

U3a Model constitution: Proposed changes

There is a common national problem of u3as having difficulty in getting people to serve on committees. The rules around the composition and tenure of committee members are set out in the model constitution provided by the Trust. After feedback from consultation with the pilot council, a number of changes are recommended.

Most of these relate to the guidance rather than the requirements in the constitution to emphasise that these are recommendations not requirements

Terms of Office

The model constitution limits the term of office for committee members to three years with a year's gap before someone can stand for re-election. In addition, the maximum period of service in any combination of roles is nine years, whether or not the periods of office are contiguous.

It is proposed that the requirement for a gap of one year is removed. This allows for someone to stay in office for up to nine years but they need to be re-elected on an annual basis.

Having an annual election enables an individual to serve for a limited period of time if they wish, whilst allowing alternative candidates to come forwards.

The current rule is in clause 16(8) *No-one may hold any specific officer position or be an ordinary (non-officer) trustee for a continuous period in excess of 3 years without an interval of at least 1 year between the periods of service.*

The recommendation is that this clause is deleted from the model constitution. Rather than ask u3as to change their whole constitution they can propose a resolution at an EGM or AGM to delete this clause from their constitution.

Serving on more than one u3a committee

Clause 21 in the constitution is about managing conflicts of interest and loyalty. The advice note attached to this clause states *"no person may be proposed for appointment or serve as an officer or a non-officer of the executive committee if they are currently serving as an officer or member of the executive committee of any other u3a"*.

It is recommended that this note is removed as it will facilitate u3as to develop more flexible management models and to legitimise and encourage the practice where one member of a successful u3a assists in the management of one that would otherwise be in danger of closing.

Roles required in the model constitution.

The u3a model constitution states that the officers must be a chairperson, vice chair, secretary and treasurer. This is not a Charity Commission requirement which simply states there must be a minimum of three trustees.

The logic of having a vice chair is obviously to provide support to the chair and to deputise when needed. Having the four posts works well in most large u3as,

however there are some very small ones where having four officers is not justified or practical due to the size of the u3a.

The recommendation is that as clause 16(2) states that that u3as “should” rather than “must”, the guidance is clarified make it clear that this is a recommendation and u3a can operate with three officers, a chairperson, a treasurer plus one other.

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