Without a background in marine biology I was hesitant to apply for the masters. I knew what I wanted to get out of the course but I wasn’t sure whether I would be able to keep up with the content and timeframe of the program. I was pleasantly surprised; don’t get me wrong this was by no means a walk in the park but now that my last assignment is safely handed in I can say that yes I did manage to keep up!!

I found the course was made up of a broad set of modules and that we could shape the subjects to make it suit our own interests. Without a science undergraduate it was mandatory that I take specific modules; Ocean and Coastal Processes and Marine Ecosystems. I found these were really informative, adding academic basis to the reading and knowledge which I already had, without being the bombardment of information I was expecting. With an arts background there were certainly modules and course work which suited me more; the Biodiversity module for example. Covering a variety of aspects of biodiversity, both terrestrial and marine the module took in a whole series of topics which related back to many of my other taught modules and in terms of the coursework, this module was definitely my favourite. We were free to pick an issue of our choice and write a popular article-style piece, allowing us to be more creative whilst tackling a subject which particularly interested us meaning we could really make the coursework our own. This coursework allowed me to look more closely into the global threats to Manta Rays, which were the subject of my summer placement and the species which I hope to ultimately work with.

Overall the best module of this course and one which makes it unique is the summer placement. 8 -10 weeks working on a management project which you must organise, delivering your findings in both presentation and report form. Being an avid diver I knew I wanted to do as practical a project as possible and being obsessed with manta rays I set about trying to get a placement based around these amazing animals. With the help of Julie and Katie (the Operations Manager of the Manta Trust and a past MEM student) I was lucky enough to get a placement with Manta Trust and flew out to the Maldives to research the social behaviour of manta rays – I was in heaven!!! Having spent the previous 9 months working on the taught modules it was amazing to get out in the water and experience research in the field, working alongside the professionals....and of course the mantas.

Of course there were some modules which I struggled with more than others but the teaching and PhD support staff were more than helpful. Extra sessions were often provided, as well as online forums where we could ask questions.

In terms of the teaching staff, I found the lecturers and PhD students really helpful and always willing to help out where they could. Throughout the different modules there were opportunities for feedback and guidance.

This was a steep learning curve for me but I would highly recommend the course to anyone who is interested in pursuing a career in the marine field. It was also great to be part of a class of people with such similar interests – I was lucky enough to make some very good friends along the way!