As a mature student of 54 with a family, it felt like a big step leaving full-time work and going back into study again, particularly to undertake such a demanding course. But what a year! Every part of the course at Queen Margaret University has been both challenging and rewarding, daunting and exciting. It feels like being in the right place at the right time for me.

The highlight has been my placement. I’ve always enjoyed working with children, particularly those who are difficult to reach. My personal academic tutor and practice educator have both been wonderfully supportive, challenging me to go beyond my experiences as performer, composer, community musician and teacher and coaxing me towards exploring therapeutic relationships with my first clients. A part of this has been exploring my own relationship with the viola and its use in clinical work. I continued to explore this in my research proposal, looking at how music therapy students with a conservatoire background might find their relationship with their instrument altering over the course of study. This is an area of research I would like to pursue as it has wider implications for all musicians’ wellbeing.

It had been many years since I had written an essay (decades in fact!), so I was rather apprehensive about the academic aspects of the course. However, the lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials at QMU have been so stimulating and I am thrilled to be going forward to second year with a distinction in all modules.

Budgeting for full-time study whilst supporting a family is, and will continue to be very challenging. So, a big thank you to the Music Therapy Charity as the bursary has helped me to fund instruments, books and video equipment which I would otherwise have hesitated to purchase.