The International Alumni Reunion Guide
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Welcome to the 
Reunion Guide

Welcome to the Surrey International Alumni Reunion Guide. Over the years the Advancement office has helped many graduates across the world organise a Surrey reunion in their country. Sometimes it is to celebrate a special anniversary with classmates, but often it is just a wonderful way to connect with other Surrey graduates in a particular city or country, reminisce and network with like-minded peers.

We hope this guide inspires many more international Surrey graduates to create their own reunion or networking events. It provides step-by-step advice on how to plan your event, whether large or small, and explains how the alumni events team can provide support and guidance.

We look forward to working with you to plan your next reunion.

How to use the guide

There are no strict rules for how long it takes to plan a reunion. If you are hosting an informal gathering in a bar or hotel then a couple of months should be enough notice, but if you are keen to organise something bigger we would recommend at least six months. The more notice you give your guests the better, especially if they’re travelling to attend. Remember that all reunions are different, and depending on how much time you have, you might want to add some of the special touches suggested or skip parts of this guide – it’s up to you!

Whether a small or large gathering, this guide will help you keep on track. We’re using the following symbols to highlight important and useful information:

- Draws your attention to the ways the Advancement office can support you
- Signposts that more information is available on our website surrey.ac.uk/reunions
- Reminds you of essential actions and useful tips
How we can help

- Guide you through the reunion process
- Advise on contactable alumni
- Provide event publicity before and after the reunion
- Send out ‘save the date’ and invitations to contactable alumni
- Provide a video message with an update on the University from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International Relations)
- Support in producing Surrey-branded merchandise or in making your own reunion merchandise (depending on availability and sufficient notice)
Getting started...

in 7 simple steps!

A reunion doesn’t have to be a formal event. For those causal get-togethers, all you need to do is book a centrally located venue – such as a bar, café or restaurant – and invite your classmates. But, if you are celebrating a special anniversary – for example 10, 20 or even 40 years post-graduation – or you wish to organise a bigger networking event, you might want to consider a more formal occasion.

Parts of this guide, for example ‘Special touches’, is mainly relevant to these formal reunions. But, the guide is written to help you prepare any size and style of event.

Remember, no matter what kind of reunion you choose to organise, the Advancement office is very happy to support.

1. Contact the Advancement office

Reunions are a great way to celebrate your time at the University of Surrey and we are here to support you. We have a dedicated Alumni Events Officer who is always happy to go through your ideas and help ensure your day is a success.

2. Decide who to invite

A great first step is to consider who the reunion is for: in-country reunions are great ways to gather all the alumni in your country. But, maybe you want to only invite classmates in a city or region? And are partners invited?

Once this is decided, get in touch with us and our Alumni Events Officer can advise on the number of alumni we’re in contact with.¹

3. Decide on the type of event you want to hold

Whether a formal dinner at the University or a casual gathering at a hotel – or even at your home – prepare an event you feel reflects your group. Remember that numbers of guests and activities can influence the style of event you plan: a buffet might be more appropriate for larger groups or if you want to allow people to mingle.

Based on your chosen venue you can develop a basic budget and cost per head – any special touches (see overleaf) will of course increase the overall budget. To help you with this, we’ve prepared a draft budget sheet.

Remember to think about your audience and what they realistically can and will pay, and what is included in the price.

4. Research venues and food options

The venue is at the heart of your reunion. Have a think about transport links, parking and accommodation – especially if people are travelling to attend. Remember that popular venues can be booked out months in advance, so plan ahead and choose a day of the week you believe your guest are most likely to attend. If you are planning your event on a short timescale, you may need to be more flexible on date or venue.

Have a look at our checklist for questions to ask when booking venue and catering.

You’ve done your research, so you are now ready to set the date and time, and make your venue booking!

5. Decide on booking and payment method

It’s useful to decide now on how your classmates can pay and how you’ll track movement of money. One option for a bigger reunion is to set up a separate bank account.

¹ The Data Protection Act means we’re unable to disclose any personal information on alumni, but we can contact them on your behalf.
6. Set up a social media group

Social media – whether a Facebook event, LinkedIn community, Twitter hashtag or just a WhatsApp or WeChat group – is a good way to communicate and create excitement about your event.

This is also an easy way for your classmates to communicate and share information.

facebook.com/surreyalumni

twitter.com/surreyalumni

bit.ly/surreyalumni

Remember to connect with us via our social media channels so we can support your event!

7. Send out ‘save the date’ or invitation

You are now ready to contact your classmates!

Forward your information to the Advancement office for us to circulate. The sooner you let people know the date the more likely they are to be able to attend.

Your ‘save the date’ should include your contact details so you can manage the responses.

Once you have finalised all your details – food, drink, and entertainment – you can send out a full invitation to all your guests. Remember to include the cost per head and be clear about what this covers – for example ‘drinks with dinner’ or ‘open bar’.

Aim to circulate your invitation no later than eight weeks before the event, but ideally much sooner.

Have a look at our draft ‘save the date’ notices and invitations.

We had a great time at the alumni gathering; it was fantastic to see the range of people – from Battersea College to a recent Surrey graduate. I was delighted to see this many alumni so close to us! Since the gathering we have been in contact with a number of the alumni. (My boys, in particular, were excited to see so many talented people attend. My eldest is now away at university and is a good friend to one of the younger alumni that had travelled seven hours to join the alumni gathering.) Thank you to the Surrey Alumni Relations team.

Babak Adibi
Special touches

No matter the size and style of event, you might want to add some extras to make the event even more special.

It was a really memorable day. It was fantastic to catch up with fellow students (some now professors and business leaders in their own fields) and even some of our lecturers! After the initial working out of who was who (without all that 1970s hair!!) it was amazing how the years fell away and we chatted like we last saw each other yesterday. Everyone had a great time – we had a lovely lunch, the Physics department did a fact-packed update on how the University had changed over the years and the student ambassador did a great job of reintroducing us to the campus! Thank you, you helped make the day really special for us.

Janet Preston

Entertainment

A guest speaker or host with knowledge on your course subject can provide a professional or general interest component to the reunion. If a Surrey representative is visiting your country at the time of your event, we can arrange for them to provide an update on University news. Otherwise we can send a video message from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International Relations) for you to play on the day.

Alternatively, you can book in a performer or some live music.

If you choose to provide entertainment, remember to book necessary equipment such as microphones, projectors and screens and to build in the cost when setting a price per head.

Photographer

Whether you hire a professional photographer or ask everyone to capture their favourite moments on their phones, remember to take photos!

And don’t forget to get a full group photo.

Room decoration

Whilst many venues are attractive, events often feel more special with decorations such as flowers, balloons and banners. You could even ask your classmates to provide memorabilia or photographs and create a display.
» Decide on a schedule or programme

Creating a schedule or programme – which can form part of the invitation – is an easy way to ensure you have time to do all the activities you’ve planned. It will also let your classmates know where to be when. Have a look at our example programmes.

Remember to set aside time to relax and mingle.

» Branded Surrey reunion merchandise

With sufficient notice, we can provide guidance on how to create branded T-shirts, cups or other Surrey reunion memorabilia.
Making your event a success

Being organised and keeping track of key deadlines is the key to success – especially for those larger reunions.

- **Record responses**
  
  These might trickle in or you might have a flood of responses. Either way, keep track of who is coming and let them know you’ve received their reply and their payment (if relevant).

  Now that you know they’re coming, encourage your classmates to stay in touch with you via social media.

  If possible, please let us know a week in advance who is coming so we can provide you with the most appropriate support.

- **Send out final reminder, with directions**
  
  Send everyone a final reminder a week or so before the event with updates and key information, such as event details, how to get to the venue and contact details.

  Ask your venue for maps, directions and details of parking options.

- **Confirm numbers and details with your venue**
  
  Get in touch with the venue no later than one week before the event to let them know final numbers and dietary requirements.

- **Keep promoting the event**
  
  The Advancement office can help promote your reunion on our website, through Facebook and Twitter if appropriate. Let us know how the event is progressing – new entertainment booked etc. – so we can shout about it on your behalf! We can also send out a reminder email and we may even be able to include it in our e-newsletter.

  Don’t forget to promote the reunion through your own social media or email channels – stay in touch and let your fellow alumni know about exciting new developments.

- **Prepare guest badges**
  
  To avoid awkward moments, it’s useful to provide all your classmates with name badges – especially if names have changed.

- **Enjoy your reunion!**
  
  Have a wonderful time reminiscing and rekindling old relationships.
After the reunion
The event is over and it’s now time to tie up any loose ends.

You’ve made a vital contribution to the University of Surrey, for which we are grateful. As a thank-you, you’ll be named in our annual supporter report and you’ll be invited to relevant supporter events.

Balance the books
Close your reunion bank account if one was set up. If you have any funds left, why not make a class gift to the University? This is a special way to commemorate your class. Please see the Supporting Surrey section overleaf for more information.

Share photos
Share your photos or create an online reunion album. If you send your photos to the Advancement office, we can create an online album for you to share.

Contact the Advancement office
Please send us an updated list of those who attended your reunion – with their contact details – so we can update our records, if they have given their consent. This will make it easier to prepare a reunion in the future or send out relevant University or department news.

Send thank-yous
Send out a thank-you email to all those who attended as well as those who supported the running of your reunion.

Every year I organise an alumni reunion in Korea. It is always great to reminisce about Surrey and the reunions provide a valuable opportunity to connect and network with fellow graduates. The personalised message from the Pro Vice-Chancellor – updating on University developments – really adds to the occasion.

Won Kim
# Reunion checklist and timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact the Advancement office</td>
<td>6 months to a year before</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decide who to invite</td>
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<td>Set up a social media group</td>
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<td>Send out ‘save the date’ or invite</td>
<td>3-6 months before</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book entertainment</td>
<td>2-5 months before</td>
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<td>Book photographer</td>
<td>2-5 months before</td>
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<td>Prepare room decoration</td>
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Supporting Surrey students through your reunion

Donations from our alumni are playing an increasingly important role in helping our current students. Gifts to the University annual fund provide crucial support to Surrey students; helping them meet their true potential and enabling those with financial hardship to carry out their studies. Individual scholarships and prizes reward those students who have demonstrated excellence.

A reunion is a fantastic opportunity to raise money, give back to your University and contribute to the success story of current and future generations of students. Every penny goes towards providing the very best student experience in a positive learning environment, with world-class facilities.

Some ideas

Class gift
Ask members of your class or year to contribute in honour of a special anniversary. You could start your own prize or scholarship fund or make a one-off donation towards student welfare, improving library facilities or enhancing the campus.

Society or club fund
Give back to your old society or sports team by clubbing together to purchase a much-needed piece of equipment. A crowdfunding campaign is a wonderful and fun way to do this.

Make fundraising part of your event
A raffle, auction or additional proceeds from ticket sales all add up and make a big difference to the life of Surrey students.

Encourage your classmates to buy a personalised brick

Another wonderful way to celebrate your time at Surrey is through buying one of the personalised bricks that make up our Surrey Alumni Brick Path. We can arrange for you and your classmates’ bricks to be placed together, immortalising your part in Surrey’s history, whilst helping future generations of Surrey students. The path is in one of the most beautiful parts of campus, overlooking Terry’s pond.

We have already funded many worthy projects thanks to generous donations to the Brick Path. With your help we can do a whole lot more.