

Procedures for Group Co-ordinators

The U3A Ethos

The overall ethos of the U3A as a national organisation is one of Mutual Learning. The aim of the U3A movement is for all members to contribute, in many different ways, to the success of the group without the assistance of non-U3A members. It is a fundamental part of the U3A ethos that teaching within U3A is by the members, for the members. Hence no payment can be made to members for tutoring or other work done for the movement. All work undertaken by volunteers for the movement is unpaid.

This mutual learning model is as appropriate today as it was when the U3A movement was founded in 1982. Much of the fun is provided by the mutual help within a group. The lack of internal expertise is not a valid reason for paying a tutor. It is surprising how rapidly a group of people can develop, without any significant initial knowledge, into a group which engages in serious study and even research.

Being 'all in it together' enhances self-confidence and groups without an expert are some of the most satisfying in a U3A. Having an expert paid tutor can easily stifle these highly desirable outcomes.

East Medway U3A abides by this overall ethos in that we do not pay for any professional tutors or advisers; with the only exception (as advised by the national body) being payment for speakers at our monthly all-member meetings.

Operation of interest groups

For groups to be covered by U3A insurance, member lists must be maintained and signed by each attendee at each meeting. Copies of these lists must be provided to the committee on request. At the beginning of each membership year and when new members join, the Group Co-ordinator must ensure that a valid membership card is produced.

Funding of interest groups

In East Medway, each interest group must be self-sufficient so they cover costs between attendees on an interest group by interest group basis. It is essential to remember that group self-sufficiency must not be interpreted as implying that funds belong to a group: all funds belong to the U3A.

Within East Medway, the majority of our interest groups make no charge for attending. Many groups meeting in private houses provide refreshments through mutual non-cash arrangements between members (eg group members providing biscuits in turn). Where any payment is made to the host for refreshments, this **must not exceed 50p per person, per meeting**.

Any group where a charge in excess of 50p is required (eg where materials are purchased for the group), then the money belongs to the U3A and the host must record the amount received. This will be treated as petty cash by the group convener/leader and any balance must be paid to the Treasurer with a completed financial return (including receipts for any purchases), at appropriate intervals – at least quarterly.

Petty Cash

The amount of petty cash that a group co-ordinator or any other member is allowed to hold to facilitate the running of an interest group **must not exceed £25**, as agreed by the committee. This, together with the financial returns required, allows the committee (trustees) to monitor the

income and expenditure of the groups within their U3A and ensure that the reporting mechanisms are adhered to.

This is essential to protect both trustees and group co-ordinators. The committee has total responsibility for ensuring safe custody of members' money and the Trustees are the people with legal accountability.

Payments to other charities

A U3A cannot raise funds for another charity that does not have similar charitable objectives as it has no power in its constitution that allows it to do so. This is a fundamental part of charity law as all money raised by any charity has to be spent on its charitable objectives. It is unlikely that many other charities will have sufficiently similar aims to those of a U3A.

A charity can buy a service from another charity such as speaker hire but that is all.

However, a marked collecting box for another charity which is displayed and is **clearly not a requirement** for attendance at the event or group is permissible.

Personal Credit Cards

Co-ordinators are not encouraged to make purchases using personal credit or debit cards, other than for low-value sundry items. All purchases should be supported by receipts.

Expensive events

Expensive events such as theatre trips or educational days out must be charged at cost and all participants pay appropriately. Currently, within East Medway, no such events are run. Any proposal to run such events in future should be presented to the committee for prior approval.

U3A tutors

As stated above, in line with the overall U3A ethos, East Medway U3A does not use paid tutors. Any interest group that wishes to use paid tutors on a continuing basis will be required to operate completely outside the auspices of the U3A. The U3A must clearly not be involved in any way, for example the group will not be part of the U3A-advertised programme,

Reports and Accounts for the Financial Year End and the AGM

For its AGM a U3A must produce a set of examined accounts which will provide details of all monies received and paid out in their previous financial year. Any money collected by Group Co-ordinators as described above (with the exception of the 50p per meeting maximum for refreshments) will be included in these accounts.

All financial records must be kept for a minimum of six years from the end of the financial year to which they relate.