



UJ ALUMNI: Guidelines for Managing Chapters and Affinity Groups

1. Introduction

The University of Johannesburg resulted from the merger of its legacy institutions, the former Technikon Witwatersrand and the former Rand Afrikaans University (into which the Soweto and East Rand campuses of the former Vista University were incorporated). The primary focus of the Alumni Office is to facilitate and maintain effective contact with its worldwide community of alumni, with the aim of keeping them informed of university activities. The involvement of alumni is crucial to the sustainability and growth of the University and provides important ties between the past and the present. The alumni network therefore helps to serve alumni needs and encourage their involvement and support in preserving the brand and stature of the University. Regular communication on UJ activities or events is shared with alumni by the UJ Alumni Office. To this end, the UJ Alumni Office wishes to increase its global footprint through the establishment of national and international alumni chapters and affinity groups. The intention is to increase our global networking and fundraising opportunities.

2. Membership

Membership of chapter or affinity groups will mainly consist of UJ alumni from formal/ subsidised programmes and from continuing education programmes (non-subsidised qualifications). Members are committed to realising the vision of the

University by acting in accordance with the University's mission and its core values.

3. Chapters and affinity groups

A chapter is defined nationally and internationally along geographic lines within the location where each chapter is based.

An affinity group is a group formed around a shared interest or common goal, to which individuals formally belong, such as choir, sports team, residences, engineering, accounting, mining, or law.

4. What are the objectives of the chapters and affinity groups?

The chapter or affinity group:

- a) Provide support and mentoring to the alumni to ensure that the group continues to exist and function through the use of online platforms such as Alumni Connect. Alumni Connect is a UJ alumni social networking platform, which facilitates engagement, and shares networking and employment opportunities and mentorships.
- b) Promotes and facilitates the engagement of UJ alumni through events, special projects, Alumni Connect and other social media platforms.
- c) Acts as ambassadors of UJ by promoting a positive image/reputation of and respect for the University as a whole.
- d) Participates voluntarily and as such without the University incurring any obligation to remunerate or compensate them or provide them with any benefits.

5. UJ Convener

A convener is a dedicated and influential UJ Staff or Alumni entrusted with the responsibility of leading and coordinating a specific group, established to connect and engage UJ alumni based on geographic location and or specific interest/goal. This esteemed role is instrumental in fostering a vibrant alumni community, advancing the University's mission, and upholding its core values.

6. The role of the convener of a chapter or affinity group

Each chapter and affinity group is coordinated by a convenor.

The convener performs the following activities:

- a) Convening at least one annual meeting of the chapter/affinity group.
- b) Organising at least one annual alumni networking/engagement.
- c) Recruiting new alumni to the chapter/affinity group.
- d) Representing the chapter/affinity group at alumni events.
- e) Mobilising involvement and support of alumni volunteer activities.
- f) Submitting written and edited articles for the Alumni magazine/ newsletter publications.
- g) Profiling alumni activities in the various chapters and affinity groups.
- h) Advising on new programmes that provide UJ alumni with the opportunity to remain connected with one another.
- i) Promoting a positive image/reputation of and respect for the University as a whole.

7. The selection criteria for a convener

- a) Communication Skills: A convener needs to have strong communication skills, including the ability to listen actively, articulate ideas clearly, and facilitate

discussions effectively. This is crucial for maintaining open and constructive dialogue among participants.

- b) **Organizational Skills:** The convener should be highly organized and capable of managing schedules, agendas, and resources. They should ensure that meetings or events run smoothly and according to plan.
- c) **Neutral and Impartial:** A convener should be neutral and impartial, able to maintain objectivity and fairness while managing conflicts or differences of opinion. This helps create an environment where all participants feel valued and heard.
- d) **Problem-Solving Abilities:** Complex situations can arise during meetings or events. The convener should be a skilled problem solver, able to navigate challenges and find creative solutions to unexpected issues.
- e) **Empathy:** Understanding the perspectives and feelings of participants is important. An empathetic convener can build rapport and trust among participants, fostering a more inclusive and collaborative atmosphere.
- f) **Knowledge of the Subject Matter:** Depending on the context, having a convener who understands the subject matter of the discussions can be beneficial. This ensures that discussions stay on track and relevant to the goals of the group.
- g) **Leadership Skills:** Leadership qualities are essential for guiding discussions, setting the tone, and making decisions when necessary. A strong leader can inspire confidence and keep participants engaged.
- h) **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Circumstances may change, and the convener should be adaptable to new situations or evolving needs. Flexibility ensures that the convener can adjust plans as necessary.

- i) **Cultural Sensitivity:** If the group consists of diverse participants, a convener who is culturally sensitive and respectful of different backgrounds and perspectives is important for creating an inclusive environment.
- j) **Previous Experience:** While not always necessary, previous experience in facilitating discussions, coordinating events, or managing groups can be valuable. It demonstrates that the convener has a proven track record of success in similar roles.
- k) **Confidence:** Convener should exude confidence, as this helps in commanding attention and maintaining control over discussions or events, especially in challenging situations.
- l) **Time Commitment:** Ensure that the selected convener has the time required to dedicate to the role. Being a convener can be demanding, and the individual should be available and committed to fulfilling their responsibilities.

8. Nomination Process

- a. **Open Call:** Announce an open call for nominations to UJ Alumni. Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities, as well as the eligibility criteria.
- b. **Nomination Submission:** Nominees should provide a short bio outlining their qualifications, experience, vision, and commitment to the initiative.
- c. **Shortlisting and recommendation of the eligible contestant.**
- d. **Qualification Verification:** The Alumni Office conducts the qualification verification process.
- e. **Vetting through a background screening agency (e.g., MIE, which conducts background checks on individuals, like Qualification verification, criminal record checks, credit checks, previous employment history and reference checks, and identity checks)**

- f. Registrar approves the recommended incumbent.
- g. Incumbent accepts the nomination and signs the agreement.
- h. Term of office is unlimited until such a time that the incumbent chooses to vacate or if the incumbent does not comply with these guidelines.

9. Vetting Process:

By following these guidelines, the nomination and vetting process for the convener role can be structured to select the most suitable individuals who will contribute effectively to the success of the initiative or group. The vetting process includes the following:

- a) **Background Checks:** Conduct comprehensive background checks on proposed conveners to verify their identity, qualifications, and professional history. This may include criminal background checks, professional qualifications, social media conduct and references.
- b) **Conflict of Interest Assessment:** Assess potential conflicts of interest that might arise due to the individual's affiliations, relationships, or interests. This step helps ensure that decisions are made impartially and in the best interest of the University.
- c) **Review of Qualifications and Experience:** Evaluate the qualifications, skills, and experience of individuals being considered. This ensures that those responsible for making decisions possess the necessary expertise.
- d) **Ethical and Cultural Fit:** Assess the ethical values and cultural alignment of individuals or entities with the Universities mission, vision, and values. This step helps maintain the organization's reputation and integrity.

- e) **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Ensure that the individuals, entities, or initiatives being considered comply with relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards. This step helps prevent legal liabilities and regulatory violations.

- f) **Financial Due Diligence:** Review the financial stability and viability of entities or initiatives involved, especially in cases of partnerships or joint ventures,. This assessment helps mitigate financial risks.