

# Planning an Alumni Reunion

## University of the Arts London (UAL)

Reunions are a fantastic way to meet up with old friends and reminisce about your days at college. By hosting a reunion you can reunite old classmates who have lost touch with one another, reignite old friendships or simply use it as an excuse to hold a celebration for those of you that have managed to stay in touch over the years.

There are many ways the Alumni Relations Team can help you plan a reunion event, including publicity, suggested venues and getting you back in touch with former classmates. This document is designed to outline all of this, as well as provide you with other tips and advice to ensure your reunion runs smoothly.

**Produced by:**  
Alumni Relations  
University of the Arts London  
272 High Holborn  
London, WC1V 7EY  
T: +44 (0)20 7514 8505  
E: alumni@arts.ac.uk

## **Event planning**

Organising a reunion is relatively straightforward, however it does require time and effort, and we have always found that the best reunions are often those that are kept simple! Here are some things to consider when in the early stage of your planning

- Are you still in touch with a former classmate/ friend who can work with you on this event and share the responsibilities?
- Who do you want to invite? Will you include their partners and families?
- Decide on what type of event you would like. Would you like to come back to your college, go for dinner, host a drinks reception? (This would depend on who you are inviting)
- Do you have a specific date in mind? Take time to plan your event carefully, we suggest allowing yourself at least 12 weeks
- Consider any costs that might be involved with what you have in mind
- Contact the Alumni Relations Team to let us know of your ideas. We may be able to make some early suggestions dependant on what else is happening at UAL and within the alumni community

## **Type of Event**

Once you know who you want to invite, you can think about what type of event would best suit the group. Here are some examples of different event formats that we feel have been successful in the past

**Come back to college** – The Alumni Relations Team would be happy to discuss the possibility of you and your guests revisiting the college and seeing what has changed since you graduated. We may also be able to organise a special room for you to have a small drinks reception

**Meet in a pub** – a very easy way to gather a group of busy people

**Drinks Reception** – formal drinks reception, think about costs of venue, drinks and food

**Dinner** – you could organise a dinner for your guests. Think about a good restaurant in a central location. It might be worth considering asking the restaurant if they can do a set menu for a large group as this simplifies paying for the meal

**Gallery/exhibition** – if there is a specific exhibition taking place that you think would be relevant to your group you could meet at a gallery or museum

**Degree shows** – are a great opportunity to come back to college and view the fantastic work of graduating students. You could organise meeting as a group to tour the building and view the work, before moving on to drinks or dinner

**Meet at a University event** – find out from the Alumni Relations Team if there are any particular events taking place that you could gather at

## Venue

So, you now know who you want to invite and what type of event you want to host. Here are some tips when thinking about the venue.

- Speak to the Alumni Relations Team who may have some suggestions about locations at one of UAL's college's or within central London that they have worked with before
- Is there a charge for hiring the venue? If so, who will cover this?
- Perhaps you have a friend who owns a gallery space or studio they are happy for you to use
- Ensure the venue has good transport links and is easy to find
- Visit the venue before hand to make sure it has the atmosphere you are after and the beverages are reasonably priced. There will also be the opportunity to talk to staff about possible music and moving of furniture

## Invitations

The date is set, the location is booked, now its time to invite people, and this is where the Alumni Relations Team can really help.

- Ideally, invitations should be sent 6-8 weeks before the event. It is also a good idea to send a reminder to those that have not responded, perhaps 1- 2 weeks before the event day
- How do you want to invite people? This depends of what type of contact details you have in your address book. Email is the most cost effective and reliable method of invitation, but you can also write a letter invitation to those you do not have an email address for
- Did you know we have a database of over 200,000 former UAL students? Let us know you are sending out invites and we can search our data and see if we have any up-to-date contact details for people you have lost touch with! We would be happy to then send them an invite to your event.
- We would also be happy to work with you on text for your invite and even send them out on your behalf

- Thousands of former students and staff follow UAL's Alumni Association on various social media channels, receive the monthly e-bulletin and view the website. We are happy to work with you on promoting your event to this wider audience
- Keep clear lists of all those you have invited, who have accepted, declined and not responded. This will make it easy for you to keep an eye on numbers to expect and people to send a reminder to. It would be great if you could update the Alumni Relations Team with all this information for our records
- Send an email the day before the event to confirm all the details with those who have said they are coming. This means everyone knows where to be and when, also you can make sure they are still able to attend

### **On the day**

**Remember, during the event, the priority is to enjoy yourself!** But here are some things that can add to your experience:

- Try and take lots of **photos** of the event and guests. You could perhaps designate one person to take photos, or for a more formal event, you may wish to hire a professional photographer to truly capture the experience. Alternatively, speak to the Alumni Relations Team, depending on availability, a member of the team may be happy to attend and take the photographs for you
- Try and encourage all guests to bring along any **memorabilia** they have from their days at college (photographs, newspaper clippings, work), this is a great way of igniting old memories and sharing stories
- Consider having a **visitor's book** to pass around the group. This could be used to share contact details and anecdotes

### **Post event**

Well done, the hard work is over, but there are still a few small tasks that need to be complete.

- Contact everyone who attended and thank them. You may also find it useful to gain some feedback from them, and see if it is something they would like to do again. Think of the best way to share photos of the day with guests. You could perhaps use a photo sharing site such as Flickr or Facebook
- Get in touch with the Alumni Relations Team to let us know how it went. We would be grateful if you could let us know who attended, any guest comments and also share your photos with us. This will help us produce, with your help, an event report and photo gallery for the University of the Arts London Alumni Association website for all to see

- Was anyone, apart from you, integral in making this event a success. If so, make sure you thank them (ie, staff member giving a tour, a gallery giving you a space)

If at any point you require any further assistance in the planning of your alumni reunion, please feel free to contact the Alumni Relations Team ([alumni@arts.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@arts.ac.uk) / +44(0)20 7514 8505)

## **Event Check List**

### **10-8 weeks before event**

- Decide who you want to invite and what type of event you would like
- Set date, time and venue
- Book venue
- Book catering if applicable
- Notify the Alumni Relations team of the event

### **8-6 weeks before event**

- Prepare your invitation
- Put together your guest list and method of recording responses
- Contact the Alumni Relations Team about any classmates you have lost touch with
- Send out the invitations
- Work with the Alumni Relations Team on further promotion of the event (website, e-bulletin, social media)

### **4-2 weeks before event**

- Confirm details with the venue/catering
- Organise photographer
- Set up a meeting with anyone playing a key role in organising the event to run through the details

### **1 week before event**

- Send a reminder invitation to those that have not responded
- Confirm expected numbers with venue/catering
- Confirm event schedule and structure with key individuals
- Update the Alumni Relations Team on any event details and who has accepted the invitation

### **1 day before event**

- Send a reminder to all those expected to attend, confirming the details, location and time of the event

### **Post event**

- Thank guests for coming
- Thank key individuals
- Update the Alumni Relations Team on the event and attendees
- Share photographs