



Leighton – Linslade
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

GROUP CO-ORDINATORS' HANDBOOK

Revised: June 2018

Leighton-Linslade U3A

Guidance for Group Co-ordinators

Our U3A is dependent on its members for setting up and running interest groups. These notes aim to support any member wishing to lead a new group as well as providing an aide memoire for existing Group Co-ordinators.

Setting up a group

The purpose of the U3A is to share knowledge, skills and experience and to help meet the educational, recreational and 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 those who wish to join. If you would like to start a group, first talk to the Groups Liaison Officer (GLO).

Needs of a group

When a group is first set up, you may wish to clarify the following as quickly as possible:

- Who will be the Group Co-ordinator (GC), and what are the expectations for the role?
- A programme of activities for at least the first few meetings.
- How often, and when, will meetings take place?
- A venue for meetings; this may be a member's house, a number of houses or a public venue (at what cost?).
- Whether or not to provide refreshments at meetings, and if so how will they be funded?

Types of group

A group may have a defined aim of learning about a specific subject in a set number of meetings, but it is more usual for groups to continue to explore their topics of interest on an open-ended basis. The degree to which groups have explicit educational aims will vary from group to group. The general objective of enhancing the mental and/or physical well-being of members may be achieved in ways that involve formal study - or a range of less formal educational, recreational, sporting or social activities - or a combination of these types of activity.

Gathering members

Once a suggestion has been put forward that a new group should be formed, members can be informed and encouraged to join in a number of ways:

- At the monthly general meeting, orally and via the groups notice board.
- By email from the GLO to those members who have supplied us with email addresses, and by hard copy to those GCs who have not supplied an email address
- Via the LLU3A website.
- Articles in the quarterly LLU3A newsletter.
- Inviting prospective group members along to an inaugural meeting.

Any of these can be pursued by someone who has taken the initiative to set up a new group. The GLO is there to offer assistance and guidance as required.

Role of the Group Co-ordinator (GC)

In most cases as GC you will have joined the group to enjoy its activities rather than just to administer the group, and it is important that the group is organised in a way that makes this possible. Your main function is to make the necessary arrangements for group meetings including notifying group members about them and managing group finances. You need to ensure that all group members are fully paid-up members of the U3A by checking membership cards on a regular basis and to provide a list of group members to the GLO or Membership Secretary when requested. You should keep a record of attendance at each meeting.

You should also hold details of home addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of group members together with emergency contact details in the event of any planned outings. These details should not be shared among the members of the group without the explicit agreement of the members whose details are being shared. This means that where such agreement has not been obtained all e-mail messages to the group should use the "blind copy" facility for members' addresses.

There is no need for other tasks associated with running the group to be your sole responsibility. Indeed, it would be desirable for any such tasks to be shared among group members. You may be an expert and choose to take on a tutorial role in addition to an administrative one, but this is entirely optional. You may also support and co-ordinate the learning and teaching which is shared among members of the group, and/or arrange speakers or visits.

Running a group

- The newsletter and our website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/leighton-linslade/home> provide a list of existing interest groups. Contact details of GCs are also available in the newsletter and on the groups' notice board at the monthly general meeting. Prospective group members who are already members of LLU3A are asked to contact the GC for further information. Enquiries from people who are not already members of LLU3A are generally handled by the GLO.
- You have the opportunity to publicise your group by speaking at the monthly general meeting, and by sending copy to the Newsletter Editor, to the Webmaster for the website and to the GLO for our monthly news update.
- You should advise any changes of the time/venue of your meetings to the GLO, the Newsletter Editor and the Webmaster.
- U3A members are covered by Third Age Trust third party insurance at meetings, on trips in the UK and in mainland Europe; the cover is for liability for actions by U3A members affecting other U3A members and members of the public. U3A public liability insurance is not personal accident insurance. This insurance is not applicable to holidays organised by third parties which are not U3A events.
- U3A members cannot receive payment for giving talks or for acting as tutors; although they can receive legitimate expenses
- You must report all accidents to the Committee and complete an accident form downloaded from our website.
- Making and distributing multiple copies of some copyrighted documents is allowed for educational purposes within the remit of the Copyright Licensing Agency licence held by the U3A. If you need to make copies of documents, please ask the Committee for further information. The licence does not cover maps or sheet music. It cannot be assumed that images and documents taken from the internet are in the public domain; they are subject to copyright laws in the same way as printed material.

Guidance on attendance of non-members at groups

As a general rule, non-members of the U3A cannot attend groups, group walks, outings and holidays etc. If in doubt, ask to see their membership card. However, in certain circumstances, occasional or casual attendance can be allowed at your discretion:

- A carer for a disabled/elderly person can attend in their capacity as carer, but paid professional carers are NOT covered by the U3A insurance.
 - A prospective new member may attend a group or outing as a visitor on a maximum of two occasions.
- NB. In these circumstances, non-members enjoy the same Public Liability insurance as U3A members. The policy is an insurance against the legal liability of the U3A and is not a personal accident insurance.

Guidance on attendance of members from other U3As

It is the policy of LLU3A that people attending U3A events or groups should be members of LLU3A. However, where it is beneficial for a group to allow a member of another U3A to attend its activities, for instance when the group does not otherwise have enough members to ensure its viability, it may be permissible for it to do so. In such cases, it is essential that you find a way to check that the person concerned does hold current U3A membership, without which the U3A liability insurance would not be valid. This arrangement is only acceptable if it does not lead to the exclusion of members of LLU3A from the group.

Policy procedures and documents

LLU3A has several policies relating to the following of which you should be aware:

- Complaints Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Next of Kin: Legitimate Interest
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Privacy Policy

These policies exist to meet legal and Charity Commission requirements. Documents describing them can be found in the Members' Area of the website. If you are unable to access them, please contact our Secretary or the GLO.

Group finances

- **General:**

The charitable status of Leighton-Linslade U3A means that you must keep cash handling to a minimum and keep financial records. Members of the group should have access to these records at any reasonable time and you must provide the members and the Treasurer with a copy of the Group's accounts made up to 31st December each year. Charitable status also means that the Committee has total responsibility for ensuring safe custody of members' money and the Trustees are the only people with legal accountability.

Groups should be self-financing. Where venue hire is involved, you can make the hire arrangements direct as long as these are informal and only involve modest fees. However, you cannot enter into a contract on

behalf of the U3A. Only the U3A's Treasurer is empowered to sign a contract. In cases where the hire fee is substantial and/or the hirer requires a contract to be signed, you should arrange the hiring of a venue and inform the Treasurer of the charge. In these cases, the provider of the venue should be requested to raise an invoice which will be paid by the Treasurer on behalf of the U3A. You should collect an appropriate contribution from each member at each meeting and pay the accumulated amount to the Treasurer either in cash or a personal cheque made out to Leighton-Linslade U3A at the end of each calendar month (except when a different frequency has been agreed with the Treasurer).

- **Income:**

You must keep a register of all those attending, monies received and dates.

For clarity, where meetings take place in a member's home, LLU3A has no interest in any arrangement to cover the cost of any refreshments.

If money is collected for purposes other than the hire of a venue, any amount in excess of £50 should be paid to the Treasurer, who will hold it on behalf of the group for planned future expenses. Under no circumstances should group money be put into a bank account opened in the name of a group.

If you collect money for a group social event, it should be collected from participating members only. Incidental surpluses should not be used to fund such events, and if no way can be found to use these surpluses for the benefit of the whole group then they should be run down by means such as contribution holidays.

- **Outgoings:**

In addition to the hire of a venue, other costs should be kept to a minimum. These other costs may include fees for speakers (but not if the speaker is a U3A member), postage, photocopying, etc. Car sharing is in order. The car owner can charge a share of the cost at up to 40p per mile. Insurance policies are not invalidated.

For an item of equipment deemed necessary to run the group, an application for funds may be made to the Committee. In line with the principle that groups should be self-financing, approval of any such application is likely to depend on the potential usefulness of the item to the U3A itself or to a number of groups. If approved and purchased, the item would then be put on the LLU3A asset register.

- **GCs Expenses:**

You should not be out of pocket in relation to the running of the group but expenses must be covered by additional contributions from members of your group.

Further support for GCs

The role of the Committee through the GLO is to ensure, as far as possible, the smooth running of the groups and to offer support and advice to you as a Co-ordinator.

- Occasional meetings of GCs may be held as an opportunity to meet with others, and to share any successes or problems

- There is a Third Age Trust (TAT) 'Network of Subject Co-ordinators'; details are available on the National website at www.u3a.org.uk (also available via a link from our own site at - <https://u3asites.org.uk/leighton-linslade/home>).
- Other documents setting out the details in areas such as copyright, insurance, and so on, the learning approach of the TAT as well as current thinking on the way forward are also available on the TAT's national website at www.u3a.org.uk .

Finally....

We hope you have found this document useful, whether you are a new Co-ordinator or have been in that role for some time. If you have any thoughts or ideas about running groups or about our U3A generally, please get in touch with our GLO or any other member of our Committee.

Leighton-Linslade U3A Committee

Revised June 2018