

Chair

The Chair, together with the Secretary, will decide on an agenda and must be well informed on all the issues to be discussed and their relative importance and aware of where decisions are needed. The Chair holds a key position during the meeting and should have a strong enough personality to keep control of the meeting and to be able to deal firmly, fairly and tactfully with disruption or aggression. It should be remembered that all decisions must be committee decisions and that the Chair has no special executive powers other than those stated in the constitution.

A sense of humour is vital! A good Chair will vary his/her style according to the purpose of the meeting. He/she should recognise a hidden agenda and allow it to be brought out into the open. Anyone trying to use the meeting to satisfy his/her own aims should be very quickly dealt with. The Chair must be a facilitator and an enabler. He/she should be a good listener as well as a communicator, controlling the length of the discussion to allow the meeting to move forward to the next item.

He/she needs to be:

- Flexible in approach.
- Diplomatic and approachable.
- A positive leader.
- Tasks:
 - To maintain the charitable objectives/purposes of the U3A.
 - To preserve order at meetings (all members must address their remarks via the Chair and not directly to the person).
 - To ensure the correct procedure is followed.
 - To guide the discussion in a positive manner, all the time assuming a neutral role.
 - To allow different points to be expressed.
 - To encourage participation from all members in discussion and decision-making, especially the quieter ones.
 - To stick to the agenda and avoid side-tracking.
 - To remain calm when strong feelings are expressed.
 - To draw discussions to a conclusion and to summarise fairly the arguments “for and against” an issue.
 - To ensure that decisions are followed through, often in conjunction with the Secretary.

Chairing a committee is a responsible job which requires hard work and considerable skill. It should not be seen as a reward or status symbol or become an ego trip