



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
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GUIDE TO ARRANGING A CLASS REUNION

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This **Reunion Guide** provides you with tips and advice to assist in arranging a successful and memorable class reunion. Depending on lockdown regulations and/or budget constraints, these reunions can be virtual or in-person.

About Reunions

Alumni have a special relationship with their classmates and the lecturers who taught them. They also have a special relationship with alumni who studied in the same fields.

Class reunions can focus on a specific class and be held at regular intervals (e.g. every five years) and/or celebrate special anniversaries such as their 25th, 40th and 50th anniversaries. Alternatively, a cohort of classes from a particular era can be combined into a joint reunion.

Class reunions are an opportunity for class members to reunite with old friends, to form new friendships, to expand professional networks, and to share memories of student life.

They are also an opportunity for those that taught and mentored them to see how they have fared in their careers and for the School to update them on projects, initiatives and developments that have taken place at the University since graduation.

What do alumni want or expect from a class reunion?

- To renew old friendships, make new friends and network
- To briefly hear about current-day Wits, its progress, achievements and challenges and its future direction and vision
- To be inspired, learn something interesting or useful
- To reminisce and remember the “good-old student days”
- To ask questions and make comments about Wits and the School and to make observations and comments about their personal career experience since graduating.
- Guests want to feel special (acknowledge their achievements) and the event should be interesting, educational and/or entertaining.
- Most importantly, they expect a reasonable number of classmates to attend. To avoid disappointment you should always inform guests beforehand who will be attending. Alumni are more likely to attend if they know who else will be there.

Office of Alumni Relations

The Alumni Relations Office provides the following support:

- A contact list of alumni from a particular class can be provided to a designated staff member in a School. In compliance with the POPI Act these lists are confidential and a [confidentiality agreement](#) must be signed by the recipient.
- Assisting with sending information to alumni and inviting them to the event.
- Assisting in finding “lost alumni” whose details have not been updated on our system.
- Promoting the reunion on our website, through our social media platforms and other alumni communication channels.
- Providing advice on all aspects of an event in collaboration with the University's Functions and Events Office.
- Providing assistance with information about alumni relations, the University and campus tours.
- For any assistance required from the Alumni Relations Office, please contact Heather.Bangwayo@wits.ac.za



3 - 6 months lead-time

- Determine whether the event will be **virtual or in-person**.

If virtual, the Alumni Relations Office can assist with access to Zoom Meetings.

If in-person, then the following needs to be considered:

- **Budget and funding for the event** (expected number of guests, will partners be included, venue hire, catering, audio-visual, entertainment, photographer/videographer, name badges, and any other allied costs).
- **Location, venue and type of event** e.g. a breakfast, lunch, dinner, concert, lecture, golf tournament, lecture hall, restaurant, hall etc.

Campus venues

[Wits Club and Barns Complex](#)

[Wits Theatre, Great Hall and Linder Auditorium](#)

[Wits Sport conference and facilities](#)

For virtual and in-person events

- Determine a date (avoid religious holidays)
- Determine the programme, format and structure of the event
- Obtain a class list and start work on updating it

Developing a programme

- Decide on a structure for the programme
- Identify and confirm appropriate presenters/presentations
- If any class members have passed away, someone might share memories
- Collect anecdotes, profiles, memories and stories of the learning experience at Wits to share with the group – five minute reminiscences
- Source relevant photographs, videos, presentations, music of the day etc.

Ideas for a class reunion

Compile a Class Directory or Booklet. This could include:

- Then and now photographs
- A short 5 - 10 lined profile on each alumnus and what s/he is doing
- Include 5 - 6 structured questions such as hobbies, interests, bucket list, most memorable experience at Wits etc
- Include any other detail and information the group would appreciate and wish to share
- Memories of any alumni who have passed away

A Class Gift

For more information on arranging a Class Gift, click [here](#)



- **Send a 'save the date'**. In choosing a date, take religious and public holidays into consideration as well as term dates if you intend to use a University venue.
- **Develop an invitation** with date, time, venue/zoom, dress code, enquiries and RSVP contact details and deadline date. RSVPs to include partner and dietary requirements if applicable.
- **Generate interest using social media**, create a Whatsapp group, encourage alumni to spread the word.
- **Create nostalgia and enthusiasm** by sharing photos of past events, campus pictures and others.
- **Extend invitation** to Dean/Head of School/past lecturers

RSVPs

- Based on information gathered, create a **spreadsheet** list of attendees with applicable information:
 - Name at graduation and name now
 - Address
 - Email
 - Name of partner
 - Dietary requirements
 - Event RSVP
 - Payments
 - Other appropriate detail
- Confirm the **Programme of Events** including any speakers, presentations, MC, entertainment
- Finalise **logistical arrangements** including signs, displays, presentations, nametags etc
- Prepare a **check list** for each event during the reunion period (see Events checklists below)
- Have a **contingency plan** for everything

Event checklist

[Webinar checklist](#)

[Physical event checklist](#)

After the reunion

- Send thank you messages to everyone that contributed to the success of the event.
- Send a thank you for attending with links to any relevant material such as photos, videos to guests.
- Share information about the event and any relevant material to those who could not attend the reunion.
- Share information about the event, audio/visuals and the guest list with the Alumni Relations Office.
- Send contact updates to the Alumni Relations Office.
- Follow up on any Class Gifts in consultation with the Development and Fundraising Office.
- Make notes of lessons learnt and ideas that may be useful for future events.

RESOURCES

Find an example of an exemplary class reunion [here](#)

Class Reunion Guides and Toolkits

[Organising a Class Reunion](#), published by the Wits Business School

University of Birmingham [Organising a reunion](#)

Sources consulted in compiling this guide:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56d29a3d7da24f7ba20c4b39/t/5be68c5f03ce64619f743ad7/1541835889209/Planning+Kit.pdf>

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<https://www.setoncincinnati.org/alumnae/lets-have-a-reunion/>

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<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/alumniandsupporters/alumni/benefits-and-services/organising-a-successful-reunion>