

Your Guide to Organising an Alumni Reunion

Reunions are a great way to catch up with old friends, re-connect with ones you've lost contact with and reminisce about your University days. We have put together this guide to help with planning a reunion. You may want to form an organising committee; this helps to share the workload and gives attendees someone they know to contact. Don't be put off by the thought of the work involved in planning a reunion. The alumni office is also available for advice and guidance, or to assist in any way required.

If possible it is best to allow a minimum of six months to plan your reunion, as our experience shows this is generally how long the organisation will take from start to finish. The list below is designed to help you make the choices and decisions that will allow the smooth planning, organising and running of your reunion.

Type of reunion

- Is it a "milestone" reunion (e.g. class of "88" 30 year reunion), or a general reunion by subject (e.g. all Pharmacy graduates), or a reunion by geography (e.g. all graduates from country "Y" or city "Z") or all former members of the society you were part of or everyone from your student accommodation block?
- Is it to be in the UK or another international country?
- Do you want a full weekend or just a lunch/dinner?
- Is it to be linked with another type of event (e.g. graduation ceremony, recruitment fair, open day, country visit, Huddersfield Food and Drink festival)?

The range and scale of the event is entirely up to you.

Contacting attendees

- There are a number of social networking sites that can be used (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, etc)
- Contact by the University can only be made by posts on the social networking sites. It is up to you to decide whether you wish to send any paper invitations. We suggest only VIPs, guest speakers, etc be sent paper invitations and that all other communications are done electronically.
- We can set up an event on Facebook for attendees to "opt into" the event, which will need to be managed by you and your team or you could set up the event on Eventbrite.
- The event page should contain not only details of the event, but tentative costs and how to express a firm interest. Responses will give you an idea of numbers and help you with the rest of your planning.
- You need to establish how to take monies if there is a cost involved. This could be a deposit with the remainder to follow by a specific date or paying the full amount up front.

Event activities

These vary according to the type of reunion being organised but they should be "inclusive" (i.e. not discriminate, even unintentionally). Activities could involve:

- An early bird activity – e.g. a BBQ or drinks the night before the main event (e.g. attend a graduation ceremony).
- Do you want a formal dinner or would you prefer it to be casual, or a mix of the both?
- A tour of some of the attractions of the location; if you're coming to Huddersfield you can download some walks here; www.discoverhuddersfield.com/trails/
- A campus tour - take in the changes since attendees were last here. (Campus tours can only take place on weekdays or on open days)
- A concert or performance of some kind; if you're coming to Huddersfield see what's on at the Lawrence Batley Theatre; www.thelbt.org/
- Attendance at a football game, cricket game or a golf activity. If you're in Huddersfield you can also bring out your inner student playing beer pong at [Roxy's](#).

Venue

This will depend greatly on some of the above decisions. Things to take into account:

- Make sure that the venue will accommodate the numbers you anticipate attending. Check that you can change the room choices close to the event date if numbers alter.
- Check to see if the whole group will fit into the one room.
- Does it meet the needs of the type of reunion you have chosen e.g. is it suitably formal or alternatively, not too formal for a casual lunch/dinner?
- Does it allow for a variety of activities e.g. BBQ; brunch; dinner?
- Is there plenty of parking available at the venue or alternately within an easy walk?
- Check to see if the venue has disabled access and facilities.
- If you plan an outdoor activity, make sure wet weather facilities are also available.
- Depending on your location – check for either heating and/or air-conditioning.
- Check that the venue can provide microphones, lecterns, sound system for playing of CDs, equipment for PowerPoint presentations, overhead projectors, etc.
- Check the (alcohol) licensing arrangements.
- When getting quotes, make sure they include VAT and that there are no “hidden extras”.
- Does the venue have accommodation attached or within easy access – factor in “drinking and not driving”?
- Transport – remember not everyone has or can drive a car:
 - ❖ Check that the venue is accessible by public transport.
 - ❖ Make sure it doesn't require too long a taxi ride from train/bus stations.
 - ❖ Think about providing transport (a bus) between accommodation and venue, if not within easy access.
 - ❖ Remember to provide directions from train/bus stations to the venue.

Accommodation

- It is often best to let people choose their own accommodation. You can suggest places close to the venue.
- Alternatively, you can make block bookings at accommodation providers near the venue and this can often get a better rate. With this option - it is best to let people make their bookings with and pay directly to the providers quoting a specific code number to obtain the negotiated rate.
- Again, make sure that all of the accommodation choices have disabled facilities.
- See below 'Resources' section with a list of hotels in Huddersfield.

Catering

- Remember that you could be catering for a very diverse group of individuals.
- Factor in the age range and ethnicity of your group.
- Decide which menu option best suits your event:

Buffet

- Offers a wide variety of choice.
- Allows opportunity for attendees to mingle and chat.
- People can help themselves to what they want.

Formal Dinner / Restaurant

- More formal and has the extra benefit of table service.
- Has the disadvantage of constraining people to their table.
- Can be fixed menu or a la carte with a full menu choice.
- Always make sure there is a vegetarian option.
- On your registration form, give people space to identify any special dietary requirements/allergies, etc.

Find out the date by which you need to advise the venue of numbers. Remember to check if this can be altered as **all** venues will charge according to the number advised regardless of how many turn up. In terms of alcohol:

- Do you want wine/soft drink/water/orange juice on the tables – make sure this is included in reunion registration fees.
- Would you prefer a cash bar (attendees buy own drinks); or
- A dry till (a set amount of money is allocated to cover the cost of drinks) – what happens if the money runs out?

Speakers/other items to consider

- Decide early if you would like to have a special guest speaker.
- Decide on an MC.
- The running order of the event can often help to decide the meal choice.
- Remember to factor in any presentations e.g. for “milestone” reunions.
- Music – decide on either background sound or a live band/DJ and dancing – remember to factor in the cost of any live music into the registration fees.
- Organise someone to prepare a souvenir programme to put on the tables. Before the event you could ask everyone to send a photo and brief description of what they have done since leaving Huddersfield. You could create a short year book or you could provide a guest book at the reunion for alumni to fill in with details of what they are doing now.
- Ask attendees to bring photos from their time at University; you could always try and reenact the photos in the same locations around campus.

Photographs

You may like to book a photographer to attend your reunion to take everything from table shots, candid photos as well as large and small groups.

- See below 'Resources' section with a list of photographers.
- Alternatively, you may like to appoint someone from the group to act as official photographer.
- With either option you will need to liaise with your photographer of choice as to how and which method they will use to distribute copies of photos to those requiring them.

Collection and payment of monies

- When setting the costs of activities, make sure to factor in the VAT (or equivalent) and all the other extra costs that will be added by the venue, caterers, bus providers, music providers, etc. As well as an amount to cover expenditure such as postage and phone calls of the organising group.
- Make sure that when booking the venue, etc that you discuss with all providers their preferred method of payment and discuss when deposits are due (this will determine your payment date on the registration form) as well as when they want final payment. Also ask if they will provide invoices and receipts.
- Keep a spreadsheet or similar to record all expenditure and payments for activities that each attendee wishes to take part in. This is also a good place to record apologies.

After the reunion

- We would love to hear how everything went and see any photos. It would be great to include these on our website/social media channels to encourage others to hold reunions.

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Useful resources (if your reunion is in Huddersfield)

Hotels

Premier Inn Central; <http://hud.ac/dk2>

Central Lodge Huddersfield <http://hud.ac/dk4>

Travelodge <http://hud.ac/dk3>

(There is a Table Table restaurant adjacent to the Premier Inn Central where you could have an evening meal on your first night if you arrive late); <http://hud.ac/dk8>

A little further away from the University are the following hotels:

Cedar Court Ainley Top <http://hud.ac/dk7>

Briar Court <http://hud.ac/dk6>

Premier Inn North <http://hud.ac/dk5>

Restaurants

Epicure Bar and Kitchen (flavoursome locally sourced foods – 10% discount for alumni)

<http://epicurebarandkitchen.co.uk/>

Med-one (Lebanese) www.med-one.co.uk/

Lost Property (Georgian) www.lostpropertyrestaurant.co.uk/

Botafogo (Brazilian Grill) www.botafogo.co.uk/

Thai Sakon (Thai) <http://thaisakon.co.uk/>

Chilli Lounge (Indian) www.chilliloungehuddersfield.co.uk/menus.html

Gringo's (Mexican/smokehouse) <http://gringos-restaurant.co.uk/>

The Keys (Simple eats in a vaulted church crypt) <http://thekeyshuddersfield.uk/>

You could always try our Student Partner Bar, the Zetland; www.facebook.com/zetlandhudds/

Photographers

Mat Wright - <http://www.matwright.com/>

Alex Beldea – www.alexbeldea.com

Chris Foster – www.chrisfosterphotography.com

Gavin Joynt – gavinjoynt.co.uk

Phil Butcher - www.philbutcher.co.uk/

Remember, the alumni office is available to assist at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact us on:

Telephone: +44 (0)1484 472241

Email: alumni@hud.ac.uk

Good luck and happy reunion planning!