

Guidelines for Group Facilitators

Interest Groups are the core of the U3A movement and one of the priorities of WU3A is to ensure we have a wide range of successful groups available for members. The success of these groups is the direct result of the enthusiasm and commitment of our Group Facilitators. These guidelines have been prepared to help when setting up new groups and in running established groups.

Starting a new group

There are a number of ways a new group can be established: -

1. A member suggests a possible new group to the Group Coordinator or a member of the Committee

The Groups Coordinator will provide a sheet for members interested in joining the new group to sign. The sheet will be available at Monthly meetings. Information will also be placed on our website and will be included in the monthly Interest Groups Leaflet.

2. A current group develops a waiting list and the facilitator contacts the coordinator that a new group is required

Facilitators are responsible for maintaining waiting lists of members who approach them. The list should be shared with the Groups Coordinator who can then decide if a new group is required. This may not always be possible if the subject requires specific skills eg French

3. The committee identifies gaps in our Groups provision

Where a committee member identifies a gap in our provision or has been approached about a topic not covered, the process outlined in 1 will apply

When there are sufficient members interested in the new group (this could be as few as 2) the Groups Coordinator will hold an initial meeting, usually in one of the cafes in Wigtown. This meeting will establish the name of the group, frequency, time and venue. A facilitator will also be agreed. The Groups Coordinator will provide the necessary documentation required for the smooth running of the group.

Role of the Facilitator

The main role of the Group Facilitator is to enable the group to run as smoothly as possible for the benefit of all its members. The facilitator should not decide on a programme on their own.

The facilitator need not be the lead person or have extensive knowledge of the subject of the group.

The facilitator is the main contact person for the group. This role can be shared so that one person does not carry all the responsibility.

The facilitators name and telephone number will be included in the Interest Groups Leaflet which is published each month, and on the Wigtownshire U3A website. The facilitator can then be contacted directly by people interested in joining the group.

The facilitator will receive an email once a month from the Groups Coordinator requesting information for the Interest Groups Leaflet. Information about the groups next meeting should be sent to the Groups Coordinator and webmaster (webmaster@wigtownshireu3a.org.uk) each month to be included in the IGL and on the website.

The facilitator is generally responsible for sending information to all members about future meetings, including place, time and topic if applicable. Information about meetings sent by email **must** be sent using the **BCC** facility in the email address bar. **Please ask if you are not sure how to do this.**

The facilitator must keep a list of members of the group, together with their contact details. These details must not be shared with other members of your group without individual permission. The Groups Coordinator will request a list of your members at least once a year. The facilitator should check membership of all members of the group shortly after renewal date.

Running an interest group

The group is run for the benefit of all its members. There may be a wide variety of expectations and knowledge within the group.

Regular planning meetings with all members are recommended. The best sessions come from an open 'brainstorming' session where everything and anything relevant can be suggested. Find out what knowledge and experience exists within your group and decide how these can be used.

A few practical things will help you to run your group smoothly

- Inform your members of dates, times and locations of meetings
- Keep a list of members and their contact details

- Ensure everyone attending is a member of Wigtownshire U3A. Non-members are not covered by our insurance. Application forms for membership can be downloaded from our web page
- Potential U3A members may attend up to 2 sessions before joining
- If your group is full you should maintain a waiting list. Contact the Groups Coordinator if you think there may be enough interest to start a second group
- Use one of your regular meetings for planning
- On outings you must provide your mobile phone number for contact in an emergency

Financial matters

All Groups are self-financing

- You should never be out of pocket as a group facilitator. Expenses should be shared amongst the group
- If refreshments are provided the cost of these should be shared between the whole group
- The cost of any resources provided should also be shared
- Any money collected or spent should be recorded and if appropriate should be detailed on the Petty Cash return submitted to the Treasurer every June and December
- You must never open a bank account
- Never pay members' money into your bank account
- Get receipts wherever possible when you hand money over
- Groups must not pay outside tutors or instructors as this is against the ethos of the movement. Paid outside speakers can be used for occasional specific purposes e.g. an open meeting
- Each group is required to provide the Treasurer with a Petty Cash return twice a year. This must be done even if you have a nil return.
- If you have any queries regarding the completion of the form or any other financial matters, please contact the Treasurer

Insurance

The Third Age Trust purchases insurance which covers all affiliated U3As. There are a number of policies which cover most aspects of our activities. Please ask the Treasurer or the Groups Coordinator for more information.

Problem Resolution

Problems will be rare but in the unlikely event that a serious problem does arise, you should contact the Groups Coordinator. If the problem cannot be resolved within the group it may be referred to the Committee, whose decision will be final.

Resources

Third Age Matters and Sources.

Members receive the national magazine Third Age Matters several times a year. This contains news from U3As across the UK. Each issue gives a list of National Subject Advisors. Some articles may be of interest to your group.

Each issue of Sources, the Educational Journal of the U3A, has a subject focus and is published 3 times a year.

National Subject Coordinators

Many subjects have a national Subject Coordinator who can be contacted directly at the National Office.

The Resource Centre,

The Resource Centre is located in the National Office and has a collection of non-book items (DVD's, CD's) on a wide range of subjects, available to all U3As to borrow free of charge with only the return postage to pay. To borrow items from the collection you have to be registered with the resource centre. This can be done online or by contacting them on 020 8466 6139. You will be issued with a user number that will allow you to browse the materials available.

On-line Courses

A list of courses can be found on the National website. Some have been written by U3A members. Their high standard has been recognised by the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education award.

The Open University has a range of courses in their 'Open Learn' section that may be useful for some groups.

Also available are MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses.

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Documents available to download from our website:

Petty Cash Management Guidelines

Petty Cash Return Form

Venue Checklist

Incident Report Form

Discussion Group Guidelines

Walking Guidelines

Grievance Procedure

Disciplinary procedure