

WEST WILTS u3a

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

PRINCIPLES

The Third Age Principle

Membership of a u3a is open to all who are no longer in full-time employment. There is no lower or upper age limit.

Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.

Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a u3a can do so.

Self-Help Learning Principle

Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire.

Learning is **by the members, for the members**.

No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.

There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers. They are all u3a members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of the Third Age Trust (TAT), which requires adherence to the u3a movement.

No payments are made to members for any services to any u3a.

Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions kept as low as possible.

Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the u3a.

FORMING A NEW GROUP

Groups Co-ordinator to collect ideas for new groups.

Groups Co-ordinator to contact all members to see if there is sufficient interest in a subject to start a new group, by using existing means of communication, e.g. Newsletter, Quarterly Magazine and Monthly Meetings.

Groups Co-ordinator to arrange a Planning Meeting to which interested members are invited.

PLANNING MEETING

Agree on the aims of the group.

Appoint a leader.

Agree a day, time and venue for meetings.

Agree (if relevant) on the level, eg beginners, improvers, advanced.

Agree any costs of running the group and what members will pay per session. This can be revised at any time.

There may be a National Subject Adviser who can provide support and ideas for the development of the group – check on TAT website www.u3a.org.uk. An alternative to subject advisers might be to contact neighbouring u3as to see if they have a similar subject group and then talk to their group leader to get some first-hand knowledge. It may be possible to sit in on their group meeting.

Generate interest by promoting the group using as many different methods as possible. This could include developing publicity in the form of a flyer, poster or promotion via existing groups, Quarterly Magazine, Newsletter and talking to members in groups that you attend. The more methods you use, the more successful your group will be and the more likely you will be to attract members.

Prior to or at the first meeting, complete the relevant forms, eg Risk Assessment of the Venue and Fitness Declaration (for active groups). These are included in the pack.

THE FIRST MEETING

Recommended steps to take at the first meeting:

Leader to introduce themselves. Leader to state the purpose of the group as had been discussed at the Planning Meeting, although this needs to be flexible and develop over time.

Agree a Deputy Leader and pass the name to the Groups Co-ordinator.

Agree the tasks that need doing in order to run the group and also who is willing to support these, i.e. who is willing to help with the future programme, keep the register of attendees and collect any session fees? These tasks can be shared in a large group.

Enquire about skills within the group.

Agree how the group will work – discussion, instruction, presentation, etc.

Identify any accessibility needs of existing or future groups members. (Refer to WWu3a Plus Guidance in the pack)

Confirm with the Treasurer of WWu3a how monies will be handled and reported. (Refer to WWu3a General Guidance in the pack).

Discuss how group members will communicate with each other between meetings, bearing in mind data protection concerns.

Agree general rules where applicable:

- a) be punctual
- b) listen to each other
- c) allow others to speak, ensuring equal participation
- d) let the leader know if you are unable to attend
- e) agree to disagree amicably and be respectful to other group members
- f) every contribution matters
- g) have patience with and encourage those who are slower to learn or participate.

Report on what was agreed at the first meeting to the Groups Co-ordinator in order to finalise arrangements.

PARTICIPATIVE LEARNING AND LEARNING STYLES

The value of the u3a style of learning is that everyone can contribute and, by doing so, will gain a feeling of self-worth and integration. We all learn in different ways. Variation in content, method and style can make the learning experience more vibrant and appealing.

Many members will have particular skills but most will use a combination of the following:

- visual – using pictures, diagrams, images and spatial understanding;
- verbal – using words, both spoken and written;
- auditory – using sounds, rhythm, music, spoken presentations;
- physical/kinaesthetic - using hands, body, senses and acting things out;
- logical/mathematical – using logic, systems, sequences, data and statistics;
- social – learning as part of a group, sharing experiences and explaining your understanding to others;
- solitary – studying on your own.

Consider the following options:

- a visiting speaker – a **one-off** visiting paid speaker, non-paid tutor or someone from another interest group or u3a;
- group member presentations - a presentation by a member(s) of the group or a member leading the meeting on a specific topic. Consider speakers from neighbouring u3as;
- discussion groups – some activities will lead to discussion, eg “what the papers say”;
- project based – a project chosen by the members. A member or members allocated an area of research which they bring to the group. This can be a good way to learn new technology;
- practical work – this might include specific subjects such as science, craft, photography, creative writing and storytelling;

- drama – create a short sketch. Provide some entertainment for the meeting.
- singing – learning new songs in a choir;
- themes – have an event or presentation linked to a specific topic;
- liaise with local groups – eg local history presentation, art exhibition, debate;
- liaise with other organisations – museums, universities and libraries – very useful for Shared Learning Projects;
- study days and workshops – plan one for your own members or as part of a local network, eg Family History Day, Language Day, Storytelling Workshop, Debate, Quiz, Music;
- Online learning – Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS), YouTube ‘how to’ videos, Future Learn, TED TALKS.

Help and Support

Educational resources: TAT offers access to a range of educational resources. These can be booked via the national website if you create an account.

Sources and Sources Online: Sources is the educational publication and online platform where the work of interest groups is showcased. Sources online can be accessed via the TAT website or via www.sources.u3a.org.uk.

Subject Advisers: Trust volunteers with specialist knowledge in a wide range of topics. Contact details are available on the TAT website and in the Third Age Matters publication.

External organisations: Museums, libraries, schools, universities.

u3a publications: Check the TAT website for the latest publications.

Networks, regions, neighbouring u3as: Allow you to draw on experience from within the movement.

Regional Trustee: Provides an overview of the region and a link to National Office.

National Office: The staff team are available to offer support.

Research Database: Contains up-to-date information regarding research projects. The database is available under the resources of the TAT website.

Other Learning Opportunities

- Enquiry-led Learning/Research Network: Shared Learning Projects and Research links with universities and within u3as; contacts available from TAT website.
- National and Regional Summer Schools.
- Events facilitated by TAT.
- National, Regional and Network Workshops and study days.

Sharing Information

It can also be good to share information about your group:

- on your group's website
- in the Quarterly Magazine
- as a display/presentation at the Monthly Meeting/Members Day
- via Sources or Sources Online
- on social media such as Twitter or Facebook.

Policies and Procedures

The Committee and/or Groups Co-ordinator will advise you of the u3a insurance arrangements, policies and procedures that you need to be aware of.

It is recommended that you also have a look at the advice section of the TAT website where a range of useful information can be found: www.u3a.org.uk (see information on page 2).

It is also a good idea to sign up (via the TAT website) to the monthly national Newsletter as it will keep you up-to-date with wider u3a news.

Copyright

The Trust holds a licence to copy some materials for educational use within groups. If you are going to be using copyright material in any form, eg printed, audio or pictures, please check with the advice section of the national website for further details on copyright.

Problem Solving

Sometimes issues can arise within a group that disrupt the smooth running and spoil the enjoyment for everyone. Don't leave a problem too long before trying to resolve it. Talk to your Groups Co-ordinator or Committee if you are unsure how to resolve the problem or just want someone to explore options with. You can also ring the u3a National Office if you want to talk something through or check something out.

Issues between Group Members

Where there is potential for friction, it is advisable to begin by bringing it into the open. Either you or another person, or the Groups Co-ordinator, could try to facilitate a discussion either with the members concerned or with the whole group, but it is important that the facilitator remains neutral and non-judgemental. If a situation is not resolved and becomes acrimonious, your Committee can consult the advice on disciplinary procedure provided by the Trust. There are also Trust volunteers trained to support with resolving disputes.

Accidents and Incidents

Report all accident and incidents to your Committee as soon as possible and complete an Incident Report form (included in the pack).

The Third Age Trust provides insurance for groups activities. (Refer to WWu3a General Guidance.)

THIS DOCUMENT IS BASED ON THE ONE PRODUCED BY THE THIRD AGE TRUST