

Response to Code of Conduct consultation.

In this consultation response “CoC” means Code of Conduct. This response reviews the responses we received on the CoC and puts forward recommendations arising from that consultation.

Overall Conclusion

That the draft CoC, subject to some minor amendments, is acceptable to our membership.

The amended CoC can be seen at [here](#).

The committee is asked to adopt this new CoC, reviewing it in a year’s time (after which we can switch to a 3 yearly review).

This consultation response will go through the responses we received on each question posed to our members.

1 Do you agree that all four behaviours are important in the successful operation our u3a?;

208 members replied. Of these 206 (99%) said yes to question 1 and 2 (1%) said no.

Conclusion

Our membership supports these behaviours as being important in the successful operation of our u3a.

2 Do you think that these four behaviours are comprehensive enough to ensure that our members are protected and continue to learn?;

208 members replied. Of these 199 (96%) said yes whilst 9 (4%) said no.

Conclusion

Our membership considers the four behaviours comprehensive enough to ensure that our members are protected and continue to learn.

3 Are there any other behaviours you would like to see detailed in the Code of Conduct?

Please see next page

Response to comments received (this analysis ignores the supportive comments)

Comment	Response
Confidentiality e.g., not sharing e-mail and contact details unless permission given. It is something we already do check but it is better to have it in writing.	Agreed The CoC has been amended to reflect this.
No. Participation is unnecessary and you need to define exactly what kind of commitment.	We think that participation should be an expected behaviour for a non-service organisation. This u3a is run and operated by volunteer members. It is unfair not to expect members to have some form of participation. That said, the CoC does allow for flexibility depending on members ability.
Confidentiality. Equal ops/ discrimination. Unless there are separate policies for these?	There are separate policies for this, although the CoC does touch upon these. The CoC has been amended to take account of confidentiality.
This may not be directly related to the code of conduct for existing members but I would like a more proactive approach to increasing the diversity of our membership. Sometimes it does not feel as if we are representative of the community more generally that we are a part of. Additionally, I strongly agree NOT a service organisation. The success of our interest groups relies on each person feeling validated in terms of any contribution they may offer to the group. I do think that perhaps a little more emphasis could be made to communicate to members that it's not so much how much you know about a subject but more that you wish to develop and learn....in other words the group membership is 'mixed ability ' and we will all have different starting points. I am happy to volunteer to a working group on how this may be developed. I enjoy being a member of the science group.	Agreed but not a matter for the CoC.

Equality	We believe that this is covered under "Respect"
Freedom of speech, expression and belief	We believe that this is covered under "Respect"
All of them need expanding into acceptable / not acceptable behaviours.	The CoC is meant to give a high-level direction on these issues rather than become a list of do's and don'ts. The document would become cumbersome if extended in this fashion. This is not to say that particular groups could develop their own individual "rules" of behaviour based upon the CoC.
Understand of other peoples needs.	We believe that this is covered under "Respect", as this would be an aspect of treating people fairly.
I think there may be other behaviours that should be included that can be added at a later date.	Noted
Something to do with 'friendliness' or 'welcoming'. I imagine it could feel quite daunting coming into some of our established groups.	Agreed "openness" and "tolerance" have been added to the "Respect" behaviour.
Inclusivity. No exclusion of people for spurious reasons e.g. because it is the way we have always done things or because new members might upset the group dynamic.	Agreed "openness" and "tolerance" have been added to the "Respect" behaviour.
Consideration	Unsure what this comment relates to: but we are asking members to treat each other fairly, which can be read into the "Respect" behaviour
Change of wording for the fourth item. Hiking and walking aren't learning activities and book groups aren't necessarily learning.	<p>The wording within commitment to learning behaviour comes directly from our constitution, which was voted and agreed at our last AGM.</p> <p>This commitment to learning is given as the sole purpose of our charity. As such, it is reasonable to expect that members pursue some form of learning/education.</p> <p>However, we agree that social interaction is important, and that this interaction can be the starting point for one's own personal</p>

	<p>learning journey. As such your committee will continue to support them.</p> <p>Also, learning comes in many forms, and many of our social groups will contribute to that learning journey: for example “Scrabble”</p> <p>We do agree that the “Learn, Laugh, Live” is reflected within the CoC.</p> <p>As such, the CoC has been amended and refers to “Learn, Laugh, Live” as one of our common goals.</p>
<p>simplicity in terms of no unnecessary paperwork etc</p>	<p>Agreed: we aim not to impose unnecessary bureaucratic requirements.</p>
<p>Anti oppressive behaviours</p>	<p>Agreed “and “tolerance” has been added to the “Respect” behaviour</p>
<p>An important aspect of Respect is open mindedness and the capacity to respect different values and points of view</p>	<p>Agreed – we believe this is covered by the “Respect” behaviour</p>
<p>Fairness</p>	<p>Fairness is included within the Respect behaviour</p>
<p>Self -Reflection and sense of Humour</p>	<p>Although the strap-line of u3a is “live, laugh, learn”, we should be careful of imposing self-reflection and humour as expected behaviours in the CoC.</p> <p>Some members may not find self-reflection a useful technique and everyone’s sense of humour is different. For example, some people would find Jim Davidson’s sense of humour offensive.</p>
<p>When in a group discussion the 'leader' tries to ensure that everyone has a turn to make a comment</p>	<p>The CoC is meant to give a high-level direction on these issues rather than become a list of do’s and don’ts. The document would become cumbersome if extended in this fashion. This is not to say that particular groups could develop their own individual “rules” of behaviour based upon the CoC.</p>

<p>I suggest meaningful contribution by each group member should be emphasised. I only participate in a few groups but observe a few members simply want to be entertained, not much commitment to learning, and make only occasional and rather insignificant contributions.</p>	<p>Agreed – we believe that this is covered by both the participation and commitment to learning behaviours.</p>
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4 Do you have any comments you would like to add regarding these questions?

Comment	Response
<p>It would have been convenient to have the draft code for each behaviour included or linked to question 2.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>They are rather broad so I'm not sure how useful they really are</p>	<p>The CoC aims to give a high-level direction of what is expected of our members. As such it will be broad – the committee does not wish to be dogmatic, but does want give members some indication of what is expected of them.</p>
<p>Could participation and commitment be combined? Health and safety - is there anything about assessing risks when meetings are in homes?</p>	<p>We felt that it was important to draw a distinction between these two behaviours. It would be entirely possible to be committed to one's own learning without really participating in groups etc. We also wanted to emphasize that, as our u3a is not a service organisation, participation of its members in running the our u3a is essential.</p>
<p>I think it would have been good to have some more detail about what these values mean in practice</p>	<p>The CoC is meant to give a high-level direction on these issues rather than become a list of do's and don'ts. The document would become cumbersome if extended in this fashion.</p>
<p>I cannot believe that simple good manners and common sense have to be replaced by this !!! A sad statement on the society that those of our age have brought into being I am ashamed.</p>	<p>Nothing replaces simple good manners. We hope that the CoC just supports the operation of these good manners.</p>

<p>It is important that personal information and or contact details are not shared, without permission . Does discrimination come into code of conduct? Or is there a separate policy on equality. I have looked at u3a policies, but can't remember ,</p>	<p>Agreed. We have added "Every members' confidentiality is respected." In the "Respect" behaviour.</p> <p>We believe discrimination is covered by the "Respect" behaviour.</p> <p>There are separate policies on equality etc.</p>
<p>We all need to treat everyone with respect. Simple as.</p>	<p>Although this is a significant component of our behaviours, your committee would like to see more member participation in the running and operation of your u3a.</p>
<p>Participation should be handled with a light touch</p>	<p>Agreed, and we believe the wording in "Participation" allows flexibility whilst saying that we should all participate according to our abilities.</p>
<p>May have to tighten up some definitions to avoid confusion in the event of "a breach"</p>	<p>We will ensure that the CoC is subject to periodic review to allow for such clarification.</p>
<p>I dont agree that the u3a is entirely about learning. The National u3a motto is Learn, Laugh, Live. The social aspect of older people meeting in groups is very important and this is referred to in two of the three words in the motto. I think the code of conduct should refer to this aspect.</p>	<p>The wording within commitment to learning behaviour comes directly from our constitution, which was voted and agreed at our last AGM.</p> <p>This commitment to learning is given as the sole purpose of our charity. As such , it is reasonable to expect that members pursue some form of learning/education.</p> <p>However, we agree that social interaction is important, and that this interaction can be the starting point for one's own personal learning journey. As such your committee will continue to support them.</p> <p>Also, learning comes in many forms, and many of our social groups will contribute to that learning journey: for example "Scrabble"</p> <p>We do agree that the "Learn, Laugh, Live" is reflected within the CoC.</p>

	As such, the CoC has been amended and refers to “Learn, Laugh, Live” as one of our common goals.
Although I answered 'yes' to question 2, I don't really understand what is meant by 'safety'?	<p>We expect all of our activities to be under-pinned by a risk assessment, to assess the risks of that activity and put measures in place to avoid inadvertent harm.</p> <p>In many cases these risks will be minor – for example a book group will have a fairly straight-forward risk assessment.</p> <p>Other activities, that carry greater risks, for example circle dancing, may need more extensive risk assessment.</p>
What should we do if we feel that this code of conduct is not being adhered to?	Report your concerns to your Group Leader, to the Group Leader coordinator or directly to any other member of the committee.
It is interesting to see how any changes in the Code of Conduct can be made in order to improve and progress the overall experience of U3a members.	Agreed – we will keep the CoC under review
These behaviours are obviously subjective, and people need to be clear that they could be interpreted differently by others.	There is a degree of subjectivity in these behaviours but the CoC does try and put in some basic standards – such as treating everyone fairly. Behaviours tend to evolve overtime, but we hope that these CoC’s basic principles will stand the test of time.
The item about sanctions for misdemeanours sounds severe, and I think it’s off putting for an adult group. Surely in these cases a polite enquiry and talk could sort it out. How many cases are there??	<p>There are very few cases – but they have occurred and generally been resolved through a polite conversation.</p> <p>The CoC does not require the committee to impose any sanctions but leaves it free to do so when it considers it necessary.</p>
the new annual return form for the charity commission (5/10/23) does not include a code of conduct in the list of policies charities are expected to have, or even in the longer list of tick boxes for other policies that a charity has.	<p>You can see the requirement to have a CoC in the following guidance on .Gov.uk</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees</p>

	<p>If you look at this page, scrolling down to “Code of Conduct” you will see that it states:</p> <p>“Code of conduct</p> <p><i>If you have staff or volunteers you must have a clear code of conduct which sets out:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>your charity’s culture and values</i> • <i>how people in your charity should behave”</i> <p>Our u3a is composed of volunteers.</p> <p>Please note that when .gov guidance says something as a “must” it is a requirement rather than good practice.</p>
<p>Many of the groups are social..arts and crafts, cinema, garden visits etc. so I question the ‘continuation to learn’ point.</p>	<p>The wording within commitment to learning behaviour comes directly from our constitution, which was voted and agreed at our last AGM.</p> <p>This commitment to learning is given as the sole purpose of our charity. As such , it is reasonable to expect that members pursue some form of learning/education.</p> <p>However, we agree that social interaction is important, and that this interaction can be the starting point for one’s own personal learning journey. As such your committee will continue to support them.</p> <p>Also, learning comes in many forms, and many of our social groups will contribute to that learning journey: for example “Scrabble”</p>
<p>Due to discrimination and oppression in wider society, it is to be expected that some people who are discriminated against and oppressed will encounter behaviours that are not acceptable in every area of life, which includes U3A.</p>	<p>Noted</p>

<p>Tolerance</p>	<p>We believe that this is covered by the “Respect” behaviour. “Tolerance” has been added for clarification.</p>
<p>Why are these self evident codes of behaviour being highlighted now ? How did this arise?</p>	<p>The development of the CoC came from two sources:</p> <p>Firstly, our chair wanted to increase volunteer participation in our u3a and challenged the committee to come with ideas to increase that participation. One idea put forward was to ensure that our members knew that participation was expected of them and hence we developed the CoC.</p> <p>Secondly, we have been reviewing our Safeguarding responsibilities and became aware of the requirement to have a CoC (see above)</p>
<p>The code says - Executive Committee "is free (...) to impose sanctions it considers necessary". This seems too open ended without any description of committee process. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say sanctions it reasonably considers necessary ?</p>	<p>Agreed. The CoC has been amended to reflect this wording</p>