

WOKINGHAM U3A : GUIDELINES FOR CONVENORS

These guidelines are designed to assist anyone in Wokingham U3A who is helping to organise a study or activity group. While there is no set pattern for such activity there is some information that all members may benefit from knowing. Contact addresses for the officers mentioned in this leaflet are available in the Newsletter and on the web site (www.wokinghamu3a.org.uk/).

Meetings held under the umbrella of Wokingham U3A are expected to be self-financing and self-taught as far as possible and the Committee needs to be aware of the activity taking place. Your immediate contact on the Committee is the Groups Co-ordinator. Members of the Committee are deemed by the Charity Commissioners to be Trustees and fully responsible for whatever is done in the name of the organisation and for proper financial control.

A small liaison team is assigned to assist the Group Coordinator with group start-ups and help sort out any difficulties that may arise later. Contact details for the coordinator are available on the web site and in the Newsletter. From time to time a member of the team may send you information for your members. If your group grows beyond the number that can be catered for in a home a decision has to be made as to whether to close it to newcomers or branch out into a hall. A member of the Groups Coordinator team will provide assistance if required.

Members rely on the Newsletter and the Diary for information about group activities. It is helpful, especially for new members, for the date, time and contact telephone number to be included in each issue. Occasionally a few lines inserted in the Group News section can highlight an activity for which the group would like the general membership to be aware - such as an outing, when more members are wanted, or a change of group leader. Contact details for group leaders are held in the members' area of our web site and periodically updated lists are included in the newsletter.

It is the convenor's responsibility to appraise the Editor of information for their group. When a new group is formed the convenor should advise the Editor of the name of the group, its regular meeting dates (e.g. 2nd Monday of month, 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month), the starting time and also first line of the convenor's address (this is not for publication but is to ensure that forms are put into the correct envelopes). The Editor will use this information to prefill forms with outline details for the following newsletter; these forms are distributed with the newsletters to convenors for checking. The convenor should confirm back to the Editor that the information is correct, or give corrections, or more detail, as

required. Convenors are asked to respond either by returning the paper form duly marked up, or by email. If responding by email, convenors are asked to state the form is correct or send just revisions. It is helpful to the Editor if information is included in the body of the email and not sent as attachments. It is unhelpful to the Editor if information, correctly stated on the form, is repeated in the email response. It is also particularly unhelpful if an image of the form is emailed to the Editor. The diary is made more interesting and useful if the subject matter for a meeting can be disclosed or the destination for an outing is given, etc.

Equipment such as flip charts, overhead and electronic projectors, laptops, sound projection etc, can be booked for specific meetings but advance warning is essential. The list is available on request from the Equipment Manager.

Appointing a deputy leader is useful especially if the group is large; someone to keep the register, collect the rent money and another to make the tea. It is necessary to maintain a register of attendance at meetings as insurance cover depends on this. One individual need not take responsibility for the whole activity of a group. Indeed it is much better to share responsibility - all members can help to prepare some part of the subject to be studied and the individual who acts as telephone and/or newsletter contact need not be the group leader.

If your group is full, please keep a waiting list of members who want to join your group. When and if the waiting list reaches the size where it is viable, in your opinion, for a new group to be formed, please pass these names to the Groups Coordinator who will arrange to start a new group.

GROUPS AND MONEY

If the convenor, host or member of the group incurs any exceptional or disproportionate expense it should be reimbursed by the group members who should agree before the money is committed. Outings and holidays present different problems and advice should be sought from the Hon Secretary when planning such a project.

When meetings are arranged in members' homes a contribution may be made by the members present towards the costs of any tea/coffee provided. Where groups are large enough to require a hall the cost is shared amongst the members and a suitable charge should be collected at meetings. A small surplus in hand helps to smooth the way if attendance drops.

A discretionary grant of up to £50 is available to new groups for start up purchases. Also, advance payment of rental of premises can be arranged as long as there is a commitment by the group members to repay this money. Please apply to the Hon. Treasurer for approval.

HALF-YEARLY FINANCIAL RETURN

All groups are asked to make a simple financial return to the Hon. Treasurer twice a year as at 30th June and 31st December. The return asks for financial information on any visits and outings your group runs - this is because it is a significant part of the accounts of some groups. The cost of any room hire is also requested as this will give us visibility of just how much this U3A as a whole spends on hiring halls and other facilities and might give us some leverage for negotiating better rents on your behalf or even arguing for better provision of halls for rent.

If you have no money matters to report please ensure you send back the form nevertheless but with a zero entry. If only refreshment contribution is made to the host no financial records are required. An example of the form is included in this document. Note that a cash float should not exceed £50 but larger sums can be lodged with the Hon. Treasurer in the name of the group and cheques requested to make direct payments. Individual items of expenditure over £30 are to be listed in the return. All money paid into a group for visits and payments for theatres, coaches etc. should be recorded and shown on the return.

INSURANCE

There is a National U3A Public and Products Liability Insurance which provides public liability insurance cover for all U3A members during U3A activities. Both the Public and Products cover is for up to £5M and there is a £250 excess for each and every loss. The Hon. Secretary will provide any information required.

The policy is intended to cover all of us during our U3A activities but we are expected to exercise a duty of care in a leadership situation and to act sensibly under all circumstances. Additionally, U3A members are expected to use their own judgment to be sure that they can independently undertake U3A activities. A register of attendees should be kept for every U3A occasion. Note that offering a lift to another member to attend a meeting is classed as a neighbourly action and not covered by the above.

If you are organising outings or holidays please contact Hon. Secretary for advice and see the paragraph on Groups and Money. Collect contributions before making bookings otherwise you may be funding careless cancellations.

Should the situation arise when a paid instructor who is not a member of U3A be wanted by a group on a *regular* basis then contact the Hon. Secretary who will provide a definition of “regular” and give full details of the insurance and tax documentation required before such a regular instructor can be taken on.

A copy of the current insurance certificate together with 'U3A Liability Insurance at a Glance' and 'Frequently Asked Questions' can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary.

ACCIDENTS

Accidents do happen from time to time and some of these can lead to complications for the individuals concerned and the possibility of insurance claims. Should an accident occur during a U3A activity it is required that a record is retained and the Hon Secretary notified - a report form is available on the web site. For the same reason, an attendance record should be kept.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

The Data Protection Act requires us to be circumspect with members' personal information such as addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Please be careful of any lists of names, telephone numbers or addresses that you hold. You may obtain a copy of Wokingham's policy on this from the Hon. Secretary. Emails should contain the words 'Wokingham U3A' as part of the subject and consider, when mailing several members using the blind copy (bcc) facility in the address section.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Activity groups such as walkers, bird watchers, golf and other groups that include physical activities or visits, in or out of doors, are obliged to give suitable warnings to their members (rough walking, sensible shoes, stiles, physical ability required etc.) and ask that members carry the name and address of a suitable friend or relation in case of accident. Appropriate wording for the particular activity must be communicated to participants. Official Risk Assessment Forms can be found on the web site.

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

U3A Sources. This is an Educational Bulletin created for the Third Age Trust and distributed directly to members' home addresses from the National Office, (email national.office@u3a.org.uk or phone 020 846 66139). It contains interesting contributions about study groups from U3As throughout the UK, Resource Centre news of additions etc., useful web sites that have been reviewed, notes on forthcoming events and details of on-line courses.

The Resources Centre has a web site that you can scroll through to see what videos, slides, overhead materials, texts, Open University courses etc. are available that may be of use to your study group. You will require a password from the Resource Centre to access the library records.

Arrangements can be made to borrow from this library according to the length of time the material may be required. The despatch of a series of videos can be arranged to coincide with specific meetings and returned within an agreed period afterwards. The return postage is the responsibility of the group jointly, but no postage charge is made for the initial despatch. Slides and the notes that go with them can offer a good starting point for a presentation or a discussion. Open University coursework can provide a wonderful framework for a really serious study of, say, art, history or literature.

U3A ON-LINE COURSES

Some subjects are free. There is also an on-line (virtual) vU3A that is a separate group affiliated to the Trust.

SUBJECT NETWORKS

There is a national network system for most subjects and advice on courses can be obtained. There is a list in the U3A News of these facilitators.

STUDY DAYS AND SUMMER SCHOOLS

Advertisements for these activities are usually included in National Office Announcements to U3A Secretaries as well as being announced in the U3A News and Sources. These publications also include details of activities arranged by Subject Networks in which any UK member is invited to take part.

REGIONAL MEETINGS AND NETWORKS

These are delegate meetings arranged by Local U3A Chairmen in rotation or the Regional Trustee. If the subject of your group is part of a programme you may be invited to attend.

THE THIRD AGE TRUST

The following is a reminder of the aims and principles of the Third Age Trust as they relate to groups. The Universities of the Third Age in the United Kingdom are autonomous, self-help organisations run by the voluntary efforts of their members. They are funded by the subscriptions of their members. All U3As are members of the Third Age Trust (a registered Charity) which is their national support and advisory body. All affiliated U3As pay a capitation fee to the Trust.

The word '*university*' is used in its original sense of people coming together to share and pursue learning in all its forms.

Aims: To encourage, generally, middle aged and older people who are not in full time employment to share knowledge, skills, interests and experience and to demonstrate the enjoyment and benefits of learning throughout life.

Principles : Activities should reflect the members' wishes and satisfy the widest possible range of interests utilising resources from own memberships, the Trust's support and outside organisations and using new technologies as they become available

There are no awards or qualifications as the pleasure of learning is the driving force. By sharing learning members help each other to develop and share programmes appropriate to their activities. Members regard themselves as learners and teachers. Paid instructors are only engaged when special expertise is necessary

U3As collaborate with each other to share expertise and facilities and offer systems of support to each other and especially to new U3As. U3As also reach out to educational and cultural bodies, and collaborate with museums, galleries and libraries in learning partnerships.

U3As collaborate with institutions undertaking research into ageing and the position of older people in society.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Any member may attend the Third Age Trust AGM and join in the social activities but only delegates may vote. Wokingham U3A will fund one ordinary member to attend as a non-voting member in addition to the delegates it sends.

(These guidelines are also available on the Wokingham U3A web site. There is also a link on the web site to Third Age Trust "Handbook for Group Leaders" which you may also find of interest.)

Wokingham U3A

Six monthly Financial Return of Group Funds

Report covering 6 months ended 30 June (December) 20__

Name of Group:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| | | |
| | Cash held within Group | |
| | Held by Treasurer | |
| | | |
| Receipts | Meeting contributions | |
| | Outings | |
| | Other | |
| | Funds received back from Treasurer | |
| | | |
| Spend | Room Hire (paid by Group) | |
| | Outings | |
| | Other (list items over £30 on back of form) (exclude outings) | |
| | Funds deposited with Treasurer | |
| | | |
| Balance at end of period | | |
| | | |
| | Cash held within Group | |
| | Held by Treasurer | |
| | Total Balance at end of period | |

