

The Group Convener

is a member who takes a leading role in co-ordinating the interest group with the help of other group members.

Longridge u3a

**Group Convener's
Handbook**

“Interest groups are the lifeblood of the u3a”

Thank you for convening one of Longridge u3a ‘s interest groups. You are making a vital contribution to Longridge u3a, and we appreciate you giving your time and energy to your group.

This pack aims to provide information on some of the practicalities of convening a group. Please let us know of any questions you may have which are not answered in this booklet.



The Group Convener’s role

Group Conveners are drawn from u3a membership, and the interest group is also made up of u3a members. The u3a is a cooperative and mutually supportive organisation so it’s not expected that one person should carry the sole responsibility for running an interest group: it is a good idea for group members to share responsibilities.

The Group Convener is the link-person for the group and generally guides the group through the subject area that the group is exploring. The group might like to share other tasks. For instance:

You might meet in a member’s home, but this does not need to be the convener’s home. A group member may be happy to host the group.

If you prefer not to give your phone number out as a point of contact for new members, another group member may be willing to deal with phone queries.

A member of the group could take on responsibility for computer-related issues, for instance updating the web-site and e mailing information to the Membership Secretary, Treasurer etc.

Other group members could organise refreshments, or take charge of finances.

Where you are exploring a subject together, group members can share in the preparation and planning of aspects of the subject.

Assistance is always on hand from the Groups Coordinator and other Trustees

Chair	Sally	07546 998907
Vice Chair	Elaine	07511 953754
Treasurer	Monica	07749 047988
Secretary	Anne	07973 729281
Groups Coordinator	Andrew	07762343307
Membership	Jenny	07540 871859

Practical aspects of running a group



Membership

All group members must be members of Longridge u3a or one of the u3a's in the network agreement (enclosed in this pack). Please check this with new members of the group.

Any one who is not a u3a member can visit any of the Longridge u3a activities TWICE, after which they need to join Longridge u3a.

If people who are not members of a u3a come to a group meeting more than twice please give them a membership form (enclosed in this pack) and ask them to complete the form and bring to the next meeting with the correct subscription. They will then be able to come to other group meetings, and take part in other activities.

Please let the Membership Secretary know if any non-members are attending your group. There are two reasons for this:

If a non-member is allowed to attend u3a activities and is involved in an accident, the u3a might find itself without liability cover.

Also fully paid-up members will be subsidising the visitor from their annual fee, and this is unfair to them.



Ground rules for groups

It is a good idea to have ground rules for the group, so that Convenors' and group members' expectations match.

For instance: Do you want members to let you know in advance if they are unable to come or will be late?

In your group, should members make a regular commitment to come to the group or are you happy to have members attending occasionally? (This is likely to depend on the subject of the group).

Is there a maximum number of group members, beyond which your group would not work well?

Does the group depend on members preparing something to bring to the group? How will the group operate if someone who has undertaken to prepare something for the group does not do so or does not come?

What if members are disrespectful of each other or don't pay?

Discuss financial issues immediately and ensure they are understood and agreed.

We prefer not to turn potential members away from Longridge u3a interest groups, so please let the Group Coordinator know if your group is getting towards its ideal maximum number. It may then be possible to start a new group.



Group Finance

Each group should be self-financing. Costs for running the group should be shared between group members.

When money is collected from group members, the Group Convenor should keep a record of the amount collected using a Group Attendance sheet (copy in the Documents/Group Convenors pages on the website). Using the Group Account sheet (copy in the Documents/Group Convenors pages on the website) you can record attendance money collected from the Group Attendance sheet and any money that has been spent.

At the end of each financial quarter of the financial year the Treasurer will ask for a copy of group records.

Where the group meets in a Group Convenors or group members house,

A small charge can be made to cover the cost of refreshments. Longridge U3a leaves it to each group to decide this amount.

When the group meets in an outside venue.

If a venue is required discuss all aspects, costs, equipment etc with the Group Coordinator. Once a venue has been agreed any hire costs must be invoice to the Treasurer and any agreements / contracts must only be signed by the Committee. The Treasurer / Group Convenor then books the required dates / times with the venue contact person.

If there is a fee to hire a room.

Group members will pay an agreed amount to cover the cost of room hire. Where there are substantial running costs for a group, it is a good idea to collect a fixed amount from members for a set of weeks in advance, even though members may not always be able to attend all group meetings. This is a groups decision.

In a pub or café.

Each group member buys his/her own drink from the venue.

Remember.

Never open a bank account.

Never put members money into your own bank account, pass to the Treasurer as soon as possible.

Give receipts if requested.

Ask for a receipt for any money spent.

Avoid cash if possible.



New Venue.

(not used by other groups)

Before using any new venue a Venue Risk Assessment Checklist must be completed. This is to ensure that the venue is safe to be used by members. Contact the Group Coordinator who will organise a assessment.



Problems

At some point as a Group Convenor, as in life, problems / events outside your control will arise. The question is how to resolve them.

Below are three examples, there will probably be more.

In the case of an accident / incident if a person is injured do not hesitate to contact the emergency services. As soon as possible contact a trustee from the list on page 2 and complete an Accident Form (a copy is available in the Documents/Group Convenors pages on the website).

Pass the report and any other relevant detail to the Groups Coordinator.

If damage is caused to property by a member of the group, take full details and inform to the Groups Coordinator.

If it happens that a group member becomes disruptive or ignores the group's ground rules it is acceptable to ask a member to leave. Inform the Groups Coordinator as soon as possible so that the problem can be resolved.

The u3a policy is that only the Trustee's can ban a member from a group or

@ Longridge u3a web-site

Your group details on the web site includes information on how prospective group members can contact you. All group Convenors are asked for their contact preferences; if yours change please let the Groups Coordinator know.

The web-site is the first port of call for many people looking for information about groups, and so we need to make sure it is up-to-date. It is quite straightforward to change your own group webpage, and you can find out how to do this from Longridge u3a webmaster (webmaster4u3a@gmail.com). If you prefer, the Groups Coordinator can do this on your behalf.

The important thing is that there is correct information regarding the time and place of meetings on your site. You may of course wish to add further information or photographs as well.

The web site also includes a section specifically for Group Convenors which includes a copy of this hand book and printable copies of all the forms etc needed by Group Coordinators.

Open the web site, click on the Documents heading, click on Group Convener Information in the Links section. This will open a page with the documents in the Links section which when clicked on will open for reading or printing.

Summary of administrative tasks - remember, these can be shared out with other group members

At each meeting

Ensure that those attending are u3a members and are recorded as attending by using the Group Attendance sheet.

Go through the Meeting Checklist (enclosed in this pack).

Keep a record of money collected and spent using the Group Attendance and Accounts sheet.

When there is a change of venue or time of meeting

Let the Groups Coordinator know.

Change the details on the web-site or ask the Groups Coordinator to do so.

Every 3 months or sooner

Send the Group Coordinator an updated list of members attending your group.

Every 3 months if you have accounts

At the end of June, September, December and March send the Treasurer an updated copy of your accounts.

As and when

If you have news about your group, update the website or ask the Group Coordinator or someone in your group to do this.

Please let the Groups Coordinator know of any changes to the timetabling and location of your group so that this information can be passed on to people who make enquiries.

This handbook has been compiled to cover the basics of running an interest group. Also in this pack is the document **Group Convener Role Responsibilities**, taken from a u3a Trust document, which defines the role of a Group Convener and goes into more detailed advice on Learning and Learning Styles.

Meeting Checklist

Safety briefing

The fire alarm is not due to be tested.

On hearing the fire alarm the exits are (point out the exits) and the Fire Assembly point is

The First Aid Box is located

Other

The toilets are