



Midhurst U3A

HANDBOOK FOR GROUP LEADERS

Interest groups are a core part of the ethos of a U3A and one of our priorities is to ensure we have a wide range of successful groups available for members.

The success of our groups is the direct result of the inspiration, leadership and efforts of our group leaders.

We have prepared this handbook to help group leaders in setting up new groups and in running established ones. It sets out some ideas on setting up and running groups, but focuses on the support available from within Midhurst U3A and from elsewhere in our regional and national U3A networks.

We sincerely hope you enjoy being a group leader with Midhurst U3A and find it rewarding.

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GETTING STARTED

If you haven't already decided, you will need to plan:

- The purpose of the group.
- When, how often, where and how you are going to meet.
- The maximum numbers you can accommodate.
- The time commitment involved.
- What help is available to you.

You can plan these on your own or discuss them with the group at your first meeting.

ESTABLISHING THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

You will need to consider the scope of the subject matter or activities (what the group is going to do) and the level at which the group will work (beginners, improvers, advanced).

FREQUENCY, TIMING AND DURATION OF MEETINGS

Be flexible at this stage and look at different models – regular meetings; meetings arranged as and when; short courses; or even residential.

CHOOSING A VENUE

You will need to take into account the size of the group and what the group needs, e.g. chairs, tables, equipment, space for physical activities. Think also about the subject matter and whether it needs a neutral rather than a domestic setting, a formal or an informal ambience.

SIZE OF GROUP

The appropriate size for the group will depend on subject, treatment and accommodation.

We aim to avoid long waiting lists. To achieve this it may be necessary for us to have more than one group covering the same or related subjects.

HOW MUCH TIME CAN YOU ALL COMMIT?

As the potential group leader you should decide how much time/expertise you will realistically be able to offer and what you will expect of the group members. Do not over-commit yourselves.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

Find out what help is available locally, regionally and nationally:

- Talk to our Midhurst U3A Groups Coordinator.
- Contact our SUN representative. There may be relevant study days planned within Sussex or opportunities to meet with others in the area to share experience.
- Contact the national Network Coordinator for your subject to see what material he or she has.
- Contact the Third Age Trust Resource Centre and register as a borrower.
- Register to receive the Third Age Trust's *Sources* publication.

More details are given in later sections of this handbook.

THE FIRST MEETING

There is a large body of research into later life learning which suggests that older people learn best when they are in control of their own learning. Participation by all group members should be encouraged from the start.

It may be useful to have a hand-out for the first meeting in the form of a check-list. This will focus the group and encourages shared responsibility.

You will need to agree your purpose, find out the skills and resources at your disposal and decide on a way of working.

FIND OUT WHAT MEMBERS EXPECT OF THE GROUP

A successful group will be clear about and share expectations. If there is a wide variety of expectation, then consider forming more than one group. If this is not feasible, then plan a programme in such a way that as many approaches as possible are included.

It is a useful exercise at the first meeting to get agreement to a short description of what the group hopes to do and how they hope to do it. This will subsequently form a statement of intent which will help to keep the group on track and will inform potential new members

DISCOVER THE EXPERTISE WITHIN THE GROUP

It is important to find out what knowledge and experience exist in the group and decide how these are going to be used. You may be fortunate enough to have many group members able and willing to share their expertise, or you may start with just one. You may also start with little or no obvious expertise.

Shared learning does not mean that a group cannot seek to extend its learning base by inviting others to join them either permanently or for specific purposes.

The ethos of U3A is that its members share their knowledge and experience freely, but there may be times when a paid external speaker or even a paid external tutor is desired by the group. However, see the later section on use of paid outside speakers and tutors.

AGREE THE WAY OF WORKING

Many methods are used by U3As groups including:

- Lectures
- Taught sessions with participation
- Shared presentations
- Discussions
- Skills teaching
- Trips and fieldwork
- Physical activities.

All methods are legitimate, as part of the shared learning experience, providing they are suitable for the topic, use the skills available to you and are accepted by the group. It is not necessary to choose one method for all time: different formats will be suitable for different purposes.

RUNNING YOUR GROUP

A few practical things will help you to run your group smoothly and will help ensure our U3A as a whole is run in an efficient and proper manner:

- Keep a list of the members of your group and of anyone interested in joining but to whom you cannot yet offer a place.
- Keep a simple record of what your group does - this can be used to brief our wider membership through our newsletters.
- Group meetings usually include a tea/coffee break and it is customary to contribute to the costs of the host (currently 30p per session).

- Keep a note of your expenses (e.g. photocopying, printing from a PC, hire of DVD/video) and ask your group members to share these. We do not wish or expect a group leader to be out of pocket.
- All bookings of accommodation, transport and other services should be made in the name of Midhurst U3A.
- If monies are collected for group visits, meals or other activities, these should be passed to the Treasurer who will subsequently make all payments.

SUPPORT WITHIN MIDHURST U3A

Midhurst U3A is run by a Committee, elected at the AGM each year. A member of the Committee is appointed “Groups Coordinator” to provide Group Leaders with help and support. The Groups Coordinator should be the first person to turn to for help.

You may also have contact from time to time with other members of the Committee as explained in this Handbook. You will find all Committee members’ contact details in our annual *Programme of Activities*.

HELP WITH PUBLICITY

Do you need help in publicising your group in our annual Programme of Activities, our printed newsletters, our website, our news e-mails or at monthly meetings? Ask the Groups Coordinator.

ADVICE ON VENUES

Most of our groups meet in members' homes but some use hired accommodation. The main hall and the side room at the Methodist Hall and various other accommodation can be used. Contact a member of the Committee for details and help in booking.

AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT

Midhurst U3A has equipment which you may borrow:

- Digital projector
- 35mm slide projector
- Projection screen
- Laptop computers
- Multi-purpose printer, scanner, copier
- Wireless modem/router
- Flip chart board and paper

If you wish to borrow any of this, please contact the Groups Coordinator.

INSURANCE

In your group activities you are covered by Public & Products Liability Insurance. This covers U3A members for loss due to accidental injury to a person or accidental loss or damage to property not belonging to them, as long as it arises from or in connection with a U3A activity. Should you ever experience such a situation, please contact the Secretary for advice and an Accident Report Form. Details of the insurance policy and a copy

of the form can also be seen on the Third Age Trust website www.u3a.org.uk.

Anyone giving lifts to fellow U3A members will be covered by their own motor insurance in the usual way.

COPYRIGHT

You can legitimately copy material for use by your group. Midhurst U3A has a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency which allows multiple photo/digital copying by our members for educational purposes. Contact the Secretary if you have any queries.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Each group should be self-funding and group members must cover all the normal running costs of their group. However, if a group ever feels there are exceptional circumstances it may ask the Groups Coordinator for help.

SUPPORT FROM SUN AND THIRD AGE TRUST

SUN (THE SUSSEX U3A NETWORK)

SUN provides a Study Day Programme available to all members of local U3As. In addition, from time to time it runs workshops specifically for group leaders. Many study days and workshops are run in conjunction with universities. For details contact our SUN Representative or visit the website www.sussexu3anetwork.org.uk.

A Summer School held in Chichester is provided by the South East U3A Forum.

THE THIRD AGE TRUST RESOURCE CENTRE

The Resource Centre in the National Office at Bromley has a collection of material (other than books) available for all U3A groups to borrow free of charge except for the cost of return postage. There are slides, videos, audio cassettes, CDs and DVDs available in many subject areas. Lists are free and available on request.

You will be issued with a user number that will allow you to search the catalogue online. Loans are for a period of three weeks and may be renewed on request if not needed elsewhere.

You may register with the Resource Centre either by telephoning 020 8315 0199 between 9.30am and 4pm on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday or online at the Third Age Trust's website.

THIRD AGE MATTERS AND SOURCES

Members receive the national *Third Age Matters* several times a year. This contains news from U3As across the country, experiences, ideas, contact details and useful advertising. Some articles may be of interest to group leaders.

Sources is the national U3A educational journal. Each issue has a subject focus, but items on any matter relevant to education in the third age are welcomed. It is

published three times a year. If you wish to receive *Sources* by post, complete the registration form online at the Third Age Trust's website or telephone 020 8466 6139.

NATIONAL SUBJECT COORDINATORS AND NETWORKS

Group Leaders in individual U3As work together to share ideas and materials. Many subjects have a national Subject Coordinator whom you can contact directly. In some cases there is also material available online that you can use or adapt to meet your needs. Contact details for the Subject Coordinator are given on the Third Age Trust's website.

ON-LINE COURSES

A list of courses is to be found on the Third Age Trust website. Some have been written by U3A members in the UK: some are from Australia. Their high standard has been recognised by a National Institute for Adult Continuing Education award. They are low cost, some untutored, with tutored ones costing slightly more. Although they may be followed individually, the material may also be used for groups. Untutored courses can be downloaded and printed for group study. You are also encouraged to use the Open University's 'Open Learn' courses.

RESEARCH COLLECTION

A research collection is currently being built up by the Resource Centre as a reference point. It encompasses a) research about older learners and b) research by older learners including U3A members on any subject. If you can offer such publications, please contact the Resource Centre Manager with details of title, author, any public source and date, marked clearly for 'Research Collection'.

SHARED LEARNING PROJECTS

A typical Shared Learning Project involves U3A members working with a local institution, such as a gallery or museum, on a project of mutual benefit. These co-operative ventures offer an exciting opportunity for sharing expertise and learning.

The Third Age Trust website describes what shared learning projects are and how to start one. There are also regular reports of such projects in *Sources*.

TIME TO LEARN

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills invited the Third Age Trust to prepare a facilitators' handbook for informal adult learning. *Time to Learn* was the result. We recommend it to group leaders. Copies can be obtained from the Groups Coordinator.

A FEW RULES

WHO CAN JOIN A GROUP?

Membership of a Midhurst U3A group is restricted to current members of Midhurst U3A and members of neighbouring U3As. If you are in doubt about a member's status, seek help from the Membership Secretary.

Repeated attendance by a non-member would disqualify that individual and possibly the other group members from U3A insurance cover.

DATA PROTECTION

The Data Protection Act requires us to store personal data securely so as to avoid unauthorized or illegal use and to restrict access to it to those who need it for the purpose for which it was collected, i.e. in our case contacting or communicating with members. It covers all personal data whether stored in paper or electronic form.

Hence:

- A group leader may hold contact details of the members of the group but should not pass these to others without the prior approval of those concerned.
- However, all members of certain groups, e.g. the Walking group, legitimately need the home and/or mobile telephone numbers of all the other members for organisational and safety reasons.

- Group leaders are required to give their approval to their own contact details being circulated to all Midhurst U3A members.
- E-mails circulated to large groups of members should place the addressees in the “Bcc” box and not in the “To” box, so that each member is not inadvertently given the e-mail addresses of all the others.

USE OF PAID OUTSIDE SPEAKERS AND TUTORS

One-off payments to speakers for fees or the reimbursement of legitimate expenses are not problems. However, if you are planning to ask a freelance leader/tutor/specialist to run a class on a regular basis for an agreed fee, it is essential that you check beforehand that the person:

- Is registered with HM Revenue and Customs as a self-employed person.
- Has a current public liability policy of at least £2 million. The U3A policy does not cover U3A members when a freelancer is being paid.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

As a charity, we are required to follow sound financial practices. This is one reason for the recommendations on bookings and money handling above. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Treasurer.

Good luck with your group!

Midhurst U3A
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