



**18 January 2016**

## **TOP STUDENTS APPOINTED TO NEW APEX HOTELS APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME**

Two students from Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh, have become the first in the capital to be selected for the new Apex Hotels and QMU Scholarship Programme.

Apex Hotels and QMU have teamed up to launch the scheme, which will help bolster career opportunities for hospitality and events students each academic year. The move aims to create a new generation of hospitality leaders who can transform Scotland's hospitality industry so that it is a key player on the world stage.

Annie Fowden (22) from Grassmarket and Florencia Gago Bigñe (21) from Portobello, have each received a bursary will begin their management apprenticeship with Apex Hotels in February 2016.

The new Programme will support both BA (Hons) Events Management students during their final year of study at QMU, and will provide each with paid work experience with Apex Hotels. The students will gain hands on experience across all areas of the business, and will conduct a research project which will aim to find solutions to internal organisational problems.

An additional award in the name of the Apex Hotel's founder, Norman Springford, will provide financial reward for one or both students to undertake postgraduate study at QMU from September 2016, and help them secure employment with the leading hotel group.

Commenting on her appointment to the Shooting Stars Apprenticeship Programme, Annie Fowden, said: "I'm really excited to have become one of the first QMU students to join the scheme. I'm hoping to develop myself professionally and personally and learn new skills.

"I plan to use this experience and my undergraduate degree to apply for the new Master in Public Administration at QMU."

Florencia Gago Bigñe, who is originally from Madrid in Spain, said: "When I heard about the opportunity to apply for this new apprenticeship scheme, I didn't think twice. It will be a perfect start for my career, giving me a chance to get a deeper insight into the events and meetings industry.

"Hands on work experience is at the heart of the events industry. Taking part in this new programme during my final year at QMU will help me get a clear picture of how the hospitality industry really works from the hotel perspective.

"I really think this programme will help me choose what postgraduate subject to study. I hope to enrol on either the MA Arts, Festival and Cultural Management or MSc International Management & Leadership with Hospitality at QMU."

Professor Joe Goldblatt, Development Executive at Queen Margaret University, said: "We're delighted that Annie and Florencia will be the first QMU students to benefit from this pioneering

new initiative. We're extremely grateful to Apex Hotels for their investment in student learning and for working with QMU to develop strong managers who can contribute significantly to Scotland's important hospitality and tourism industry. The combination of talented students who have both solid work experience with a leading hotel organisation, and excellent academic knowledge, will help to create future managers who can raise industry standards."

Professor Goldblatt added: "Aside from this scholarship, the Springford family has made a generous donation which will see one or both of the scholarship students presented with the Norman Springford Scholar Award. The top student will also be offered a full-time position with Apex Hotels whilst completing their postgraduate education at QMU."

Norman Springford said: "The Hospitality industry is a key growth area within Scotland and critical to the Scottish economy. We therefore need to equip a young workforce with the right skills and attitude to continue improving and transforming Scotland's hospitality and tourism industry. By joining forces to support and reward talented young students, who are passionate about the industry, we can ensure that Scotland is viewed as a leading hospitality destination both by a home audience and internationally."

**ENDS**

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**Note to Editors:**

Apex Hotels is a family run, independent hotel group with nine award-winning properties at the heart of four major UK cities - London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. The hotels feature contemporary accommodation, excellent dining facilities and exceptional customer service at surprisingly affordable rates. For more information visit [www.apexhotels.co.uk](http://www.apexhotels.co.uk)

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