



Alton Towers set to host graduation ceremony – on a rollercoaster!

Students graduating from Staffordshire University, on what is believed to be the only degree course of its kind, are set to launch into their careers on board one of the world's most iconic coasters.

On Wednesday July 10th, Visitor Attraction and Resort Management foundation degree students will be joined by academics, family and friends at Alton Towers theme park, as they take part in a graduation ceremony on Oblivion, the World's first vertical drop coaster, led by the Dean of Staffordshire University Business School.

The students, who all complete placements at the theme park as part of the course, will receive their graduation certificates in traditional cap and gown, before taking their seat on the coaster that will then climb 65ft, overhang the 197ft drop, before free falling vertically at speeds of up to 68mph to the ground below.



Simon Ratcliffe, Assistant Recruitment and Learning and Development Manager at Alton Towers Resort, who has helped organise the bespoke graduation event, said: “We have done some research and believe this will be the first ceremony like this to take place in the World. From what we know, the Visitor Attraction and Resort Management foundation degree course is still the only one of its kind, so we wanted to do something really unique for the students following all their hard work and this seemed perfect.

“The whole thing will certainly give them an exclusive graduation picture and no doubt provoke a ‘rollercoaster’ of emotions among friends and family as they celebrate and watch their loved ones complete a great milestone in such a memorable way.”

The two year, full-time, [Visitor Attraction and Resort Management foundation degree](#) course was launched in 2015 and sees the students work at the world famous theme park, situated in Staffordshire. This unique course is taught at Staffordshire University in partnership with Alton Towers Resort, part of the World renowned Merlin Group. It includes 20 weeks paid work experience and the opportunity to top up to a BA (Hons) degree in the third year.



In 2016, a report by VisitEngland showed that the visitor attractions sector is experiencing tremendous growth both in the UK and overseas, with the most notable increase being in visits made to family attractions. The course was launched to help staffing levels within leisure/theme parks, anticipated to increase to meet this growing demand.

Ahead of the graduation ceremony, Carol Southall, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader, said “Our foundation degree in Visitor Attraction and Resort Management is unique and exciting, with its combination of paid placements and academic study. Our students have the chance to experience a diverse range of job roles across the operational areas of the business, giving them the edge when they graduate. As a ‘connected’ university we are extremely proud of our partnership with Alton Towers and the benefits this brings for our students.”

Undergraduate Charlotte Hall, who will be part of the graduation ceremony and is now employed full-time in the Human Resources team at the Resort, said: “The course has really given me the skills I need to kick-start my career and get my foot in the door with Merlin.”

“I did the course because I wanted to do something different to any other degree, something that would be creative and innovative, giving me that edge over other graduates. Since graduating I have become a permanent member of the Alton Towers Team and I am looking forward to the exciting opportunities ahead!”

The Visitor Attraction and Resort Management foundation degree ‘graduation’ ceremony will take place on Wednesday, July 10th at Alton Towers Resort from 8am.

The students will also take part in an additional, more traditional and official academic graduation ceremony at the Trentham Estate alongside fellow 2019 Staffordshire Business School graduates on Tuesday, July 9th.

Ends.