house full of animals.

I like writing because it works round me and I can do it when I want to. It works round the children as well so if they're at home in the evening, I don't write. I think routine's quite important. I get up about half past six, seven o'clock, get the kids up and fed, get them to school, come back, have a cup of tea, take the dog for a walk, stick the washing on the line.

I actually started doing my degree about ten years ago when I was pregnant with my daughter, but through a problematic pregnancy I sort of shoved it to one side for a bit, and came back to it about three years ago.

The last assignment was discussing the prominence of the English language and the resistance of the prominence of English language. We had to use an academic text. I did do a lot of searching on the university website. They have a library that lists all the approved academic texts, but I did do a lot of Googling. Finding the academic text was the hardest part of finding source material. So I found two or three that I thought would be quite good and I read each text about two or three times and highlighted the bits that I thought might be useful and then decided which one would have the most highlighter on it: I used that one. I ended up with far too much stuff: it was quite difficult actually trying to condense it down to within the word count.

I did use paraphrasing, summarising and quoting throughout my essay. There were times when it was just easier to quote – you'd come across something that – yeah, that's exactly what I want to say and there is no other way to say it.

When I first started doing my degree, I really struggled with referencing. By last year though I had found a guide to Harvard referencing, and every time I was trying to reference, I went back to that guide to make sure that it was done in the correct order.

I think I have got better at finding source material. I now know which sources are unreliable and which sources are reliable. If you're struggling to find source material, don't panic. There's plenty of stuff out there. The books that my university gave me were really comprehensive – everything I needed was in there. My advice to anyone who's struggling to quote, paraphrase or summarise is just speak to your tutor. If in doubt, leave it out.
I think I've always written short stories for friends, but it's only been in the past sort of five or six years that I actually wanted to make it a career, and then when I was pregnant with my daughter I sort of had the time to sit down and decide what I really wanted to do: writing, so English courses sort of seemed to be the next natural step.

I've got one more year left to do with university. I'm still playing with the idea of then doing a Masters' or maybe doing my PGCE. I do love learning, I do love learning a new skill, a new language, anything really.

Go the distance.