

GUIDANCE FOR CONVENORS

Thank you for being a Convener. Without you our u3a would not exist. First and foremost, we want you to ENJOY IT. So, these guidelines are here to make things as easy as possible for you, not to get in the way. For help with any questions or issues feel free contact our Groups Coordinator or Chairman. We may not always know all the answers straight away, but the Committee will always try to support you with running your group. The following notes are based on an advice sheet from the u3a National Office (the Third Age Trust) but customized to meet our own needs. Our documents referred to will be found on the High Wycombe and District u3a Website. These documents include our u3a Constitution.

BY THE MEMBERS FOR THE MEMBERS

The u3a operates by self-help learning. Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire.

- No qualifications or awards are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive.
- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; you are all members.
- We do not pay teachers or speakers for interest groups except for occasional special events – usually open to members outside the group. See our Policy on the Payment of Speakers.

GROUP VENUE

Your group may be one of the majority which meets in a member's home. Or, your group may meet in a community or sports hall. Wherever you meet, members' safety must be a priority.

- If you are responsible for selecting the group venue, please make sure you check its safety, accessibility and suitability. Consult with the Groups Coordinator when necessary.
- Once you have the go ahead from the Committee, do not sign any rental agreement yourself, or make any payments. Pass them to the Groups Coordinator for the Committee to deal with.
- When you arrive at the venue for your meeting, reassure yourself that everything is in order. If you have any safety concerns do not continue if they cannot be resolved to your satisfaction.
- If your activity takes place in a workshop/sports centre or outside facility, ensure that you consult any local risk assessment which should be in place.
- All monies should go via the Treasurer where practicable. Out of pocket expenses, such as tips and coach parking can be paid in cash and refunded to the organizer by the Treasurer.

GROUP MANAGEMENT

- **Beacon:** This is our database and administration system. It will enable you to (i) email Group members (ii) see their telephone numbers (if a member agrees), and (iii) produce a register of your members. We will, of course, guide you through Beacon and issue you with your personal password.
- **Facebook:** Our own Facebook page (hwdu3a2022) was set up in 2022. This page can be seen by the general public. Your group will have its own PRIVATE page which can only be seen by members of your group. We will guide you through how to maintain your page and add new items. These 'member only' group Pages are proving very helpful to both members and Convenors for keeping in touch with one another and sharing news.
- **Website:** This is constantly updated to reflect any changes within our u3a. [This includes the addition of events and notices, and changes to group activities and formal documents. Group Convenors are asked to evaluate and, if necessary, update their group page on a regular basis to keep members and the public informed of our activities. Go to <https://highwycombe.u3asite.uk>. Any updates may be made through the group author, or the web editor at u3awebsite@gmail.com who can provide authors' details.

Facebook and the Website are key ways we keep in touch with members and the attract new members, so are essential for the continued success of our u3a.

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GROUP MEMBERS' INFORMATION

All personal data must be used in accordance with GDPR. See our Data Protection Policy and our Privacy Policy. In particular, treat the personal data you hold with great care and always use blind copy (bcc) when sending to more than one recipient by NORMAL email.

- Keep a register of attendees at each meeting.
- Ensure that everyone attending is a member and always check when any new faces arrive. The Membership Secretary will ask you annually to provide a list of your group members.
- If a non-member comes along to try your group with a view to joining the u3a, or someone brings a visitor on a one-off basis, note the name in the register. Please refer to our Policy on those who are not members of our u3a attending our meetings.
- If one of your members stops coming, do try to find out why.
- Keep your eyes open for members within your group who may be able to take your place in an emergency, who may be able to take over as Convener in due course, or who might be able to lead a second group in the event of demand exceeding places.
- If one of your members is ill, it is up to you to deal with sending a get-well card etc. if appropriate. In the event of serious illness, please advise the Groups Coordinator as well. In the sad event of the death of one of your members please advise the Groups Coordinator or a Committee Member.
- Everyone coming along to a u3a group should obviously be treated fairly and with respect. Please see our Equality and Diversity Policy and also our Safeguarding Policy and refer to them as needed.
- If you plan to take your group on an outing, you should consult the Guidance for Visits. This document is primarily designed for larger outings, but even if your group is going on a small trip, you will find sensible advice within it. At the very least, the Visits Co-ordinator and the Committee should know about the trip.

PROBLEMS

- In the event of an accident complete an Accident Report or send a detailed report to the Committee including details of witnesses.
- If damage is caused to property by a member of the group, take full details, as it may in future be the subject of an insurance claim.
- Should you have a difficult member whose behaviour is regularly impacting on other members of the group contact the Groups Coordinator for help.
- If you have a serious problem in a session, it is quite acceptable to ask a member to leave but contact the Groups Coordinator as soon as possible after the end of the session.
- If you have a member who is not able to cope independently, inform the Groups Coordinator.
- In the event that you are unable to run your group for any session, ensure that you have a contingency plan in place and that this is clear to your group.

MONEY MATTERS

- Do not put members' money into your personal bank account unless it is unavoidable.
- Give receipts and avoid cash where possible.
- Do not hold large sums of money. Anything other than small amounts of petty cash should be passed to the Treasurer.
- Get and keep receipts when you pay money.
- **Keep good records** and be prepared to provide them to the Treasurer if asked.

REFERENCES

HWDu3a Website for our Policies and Guidance Documents (<https://highwycombe.u3asite.uk>)

The Third Age Trust (u3a national office) website has specific Risk Assessment Checklists for Day Trips, Holiday Travel, Outdoor Sporting Venues, Indoor Venues, Walking Groups, etc. Go to – www.u3a.org.uk/advice. You will need to login to access Advice - and look for Risk Assessments.