

THE PRINCIPLES of the u3a MOVEMENT

1. The Third Age Principle

- Membership of a u3a is open to all in their “third age” which is defined, not by a particular age, but by a period in life in which full time employment has ceased.
- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.
- Members should do everything to ensure anyone wanting to join a u3a can do so.

2. The Self-help Learning Principle

- Members form interest groups covering whatever topics and activities they desire; by the members, for the members.
- Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive. No qualifications are sought or offered.
- There is no distinction between learners and teachers; all are u3a members.

3. The Mutual Aid Principle

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the u3a movement.
- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any u3a.
- Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions and costs kept as low as possible.
- Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the u3a movement.

THE THIRD AGE TRUST

The Third Age Trust is the body that represents all the u3as in the UK at both national and international level. **All** local u3as are members of the Trust and must agree to abide by the Principles of the u3a Movement. The Trust is run by a **National Executive Committee (NEC)** which offers a range of services to local u3as.

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC)

Members of the NEC are democratically elected by the u3a members. The NEC meets every 2 months to consider policy matters raised by its various sub-committees and working parties, as well as matters raised by u3as, u3a members, regions, networks and external organisations. The NEC is made up of:

- **Chairman**
- **Treasurer**
- **Vice Chairman (x2)**
- **12 Regional Trustees** each representing a u3a region (see below).

Individual NEC members may also be involved in:-

- Links with external organisations (e.g. The Open University, Age UK etc)
- Responding to papers/ research on Lifelong Learning
- Publicity and awareness
- Attendance at u3a and other conferences

The NEC has 3 main sub-committees:

Standing Committee for Education (SCE). The **SCE** has responsibility for:

- The Resource Centre
- Online Courses
- In-depth Study
- Summer Schools
- Shared Learning Projects
- Subject Advisors
- Group Leader Support and Training
- National Conference Programme
- Exclusive u3a events
- Production of the educational journal “u3a Sources” (3 times a year)

Finance sub-committee (FSC).

The responsibilities of the **FSC** include Accounts, Finance, Staffing, Salaries, and Risk Assessment.

Development sub-committee (DSC). The **DSC**:

- Encourages the formation of u3as in under-represented areas.
- Provides start-up packs for the Steering Committees of newly-forming u3as.
- Oversees the development of new u3as.
- Provides Committee Packs, Advice Sheets, Discussion Documents and Workshop Seminars to support existing u3as in all aspects of their management.
- Assists existing u3as with any issues of growth or declining numbers.
- Supports Regional Volunteers in assisting Regional Trustees.

There are 2 further sub-committees:

Research sub-committee (RSC). The **RSC** has responsibility for:

Shared Learning Projects, University Partnerships, Research Projects

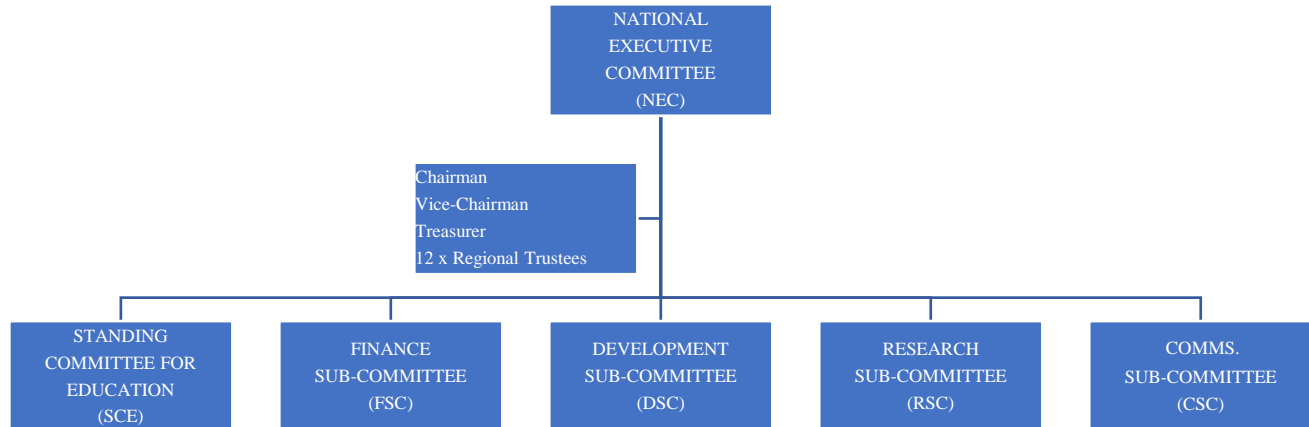
Communications sub-committee (CSC). The responsibilities of the **CSC** include:

- Publicity
- Promotion and Public Relations
- Production of the national magazine “Third Age Matters”
- Maintenance and development of the u3a website
- External Communications
- Sharing best practice

- Assisting u3as, networks, and regions
- Overseas u3as
- IT trends and guidance

In addition, steering groups are established from time to time to organise specific events.

STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



REGIONS

A region is a geographical constituency within the u3a organisation. Together with **Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales**, there are **nine** English regions. These are:

East of England, East Midlands, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands, Yorkshire & the Humber, Greater London.

Each of the 12 regions will nominate and elect a **Regional Trustee** to the NEC (see above).

NETWORKS

Network is a term for groups of u3as which have chosen to work together for their mutual support and benefit. Membership of a network is entirely voluntary and no u3a is compelled to join their local, or any other, network. Networks choose their own organisational structure. Some have no constitution or procedural rules, no committee and no bank account. Others have a constitution which governs their running. Some networks have no contact with their region while others are fully integrated into the structure and send representatives to regional meetings. Geographical boundaries do not necessarily follow county boundaries, and may even cross over into another region.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP of a LOCAL u3a

ALL committee members, including those who are co-opted, are automatically **TRUSTEES**. Trustees are **collectively** responsible for the u3a funds and for controlling its management and administration. Trustees are covered by the Trustee Indemnity Insurance provided by the Third Age Trust, provided that they act responsibly. An excess of £250 applies in **all** circumstances.

TRUSTEE DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Make sure that the charity is carrying out the purposes for which it is set up.

- Ensure that you understand the charity's purposes (as set out in its governing document).
- Plan what you want your charity to achieve, and what it will do.
- Be able to explain how the charity's activities are intended to further or support its purposes.
- Understand how the charity benefits the public.

2. Make sure that the charity complies with its governing document.

- Comply with charity law requirements and any other laws that apply.
- Take reasonable steps to find out about the legal requirements that apply.
- Read any available relevant guidance notes.
- Take appropriate advice where possible.
- Make sure that the details held by your regulatory authority are accurate and that they provide all necessary information, financial and otherwise, by the required date.

3. Decide what will best enable the charity to carry out its purposes.

- Make balanced and adequately informed decisions, both long term and short term.
- Avoid conflicts of loyalty between your personal interests or those of any other person or body and your duty to your charity.
- Not receive any benefit from the charity unless it's properly authorised and is clearly in the charity's interests. (This also includes anyone who is financially connected to you).

4. Act responsibly, reasonably and honestly.

- Exercise sound judgement.
- Construct appropriate procedures and safeguards to ensure that the charity's assets are only used to support or carry out its purposes and, together with its reputation, are not exposed to undue risk.

5. Use reasonable care and skill

- Use your skills and experience wherever relevant.
- Take appropriate advice when necessary.
- Give sufficient time, thought and energy to your role.
- Prepare for, attend, and actively participate in all committee meetings.

6. Comply with statutory accounting and reporting requirements.

- Demonstrate that your charity is complying with the law, and is well run and effective.
- Ensure appropriate accountability to members and within the charity as a whole.

TRUSTEE CODE of CONDUCT

This is an agreement between the organisation and the individual committee member which clarifies the standard of behaviour expected in the performance of their role.

Trustees **must**:

1. Read the Charity Commission leaflet **CC3 ‘The Essential Trustee – what you need to know, what you need to do’** (see final page).
2. Comply with Charity Law and the requirements of the Charity Commission.
3. Always act in the best interests of **Torfaen u3a** and the u3a Movement, and never do anything which could bring them into disrepute or expose them to undue risk.
4. Never derive any pecuniary benefit from being a trustee.
5. Notify the Chairman of any gifts received.
6. Inform the Chairman before accepting an invitation to speak on behalf of the u3a.
7. Respect organisational, committee and individual confidentiality at all times.

In addition, trustees are expected to:

1. Promote the Principles of the u3a Movement at every opportunity.
2. Abide by **Torfaen u3a’s** governance procedures and practices.
3. Reflect the current organisational policy of **Torfaen u3a**, even if it conflicts with their personal views.
4. Treat fellow committee members courteously at all times and maintain a respectful attitude towards the opinions of others.
5. Use **Torfaen u3a’s** resources responsibly and only to further its stated charitable objects/purposes.

All trustees should be asked to confirm their acceptance of the code, and this should then be minuted.

FUNCTIONS of the OFFICERS of the COMMITTEE

Chairman

The Chairman has no special executive powers other than those stated in the constitution. The Chairman, together with the Secretary, decides on the agenda for committee meetings and should be well informed on all the issues to be discussed. The Chairman should be a good listener and communicator, controlling the discussions to allow the meeting to move forward to the next item. He/ she should be able to deal firmly, fairly and tactfully with any disruption.

Tasks:

- To preserve order at meetings (**members must always address remarks via the Chairman**)
- To ensure the correct procedure is followed
- To guide the discussion in a positive manner, **assuming a neutral role at all times**.
- To allow different points to be expressed
- To encourage participation from all members
- To stick to the agenda and avoid side tracking
- To draw discussions to a conclusion and to summarise fairly, the arguments “for and against” an issue
- To ensure that decisions are followed through, often in conjunction with the Secretary.

Vice Chairman

The role of a Vice Chairman is to deputise for the Chairman when required and to be able to assume responsibility at short notice.

Business Secretary

The Chairman and the Secretary need to be able to work well together and agree upon a course of action. He/she needs to be a good organiser, diplomatic, approachable, a clear thinker and calm.

Tasks:

- To keep the Chairman well informed on all correspondence
- To construct the agenda for the meetings with the Chairman
- To send out agendas with relevant discussion papers in good time
- To take spare copies of the papers
- To convey decisions taken to the people who may be required to take action
- To take action as required following the meeting
- To deal with correspondence following discussion with the Chairman
- To maintain full and accurate files including minutes
- To be the point of contact and reference between meetings
- To be the link with the National Office and to ensure that information is relayed to the committee and passed on to the membership.

Treasurer

Tasks:

- To open and operate a bank account
- To make a recommendation on cheque signatories for committee approval
- To maintain accurate and sufficiently detailed financial records in accordance with the requirements of Charity Law
- To report to the Committee on finance at each meeting
- To prepare the statement of accounts for examination and presentation to the AGM
- To prepare an annual budget
- To recommend the level of subscription to be paid by the members
- To pay approved invoices and agreed expenses
- To keep all receipts
- To ensure that the committee has agreed appropriate procedures for the handling of financial matters.

Committee Secretary

Tasks:

- To take fair and accurate minutes of the meeting.
- To write up the minutes in fair copy, agree them with the chairman, and circulate them to the committee.

Committee Members

Other, non-officer, committee members may carry out other defined functions (e.g. membership secretary, speaker secretary, groups' co-ordinator, etc).

Co-opted Members

The committee may invite any unelected persons to join the committee until the next AGM takes place. This may be to ensure that a committee has the necessary skills and expertise, or to replace a committee member who has to leave the committee. **Co-optees have the same status and responsibilities as the elected members.**

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. Committee members are expected to study the agenda and all supporting papers prior to the meeting and strive to attend all meetings.
2. Committee members must declare any conflict of interest at the start of the meeting or at the earliest possible opportunity. The Chairman will decide whether to exclude the member from a particular item or possibly the entire meeting. Where the Chairman expresses a conflict of interest, then committee members should ask the Vice Chairman to rule on the matter.
3. All motions should be proposed and seconded. Before voting takes place, the Chairman should summarise all arguments both for and against the issue.
4. Voting should be by a show of hands and votes for, against and any abstentions should be recorded in the minutes. Decisions can **only** be made as a result of a majority vote in favour by those committee members present. If there is no dissent then the motion should be recorded as having been carried unanimously. In the event of a tied vote then the Chairman has a casting vote.
5. Once an item is approved by the committee, **all** trustees, whether present at the voting or not, **must** accept it as decisive. **No trustee has the authority to act in isolation.**
6. It is essential that everybody maintains complete confidentiality outside the committee at all times.
7. Once they are approved, the minutes should be made available to members on request

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS:

Constitution (Torfaen u3a)

The Secretary holds a copy of the constitution for **Torfaen u3a** on file and this can be made available to any committee member on request.

Guidance documents (issued by the Charity Commission)

Document CC3 – “The Essential Trustee- what you need to know, what you need to do” can be downloaded from the Charity Commission website (see link below).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

Objects and Principles of the Third Age Trust

The Secretary holds a copy of this booklet and it can be made available to any committee member on request.