

Alumni Event Pack

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton



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Planning

Whether you are interested in organising a full-scale reunion or a catch up with a few friends from your student days, we are here to help. This guide will give you an idea of what you need to think about to plan a successful event. Don't let the level of commitment required put you off; our events team will help you with as many of the details as possible. It might also be a good idea to get in touch with friends from your group and get them involved with the organising and sharing of ideas.

❖ Think about who you want to reunite

- Year groups or decades
- Departments or subjects
- Halls of residence or sports clubs/societies

❖ Where would you like your event to be?

- If you would like to hold your event in Southampton around 50% of our UK based alumni live within 50 miles of the University. This is important to bear in mind, since your numbers may be affected by the distance people have to travel.
- Holding an event at or around the Highfield Campus may help to inspire a sense of nostalgia with your guests.
- You may wish to choose a central location, such as London, depending on the locality of your guests.

The events team will be able to offer you support and advice wherever you decide to hold your event, just contact us to discuss your plans.

❖ Why do you want to hold this event?

- It is good to have clear objectives of what you want your guests to take away from the event.
- Is it an anniversary of your graduation, a celebration of a great sporting achievement, or reuniting everyone from your hall of residence?
- Thinking about the structure of the event will help create appropriate themes and will guide your choices of activity and venue.

❖ When would you like your event to happen?

- Give yourself a realistic amount of time as specific aspects of your event will need to be arranged at specific times and with a reasonable period of notice.

“We had an excellent burst of nostalgia, 5 alumni and 3 patient wives!”

(Campus Visit - David Furneaux, Engineering 1966)

- When choosing a date, you may wish to be guided by an anniversary you're celebrating, for example if you graduated in July you may want to hold the event then.
- If you intend to use University facilities take into consideration term dates and busier periods on campus, for example, Open Days, Graduations and examination weeks.
- Take into account other dates that may significantly affect the likelihood of attendance, for example public holidays, major sporting events and school term dates.

❖ What type of event do you want?

- Think about what group you are inviting and the likely numbers involved to help get a sense about how big or small the gathering will be. If you're not sure the events team can help with the amount of graduates per subject, per year.
- You could check the University's events calendar to see if there are any lectures or events your group may be interested in. If there are you could then organise an informal meeting in a bar before the event starts.
- If you were thinking of coming back to the University you may want to include a campus tour into your event, for more information about this just contact us.
- You may just want to arrange a lunch or dinner, or alternatively you could just agree a date and time for an informal meeting in a bar and see who turns up.

There are plenty of options, but your choice is worth considering carefully as impressive or unusual venues could encourage more people to attend. You can always talk over your ideas with the events team, we are happy to advise you where we can.

Potential Costs:

Venue

Catering

Decorations

Travel

Accommodation

Printing

Entertainment

Equipment hire

Photography

Speaker

*Complimentary
arrival drink*

*Additional
hospitality costs*

Next Steps

❖ Budgeting and costs

- Whatever the size of your event, you should think about a budget and decide whether to sell tickets to cover your costs. In our experience, most people are happy to cover the costs of a reunion by paying for a ticket.
- Remember to consider how much people are willing to pay, if it's more affordable more people may attend.
- Create a budget based upon all of your expected costs, the list opposite is not exhaustive but is a good starting point. You may wish to also factor in a contingency budget to cover any unforeseen costs.
- Obtain quotes from various companies and decide how much you can spend on the different aspects of the event.
- Based on the numbers you are expecting work out what you will need to charge for a ticket to break even. Depending on when your venue expects the deposit (if applicable), you will need to provide a date after which your guests' ticket price cannot be refunded.

If you make a profit on your event, you might like to retain this money and run the event again in the future. Alternatively, as alumni of the University you may wish to make a gift to one of the University's priority funding areas. More information can be found at:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/supportus/>.

❖ Venues

- A major expense may be your venue; you could hire a function room in a hotel or a hall. Large hotels will have a hospitality team that will take care of several aspects of your event.
- If you plan to hold your reunion in Southampton, you could use the University's facilities by contacting the University Conference & Hospitality Office (page 14).

❖ Important questions to ask

- What is included in the cost and is there a minimum fee?
- Are you obligated to use their facilities, e.g. catering and entertainment?
- In the event of cancellation, what are the arrangements? Will they charge a percentage of the total cost of hire?
- How much is the deposit and do they take it off your final bill?
- How much is the total and when is it due?
- How early will you be able to get into the venue on the day of the event and will they charge extra for this?
- When do they require your final numbers, and what is the latest date you can alter these numbers?
- When does the venue need your menu choices?

If you are holding a larger event and are presented with a booking contract, make sure you check it carefully and clarify any ambiguities before you sign. Also find out if the venue requires you to obtain event insurance, or whether they will provide this as part of your contract.

❖ Less expensive options

- A cheap and cheerful option could be holding a barbeque or drinks party in someone's garden. You could even ask the guests to bring along some food for the party.
- You could organise an informal get together at your favourite pub or bar. You could ask to reserve an area or hire a function room; whatever you decide to do we would recommend that you let them know you're coming.
- You might like to return to The Stag's Head or The Bridge Bar.
- If you work for a large firm that has meeting or function rooms you may consider asking to use them. If you are aiming for a group of friends in the same profession as yourself, your firm might be keen to assist with such a networking opportunity.
- Depending on the size of your group you could book a table at a restaurant and let guests pay for their own bills, or if you are a big party some restaurants will have a set menu option.

❖ Expression of interest

- You may like to send an expression of interest early on in your planning process. This will make people aware that you are planning an event, when it will roughly take place and where it may be. You can then gauge how many people are interested and what numbers you can expect. This will then help when looking for venues.
- You could also include a list of lost alumni, as other alumni may be in touch with them or have their contact details. The events team can send this out with the expression of interest on your behalf. To do this we will need the event details and contact information so potential guests can contact you directly.

❖ Invitations

- Due to the Data Protection Act we are unable to provide you with contact details. However, we can send out mailings on your behalf. Once you know who you would like to invite you should contact us to put together your mailing list. You may need to do this at the start of your event planning.
- If you are aiming for a reunion of your year and subject group, the events team can help with mailings. If you are looking for former sports teams or special interest groups, the events team is less likely to have this information, but we can speak to the Students' Union on your behalf and find out whether or not they keep records of former members.



❖ Information to include on invitations

- Your contact details (to reply directly to you)
- A brief description of your event
- Who your reunion is for
- When and where it is taking place (name of and directions to venue, date, time of day)
- If tickets are required, if there is a charge for the event and what the preferred method of payment is
- Dress code (where appropriate)
- How they should respond or apply for tickets and if there is a closing date for responses
- Other details, such as if Campus tours or accommodation are available
- Request that dietary requirements and seating preferences are returned with the RSVP (if applicable)

You may also like to ask for guests' contact details and ask them to pass on the event details to other alumni they may be in touch with.

❖ Promotion we can help with

- Our forthcoming events page
- Mailing out invites
- Our alumni social media channels
- Hartley News and e-newsletters (if we have capacity)

❖ Practicalities

- An important consideration is whether or not you will invite partners and children. It may impact your numbers if your guests have childcare responsibilities. You will have to check that the venue allows children if they are serving alcohol and you may like to arrange activities which will keep them entertained.
- If your event is mainly outside you will have to consider what provisions you will put in place if it rains. This may be ensuring that meeting points are covered, providing umbrellas or moving your entire event inside.
- Bear in mind the size of your venue compared to the number of guests. A large venue for a small number of guests may not give the event a personal and inviting ambiance.

If you intend to make use of the facilities on campus, remind your guests to obtain their free Alumni ID Card, as this will ensure they have access to these facilities.

❖ International events

- If you are planning on holding your event overseas, contact us to ask about putting together a guest list of our known international alumni.
- You may also like to check our website for information about our international alumni branches. You may find that the branch is organising events in your area.

❖ Catering

- Will your chosen venue allow external caterers? Or will they offer you a discount on the venue if you use their catering services? Ask if there are any packages they will offer.
- Make sure you leave yourself enough time to select your menu and that you have a vegetarian option. Find out from your caterers or venue when they will require your dietary requirements and pre-orders.
- For smaller events, you might like to order a selection of platters or ask for nibbles to be provided at your drinks reception. For a picnic or barbeque, you could ask everyone to bring a few things to share.

❖ Decorations

- Will your venue allow you to provide your own decorations or will they decorate the room for you? For a larger room, depending on cost, you might like to ask about having centrepieces on dinner tables.
- It might be a nice idea to decorate the room along the lines of your reason for the reunion, so you may wish to display old photos of your halls of residence or sports club.
- The Alumni Relations office may have some photographic memorabilia that you could display and it may also be a good idea to ask your friends and guests to bring some of their own.
- You might want to have a visitor book for guests to fill in with their details and ask them to indicate if they would be interested in making it a regular event.

Whatever the size of your event, think about how you can make the venue memorable and your guests feel welcome.

❖ Photography and entertainment

- A camera is essential for any event; it is a nice way to document the day and can be used to promote your event in future years.
- You may have budgeted for a professional photographer to attend the event; however this can be expensive. Ask around your friends to see if they know anyone who would cover the event for a small fee, or several amateur photographers who would work for free in exchange for the opportunity to gain experience.
- Alternatively, for events on campus we can contact the Photographic Society on your behalf, as they may agree to cover the event for a small price.
- If you would like entertainment at your event, discuss this with your venue as you may need additional equipment and space.

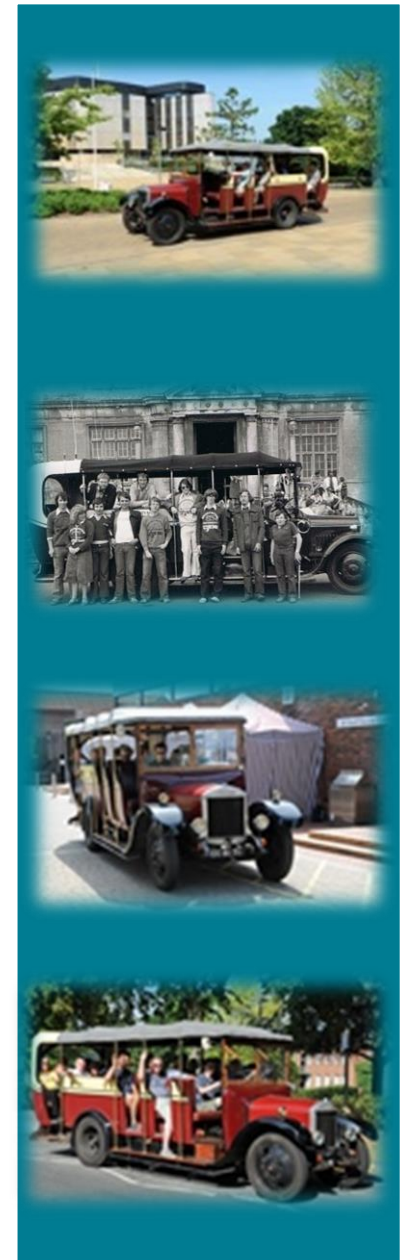
❖ Transport and accommodation

- I would be a good idea to provide guests with a number of different travel options and give directions from major transport links and motorways.
- If your event is on campus you can find comprehensive directions on the University of Southampton website.
- The Unilink bus service provides regular connections from the waterfront, Southampton Airport Parkway and Southampton Central Train Stations.
- If your event is out of term time you might like to stay in your old halls of residence, or alternatively contact us for a local accommodation list.

❖ Local transportation

- South West Trains – 0845 6000 650
- Red Funnel Ferries – 0844 844 9988
- Wight Link Ferries – 0871 376 1000 (calls 7p per minute plus network charges)
- Southampton Taxis – 0740 5386 994
- West Quay Cars – 023 8022 9292
- Shirley Cabs – 023 8039 2392
- Unilink Bus – 023 8059 5974
- Bluestar Bus – 023 8023 1950
- First Bus – 0870 010 6022

You may like the Toastrack bus to make an appearance at your event, for more information just contact us.



❖ Points of interest – include an attraction into your event or make a weekend of it

- Mayflower Theatre - www.mayflower.org.uk
- Southampton City Art Gallery - www.southampton.gov.uk/s-leisure/artsheritage/sotonartgallery
- Turner Sims Concert Hall - www.turnersims.co.uk
- Nuffield Theatre - www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk/home/
- West Quay - www.west-quay.co.uk
- John Hansard Gallery - www.hansardgallery.org.uk
- The New Forest - www.thenewforest.co.uk/
- St Mary Stadium - www.saintsfc.co.uk/
- Isle of Weight Trip (Red Funnel Ferries) - www.redfunnel.co.uk
- SeaCity Museum (Titanic Exhibition) - www.seacitymuseum.co.uk
- Solent Sky Museum - www.spitfireonline.co.uk

❖ Local venues

- City Cruise Terminal - www.destinationsouthampton.com/venue_city_cruise_terminal.htm
- Southampton Football Club - www.saintsfc.co.uk/page/Home
- DeVere Grand Harbour Hotel - www.devere.co.uk/our-locations/grand-harbour/business/layouts-and-dimensions.html
- Leith's at Beaulieu - www.leithsatbeaulieu.co.uk/conferences_meetings.aspx
- Southampton Hilton - www.hilton.co.uk/southampton
- Southampton Guildhall - www.southampton.gov.uk/news-events/events/guildhall-square.aspx
- Blue Funnel Cruises - www.bluefunnel.co.uk/
- Waverley Excursions - www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk/venuehire.htm
- Southampton Cineworld - www.cineworld.co.uk/conferencing

In addition to our on-campus facilities, the city of Southampton has a wide variety of venues to choose from. The venues listed above are a small selection to help you get started with venue planning; however, if you would like a more comprehensive list please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Timeline

Depending on the size of your event, it is important to set yourself a realistic timescale. A larger event can take anything up to 12 months to organise, and larger venues may require you to book quite far in advance to ensure they can accommodate you. Smaller events may take less time but you will still need to gauge the interest of your prospective guests, send invitations and wait for responses.

❖ 9-12 months to go

- Once you have roughly decided when you would like your event to take place and what you would like to do, get in touch with the events team. We can then advise you on your choice of event, let you know if there are any similar events on campus that you may like to invite your chosen group to and help with mailings to your prospective guests.
- You may wish to send an expression of interest to evaluate how large a venue you may need, just get in touch with us to do this.

❖ 6-9 months to go

- Await the responses from your guests and use these numbers as a rough when looking for venues. Consider several venues and book a provisional date.
- Approach your speaker, if applicable. The availability of your venue and/or speaker may decide the date of your event.
- If you would like to see the changes since you left why not include a campus tour as part of your day. We can organise a student ambassador to show you around campus, to arrange this just contact us.
- Remember to check the 'Key Dates' section of the website to ensure there are no Open Days or large events on campus that may affect your day.

❖ 3-6 months to go

- Send your invitations and await your responses. You should monitor your responses to get an idea of potential attendance.
- If you are charging a sum to cover event costs, provide a realistic RSVP date guided by any deposits you are required to pay.
- If catering is not being provided by the venue look into this being arranged (if applicable).
- Depending on your event you may wish to send your guests information about local accommodation. If so, the events team can provide you with this. If your event is on campus (and outside of term time) you may like to ask about the possibility of halls accommodation (see page 14).

❖ 1-3 months to go

- Follow up non-responses.
- Confirm with the venue when they need final numbers and menu options by.
- Start to collate the information on dietary requirements and any other requests.
- Book entertainment - if you are having entertainment at your event, discuss your requirements with the venue. You may need additional equipment, for example microphones and speakers. If the venue cannot meet these requirements and your performers do not have their own, you will need to hire this equipment from an external company.

❖ 1 month to go

- Finalise your menu with your caterers and give them a list of dietary requirements and a table plan, if applicable.
- Discuss any final details with your venue. If you would like to decorate the room discuss with them what scope they will give you to do this. If you are having anything delivered, for example technical equipment or catering agree the earliest time they will be able to gain access and let them know.
- Work on any final touches to make guests feel welcome. You may wish to make name badges, photo displays or prepare small keepsakes for the dinner tables.
- Collate some local taxi numbers to give to guests at the end of the event.

❖ 2 weeks to go

- Send joining instructions to your guests including details of the event, directions and any additional information. If you are not staying in one place, you could provide an itinerary or clearly state the meeting points. Also provide directions for local transport links and outline the parking facilities.
- Provide your contact number or several contact numbers if you have worked with friends to organise the event.

❖ After the event

- Get in touch with the events team, we'd love to see some pictures and find out how it went. We can put your event on our past event page and we may be able to put a small feature in the e-newsletter or Hartley News showcasing your event. This is a great way to encourage others to arrange and attend future alumni events.
- Please send us a list of the attendees and their contact details, this will help keep our records up-to-date and will make it easier for us if you wish to run another event.

Checklist

- Contact Alumni Relations Events Team for advice
- Decide on the group you are reuniting and the type of event you want to hold
- Contact Alumni Relations Events Team to send expressions of interests and monitor replies
- Research possible venues
- Discuss proposed dates
- Check proposed dates against the University events calendar (if applicable)
- Agree on a date
- Agree on a venue and book
- Obtain transport quotes (if applicable)
- Retrieve catering quotes
- Decide if you want entertainment and obtain quotes
- Retrieve quotes from venues or external suppliers for audio/visual equipment (if applicable)
- Compile budget
- Set ticket prices (if applicable)
- Pay venue deposit
- Contact Alumni Relations Events Team with event details
- Create invitations and print (if applicable)
- Send invitations and monitor responses
- Alumni Relations will promote the event via Twitter, Facebook and the forthcoming events webpage
- Book caterer and menu
- Pay deposits to caterer
- Book transport and accommodation (if applicable)
- Follow up non-responses
- Liaise with the venue regarding guest numbers and ask about access in to the function room on the day of the event
- Update caterers/venue with numbers and dietary requirements
- Book photographer and entertainment (if applicable)
- Book audio/visual equipment (if applicable)
- Create a table plan and give it to the venue (if applicable)
- Create and send joining instructions
- At the venue set up - decorations, signposting for the event, table plan, place cards and badges
- Contact Alumni Relations Events Team about how the event went

Useful contacts and websites

❖ Alumni Relations Office

- Gemma Marengi - Events Manager
- Ali McManus - Events Assistant
- www.soton.ac.uk/alumni, AREvents@Southampton.ac.uk, 023 8059 9466
- Office of Development and Alumni Relations, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, Hampshire, SO17 1BJ, UK

❖ Southampton University Students Union (SUSU)

- www.susu.org, susu@Southampton.ac.uk, 023 8059 5201
- Students Union Building, Highfield, Southampton, Hampshire, SO17 1BJ, UK

❖ University of Southampton Conference & Hospitality Office

- www.conferences.soton.ac.uk, conferences@Southampton.ac.uk, 023 8059 2832
- University of Southampton, Bassett House, Glen Eyre Road, Southampton, Hampshire, SO16 3TU, UK

❖ University of Southampton Residences

- www.southampton.ac.uk/accommodation/, 023 8059 5959
- Residences Service, Student Services Centre, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton Hampshire, SO17 1BJ, UK

❖ Destination Southampton

- Tourist information website which includes details about venues, accommodation, transport, local attractions and amenities.
- www.destinationsouthampton.co.uk, info@destinationsouthampton.com, 0845 226 9944