

Pro-Chancellor,

Madeleine Wickham is a best-selling novelist who has sold over 40 million copies of her books in more than 60 countries, under her pen name Sophie Kinsella.

Madeleine was educated in Dorset, attending Sherborne School for Girls before embarking on a university education at New College, Oxford. She has recently returned to live in the county, which she describes as her “happy place”.

Madeleine is a big believer that the subjects you study should not define your future career. Whilst she is now a successful writer, her own education was characterised by a love for music, maths and physics. After completing her first degree in philosophy, politics and economics, Madeleine went on to study a postgraduate qualification in music analysis at Kings College, London.

Having always loved reading and writing, she set about securing a job in the media and found her first professional role as a journalist with Pensions World magazine. She quickly learnt to find interest in the seemingly mundane and to connect with readers on the subjects which mattered to them. Madeleine continued to work as a financial journalist while penning her first novel, ‘The Tennis Party’, which she describes as a “life changer”. She sent the manuscript to a couple of agents, hoping to receive some constructive feedback, and ended up being invited to meet with seven publishers who were all keen to sign her up.

Madeleine went on to hit the bestseller lists in 2000 with ‘The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic’. The book told the story of a financial journalist, who loved shopping but was hopeless with money. It was made into the feature film ‘Confessions of a Shopaholic’, starring Isla Fisher, and inspired a number of related titles. Away from the Shopaholic series, Madeleine has written seven standalone novels as Sophie Kinsella and seven under her real name. She loves meeting her readers during book tours, which provide a welcome contrast to the near solitary experience of writing.

Madeleine’s advice to today’s graduates is to hold on to your inspiration when things get tough. This is borne out of the experiences of writing, during which she says she often struggles with the story and characters, before getting back on track.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Madeleine Wickham, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*.