

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR INTEREST GROUP COORDINATORS

The following is suitable for both new and existing coordinators

Setting up a new interest group

Setting up a group is not difficult but it does require planning.

You need to take the following steps:

- Think carefully about what sort of group you want and what you want to achieve.
- Contact a member of the Executive Committee or the Chair of the Coordinators Committee to check that your idea falls with the ethos of the U3A movement and that the Committee is happy with it. This can be done in person or through the TSU3A website.
- Read the policy document on TSU3A website, especially the section relating to Groups.
- Formulate and write down your ideas on:
 - a) where the meetings will be held
Options are: one member's house, a rota of members' houses, hired premises for activities requiring space and equipment;
 - b) when and how often you will have a meeting
Monthly, twice monthly, weekly. Every other week leads to clashes with other groups;
 - c) how many you would like in the group
Depends on where you intend to hold the meetings, members can generally fit ten to twelve members in their houses;
 - d) how the meetings will be run
Same leader each time, a rota of leaders, taught classes, self teaching group.
- Compose an email setting out your basic idea and forward to the secretary for circulating to all members.
- Make a list of interested members with their contact details as you hear from them.
- When you have sufficient members call a meeting of those interested, using BCC (blind carbon copy) for the email. You may have to have to set up a waiting list. Finding a time that suits everyone will be difficult so you may wish to suggest a few dates and times. Consulting the monthly timetable on the website may help.
Do not expect to be able to accommodate everyone. The group timetable is quite full and members have interests outside U3A. Take a consensus and go with the majority, provided that suits you.
- At the initial meeting clearly set out your objectives and ideas. Listen to members' suggestions. Especially important are fixing a regular meeting time and agreeing procedures and house rules.
Prompt start, notifying of absence, forward circulation (if appropriate), tea break or not, charges, setting out, tidying up etc.
- Once the group is up and running, arrange for tuition on Beacon, the membership management system, and to be given your own page on the website. An email to the Committee through the website will be forwarded to the correct person. There is a document on the website to help you with managing your group page.
- Being a coordinator is not difficult but it does require thought and planning.

If you are a new coordinator, experienced coordinators will always give you help and guidance.

Running an interest group

Most issues can be resolved by referring to TSU3A's policy document on the website.

Things to remember when running a group

- Keep a register of attendees;
- Keep your web page up to date by checking at least every six months;
- Check membership of your group in late May/early June by referring to Beacon and seeing if any have turned red, showing that they are no longer members;
- Contact those who have not attended for a while and have not indicated that they are no longer interested and perhaps gently ask when they intend to return. This is particularly important if you have waiting list;
- Always send email through Beacon as it is secure;
- You do not have to do everything yourself, you are allowed to delegate.

Interest groups are integral to U3A and your role is vital to its success.