



BELFAST U3A

(Founded in 2001)

A Member of the Third Age Trust



Photograph of Belfast lights by Brian Moore

THE GROUP CONVENORS' HANDBOOK

Introduction	page 2
Committee	page 3
Information and Guidelines for Convenors	pages 4-6
Members Code of Conduct	page 7

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn –

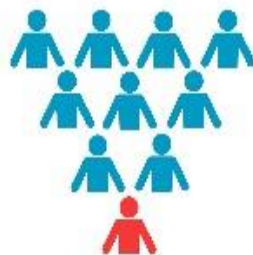
Benjamin Franklin



INTRODUCTION



*Belfast U3A is its **membership** –a group of people collectively promoting and sharing **interests and learning** in keeping with the overall ethos of The Third Age Trust*



Special amongst the membership are the Convenors who give freely of their time to ensure that existing and new Interest Groups remain vibrant. Interest Groups are the lifeblood of any U3A and Belfast U3A is indebted to the commitment and dedication of all our Convenors



COMMITTEE



“Our Committee works as a team and speaks with one voice”

We comprise four officers – Chairperson, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary plus eight others (maximum) as per our Constitution.

Some roles within the committee, such as Groups Coordinator, specifically engage with members, including the ongoing support and initiation of new Interest Groups; others assist in forging links with educational establishments, whilst others are involved in liaising with the Membership Secretary, the Newsletter Editor and Webmaster and in updating policies and procedures.

Living out the U3A principles through ‘laughter and learning’ our events team engage with and encourage our members to participate in social activities such as our Christmas Party and any other special events organised by the Committee.

Our Monthly Meeting is an informative and social occasion for members to meet up, with the opportunity to listen to a range of speakers organised by our Speaker Coordinator.

General communication with our members is maintained through personal contact and via email, our Website and our Newsletter



INTEREST GROUP CONVENORS

The Role of the Interest Group Convenor incorporates **four key areas**:-

Confidentiality and Record Keeping; Financial Arrangements; Communication and Insurance.

1. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- Belfast U3A's Interest Groups are open to Belfast U3A paid up members only.
- Potential new members are welcome to attend one monthly meeting and activity before deciding to apply for membership. The Interest Group Convenor should be informed and a record of attendance kept.
- Interest Group Convenors are responsible for the safe keeping of all contact details of Interest Group members. The use of the Beacon Membership Database is encouraged.
- Interest Group meetings are generally of two types - one with named members e.g. Bridge, and other events open to all members of Belfast U3A e.g. Let's Go.
- Contact details (including email address if appropriate) of Interest Group members which meet regularly, should be entered on a Contact Information Sheet, an Interest Group Notebook, or entered on Beacon (online database).
- A record of attendance at each meeting should be entered on a Record of Attendance Form or in an Interest Group Notebook.
- For an event open to all members, a Sign-up Sheet will be available at the Monthly Meeting.
- For regular Interest Groups, the Convenor is responsible for ensuring that all those attending are fully paid-up members of Belfast U3A. Convenors who are not using the Beacon data=base system, must send a list of Members to the Membership Secretary at the end of October each year.
- Communication by email informing members of Interest Group activities must always be sent as Bcc's, unless the individual members agree to share email addresses e.g. in a small interest group. As per GDPR regulations, members email addresses are provided on the understanding that they are only used to communicate information relating to U3A activities. For Convenors using the Beacon system, this happens automatically.
- Policies for General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Privacy, Safeguarding and Equality, should be adhered to at all times and can be found on the Belfast U3A website.
- When a member leaves an Interest Group, it is essential that his/her contact details are deleted from the Convenor's records.
- When a Convenor leaves a group, all relevant information should be passed to the member taking over the role.

2. Financial Arrangements

- All Interest Groups must be self-financing---covering room hire, photocopying, tea/coffee, etc.
- Self-sufficiency does not mean that funds belong to an Interest Group. All funds belong to Belfast U3A.
- An Interest Group Convenor is advised to avoid cash where possible.
- Using cash collected from members to meet expenses related to the activity they are attending is acceptable but needs to reconcile to all monies collected.
- No Convenor or any member is authorised to sign a Rental Agreement. It is a requirement that all such documentation is passed to the Treasurer for Committee approval.

- All monies collected are passed to the Treasurer of Belfast U3A for payment of invoices to outside bodies e.g. libraries, church halls, etc.
- All monies collected for one-off events are passed to the Treasurer of Belfast U3A, accompanied by the completed sign-up sheet.
- All payments for activities from members/conveners should be made payable to Belfast U3A by Bank Transfer or by cheque.
- An Interest Group Convenor must never open a bank account for an Interest Group.
- Interest Group Convenors should not use their personal bank account or credit card to process payments or receipts for an Interest Group without prior approval of the Treasurer.
- Procedures around cash payments and collections must be discussed with and authorised by the Treasurer for each Interest Group.
- The payment of large sums e.g. theatre tickets, coach hire, should be discussed with the Treasurer.
- In the event of free places or tickets due to large numbers, the total cost should be divided by the total number of members attending. Each member then benefits from a price reduction.
- Events involving ticket sales to the general public should not be advertised under the auspices of Belfast U3A.

3. Communication

- Media: No member is authorised to speak to the media on matters relating to Belfast U3A in general unless requested by the Committee. However, individuals are free to speak of their own experience as members.
- The Belfast U3A Newsletter is emailed to members bi-monthly, excluding the Summer months of July/August. This means it will be sent out in January, March, May, September and November. Members without email receive a hard copy. The Editor will contact Convenors in advance of publication to request information on group activities.
- Belfast U3A website [Belfast U3A: Welcome \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://Belfast U3A: Welcome (u3asites.org.uk)) is a useful source of information for Members. Convenors are encouraged to use it.
- The website of NIREC is u3ani – University of the Third Age – NORTHERN IRELAND REGION
- Information and advice on subjects/topics are available on the Trust Website - u3a - Subject Advice
- Third Age Matters (TAM), the magazine of the **Trust** is mailed to members 5 times per year.
- The website of the Third Age Trust (www.u3a.org.uk) provides more detailed information and advice on the U3A movement and on Learning Events.

4. Insurance

4.1 Public Liability

- The Third Age Trust provides Public Liability Insurance for all members of U3A.
- Interest Groups using outside premises, can request a copy of the Third Age Trust Public Liability Insurance Policy from the Groups Coordinator.
- All Convenors must check regularly that everyone is a paid-up member of Belfast U3A.
- Only paid up members of U3A are covered by the Third Age Trust Public Liability Insurance.

4.2 Personal Liability

- The Third Age Trust does not provide members of U3A with Personal Accident Insurance.

- Members of Interest Groups must take responsibility for their own care, safety and equipment.

5. **Reporting of Incidents**

All incidents, no matter how minor, are required to be reported initially by the Interest Group Convenor, or the person responsible for the activity on the day, to the Business Secretary and the Groups Coordinator on the *Incident Report Form* which can be downloaded from the Belfast U3A website.

- The Interest Group Convenor or the acting Deputy should obtain all relevant details of the incident--- time, place, contact details, action taken, etc.
- The *Incident Report Form* is held on file by the Business Secretary for 3 years.

6. **Venue arrangements.**

- Activities can take place in hired, public venues or outdoors. (*Please see item 2 Financial Arrangements in relation to Rental Agreements*)
 - Hired venues ----- libraries, church halls, Belvoir Theatre Studio, community rooms, leisure centres, bowling clubs, etc.
 - Public venues ----- theatres, concert halls, cinemas, restaurants, hotels, PRONI, etc.
 - In members' homes
 - Outdoors ---- e.g. participating in golf, walking, cycling, gardening etc.
- Risk assessment using the Venue Risk Assessment Checklist is strongly advised. Available from Belfast U3A website.
- Risk assessment for walks using the Walk Leader Risk Assessment Checklist is strongly advised. Available from Belfast U3A website.

7. **Equipment**

- All equipment purchased by an Interest Group for a specific group remains the property of Belfast U3A. *Charges to members for use of personal equipment within an Interest Group is not permissible.*
- It is important that a record is maintained of all U3A owned equipment for the purposes of Belfast U3A Annual Assets Return. This is kept by the Treasurer.
- Equipment for Group members with hearing difficulties is available.

8. **Convenor Support**

Should any concerns arise within the running of an Interest Group, the Groups Coordinator is always at hand to lend advice and support.

9. **Improvements and Updates**

- This handbook is to help and provide guidance to Group Convenors and will be subject to improvement and revision periodically as Belfast U3A evolves and grows. It should be of particular benefit to Group Convenors new to the role, in helping them familiarise themselves with best practice within Belfast U3A and to share with more experienced Convenors. There will be opportunities for Group Convenors to discuss such changes through the Groups Coordinator and at regular Group Convenor Meetings.
- This Handbook is available on the Belfast U3A website.



BELFAST U3A

A MEMBER OF THE THIRD AGE TRUST

Member Code of Conduct

The Member Code of Conduct clarifies the standard of behaviour expected as a member of a U3A.

- Members are expected to know, follow and promote the Principles of the U3A Movement at every opportunity. (<https://www.u3a.org.uk>)
- Members must always act in the best interests of Belfast U3A and the U3A Movement, strive to uphold its reputation and never do anything which could bring Belfast U3A or the U3A Movement into disrepute or expose it to undue risk.
- Members are expected to use Belfast U3A's resources responsibly and only to further its stated charitable objects/purposes.
- Members are expected to reflect the current organisational policy of Belfast U3A, regardless of whether it conflicts with their personal views.
- Members are expected to abide by Belfast U3A's policies, procedures and practices.
- Members are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times.

This Code of Conduct is provided by the Third Age Trust