



Nottingham University
Business School

The new language of business

Your Guide to Setting up a **Regional Alumni Association**



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International Alumni Networks

Increasingly, in the competitive world of work, it's not just what you know but who you know that can make a difference to your career advancement and success. And having access to a group of professionals and individuals, all of whom have the shared experience of having studied at Nottingham, can offer an opportunity for an invaluable personal network of business and social contacts.

Increasing the awareness of Nottingham University Business School's activities, achievements and aspirations is also fundamental to building our educational brand internationally. The better our academic standing, the greater this reflects on the perceived quality of our graduates – the Business School's success being their success too. Our alumni can be our greatest ambassadors and, through their support, contribute to the School's development, by promoting our name and reputation.

For all these reasons we actively encourage the development of international alumni groups in countries where there are sufficient numbers of Business School alumni to make this activity viable.

The group might have some, or all, of the following objectives:

- provide opportunities for alumni to meet each other and participate in social activities and business networking.
- serve as an academic focus for alumni by creating a forum for intellectually stimulating talks or lectures from local, or visiting, distinguished speakers.
- promote the Business School's/University's name and reputation.
- keep alumni in touch with the Business School and University of Nottingham by means of newsletters or visits by staff of the University.
- help the Business School to maintain current addresses for its alumni in the area.
- help the Business School to trace lost alumni.
- assist in the recruitment of new students.
- assist recent Business School graduates, as well as the Careers Advisory Service, to gather information about career prospects and opportunities.
- encourage alumni and others to offer professional advice and support to the Business School.



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Setting up a regional alumni association

The administrative structure of an alumni association is usually determined by bylaws of the organisation and any local legal regulations and/or constraints. While local circumstances may dictate exceptions, an association's officers usually consist of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.



In addition, many associations appoint or elect committees to manage projects which are too large for an individual member to coordinate, such as organising special events or raising awareness through a major publicity campaign. Special attention should also be given to involving new alumni.

Most associations have a regular succession plan of officers, usually starting with a Secretary and moving along to President. This not only ensures continuity in the management of the association's affairs, but also allows members to gain relevant experience and plan for additional responsibilities. The best leaders are those who have had an opportunity to get to know an association's members, and have set aside the time needed to do a good job.

Two years in a given office usually provides an adequate period for achievement, provided the incumbent has already served in a related role. Smaller associations, which hold fewer meetings and events, may wish officers to serve longer.

Above all, the best possible leaders of regional associations are people who consider fulfilling their association duties to be an enjoyable part of their days. All it takes is a small group of dedicated individuals to keep an association running.



Below is a general description of officers' duties:

President

- Leads the association's efforts to improve its services to its members, other alumni and to the University/Business School community at large
- Acts as primary liaison with the Alumni Relations team in Nottingham
- Assumes fiscal responsibility for the association
- Appoints committee chairs and serves as an ex-officio member on all committees
- Carries primary responsibility for planning.

Vice-President

- Often serves as programme/events chair (i.e. schedules speakers, plans dinners, etc.)
- Liaises with members about programme/event ideas
- Works with other officers and committee chairs to generate programme/event ideas and strategies.
- Maintains an overview of the Chapter Manager website's content and functionality

Treasurer

- Maintains the association's bank account
- Pays bills and records income
- Collects and records the receipt of dues
- Prepares financial statements
- Submits annual financial statements to the Business School's Alumni Manager

Secretary

- Maintains membership list and advises Alumni Relations of address/member changes
- Maintains the day-to-day activities and content on the Chapter Management website
- Organises club mailings and forwards copies to Alumni Relations
- Keeps minutes of all meetings
- Notifies Alumni Relations of club events and election results
- Submits current copies of the club's constitution and bylaws to the Alumni Manager

Below is a description of possible committees:

Student recruitment committee

- Participate in local recruitment activities (e.g. attend information sessions and University/Business School fairs, assist with interviewing or screening applicants unable to travel to Nottingham, represent Nottingham to local recruitment agents)
- Send congratulatory letters to successful local applicants. Community service committee
- Research and organise community outreach projects (e.g. recruit alumni volunteers to provide consulting services to local charities).

Continuing education

- Identify good local speakers
- Coordinate visits by University/Business School faculty members.

Career development

- Provide association members with career development and professional networking opportunities (e.g. organise a career mentoring programme, liaise with campus-based Industry Sector Clubs, inform members of job openings).

Social events

- Organise parties, dinners, cultural events, family outings, alumni networking etc.

Long-range planning committee

- Review the association's recent activities, trends in membership, and event attendance levels
- Propose ideas designed to energise the membership and renew the association's sense of purpose.

Membership committee

- Responsible for maintaining and increasing the association's membership
- Follow-up with alumni who were members in previous years, but have not rejoined
- Invite new alumni to join.

Nominating committee

- Solicit association membership for names of members to consider as candidates
- Prepare a slate of officers for the upcoming term.

Meetings

Association leaders should hold meetings regularly – monthly, quarterly, or whatever works for the group. It is always easier to get busy people to attend meetings that occur at regular intervals than on an impromptu basis. One approach is to set the date for the next meeting at the end of your current meeting, and to use e-mail to keep in touch in between. You also may want to add a social aspect to meetings, perhaps have lunch or dinner afterwards.

Working with volunteers

It is important to be mindful of the fact that the time alumni give to the group comes from somewhere else – usually their jobs or their families. However, association leaders should not try to do everything themselves. The leader who has difficulty delegating tasks is a prime candidate for burnout.

Some tips:

- **Create a specific position for something you want done well.** If someone is publicly recognised as being responsible for getting something done, they are more likely to do a good job.
- **Let people do their jobs.** There is nothing worse than being appointed to a position and then being told exactly how things should be done. If you charge people with a task, give them the support they need, but let them get the job done their way.
- **You can never say “thank you” too often.** Publicly and privately, let volunteers know you appreciate their dedication and hard work.
- **Remember the “Rule of Thirds”.** One-third of your volunteers will be great – they will do everything they are asked without complaint. One-third of your volunteers will be average – they may not share your level of commitment to the group, they may not have the necessary skills to do a better job. And, one-third of your volunteers will do the bare minimum – anticipate and plan for the fact that someone will have to fill the breach.

Membership

Regional Associations stay robust by extending warm welcomes to newcomers while continuing to engage current members. Membership levels will vary over time, but it is usually the positive personal relationships members establish with each other that will help maintain their interest in the association. This following section assumes that you are charging membership fees:

Some tips:

Increasing Membership

- Appoint or elect a Membership Committee to keep accurate records of current and past members
- Extend personal congratulations and invitations to join to new alumni from the local area
- Discount membership fees (see below) for 1–2 years for recent graduates
- Contact members who have not attended meetings or events to encourage them to participate and ask for their input and ideas
- Contact past members about re-joining
- Send a general announcement at the beginning of the year that includes a description of the work done by various committees and asks members to become involved by joining a committee of interest.

Membership for non-alumni

- Consider making a very limited number of associate memberships available to non-alumni (e.g. faculty members, administrators, etc.)
- Extend invitations of associate membership to leading business people who have expressed an on-going interest in the club.

Membership and event fees

For an association to operate successfully an adequate revenue stream is vital. Beyond the initial seed money received from the University, all regional associations are self funded. Associations also take sole responsibility for the banking and administration of monies relating to their activities. Any start-up funds from the University/Business School will only be transferred to official association bank accounts.

Annual dues will help cover administrative overheads (e.g. postage, printing, etc.) The amount charged will vary with local circumstances.

Some Regional Alumni Associations may prefer to operate without charging annual membership fees. In this case you will need to charge admission fees to cover the cost of most events and even make a small surplus for future events, for development of the Chapter website and so on. Most people will expect to pay to participate in activities. However, be sure that your event fees are set at an affordable level and do not have a negative impact on participation.

Best practices

Programmes/Events

- Start planning well in advance
- People often decide whether to attend an event based on promotional materials they receive. Invitations that are well prepared will convey the nature of the events they are promoting (e.g. well-organised, professional, fun,). The Chapter Management website will be an important resource for this.
- Allow a reasonable amount of time for RSVPs and payments.
- Throughout the year, be sure to organise a variety of programmes and events that appeal to your association's diverse membership (e.g. industry-focused seminars, networking events, family-friendly outings, etc.)
- Make sure programme participants have time to meet new people and re-connect with old acquaintances.
- Consider having a regular informal social event that anyone can 'drop in' to eg a first Friday of the month, post work drinks get-together at a popular city centre venue.
- Capitalise on your location and your city's resources.
- Alumni have connections. They can provide access to venues, expertise, funding etc.
- Get feedback. What worked? What could have been done better?

Communications

- The Chapter Manager website is the most effective way of communicating with your membership quickly and consistently and should include a calendar of events, a recap of programmes, officer's contact details and membership information (e.g. how to join, fees).
- An e-newsletter is another great way to communicate with members
- Have a set format for your newsletter – it simplifies production and helps members find the information they are looking for.

Career Development

- List job openings in your newsletter and on the website, with active links to information wherever possible.
- Providing career assistance will have a broad appeal with club members. Be sure your Career Development Committee – if you decide to have one – has enough resources to meet members' needs.

Students

- Send congratulatory letters to successful local applicants.

- Send congratulatory letters to new alumni from the local area and those who are relocating to the area.
- Liaise, via the Alumni Relations team, with student groups at the University/Business School (e.g. plan joint events).

Membership

- Regularly review the demographics of your membership to ensure your programmes and events meet your members' needs.
- Use your newsletter to recruit new members. At the beginning of the year send a copy to all alumni in the area. Encourage them to log into their alumni Chapter website

Fees

- Keep fees at a reasonable level.
- Try a multi-tiered fees structure (e.g. charge recent graduates less; members choosing to pay a premium rate attend events free of charge).



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How to plan regional alumni group events

Alumni group activity can range from one reception a year to as many as one or more events a month, and from social networking to educational and professional development. What each group delivers, ie how much and how often, will depend on goals and priorities and how much time members have. The greatest resource that you share as Nottingham University Business School alumni is each other.

The activities should reflect the interests and demographics of the alumni group and the unique circumstances present in a particular town, city or country or because of the specific affinity.

A varied menu of events will ideally attract alumni across all ages and professions. Your ability to attract a range of alumni to a variety of events, rather than the same group all the time, will be one of the measures of group success. It's important to remember, though, that you'll never please everyone.

Types of events/activities

Social Networking

- monthly get-togethers at a regular location, day and time eg 'first Fridays'
- annual sporting competitions eg a golf tournament or football match
- arts events eg gallery tours, theatre trips or music performances or gigs
- an annual BBQ, formal dinner or reception

Career and Professional Development

Nottingham alumni possess very rich and diverse expertise in a wide range of disciplines. Alumni can take turns leading informal seminars or giving presentations drawn from their work, interests and background. Or they can invite colleagues with particular expertise to share their business experiences with the wider alumni group.

Alumni gatherings involve a multidisciplinary group of individuals who can benefit from networking and sharing expertise:

- establish professional or business networks
- try staging professional development seminars
- invite special guest speakers to address the group
- think about time of day – try a breakfast or luncheon speaker series
- set up career panels for young alumni with experienced alumni speakers

Business School and University Related Events

- host visits from the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Director of the Business School, academic staff, administrators and other supporters
- show NUBS/UoN podcasts or videos at meetings
- co-host events with the British Council or other UK universities' alumni (particularly relevant for international regions with smaller numbers of Nottingham graduates)

Mentoring and Student Cultivation

- organise 'welcome back' events for new graduates
- act as a resource for recent graduates as they get their careers started – host a careers/recruitment event
- participate in career mentoring programmes
- support student recruitment activity – eg attend Education Fairs
- organise/support student send-offs/pre-departure activity
- act as a resource for prospective students & new starters

Fundraising/philanthropy

- fundraise, through your events, to establish regional scholarships



Some tips for holding great events

Here are some suggestions to assist you with organising successful and rewarding events:

Location

- Creativity is essential when selecting a location for your event. Consider using a location that isn't typically accessible to the general public. People enjoy going somewhere that they haven't been before or where they normally wouldn't, or couldn't, go on their own.
- Look for facilities that already have an entertainment focus built into them (i.e. wineries, museums, aquariums, historic sites, performing arts facilities, or culinary academies).
- Check to see if any of your committee members have access to any unique facilities or sit on the boards of local museums or other organisations. You might be surprised at the wealth of resources in your own backyard.
- Use your status as a non-profit, educational service group to open doors.

Boosting attendance

- If your attendance numbers are low, you may want to set up a 'phone tree' with members of your committee. Some alumni just need a little encouragement or a reminder to attend an upcoming event.
- Consider having one committee member whose role it is to contact those alumni who have expressed interest in getting involved with the group and encourage them to attend.
- Use social networking and viral marketing mechanisms – eg Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc.

The personal touch

The greatest concern most alumni have before attending an event is whether, or not, they will know anyone there. If a group goes out of its way to make people feel welcome, it will greatly increase the chances of alumni attending future events.

As simple as it sounds, some groups forget to welcome guests as they arrive, introduce attendees to one another, and engage with shy "wall-flowers" who are standing alone.

Alcohol

In most cases a cash bar is preferable to an open bar so that alumni who don't drink will not be subsidising those who do. This will also help to keep the price of your event down, and potentially attract more diverse attendees.

After the Event

- Keep records about your event – what worked well/less well, quality of speaker etc.
- Post-event reports provide valuable information both for the co-ordinator of the next event and for identifying new volunteers. A report will help to track successes as well as provide a means of keeping accurate data with updated contact information.
- As follow up, discuss what worked, what didn't, and what you might do differently the next time. Good, consistent planning and evaluation will result in top-quality, successful events time and time again.



General event planning checklist – tips for successful events

This list may assist you in organising and keeping track of your event. Please note that not every item will apply to every event.

Getting started

Determine if you have enough time to plan and publicise the event. If not, consider rescheduling to avoid low quality or poorly attended events. In general, you will need approximately 10 weeks to plan an event, and we would advise that you send out invitations 4–6 weeks ahead of the event date.

10 weeks prior to the event

- Identify an event co-ordinator (provide them with this checklist)
- Select the day of the week/time of the day that best suits the event
- Identify potential conflicts (religious/government holidays, school vacations)
- Research venue possibilities. Venue considerations: Where do the invitees live? It may be best to hold your event somewhere central to where the majority of alumni live or work. Is the venue easy to find? Is there public transport to get to the venue? Is there adequate parking facilities? Is there disabled access (if applicable)?
- Check and confirm the availability of key guests or attendees (visiting speakers, VIPs etc)

9 weeks prior to the event

- Estimate attendance numbers in order to plan a budget
- Recruit volunteers to assist with the event
- Decide on the RSVP method (Alumni Relations can assist) and assign someone to handle questions
- Work with Alumni Relations to design and print invitations (if appropriate). If sending paper invitations, consider that this may take up to three weeks to process and deliver
- Think about/design e-invitations
- Risk assess the event plan, including venue
- Think about a 'contingency plan'

8 weeks prior to the event

- Select/book a venue
- Create an event budget worksheet to help determine admission cost and keep an eye on event costs

7 weeks prior to the event

- Get all costs from suppliers in writing
- Secure parking arrangements so you can include that information in the invitation
- Visit the site/venue and determine the event set-up

6 weeks prior to the event

- Mail paper invitations and send e-mail invitations
- Confirm event details with Alumni Relations so it can be included in other publicity materials/communications and marketed more widely

5 weeks prior to the event

- Track RSVPs (liaise with Alumni Relations)
- Make onsite facility arrangements (catering, tables, chairs, linen etc.)
- Request name badge holders, gifts and other relevant décor requirements from the Alumni Relations team
- Arrange audio/visual requirements (check with presenters to see what their needs are, and discuss with the venue which facilities are included)
- Arrange catering requirements
- Book a photographer

4 weeks prior to the event

- Track RSVPs

3 weeks prior to the event

- Track RSVPs
- Make phone calls to increase attendance if necessary
- Send a reminder e-mail
- Purchase a gift for any speaker(s) or event sponsor(s)

2 weeks prior to the event

- Track RSVPs
- Confirm arrangements with all suppliers

1 week prior to the event

- Track RSVPs
- Send confirmation e-mail to guests
- Confirm numbers with catering
- Liaise with speakers to ensure they are aware of event schedule and other on-the-day arrangements
- Prepare name badges
- Confirm event duties for volunteer hosts

At the event

- Collect data, attendance record, e-mail addresses, business cards
- Ensure photographer records event appropriately
- Event co-ordinator to sort any on the day hitches and keep event 'on schedule'

Following the event

- Send thank you notes to speaker and volunteers
- Issue any necessary reimbursements and expenses
- Write up a post-event evaluation for network files

Speaker events - extra checklist!

- Clarify with the speaker who's paying for items up front, and know what you can afford before going ahead. Set expectations at the beginning and avoid last-minute bookings and surprises.
- If you are taking advantage of a speaker's pre-existing trip to your area, be clear if and what the group can contribute to travel expenses.
- Set a publicity schedule, and have the speaker approve the topic, title and bio before you print anything. To speed up the process and give a speaker the opportunity to edit it, you might consider sending them a published bio found through their organisation, via the web or other appropriate source.
- Find out if the speaker wants to invite/bring guests with them.
- Clarify and offer to coordinate the speaker's travel and accommodation arrangements.
- Confirm who is making the travel and hotel arrangements? Can you recommend a good place to stay?
(NB. Most speakers will prefer to stay in a hotel rather than in the home of a local alumna/us).
- Will you meet/drop off the speaker at the airport, or are they renting a car or taking a cab?
- Find out what the speakers audio-visual and handout requirements are, and secure the required equipment with your venue.
- Do you need a lectern/podium?
- Will the size of the audience or speaking space require a microphone and PA system? Does the speaker prefer a lapel microphone?
- Do you need a screen?
- Do you need a slide or LCD projector? Who is bringing the adaptor cable for the speaker's laptop, or do you need to rent a laptop?
- Will the speaker send you handouts ahead of time that you will need to reproduce and bring to the event?
- Will the speaker e-mail you a copy of the presentation to be used as a back-up?
- Arrange for someone to meet the speaker at the event location and act as host to them throughout the event. Remember to include that person's name and contact information in the speaker's briefing.
- Have the speaker approve the text of their introduction.
- Arrange for the introducer or another volunteer to: watch the clock and manage the question and answer period. For example, that person may need to say, "Last question" to the group.
- Manage the speakers' time after the presentation if a lot of people have questions.
- Make sure the speaker doesn't get stuck. Perhaps offer some food and a beverage if s/he is talking to alumni.
- Make sure the speaker has a name tag, ticket, meal, etc. as appropriate for the event.
- If the speaker is bringing a spouse or other guests confirm who is paying for them?
- Follow up with a thank you note as soon as possible after the event.
- Promptly take care of any travel reimbursements as agreed with the speaker.
- Produce a speaker evaluation – ie would you recommend they speak at another group's event?



4 Sample constitution

This sample constitution should be regarded as a guide only. Alumni associations can decide for themselves on the exact content of their own constitutions, based on local laws and common practice.



1. Name

- 1.1 The name of the alumni association shall be:
Nottingham Alumni: Country

2. Address

- 2.1 The registered address of the association shall be:
XXX

3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of the association shall be:
- a. to promote and encourage, social, cultural and professional networking between alumni in (Country);
 - b. to raise the profile and promote the reputation of the Business School/University throughout the local community.
 - c. to foster close links between the Business School/University and its former students resident in (Country);
 - d. to support the goals and purposes of the Business School / University;
 - e. to assist the Business School's/University's current and potential students in (Country);

4. Membership

- 4.1 Ordinary membership – open to any individual resident in (Country) who has studied at the University of Nottingham or has had other links with the University and whose application is approved by the association's Executive Committee;
- 4.2 Associate membership – open to current University of Nottingham of students, parents or family members, former staff and others who have an association with the University; normally resident in (Country);
- 4.3 Applications for membership – all applications shall be submitted to the Executive Committee of the association.
- 4.4 Privileges and rights of members – all members shall be entitled to participate in the activities organised by the association. Ordinary members shall have the right to move, second and vote on motions during general meetings.
- 4.4 Subscriptions – if deemed appropriate to charge for membership, the level of subscription shall be set each year by the Annual General Meeting.

5. Session

- 5.1 The annual session of the association shall run from 1 September to 31 August.

6. Annual General Meeting

- 6.1 The Annual General Meeting will be held within eight months of the end of the session.

7. Executive Committee

- 7.1 The association shall be run by an Executive Committee which shall meet at least three times each year.
- 7.2 The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the finances of the association and its overall running and activities.
- 7.3 The Executive Committee shall comprise the following office-holders:
- Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Events Officer
Publicity/Communications Officer
- 7.4 The Executive Committee shall provide a report of its activities to the Annual General Meeting.
- 7.5 The Executive Committee shall also keep the Alumni Relations team informed of all group activities.

8. Finance

- 8.1 The financial year shall correspond with its annual session.
- 8.2 The group should have its own bank account and there should be two signatories for the bank account.
- 8.3 An annual budget estimate shall be prepared by the Treasurer and presented to the Annual General Meeting for adoption.
- 8.4 An annual statement of accounts and balance sheets of the previous financial year should be presented for approval at the Annual General Meeting.
- 8.5 The balance at the end of the session shall be put into a reserve fund.
- 8.6 Any funds raised for the University should be remitted to the University in sterling or when the exchange rate is favourable. Payments should be sent directly to the Development Office.

9. Audit

- 9.1 The Annual General Meeting shall appoint two members of the association as Honorary Auditors. The auditors shall be required to audit accounts of the association for the year and submit a report to the Annual General Meeting.

10. Constitution

- 10.1 The constitution shall not be altered except by a majority decision of the Annual General Meeting attended by a quorum of (X).

11. Duties of the post-holders on the Executive Committee**11.1 Chairman**

- overall responsibility for the smooth running of the local association
- chairs meetings
- maintains regular contact with the Business School Alumni Manager.
- ensures that the Business School Alumni Manager is notified of changes of address for alumni
- has co-responsibility for the finances of the group

11.2 Secretary

- manages general correspondence
- informs members of committee meetings
- maintains the minutes of the committee meetings

11.3 Treasurer

- co-responsibility for the finances of the local association
- day-to-day management of group accounts
- paying group bills
- organising subscriptions (where these are levied)

11.4 Events Officer

- organises events
- liaises with potential speakers
- books venues and deals with caterers etc.

11.5 Publicity/Communications Officer

- responsible for communication with group members about events/general news
- produces a newsletter / regular events listing
- manages the on-line Alumni Chapter pages
- publicises group events
- liaises with external bodies, eg. media, press, local businesses

12. Terms of Office

- 12.1 It is recommended that members of the Executive Committee should be re-elected after three consecutive years and that there should be an overlap period to enable new committee members to be properly briefed.