My summer placement took place in a rather less exotic location than most others on the course as I spent my summer at Tynemouth Blue Reef Aquarium, Newcastle in sunny old in England. Despite this, I had an excellent summer and thoroughly enjoyed my time there.

My original plan for my placement revolved around trying to assess the marine conservation awareness of visitors to the aquarium through a survey. Unfortunately though this didn’t go to plan but that didn’t mean that my placement was ruined in any way! With help from the York lecturers, I was able to take my project in an entirely new and interesting direction and ended up designing an aquarium exhibition that could be used to educate the public on the destructive impacts of fishing. To create this I used my experiences and observations from Blue Reef as well as information gathered from the literature. I also got to use my A* GCSE art skills for the first time in 8 years....

During my time at the aquarium I also got involved with its day to day running. I learnt how to care for the animals which included both marine and freshwater fish, terrapins, frogs, lizards, geckos, monkeys and seals. I learnt how much effort is required to keep all the animals fed and clean and the equipment maintained. A LOT of work goes on behind the scenes. I gave talks to the public as well as getting the chance to educate them about the animals we had and some of the issues currently facing the marine environment. Possibly the most exciting thing I got to do was feeding and training the four resident common seals. Despite smelling of herring, getting fishy saliva all over my face and an accidental incident involving a seal mistaking my finger for a fish, they were the most affectionate and amusing animals I have ever had the pleasure of working with.

I think my placement proves that even if you don’t have the money to go flying off to the tropics or your project idea falls to pieces half way through the placement, it is most definitely not the end of the world.