Laura McGuirk – MEM year 2010-2011

I joined the MSc in September 2010, straight after completing my bachelor’s degree at Liverpool. Attending a new university and a new city was a daunting prospect but it was the best decision I have ever made. The course equips you like no other, offering both taught modules and lots of opportunity to develop your research skills with independent modules such as the summer placement, the dissertation and the term paper. There is plenty of opportunity to steer this course into a specialist area, whilst at the same time gaining knowledge in a broad range of marine issue with modules such as Marine Ecosystems, Ocean and Coastal Processes, Fisheries Management and Marine Protected Areas.

To begin the course offers all students a field trip to Whitby, purely for bonding and eating fish and chips! This is a great way to meet your course mates and the lecturers, as well as a FAB day out that I highly recommend. Following this there are several other field trips along the North east coast, as well as the opportunity to go to the Red Sea. At the end of the course you will complete a 2 month summer placement. You will have freedom of choice with where you choose to go; I went to Blackpool Zoo and studied their population of Magellanic penguins – the best 2 months of my life! Others went to the Maldives, Philippines, Fiji, Isle of Man, Scotland – everyone had a FAB time and gained valuable on the job experience, great references and a lot of useful contacts in their chosen field. These aspects of the course enable you to build on practical, in the field and laboratory skills, all highly desirable for future employment! The course also gives you the chance to develop further skills such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA).

The module I found the hardest on the course was the compulsory Statistics module. This requires a lot of hard work, extra hours and 100% attendance in order to succeed. However, despite the difficulties faced in this module, staff were extremely helpful and the ability of each student to now use R (an up and coming statistical package) makes each and every one of us highly desirable to many companies in not just the marine sector, but most environmental sciences. Thoroughly worth the long nights in the library 😊

All in all, this course is both demanding and highly rewarding. Come into it expecting to work extremely hard, be organised and prepared and you will reap the rewards. The staff Callum, Julie and Bryce are all fantastic; if you ever need any help with modules, someone to talk to or even career advice after you have left, they will always be there. You will make friends for life on this course, not just in your course mates but also in the lecturers.

I can whole heartedly recommend this course to anyone – it is by far the best thing I have ever done and I would give anything to do it again!!