

How to launch a chapter

Mission

The mission of the chapter must be in line with the mission of the Graduate Institute, which strives to promote international cooperation and make a contribution to the progress of developing societies. More broadly, the Institute endeavours to develop creative thinking on the major challenges of our time, foster global responsibility and advance respect for diversity.

Critical Mass

A chapter is constituted by a group of alumni from the Institute. When too few alumni are available to create a chapter, an “ambassador” can be appointed by the Institute upon proposals. The ambassador will act as the contact person in the country or region, depending on the representation.

Making the Best of These COVID-19 Times

1. Meeting with fellow alumni

The pandemic has made human contact and face-to-face meetings more challenging, but creating a chapter is still possible and is now even more accessible! Whether it be to gather fellow alumni for a new chapter or to keep in touch between chapters’ members, try organising virtual meetings using the various platforms at your disposal (zoom, skype, webex, google meet, etc). Virtual meetings are in fact more flexible and will thus enable greater participation. For a smooth organisation of meetings, we advise you to use a [doodle](#) where everyone will be able to indicate their availability.

2. The launch

Additionally, the launching of chapters is not only more accessible, they are now truly international events! To organise an event to launch your Chapter, contact the AR. We will take care of the logistics and of the technical side of the event on Webex: the launched will be advertised to the entire Graduate Institute community, and invitations will be sent to all of our alumni. Should the pandemic end and gatherings

become possible again, we will continue to have hybrid meetings in order to ensure greater interaction and access to the greatest number possible.

3. Promoting events

Finally, take advantage of the democratisation of virtual meetings. No matter where in the world, our professors, alumni and experts are only an email away. If you wish to invite a Professor or fellow alumna or alumnus to speak for the launch or during an event organised by your Chapter, do not hesitate to reach out to the AR team. We will advise you on the person most suited to your event and will contact them for you. Lastly, and similarly to a launch, we will ensure maximum visibility by advertising to and inviting the entire Graduate Institute to your event!

The 5 Steps to Launch Your Chapter

1. Gather the alumni

The success of a chapter hinges on the alumni's level of involvement.

Chapters are essentially a group of alumni whose close geographic proximity enables them to support and contribute to the Graduate Institute's projects in a given country or region.

In order to ensure the long term sustainability of the chapter, the Alumni Association Committee recommends that you create a chapter committee of 5-7 alumni and agree on the roles of each committee member. Functions could include: President, Vice President, Communications, Treasurer, etc.

Ask the Alumni Relations (AR) to provide you with a list of alumni in your region, edit the information you get if possible, and contact your fellow alumni for a first get-together!

In case you choose to communicate through mass emailing, please ensure that everyone is blind copied (Bcc).

2. Set your goals

Once you have formed a group of motivated alumni, you should start to think about the long term goals of your chapter. A couple questions you may want to take into consideration are:

- What do we want to accomplish as a chapter? What is your mission?
- What kind of activities do you want to engage in (ex : representing the Institute during student higher education forums, offering internships and jobs, organising conferences or events – with or without other chapters, networking)
- Where do you see your chapter two years from now? Five years?

Do not hesitate to contact other existing chapters for advice and inspiration.

3. Apply to be approved by the Committee Association

Once you have agreed on the long term goals of your chapter, submit your ideas to the Association Committee (via AR) for approval.

4. Ask for a @graduateinstitute email and a page on the Alumni website

A couple days before the formal launch of your chapter, ask AR for a “XYZchapter@graduateinstitute.ch” address as well as a page on the Alumni website under the “chapters” section.

5. Promote your existence !

All done! You can now go ahead and launch your chapter, promote it through the news section on the Alumni website as well as through alumni social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram). You can also ask AR to help your communications (sending invitation, layout, yearly new list of alumni, getting paper copies of Globe – the semestrial review of the Institute, etc.).

If you would like to contact the Swiss Embassy of your country of residence to organise a reception, please get in touch with the AR. Such events are usually organised by the Director of the Institute when he or she is visiting a particular region.

Budget

If a Professor who is in your region is invited to one of your events, the Institute can help cover the costs of his participation, so long as he/she notifies AR beforehand of his/her intention to partake in this event.

Guidance and ideas on organisation and activities

- Establish a list of chapter members, and agree who will manage it and keep it updated. AR can assist with creating and keeping the list updated.
- Agree on an annual plan of events that could include 1-2 big events (annual reception), regular social meetings (e.g.: Happy Hours) and their frequency (once a month/every 6 weeks/quarterly) and outings or meetings at someone’s home.
- Be in routine contact with AR on new members and happenings. Discuss several months in advance how someone from the Graduate Institute (Director, Head of Alumni relations, Professor) could attend your big event. See if any professors are travelling through your city and try to organize a happy hour or social gathering with them.
- Discuss possible chapter projects, such as sponsoring a student or funding a scholarship, with the support of chapter members (e.g.: the Washington chapter has created a scholarship funded by chapter members, with a matching grant from local foundation associated with the Institute).
- Make plans to attend the annual Alumni reunion and represent your chapter every fall (September-November).

- Take leadership in promoting content of The Graduate Institute on social media platforms such as [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).
- Identify alumni profiles for The Graduate Institute to share on their website and newsletters (i.e. any alumni you would like to highlight in terms of their work).
- Get in touch with prospective and/or admitted students. Be in touch with AR on how this can be done in your area.
- Participate in the annual conference call with the Institute Alumni Committee (usually in April/May each year).

Other

If you have any other suggestion or wish to get some support from the Institute for the organisation of your chapter, please contact AR (alumni@graduateinstitute.ch).