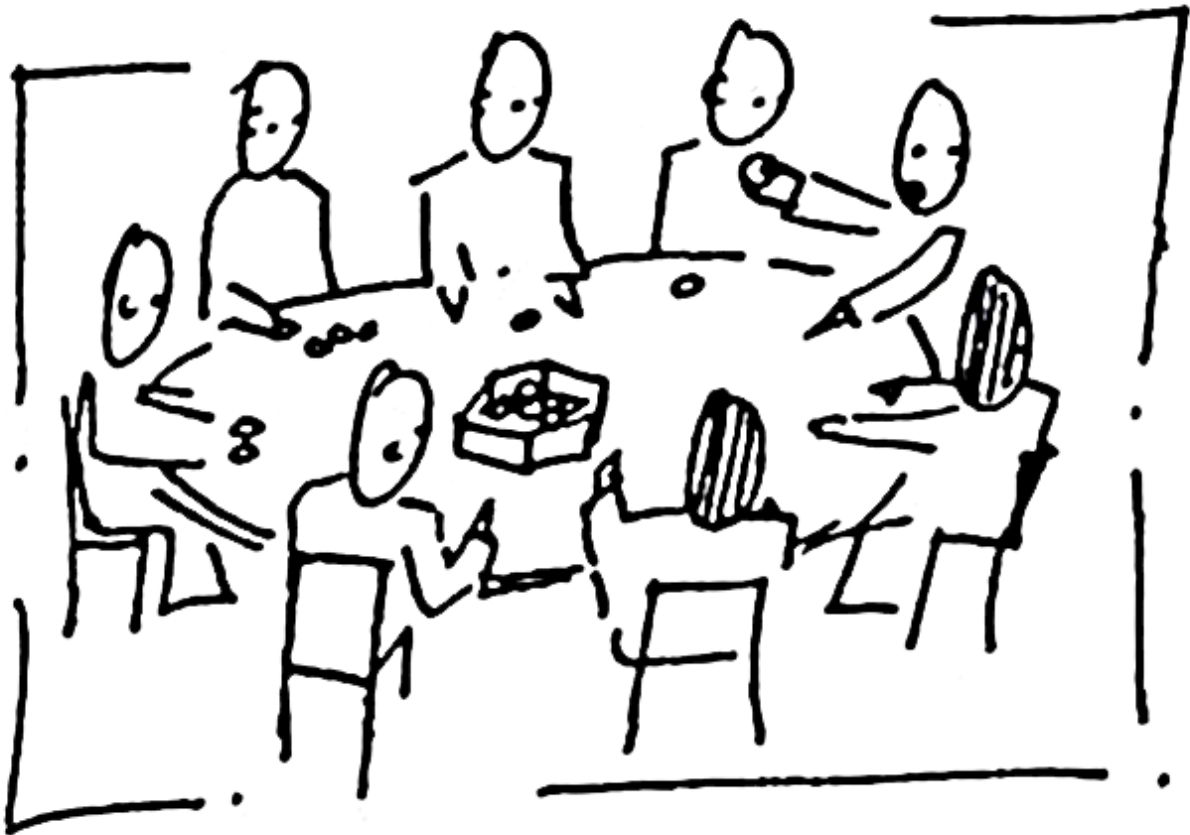


Running a Group



U3A South East London

Running a Group

Introduction

Without the support of tutors and convenors, U3A could not exist: they're vital both for individual members and for the committee members who also help run the organisation. Some groups will have just a convenor, others just a tutor and some will have both, depending on the type of group and the way it is run. In groups which have both, who does what can be decided between the individuals concerned and the members of their groups. For simplicity's sake, these guidelines will refer to convenors to include both roles.

We hope this guide contains enough information to enable you to run your group but if you need any help or advice please contact the chair or the appropriate member of the committee.

You'll find the names and details of current holders of posts such as chair and treasurer on the contact list which is on the website, in the programme and in the newsletter.

Further information can be obtained from the member area of our website **www.u3asites.org.uk/london-se**

Our charity registration number is 1044428

What practical support is available to convenors

- We will support you in starting the group and provide any support that you may need.
- We will book and provide accommodation in a hired venue for your group if necessary but there may have to be a minimum number of regular participants to maintain the booking. We may also agree a maximum number of meetings each year.
- We will provide opportunities for you to publicise your group and recruit new members
- Convenors are invited to regular general meetings where they will have an opportunity to meet other convenors, raise issues of concern with the committee and contribute to the efficient running and continuing success of our U3A. If the convenor is unable to attend these meetings you should ensure your group is represented by another member.
- We will ensure that reasonable expenses such as postage and telephone calls are reimbursed. You should keep receipts for all purchases; if you are in doubt about whether a potential expense is reasonable, please contact the treasurer. Group members are expected to cover incidental expenses such as refreshments and photocopies.

What group members expect from convenors

- The convenor should agree the format and content of meetings with members: how often you'll meet, where, whether there will be any form of instruction or other specific structure to meetings and so on.

- Members expect to be kept informed of any changes to arrangements – if a regular venue is unavailable for some reason, for example; convenors should therefore maintain a list of members' contact details.
- Some new members may be shy or nervous and will appreciate a genuine welcome, especially in a large group or one where all the existing members already know one another well. It could be worth asking someone else to keep an eye out for new people if you have your hands full just being the convenor!
- For many members, especially new recruits, the convenor will be the main link or liaison with U3A South East London so will appreciate you sharing any general information and news about its activities.

What U3A South East London needs from convenors

- A register must be kept at each meeting. The main purpose is to ensure that everyone attending is a paid-up member and additionally to record how many people are turning up each time. You should also record the names and contact details of any visitors. While in smaller groups, the convenor may well know everyone personally, it is useful to take members' names in larger groups in case introductions are needed, especially when welcoming new people to a group. The register must be sent to the registrar three times a year: April 30th, August 31st and December 31st.

- Convenors in booked venues should make themselves aware of the cancellation policy of their venue so that they know what notice is required to avoid unnecessary payment of rent if the group should need to cancel a meeting. You should tell the treasurer if that happens so that we do not pay for unused rooms.
- There needs to be one person in each group who acts as an official contact with U3A South East London, preferably the convenor or another member who is on email, to stay in touch and pass on messages to convenors and group members when required.
- It's the convenor's responsibility to supply details of meetings for publication in the official programme three times a year. These should be sent to the programme editor preferably in the body of an email. This should include dates, times and location of meetings; a sentence or two on what the group does and contact details for the convenor with phone number and email. It is essential that entries are submitted each time, even if the details remain more or less the same (eg, meets every first and third Thursday of the month to play badminton and table tennis), and of course it's even more vital if dates and/or other details vary from month to month. Copy dates are on the publication schedule which is sent to you and is also available on our website. The programme editor may well omit mention of a group that fails to provide up-to-date information by the relevant deadline.

- When you are planning an outing you should check with the Event Coordinator that your proposed date does not clash with an outing arranged by another group. Details of the current Events coordinator can be found on the contact list.
- The programme entry is an important way of attracting new members to join a group so try to make your write-up sound welcoming even if it's just a couple of sentences. Space in the programme isn't unlimited, but you can say a lot more by creating your own group page on the U3A South East website. Look at the groups page on the website to see what information other groups have included. If in doubt about how to go about making your own page, contact the web editor or the chair for some initial advice; it's easier than you might think!
- The editor of the newsletter is always keen to hear from convenors about what the groups have been doing and it's another effective way to promote your group and encourage new people to come along. See the newsletter for inspiration, and send your contributions to the editor by post or email; copy dates are also on the publications schedule.
- If your promotion efforts are successful, you may find you have more people wanting to join than you can handle, for space or other reasons. You should then start a waiting list and let anyone on it know if a vacancy does arise. It would also be helpful if you could keep the chair of the groups team up to date about your waiting list in case there may be an opportunity to start a second, related group or provide larger

accommodation. There is a space for you to make a note of your waiting list on the register.

- If your strategy for increasing numbers fails to bring the desired results, you should let the leader of the groups team know as soon as possible so that the group can be formally closed. If you were meeting in a hired room, the groups team will be responsible for permanently cancelling the booking.

Support for you in running your group

- When complications, of whatever kind, arise, your first port of call should be the chair of the groups team. They will be able to offer advice if you have a problem with your venue, for example, if your group is becoming too large (or too small) and such practical matters.
- Occasionally, difficulties may arise with an individual member who is unhappy for whatever reason and, if the problem can't be sorted out with a friendly chat, ask for help from the groups team who will advise on the grievance procedure. Don't try and sort out a potentially serious problem of this kind on your own and in particular, don't try and resolve it by excluding anyone from the group without going through the correct procedure.
- As we all know, discussions on politics and religion can sometimes go beyond friendly disagreement and escalate into the offensive; please bear in mind that U3A is a non-political organisation and do what you can to nip such behaviour in the bud. If such potentially contentious topics form part of your

group meetings, you may want to agree a 'code of conduct' with members to make sure everyone understands what language and behaviour is acceptable and what isn't.

- You should adopt a similar approach if members want to garner support for a particular cause by means of a petition or fundraising and this should not be part of the official meeting.

Copyright

We hold a licence to copy some materials for educational use within groups. If you are going to be using copyright material in any form, for example, printed, audio or pictures, please check with the licence information on advice sheet 10 on the national website at www.u3a.org.uk

Visiting speakers

A visiting speaker may be a regular feature or an occasional highlight, but before inviting someone to talk to your group, please be aware of the following guidelines:

- U3A South East London policy is not to pay speakers a fee, though we will cover expenses, such as travelling, meals, photocopying and so on. It is good practice to ask for an estimate of expenses before confirming a booking. After the event, please ask the speaker to give you a note of their costs, with name, address, phone number and email together with

the amount claimed, and forward it to the treasurer. Contact him for advice if you have any queries.

- Check whether the speaker will require any special equipment and ensure that it will be available. Contact the groups team for advice if necessary.
- If you choose to offer the speaker lunch and/or tea or coffee, plus bottle of water, keep a note and claim the costs from the treasurer. Again, contact him if you have any queries.

Health and safety

We try to ensure that all the public venues used by U3A South East London are on the ground floor or accessible by lift but access can be more difficult when members meet in a private home. Wherever possible, the convenor is expected to arrange help as needed for anyone with a disability but if problems arise, contact the chair or chair of the groups team for advice.

Despite its reputation for absurdity in some quarters, health and safety policy is largely a matter of common sense. As convenor, you are expected to take reasonable steps to check that exits from public venues are not obstructed and are clearly marked, cables are not trip hazards, staircases are well lit and not obstructed and so on. In larger venues you should point out the safe exits from the room at the start of the meeting. You should also delegate someone to be the last person out in order to check that everyone has safely left the room. You will be expected to make yourself aware of any first aid equipment and/or first aider support provided at the venue.

At home, just be aware of any potential hazards, such as slippery rugs and poorly lit areas and do what you can to reduce the risk of accidents.

Common sense is also the key if you are running an outing; for example, give participants some idea of the length of a walk and the likely terrain beforehand. If you are leading a walk on roads, follow the Highway Code relating to pedestrians. It's a good idea for leaders to carry a small basic first aid kit for minor emergencies.

Financial matters

- Charity status – U3A South East London has charitable status, and is therefore regulated by the Charity Commission. Our charity registration number is 1044428. In order to maintain this status, proper records must be kept of all income and expenditure.
- Expense claims – please make any claims as soon as possible after incurring the expense, using the expense claim form available from the website or from the treasurer. Please make clear the nature of the expense and the group(s) involved.
- Room hire – please don't commit U3A to expenditure on the hire of rooms for a new group before clearing this with the groups team chair. The cost should be appropriate for the size, location and activities of the group. Ongoing bookings may be renewed by the convenor within the guidelines laid down by the groups team.

- Significant expenditure – if you think that your group might incur expenses of more than £100 per year, please discuss this with the treasurer. Purchase of equipment should be discussed with and approved by the treasurer before you buy. Any equipment becomes the property of the U3A and should be made available to other groups if required.
- Special events, outings, etc – these should be planned on the basis that they will be self-financing. If the event needs upfront financing (e.g. a deposit) by U3A, you should consult the treasurer.

Insurance Policies

We, as a U3A, have arranged a range of insurances that cover our operations. This covers U3A activities held both in hired halls and in members' homes. It also covers walking and other outdoor activities; however it is not personal injury insurance. For that to be covered there would need to be proof that the U3A had been negligent.

Our range of policies is outlined below. Full current policy details can be obtained from the Trust website www.U3A.org.uk

Public and products liability

This cover indemnifies all U3A members against all sums you could become legally liable to pay as a result of :

- Accidental injury to or death of any person.

- Accidental loss or damage to material property not belonging to you, which arises or is caused in connection with the 'business' of U3A.
- Public liability indemnifies the insured against compensation which they are legally obliged to pay following injury or property damage sustained by a third party. It does not cover pure accidents where no legal liability has been established.
- Product liability protects the policy holder against claims related to a product for which we are held legally liable.

Money cover

- A limit of £300 for U3A cash held in members' homes.
- A limit of £1,000 U3A cash in transit and at hired premises.

Tour operators' liability

NOTE: This insurance is to cover a group leader/convenor who wants to arrange a short study trip for their group, involving overnight accommodation. It follows therefore that it does not include day trips, whether by coach or other means of transport, which are covered by the public and products liability insurance.

U3A holidays should always be booked through a bonded travel agent.

Charity indemnity insurance

This covers the acts of trustees (committee) of the charity.

Contact Information

Details of current committee and other post holders can be found in every Newsletter and Programme there is also an up to date list in the member's area of the website.

Our Website

www.u3asites.org.uk/london-se