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Gongs galore for Northumbria graduates

Two high flying businesses set up by graduates from Northumbria University, Newcastle have walked away with a clutch of silverware at the prestigious British Travel Awards

The Awards Gala Dinner in London celebrated the UK's best travel and tourism businesses.

Up to 1,000 guests saw graduate businesses The Activity Travel Company pick up three awards, and Perfect Weddings Abroad announced as the 'Best Weddings Abroad & Honeymoon' category for the third year running.

Danny Waine, 25, from Middlesbrough set up his business 'Perfect Weddings and Honeymoons Ltd' after spotting a gap in the market during his year-long work placement, while studying BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism Management at Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School. The award tops a record year for the business with sales up over 150%, against 2012.

The Activity Travel Company is based in Stannington, Northumberland, and includes Activities Abroad which offers family-focused activity breaks, and The Aurora Zone, a company specialising in trips to view the Northern Lights. It was set up by Northumbria University graduate Alistair McLean 11 years ago and now employs 14 staff – around half of whom are also Northumbria University graduates.

In the British Travel Awards The Activity Travel Company won Best Small Holiday Company (Family) and Best Small Holiday Company (Activity/Sports) for its business division Activities Abroad and Best Small Holiday Company (Adults) for The Aurora Zone.

Alistair explained how his time at Northumbria University led him to establishing his travel company. "When I was thirty I decided I needed a career change and travel was top of my "wanted" list," he said.

"I had no idea how to go about setting up a travel business – or any business for that matter - so I enrolled on the BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism Management course at Northumbria. Three years of study and an invaluable 12 month industry placement gave me the confidence and the knowledge to create my own activity holiday company and since then I've never looked back. Basically, it's never too late to learn, to change your life and do something you really, really want to do. We all spend a huge proportion of our lives working and Northumbria helped me to spend that valuable time doing something I love. You can't ask for much more than that!"

Naomi Kirkup, a Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism Management programme, said: "This is wonderful news for Danny and Alistair and well deserved. Our Travel and Tourism Management programme is extremely popular and I think it works so well because it offers a clear foundation of business and management education, and leadership skills within the travel and tourism industry – it's the right blend across all levels. In addition students and employers like the fact it is a sandwich

course with a year-long placement for work experience, and it includes a fully funded international field trip allowing theory to be put into practice at a key tourism destination.

“We have also just been recognised by the Institute of Travel and Tourism as one of only four accredited Centres of Excellence for travel and tourism education. This is something we are enormously proud of and clearly reflects the success we have in helping aspiring entrepreneurs. Ultimately this is all about creating jobs and opportunities so it is also fitting and topical that Danny and Alistair can showcase their enterprising flair as we enter Global Entrepreneurship Week.”

Northumbria University prides itself on its top 10 ranking for helping UK graduates enter professional employment. The University is also working in partnership with Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Science City and the British Library to help inventors and small businesses through the Business and IP Centre, Newcastle (BIPC) - and is supporting Global Entrepreneurship Week, which runs from 18-24 November.

For more information on courses at Northumbria University, Newcastle visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/opensday.

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