Rachel Linaker

Having completed my undergraduate degree in Marine Biology at the University of Plymouth, I wanted to find a Masters course that would cater to my passion for the marine environment. The Marine Environmental Management course did just that, refining my existing knowledge on the marine environment and allowing me to learn more about existing threats and challenges, the history of certain aspects of marine management (fisheries and protected areas), enhance my communication skills, and develop new skills such as learning to understand (and eventually code) ‘R’ statistical environment and geographic information systems (ArcGIS). As long as you have a passion for the marine environment then this course is for you – you needn’t have an undergraduate degree in marine biology as the basics are all covered in two of the modules – Marine Ecosystems and Ocean and Coastal Processes – which are optional if you’ve studied marine biology before but act as a perfect refresher (with the addition of plenty of new information).

When deciding which university to choose, York undoubtedly stood out from the rest. Having visited other universities the general feel was very impersonal yet the Environment Department at York always thrived on building up a little family of like-minded people. The members of staff are all there for your support and guidance on work related or personal matters. Furthermore, the course offered the chance to partake in a two-week coral reef monitoring and management course in the Red Sea which was one of the best experiences of my life. You didn’t have to be a SCUBA diver to do it as all of the tasks were also possible just by snorkelling. Another highlight of the course was the opportunity to work outside of the academic environment as part of a summer project placement. Our MEM group conducted work over 13 countries, three oceans, and seven seas, so the sky really was the limit although I put my newly acquired R and ArcGIS skills to the test and conducted a desk-based study into recreational disturbance of waterbirds at the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast European Marine Site. Finally, there was an equal mix of both taught modules (assessed in the classic coursework/exam way) and the independent research modules which allowed the skills taught in the first half to be transferred into the second.

As we’re now creeping up to graduation, a date which signifies the true end of the course, I’m feeling sad that I have to say the final goodbye to one of the most productive years of my life. Yes, it was intense and tough, there is a lot of reading, and yes you may feel like throwing your computer out of the nearest window following the miscoding of R or ArcGIS frustration but I wouldn’t change the experience for the world. I’ve made some lifelong friends (one day maybe colleagues?), built up my confidence in public speaking and report writing, and seen a little bit of the world along the way. It is also nice to know that support from the tutors is only a ‘yell’ away!