



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Running a Group at Weston Turville U3A

So, now you're thinking of running a group. Hopefully this document will tell you much of what you need to know. It may be that this is a new group, or you may have taken over an existing group but all the information should be in here. I hope it will be an evolving document and as we review the processes we use, it may change. If something you need to know is not in here, please get in touch and the committee will hopefully be able to give you an answer or point you in the right direction to find the answer.

All the information in this document may not be relevant to every group. It is up to you as group leader to extract the relevant parts. However, some financial, recording and booking information guidelines do need to be followed to ensure that your activities are covered by U3A insurance. It is written from the perspective of starting a new group with notes on taking over an existing group where necessary.

I would like to thank you for taking on this role. Groups are at the heart of the U3A and at Weston Turville we have a healthy mix of the type and frequency of different groups. If you have any queries or concerns, either about the start-up or running of your group, please get in touch or speak to our Chairman or any other committee member at the monthly meeting.

Getting Started

If you have an interest and there is no group currently catering for that topic we would encourage you to start a group. You do not need formal qualifications but enthusiasm and an interest in the topic is recommended! If you are thinking about starting a group and believe others may also have an interest in that subject, talk to a committee member who can guide you through the simple process.

It is permissible for external specialist instructors to be hired for subjects that require a level of expertise not available within the membership e.g. a Pilates Instructor.

The main principle of U3A is 'continuing education' in its broadest sense. This is achieved by self-help and teaching others. There is a lot of information on different interests available from the National U3A which is usually free for group leaders to access and it can include advice from National Group Leaders and media (DVD's, books etc.) for their use. If you wish to obtain subject material for your group, such as DVDs, a large range is available from the Third Age Trust Resource Centre. Group Leaders will need to open an account www.u3a.org.uk [Create Account] and, once set up, login with your new id [Member Login]

select [Members' Area Homepage] you will find details of material available for U3A use. Requesting material will require WTU3A's registration number, which is: 826/805/10. If materials are required which are chargeable, please get in touch with the committee, as we may already hold them or be able to fund these for you.

Other than our own members, members from local U3As may attend group meetings as long as the group leader has agreed to this and their attendance does not prevent any Weston Turville member from attending {See Appendix 1}. Similarly, Weston Turville U3A members are invited to groups run by Aston Clinton, Wendover, and other local U3As. Details of trips or holidays that may have been arranged will be circulated via the monthly newsletter. Members should make contact with the organisers directly to make bookings, payments and all other necessary arrangements.

If you are starting a new group, one of the first things you will have to decide is where you are going to hold the meetings. If the numbers are small, you may consider holding it in your own home or you may feel that a neutral venue would be more appropriate. Please remember and consider the needs of any member who may have special needs e.g. access for wheelchairs etc. Although the first session should be a "finding out" session below are some of the things that you may like to consider.

- How often will your group meet?
- What would the members like to be included – perhaps you can write a short description of what the group wants to achieve and how they hope to do it.
- Does anyone have any experience that may help?
- Are there any financial commitments? Make sure that all potential members are happy with these before you proceed.

Taking over an Existing Group

Make sure that you have been fully briefed by the outgoing Group Leader where this is possible. This should include all aspects of the group including

- How and when the venue fee is paid. (Make sure you get a receipt.)
- Who provides and deals with refreshments.
- How and when you communicate with group members.
- Whether or not it is necessary to speak at the monthly general meeting.
- Names and contact details of any visiting speakers for the group.
- How access is available to the venue. (Contact details of any key-holders etc.)
- Passing on any relevant documents.

You will also need to contact the Webmaster so that the forwarding details can be amended on the group email address, or a new one set up to allow e-mail to be sent to you using an anonymised e-mail address such as *dogtraining@wtu3a.org.uk*. You may then decide to

continue with the current plan for the group or start again and plan new sessions. This should always be done in discussion with the group members. You should also identify a deputy for the group who will stand in for you if you are not available.

If you are finding it all a bit daunting – DELEGATE! There is no need for you to do everything yourself – pass responsibility for finances or refreshments to a willing volunteer. If in doubt or struggling, talk to the Groups Co-ordinator.

Meetings & Finance

All group leaders should keep a register of members attending their group. This can be in any form, but a sample will be provided which may be downloaded from the website. It should contain member's name, telephone number, email address and an emergency contact for that person.

If the meeting is in someone's home then the host should be reimbursed for any refreshments they provide. It is up to the group members to come to a sensible arrangement about this but 50p per person seems to be reasonable.

If you are meeting in a room or hall that has to be hired then the cost of the hire should be equally divided by ALL the participating members, including the leader. This can be done month by month in which case the amount may vary each month, depending on the number of participants; or a set amount can be established at the beginning which each participant is prepared to pay. (Do think about this – if only a few people were able to attend – should those people have to pay a higher amount than usual for the hire?) The other way is to collect a set amount from all members to cover the hire of the Hall for the whole year (or per quarter) and only pay for refreshments, materials etc. each month. Subject to agreement by the Committee, this money may be held by the group leader, who will be accountable to the committee for it.

Whatever arrangements you make, you must make sure that someone from the group (preferably the leader or deputy) keeps a record of **all** financial transactions. These should always be backed up by receipts which should be held by that person and submitted to the treasurer at the end of the financial year. Groups which hold ANY money will be asked quarterly (end of June, Sept, Dec, March) to submit a figure of the amount they are holding along with their monthly financial figures.

It is important to note that no U3A member should ever be paid for giving a talk although it is permissible to pay them for any relevant expenses. If you hire a speaker for a meeting, the cost must be met by the group. Regular paid tutors are contrary to the aims of the U3A Trust, as are any speakers who are promoting commercial activities.

No group leader should be subsidising their group but neither should they be making a profit from it. If photocopies of patterns, instructions etc. are necessary they should be sent out to group members in advance of the meeting for them to print off at home. Should it be necessary to make copies for group members who do not have access to a printer a maximum of 10p per black & white copy may be charged.

If there are extra costs likely to be incurred by the setting up of your group then the committee should be informed. It may be that they will be able to help with these with a small loan or grant from general funds.

The cost of refreshments within your meeting should be wholly met by the group. If someone else is providing the refreshments it is permissible for you to pay cash to them for the cost of refreshments provided that they supply you with all relevant receipts.

Waiting Lists

From time to time it may be necessary to run a waiting list for your group. If this occurs a discussion should be had with all the current members (and perhaps including those waiting) to see whether a suitable solution could be reached. Some suggestions for solutions are given below, but you are urged to explore all possibilities.

- Find a larger venue to hold the meeting.
- Could the group be split to run two separate groups? Who would take this on?
- Would someone from the existing group or one of those on the waiting list be prepared to start a second group?
- Would the current leader be prepared to run the same group more than once during the month?

If no suitable solution can be found after discussion then those on the waiting list should be informed and should be invited to meetings on a monthly basis if space is available.

Accidents

If a member should have an accident or become ill during one of your meetings or activities, the Third Age Trust advises that the emergency services should be called. However, if the accident is minor this may not be necessary.

- If they are called, make sure you know the postcode of the venue.
- Always have your register with you in case you have to call the member's emergency contact.
- Check if anyone else in the group is a trained First Aider.
- Complete an Accident report form as soon as possible. The form may be downloaded from the members' area of the national website www.u3a.org.uk

New Members

During the year if a new member joins our U3A who has expressed an interest in your activity, you will be informed by email. Please make sure you respond to this by sending them a welcoming email and telling them a bit about your group, when it runs, where it is held etc. Invite them along to the next meeting if possible so that they can get an idea of how the group works. Do not assume that they will want to join, but if there is room, ask them if they would like to be told about the next meeting so that they can come along if they wish.

And finally...

Running a group can be both rewarding and empowering. Don't be frightened to try it; after all you are among friends! If it doesn't work out as expected, at least you know that you gave it a try. The committee, and particularly the Groups Co-ordinator if the current committee has one, will give you help and advice and will take you step by step through the process. Most of all enjoy it – you are doing something you love so it should be fun!

The Chairman WTU3A

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