I took a somewhat roundabout route to be at the point I am at today. I am, as ever, riddled with a ridiculous enthusiasm for the ocean and everything in it, but I haven't been able to say until recently that I could have based a career around it. I began with a degree in politics, followed this up with a law conversion and began a legal career. For years I suppressed a constant and uneasy awareness that I would rather be throwing myself off Greenpeace boats on to whales (or something along those lines). But, with my arts background, I was convinced that I couldn't pursue a career in marine science without returning to undergraduate study. I will be forever grateful that the MSc Marine Environmental Management course at York made such a career accessible to me.

I started the MSc when I was in my 30s. I was terribly worried that I was far too old, far too entrenched in a regrettably ill-considered career and most likely academically rusty too. What have I done? A marvellous thing I conclude a year later. A lot of needless worry. I left York University with a respected qualification, practical work experience and some lifelong friends. I also learned something I didn't expect ... away from those law offices (and once, a letter from a suicidal opponent) I found myself in an environment where people work really really hard, not because they are paid, but because they genuinely and absolutely care about their work. This type of working environment was new and unexpected, but now I see it as something invaluable. I currently work in the NGO sector and I am surrounded by the same type of people. I never want to go back. This course requires hard work, but you will be supported by passionate and dedicated staff (and later, colleagues) who care about your launch in to marine conservation as much as you do.

I found that my background helped, rather than hindered me. I was able to tailor the course to bring out my strengths; both my placement in the Cayman Islands and my dissertation project were perfectly matched to my existing skills and future aims. The Environment Department has a great reputation and many friends in helpful places. I left feeling more connected to the marine conservation community, as well as the inherent wonders of the marine world.

This course is an intense but sincerely enjoyable and worthwhile venture for anyone eager to join the quest to understand and manage the world's most fascinating and sacred resource. I suggest you get on with it.