



Press Release from Bournemouth University

1 December 2009

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BU graduate wins international science award for Antarctica research

An outstanding Bournemouth University (BU) masters graduate has won a leading European tourism science award for Best International Thesis.

Christy Hehir, who recently graduated from BU with a distinction for her Masters in Tourism Management and Planning, has won the 'ITB Science Award' of the German Tourism Science Association (DGT) for her research on Antarctica.

The European-wide annual award honours outstanding research by young graduates and researchers in the area of leisure and tourism.

Christy will collect her award at the official ceremony in Berlin, March 2010, where she will also present her thesis 'The Future of Antarctica: Is tourism an ally or an enemy?'

The thesis explains the trend of how people are moving away from traditional 'sun, sea, sand' holidays to travel experiences, leading to fragile environments like the Polar Regions becoming increasingly popular as tourist destinations.

Christy undertook research with those who had visited the continent to compare their environmental knowledge, attitudes and behaviours with those who had never visited the region, and conducted a follow-up study 18 months on.

The research found that participants' attitudes towards the need to protect the continent grew considerably 18 months after the trip. Environmental attitudes had improved as more participants increased their use of public transport, yet there was a general decline in the number of participants regularly involved with an action or conservation group.

The thesis also highlighted how visiting Antarctica increased participants' knowledge of the region and that visits to the continent can increase advocacy, care and support for the region.

Christy recently attended the Royal Geographical Society's 'Responsible Travel... In Antarctica' conference, acting as the UK representative for 'Students on Ice' – the company who she traveled with to Antarctica to carry out her dissertation research.

A copy of her dissertation has now been requested by the Royal Geographical Society, Scott Polar Research Institute and the British Antarctic Survey for their libraries.

Commenting on her award success Christy said: “I am so excited about Berlin and will embrace this opportunity to present my findings at the awards ceremony. I am totally honoured to have achieved this and for BU.”

Notes to Editors:

1. BU is the UK's Number One New University (first place among all institutions that became universities since 1992) according to The Guardian University Guide 2009 & 2010. (www.guardian.co.uk/education)
2. In the 2008 [Research Assessment Exercise](#) (RAE) BU is the fourth most improved university in the UK for the quality of its research (according to *Times Higher Education*).

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