

## INTRODUCTION

Information taken from *U3A Handbook for Group Leaders*

### **The u3a ethos is based on three principles:**

#### **The Third Age Principle:**

Membership of a u3a is open to all in their third age

Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a. Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a u3a can do so.

#### **Self-help learning principle:**

Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire. Learning is **by the members, for the members.**

No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.

There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers. They are all u3a members.

#### **The Mutual Aid principle:**

Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of the Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the u3a movement.

No payments are made to members for services to any u3a.

Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions kept as low as possible.

Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the u3a. page 1 of 4

## Participative Learning and Learning Styles

***'Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.'* Benjamin Franklin**  
***'Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try.'* Anon**

The value of the u3a style of learning is that everyone can contribute and by doing so will gain a feeling of self-worth and integration. We all learn in different ways. Variation in content, method and style can make the learning experience more vibrant and appealing. Many of us will have particular skills but most of us will use a combination of the following:-

Visual using pictures, diagrams, images and spatial understanding.

Verbal: using words – both spoken and written.

Auditory: using sounds, rhythm, music, spoken presentations.

Physical/kinaesthetic: using hands, body, senses and acting things out.

Logical/Mathematical: using logic, systems, sequences, data, statistics.

Social: learning as part of a group, sharing experiences and explaining your understanding to others. Solitary: studying on your own.

Consider the following options:

A visiting speaker: A one-off visiting paid speaker, non-paid tutor or someone from another interest group or U3A.

Group member presentations: A short presentation by a member of the group or a member leading the meeting on a specific topic.

Discussion groups: Some activities will lead to discussion e.g. 'What the papers say', 'Which way does water go down the plug hole – and why?'

Project based: A project chosen by the members. Each person (or pair) allocated an area of research which they bring to the group. This can be a good way to learn new technology.

Practical work: This might lean towards specific subjects such as science, craft, photography, creative writing, story telling.

Drama: Create a short sketch. Provide some entertainment for your monthly meeting.

Themes: Have an event or presentation linked to a specific topic.

Liaise with a school or community group: e.g. local history presentation, art exhibition, debate. Liaise with other organisations: Museums, Universities, Libraries. Very useful for Shared Learning Projects. page 2 of 4

Shared Learning Projects: These are opportunities to work on short term projects with other u3as or outside organisations. They usually involve research and have a definite outcome.

Study days and workshops: Plan one for your own members or as part of a local network. e.g. Family History Day, Language day, Story telling workshop, debate, quiz, music.

Online learning: MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses), YouTube 'How to' videos, Future Learn.

## **Help and Support**

Educational resources: National Office offers access to a range of educational resources. These can be booked via the national website if you create an account. For DVD loans, the only cost is return postage.

Sources and Sources Online: Sources is the educational publication and online platform where the work of interest groups is showcased. Sources online can be accessed via the national website or via [www.sources.u3a.org.uk](http://www.sources.u3a.org.uk)

Subject Advisers: Trust volunteers with specialist knowledge in a wide range of topics. Contact details are available on the national website and in Third Age Matters.

External organisations: Museums, libraries, schools, universities.

u3a publications: Check the national website for the latest publications.

Networks, regions, neighbouring u3as: allow you to draw on experience from within the movement Regional Trustee: will provide an overview of the region and a link to National Office

National Office: the staff team is available Monday to Friday to offer support

Research Database: contains up to date information regarding research projects. The database is available under the resources tab of the website.

## **Other learning opportunities**

Enquiry-led Learning/ the Research Network : Shared Learning Projects and Research links with universities and within U3As; contacts available from the national website.

National and Regional Summer Schools

Events facilitated by National Office

National, Regional and Network Workshops and study days.

## **Sharing Information**

It can also be good to share information about your group

On your group's website

In a newsletter

As a display/presentation at the monthly meeting

Via Sources or Sources Online

## **Copyright**

The Trust holds a licence to copy some materials for educational use within groups. If you are going to be using copyright material in any form, e.g. printed, audio or pictures, please check with the advice section of the national website for further details on copyright.

## **Problem Solving**

Sometimes issues can arise within a group that disrupt the smooth running and spoil the enjoyment for everyone. Don't leave a problem too long before trying to resolve it. Talk to your Groups Coordinator or Committee if you are unsure how to resolve the problem or just want someone to explore options with. You can also ring National Office if you want to talk something through or check something out.

## **Issues between group members**

Where there is potential for friction it is advisable to begin by bringing it into the open. Either you or another person could try to facilitate a discussion either with the members concerned or with the whole group, but it is important that the facilitator remains neutral and non-judgemental. If you cannot reach a resolution informally speak to your Groups Coordinator or a member of your Committee. If a situation does not resolve and becomes acrimonious, your committee can consult the advice on disciplinary procedure provided by the Trust. There are also Trust volunteers trained to support with resolving disputes.

## **Accidents and Incidents**

Report all accidents and incidents to your Committee as soon as possible and complete an accident form.

It is as well to have an accurate record in case of future problems relating to the incident. Remember that the Third Age Trust provides insurance for groups activities.