

Guidance for Group Leaders

The U3A is dependent on its members for setting up and running groups. These notes have been written with the aim of supporting current Group Leaders and any member wishing to lead a new group.

Setting up a group

- The purpose of the U3A is to share knowledge, skills and experiences and to meet the social needs of its members.
- The U3A relies on the enthusiasm of its members and on their willingness to involve themselves in groups.
- A group can be established on any topic that interests you and those who wish to join.
- A group can be of any size, though 5 and upwards is best, but where it is likely to be held dictates the number.
- If you would like to start a group talk to the Group Co-ordinator who will help you to begin.

Needs of a group

- A leader to coordinate/organise and members to participate.
- An agreed programme.
- A regular time and place for meeting at a member's house or public venue.

Types of group

- A study type with a defined educational aim and a specific subject to learn about in a set number of meetings e.g. computers, photography.
- A social study group with a defined educational aim but with no limit to the number of meetings e.g. psychology, history, art, craft work.
- A social or activity group with no defined educational aim e.g. walking, Mahjong, cinema, lunches.

Aims of a Group

Interest Groups are members of a u3a who choose to pursue an interest together. The method of learning preferred by the u3a movement is co-operative, self-directed and non-formal. It is fully democratic. All members of the group will participate in the decision making as to what they would like to do, how to achieve it and what methods to use.

Group Leaders

The main function of the Group Leader is to make all the necessary arrangements for the group meetings and to manage the group finances. However, there is no reason why some, or all, of the administrative roles may not be delegated to other group members.

Group Leaders may have particular skills to offer and choose to take on a tutorial role in addition to an administrative one, but this is entirely optional. They may also support and coordinate the learning and teaching, which is shared between members of the group and/or arrange speakers or visits.

If a Group Leader is also the group 'teacher' they should try and delegate some of the administrative tasks e.g. register checks, collecting money.

A Deputy Leader for each Group is recommended as they can provide support for holidays and illness. It is also an opportunity for training to be given for the Deputy to start up another group, in the event that a waiting list of other members build up and another group is needed.

Members' Attendance.

A blank version of the register can be obtained from the Group Co-ordinator or downloaded from the Members' page on the Website

Wherever a meeting is held, the Leader must maintain a register and record attendance at each meeting. The register must be shredded 6 months after it has been filled up.

Contact details are obtained from members when they sign up with the Group Co-ordinator at the general meeting, or when they contact the Group Leader to join i.e. Membership number, name, telephone number and email address. This register is the list through which the Group Leader can contact members of the group. It must be kept securely and not copied to anyone else.

Group Leaders must not circulate personal data of a member to the rest of the group, or anyone else, without that member's authorisation.

Please ensure your members are fully paid-up members during April by checking that the group have up-to-date membership cards of this or a neighbouring U3A. This includes those members who are attending a Stubbington group but belong to another U3A. If there is a problem, let the Group Co-ordinator know.

This information is required for fire regulations and Insurance cover which depends on accurate records of attendance and on membership-only groups.

The Group Leader should mark the register at the beginning of a meeting. This would be needed for a roll call if the building had to be evacuated. The Leader should also be familiar with emergency exits from a building, including a private house.

The Group Leader, where possible, should also record a name/number of someone to be contacted if a member is taken ill, or has an accident that may need emergency intervention.

This could also be essential if there is someone at home expecting them, or they have a pet. Visitors attending a group meeting as a 'taster' must also be recorded.

Group Leaders should note on the register if/when a member stops attending and, also advise the Group Co-ordinator when the group is full and a waiting list has started.

A minority of members, who have joined another U3A, attend some of our groups because their U3A does not run the interest group they are attending. E.g. Solent and Gosport members sing in our choir and several other U3A members play in our Bridge group. This is approved by the Chairperson.

Non-attendance at 3 group meetings, non-reply to 3 emails without a given reason, the Group Leaders can remove the member from the group.

The Group Leader will send an email to the member advising them that their name will be removed from the interest Group due to non-attendance. This will ensure that waiting lists are kept to a minimum.

Should a member leave the group all their details must be deleted from the register.

Running a Group

The date and time of the Group Meeting is published in the monthly Newsletter and details recorded on the website of each group. This can all be accessed from the Home page of the Stubbington website under Groups.

It is anticipated that Group Leaders publicise their groups by sending information to the Newsletter Editor. The Newsletter Editor is always pleased to receive photographs and activities about your group. You must ensure that you have everyone's permission before photographs are sent for publication.

Group Leaders can also send information to the Assistant Web Master in order to keep their own group website up-to-date, or they can arrange to maintain the website themselves.

Group Leaders must let the Group Co-ordinator, the Newsletter Editor and the Assistant Web Master know of any changes to the time/venue of their meeting in the coming month, in time for the publication of the Newsletter and/or for the general meeting.

The Group Coordinator will maintain an Interest Groups Photographic Board to display at the monthly U3A meeting. This board will contain details of all existing groups with contact details of the Group Leaders.

Members and prospective members can take the contact details if they are interested in joining a group. Lists of proposed new groups will be available for members to add their names.

The Group Leader is asked to let the Group Co-ordinator know the names of members on their waiting list, if they have one and date accepted. Some Leaders, who have had a waiting list, have started other group themselves, or encouraged a member of the group to start another group when the waiting list reaches 5 or 6.

The Group Co-ordinator will assist Leaders with this by advertising at the general meeting and in the Newsletter. Members are disappointed if groups they choose to join have a waiting list and have left the U3A as a result.

Prospective new members are asked to contact the Group Leader for further information and may request to attend 2 monthly General Meetings or 2 Group Meetings, or 1 General meeting and one Group Meeting, or 2 visits to the same Group or 1 visit to 2 different Groups.

If a disabled member wishes to join a group and there is something that prevents them, there may be a solution. The Disability Liaison Officer, whose contact details are in the Newsletter or on the Website, is available to help.

In the event of an incident/accident of a member or a visitor who is trying out a group, an incident form should be completed. The form is available to download from Links on the Members' page of the website or from the Group Co-ordinator. This should be returned to the Group Co-ordinator for reference to the Committee. It will then be filed by the Secretary.

If a Member has a Carer, that Carer can attend a meeting, with the Member, without having to join. Should the Carer become a Member and there is a time when the person being cared for cannot be left, the Member may bring the person they care for with them to a meeting without having to join.

For either situation, the non-member will pay the particular meeting expenses. They will be covered by the liability insurance provided by the Trust.

Expenses and Equipment.

Support funding is available for some purchases (£50 grant). The item purchased should be marked as the property of the Stubbington u3a with labels obtained from the Group Co-ordinator. Grant application forms can be downloaded from Links on the Members page of the Stubbington Website. Completed forms should be passed to the Group Co-ordinator for submission to the committee.

Group Leaders may make reasonable applications for expenses. Please consult Expenses in the document 'Policies adopted by the Committee', which can be found under Links on the Members Page. The Expenses claim form can be downloaded, also from Links on the Members Page on the Stubbington U3A, website.

Groups should be self-financing, and therefore costs should be agreed with the group members and kept to a minimum.

If a Group is held in a member's home, it is expected that a contribution of 50p is to be made towards refreshments, wear and tear of home and heating. This is given directly to the host and need not be recorded. Any damage or spillage on carpet or furniture may be covered by insurance.

The Group Leader will arrange for the hire of a venue and inform the group of the charge. If it is a large group, it would be preferable if the Treasurer handled the money. However, if the Leader wishes to pay from funds collected on the day of the meeting, then a receipt must be obtained and financial records kept.

At no time should the petty cash amount to more than £50. The U3A is not insured for a larger sum and the Leader should discuss this with the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer if this occurs.

Stubbington U3A holds a number of items of equipment e.g. tables, pop up gazebo etc. which is available for use by Groups during meetings.

There are also multimedia items e.g. Projector, speakers, screens and laptop available for use at meetings with instructions on borrowing and usage. These lists can be seen on the Members page of the Website.

Cash holding Guidelines for Group Leaders.

Group Leaders are asked to adhere to the following guidelines, agreed by the committee if handling cash on behalf of their group.

Keep a record of all cash transactions, they may be subject to an occasional audit.

Keep a float to less than £50, amounts greater than this should be handed to the Treasurer for banking, it will still be available for the groups use.

Obtain a receipt for all cash payments to outside providers. If it is not possible, make a clear record of the transaction.

The U3A will insure sums up to £50 against theft or other loss, which is why you should bank any greater sum. If a sum greater than £50 is lost, the group would have to bear the cost.

If your group needs to hold a float greater than £50, please contact the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer to discuss the reason and what should be done.

If a group meets in your home and members simply pay you “tea money” (typically £1), you do not have to keep a record of these payments and you will not be audited.

The £1 payment is not just for any drinks you supply. It is also intended to be a contribution towards wear and tear and heating. This being the case, all group members should pay the charge and not seek to escape it because they don't take a drink.

Based on the above, the money is the host's to keep. You should not feel obliged to put it towards some other cost, such as occasional room hire or a speaker. Any such extra costs should be charged separately to your group's members.

Car Share

Using cars to take U3A members to meetings etc. does not affect 'social, domestic and pleasure' insurance cover.

The Committee recommends that a contribution of 15p per mile should be offered towards petrol when given lifts by members to Group Meetings.

Licenses

If appropriate to your activity, be aware of the National Office Advice on Licences which covers photocopying, recorded music, DVDs/video and performances.

This information is available from the Group Co-ordinator or the National website, under '**Committee Responsibilities'/'Advice'**

Useful Documents for Group Leaders

Many of these documents can be found on the Stubbington U3A website... Members page under '**Links'**.

Register for Group attendance
Incident Form for use for Incidents and/or accidents.
Expenses form
Grant Application Form
Multi-media equipment for use by Group leaders
Equipment for Groups
Policy for use of multimedia equipment.
Advice on using your Wi-Fi away from home
IT Guidelines
Local policies
Venue Checklist
Walk Leader Risk Assessment Checklist

Other useful articles and resources can be found on Third Age Trust central website (www.u3a.org.uk). A password will be required. On the 'Home' page click on '**Advice**' or '**Resources**'. Both have a dropdown menu with very useful documents, particularly under **Committee Responsibilities**.

The website also allows access to Subject Advisers, National Programmes and free online Learning events.