

How to Organise a Reunion

Reunions are a fantastic way of meeting up with old friends and reminiscing about your days at university. Holding a reunion can enable you to reunite alumni who have lost touch with one another, reignite old friendships or they can simply be an excuse to hold a celebration for those of you who have managed to stay in touch over the years!

We are happy to give you advice on planning your reunion, based on our many years of experience in organising alumni events. The Alumni Office can help you with your reunion in a variety of ways – from offering advice on the type of event and venues, to publicising the event and putting you in touch with old friends.

Regardless of whether or not you need any assistance with your arrangements please do keep us informed of your plans. We always look forward to receiving news and photographs of alumni celebrations.

Before the Event

Organising a reunion is relatively straightforward, however it does require time and effort, and we have always found that the best reunions are usually ones that are kept simple! It's best to form a small committee and share out the tasks as they prove useful in sharing ideas and suggestions for the event. And remember: we are always here to give you a hand where we can.

How do I go about organising a reunion?

Decide on the format, date, venue, cost and accommodation, if necessary.

Format: This may vary from an informal meeting in a bar or restaurant in the city, or a buffet/ dinner on campus, to a full weekend of events including dinner, music and visits to old haunts. This will obviously have a significant impact on the effort and costs involved.

Date: If you decide on a buffet or dinner, the date and venue should ideally be set about six months ahead to be sure of bookings. Most venues will accept a provisional booking; however, if you are a small group, you may prefer to meet in a bar or pub and then go on to a restaurant of mutual choice to be decided at the time. You may wish to hold your reunion on an anniversary (of your graduation ceremony for example) or to have it coincide with a specific local event such as a local festival or rugby match. Please be aware of University term dates, particularly if you want to meet on campus, have a campus tour, or use University accommodation.

Term Dates for 2014-2015

Autumn Term: 29 September 2014 – 12 December 2014

Spring Term: 12 January 2015 – 27 March 2015

Summer Term: 27 April 2015 – 19 June 2015

As a rule, no University buildings are open at weekends and it is not possible to book University accommodation (i.e. halls) during term time.

If you'd like to see how the University has changed since you were here, we can organise a tour of the campus for your group, led by a student ambassador.

Venue: Where do your classmates live? It may be best to hold the reunion somewhere central to the majority of guests. If Birmingham is your chosen location here are a few contact details you may find useful:

VenueBirmingham

A mix of contemporary and heritage conference and events venues are available to hire at the University, including Winterbourne House - a beautiful Edwardian arts and crafts property set in seven acres of botanic gardens. They will help you to organise all of your accommodation and catering for your event.

Tel: + 44 (0) 121 415 8400

Email: enquiries@venuebirmingham.com

Web: www.venuebirmingham.com

Guild of Students

For help booking or getting access to the Guild's venues, please contact them directly.

Tel: + 44 (0) 121 251 2300

Web: www.guildofstudents.com

Birmingham Tourist Information

A guide to Birmingham restaurants and hotels is available from the Tourist Information Centre.

Tel: + 44 (0) 121 202 5115

Web: www.visitbirmingham.com

Cost: Remember to take into account how much the event will cost, both in terms of money and time, and how you can divide the cost between the attendees. The more affordable the event, the more likely it is that people will attend.

We recommend that money be collected in advance to ensure commitment and prevent any misunderstandings. Some venues will accept individual cheques made payable directly to them instead of cheques being made payable to the reunion organiser. If you prefer a more informal event, it may be possible for everyone to pay individually on the night.

**Please note the Alumni Office is unable to fund or subsidise alumni events, but we are here to help and offer support and advice whenever you need.

Who would you like to attend?

Decide who you would like to invite to the reunion. Perhaps it was those in your hall, fellow classmates or members of a society you were in? The Alumni Office can help put you in touch with old friends you're no longer in contact with.

We can provide you with a list of relevant alumni for whom we have up-to-date contact details and send emails or letters to them on your behalf. Through your own personal networks you may be able to help us find any we have lost touch with over the years.

The Alumni Office may be able to contact current and former members of staff on your behalf. If you would like to invite any lecturers or support staff to your reunion, please do not hesitate to ask.

Consider the different factors that might affect attendance:

- Are your classmates retired?
- Do they have young families?
- Are some of your classmates now overseas?
- Are you going to invite partners?
- When are you going to hold your event? And does it conflict with other major events or alumni events?
- Would a daytime or evening event suit your fellow alumni better?

Sending out invitations

Sometimes organisers prefer initially to send a letter to gauge interest in a reunion before the invitation itself goes out. We usually send an invitation two to three months before the event, so you should factor this into your planning.

We can contact selected Birmingham graduates on your behalf by sending out email notices or forwarding on letters. Due to the Data Protection Act we are unable to give out contact details, but you can send your email notice to alumnievents@contacts.birmingham.ac.uk and we will forward it on for you. Alternatively, send the correct number of letters to the Alumni Office for each person you wish to invite, and we will then address and seal the envelopes and post them on for you.

Consider the following when sending out invitations:

- A list of invitees – it encourages people to attend.
- Lists of 'lost' alumni – some alumni contacted may have up to date contact details.
- Produce several pieces of correspondence to keep your guests informed (initial letter/invitation, confirmation letter, final details letter etc.).
- An RSVP date with your invitation. This will ensure everyone responds in sufficient time to plan an event.

Wait for responses

All replies should be sent back to you, the organiser. This means that you will be able to monitor the progress of who is coming to your event. All we ask in return for forwarding your emails/letters is that you inform the Alumni Office of any changes to people's contact details so that we can keep our database up-to-date. We'd also like to know the names of all those who attend for our records.

Promotion

We will promote your reunion on our website www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni and, space permitting, in our magazine, Old Joe (sent out September and March). You can also publish them on the University of Birmingham Alumni Facebook (www.facebook.com/birminghamalumni) and LinkedIn (search University of Birmingham Alumni and Friends) pages.

Souvenirs and Display Materials

Gifts and souvenirs can be purchased directly from www.bhamonlineshop.co.uk. If you want printed hoodies, t-shirts, etc., please email Adrian Adams at a.adams@guild.birmingham.ac.uk. On request, the Alumni Office will provide University publications for use as display materials at reunions, as well as Alumni Update forms.

Photographs

A camera is a must for any reunion! If your reunion is held on campus and you would like a photographer to record the event, we can recommend one for you.

During the Event – Turn Up and Enjoy Yourself!

Do you want to capture 'what are you doing now' details? You could consider a visitor book or fill in 'your details' cards that can be shared with the group after the event. It may be useful to find out how many people are interested in making it a regular event.

Class Giving

The University's class giving programme allows you to give back to the place that brought you all together. It is also a great chance for your group to transform the lives of our students. The money that is raised in this way will be distributed to the key projects supported by our '*Circles of Influence*' campaign. Read more about our current campaign or the specific projects that we have recently supported at www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni/giving/circlesofinfluence.

After the Event

It may be useful to send out a feedback form to see how your attendees thought the event went – what did they find most memorable? What would they like to do again?

You might like to send out a thank you letter or email which could include some photographs of the event and a link to the alumni website. We can publish a summary of the reunion with photographs on the website and in Old Joe for alumni to view.

Please advise the Alumni Office of any new contact details so that we can keep our records up to date when you plan your next reunion.

Contact Details for the Alumni Office:

Alumni Events Team

Tel: + 44 (0) 121 414 8904

Email: alumnievents@contacts.bham.ac.uk