Having worked in the scientific research sector since 2002, primarily within toxicology and pharmacology, I decided it was time for a new challenge - time for an MSc! After time out volunteering on environmental projects abroad, and having worked as a diving instructor abroad and in the UK, I was keen to combine my love of the marine environment with my scientific research skills. After copious amounts of research into postgraduate courses, the MSc in Marine Environmental Management at York seemed the perfect opportunity.

I was not disappointed! The MSc has given me the opportunity to develop my knowledge and understanding of a subject I am passionate about, and has also allowed me to re-focus my career, while building upon my previous experiences. There was flexibility to specialise in areas I was particularly keen to explore further, yet still I have developed a broad understanding of all things marine, including marine ecosystems; ocean and coastal processes; fisheries management; biodiversity and conservation; and marine protected areas. The course was also a great mix of people, both in age and experience, and is something which was very much welcomed, adding something special, and rather unique, to the course and the overall experience.

The structure of the course, particularly its flexibility with module choices, was a real draw for me, and I particularly liked the inclusion of a large portion of independent research alongside the taught element of the course, in the form of a term paper, a dissertation and a summer placement. In addition, the field course in the Red Sea was a good opportunity to learn and develop practical surveying techniques and a great way to get to know your classmates even better (and the diving is fabulous)!

The course was hugely challenging, even more so than I expected, and I loved that. It pushed me to work and study harder than ever before, but the more I studied and the more I learnt the more I wanted to know! There’s plenty of opportunity to develop and hone essay-writing and presentation skills, and though these may once have seemed a daunting prospect, they soon became second-nature, and dare I say it, enjoyable!

The year ended with a two month placement in the Maldives, leading my own research project - what an amazing opportunity that was! The MSc in Marine Environmental Management has been one of the best things I have ever done and I cannot recommend it highly enough. The MEM lecturers are enthusiastic and passionate about their subject and this rubs off! Whilst being leaders in their field they are friendly, approachable and supportive and the Environment Department as a whole is friendly and inclusive, it is a place I know I am always welcome and where I have made friends for life.

For anyone interested in a career in the marine sector, whether from a marine biology background or not, this course equips you with knowledge of the marine environment and the historical and contemporary issues associated with its management, and, alongside the practical skills developed throughout the course, prepares you for a rewarding career in the field of marine environmental management.