

## **CARDIFF U3A POLICY: CONVENORS AND GROUPS**

### **1 GETTING STARTED**

If you haven't already decided, you will need to plan:

#### **The purpose of the group.**

When, how often, where and how you are going to meet.

The maximum numbers you can accommodate.

The time commitment involved.

What help is available to you.

You can start to plan these on your own, discuss them with the group at your first meeting or sometimes, the finer aspects will develop as the group starts up.

#### **Establishing the Purpose of the Group**

You will need to consider the scope of the subject matter or activities and the level at which the group will work (e.g. improvers, advanced).

Frequency, Timing and Duration of the Meeting

Be flexible at this stage and look at different models – regular meetings; meetings arranged as and when; short courses; or even on-line MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).

#### **Interest from Members**

Once you have formed some initial ideas, put a Notice on the Website and announce it at the Monthly Meeting to see what interest there is (replies can go to [groups@cardiffu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@cardiffu3a.org.uk) in the initial instance).

#### **Choosing a Venue**

You will need to take into account the size of the group and what the group needs, e.g. chairs, tables, equipment, Wi-Fi facilities, space for physical activities. Think also about the subject matter and whether it needs a neutral rather than a domestic setting, a formal or an informal ambience, audio visual equipment. Do not sign any rental agreements, but discuss with the Groups Coordinator (or if not available, a member of the Committee).

#### **Advice on Venues**

Most of our groups meet in locations for which we have to pay a rental to hire. All hall hire fees should be paid out of the U3A's bank account, and any contracts / agreements need to be approved by the committee and not signed by individuals.

Many groups currently choose the City United Reformed Church (URC) and in order to avoid misunderstandings and clashes all bookings there are currently arranged by the Group Coordinator as are bookings for the Central library, Friends Meeting House, Heath Citizens Hall and St David' Hall.

The choice of location is entirely that of the members of the group, subject to it meeting appropriate health and safety and accessibility standards. The cost of rental should not be out of line with 'market rates' and be viable for the size of the group. Most of our members use public

transport, and so we aim to make venues as accessible as possible to everyone, bearing this in mind.

Regularly used Venues can be found on Beacon. Contact the Groups Coordinator for advice and help in booking.

### **Size of Group**

The appropriate size for the group will depend on the subject, method of delivery and accommodation. We aim to avoid establishing any waiting lists. To achieve this it may be necessary for us to have more than one group covering the same or related subjects.

### **How Much Time Can You Commit?**

As the potential Group Convenor you should decide how much time/expertise you will realistically be able to offer and what you will expect of the group members. Make sure you can spare enough time to do a good job, do not over-commit yourself.

### **What Help is Available?**

Find out what help is available locally, regionally and nationally: Talk to our Cardiff U3A Groups Coordinator. Contact our South Wales U3A Network representative. There may be relevant study days planned within Wales or opportunities to meet with others in the area to share experience. Contact the National Subject Advisor to see what material he or she has. Visit the Third Age Trust Resource Centre's webpage (see later).

### **The First 'Inaugural' Meeting**

There is a large body of research into later life learning which suggests that older people learn best when they are in control of their own learning. Participation by all group members should be encouraged from the start. It may be useful to have a hand-out for the first meeting in the form of a check-list. This will focus the group and encourages shared responsibility. You will need to agree your purpose, find out the skills and resources at your disposal and decide on a way of working.

A successful group will be clear about, and share, expectations. If there is a wide variety of expectation, then consider forming more than one group. If this is not feasible, then plan a programme in such a way that as many approaches as possible are included. It is a useful exercise at the first meeting to get agreement to a short description of what the group hopes to do and how they hope to do it. This will subsequently form a statement of intent which will help to keep the group on track and will inform potential new members.

### **Discover the Expertise Within the Group**

It is important to find out what knowledge and experience exist in the group and decide how these are going to be used. You may be fortunate enough to have many group members able and willing to share their expertise, or you may start with just one. You may also start with little or no obvious expertise and depend on the internet for videos and information. Shared learning does not mean that a group cannot seek to extend its learning base by inviting others to join them either permanently or for specific purposes.

The ethos of U3A is that its members share their knowledge and experience freely, but there may be times when a paid external speaker or tutor may be helpful to the group's progress. However, see the later section on use of paid outside speakers and tutors.

## **Agree the Way of Working**

Many methods are used by U3A groups including:

Lectures

Taught sessions with participation

Shared presentations

Discussions

Skills teaching

Trips and fieldwork

Physical activities

Online videos

All methods are legitimate, as part of the shared learning experience, providing they are suitable for the topic, use the skills available to you and which are accepted by the group. It is not necessary to choose one method for all time: different formats will be suitable for different purposes.

## **2 RUNNING YOUR GROUP**

### **Beacon**

Once it has been decided to go ahead with the group, the Groups Coordinator arrange with the Beacon administrator to create a new group for you on Beacon. As a Convenor you will then be able to access this. Here you can manage:

Details about the group, Schedule (Calendar), Group Members and if wished use the Ledger to record financial transactions.

The system is straightforward but training is available to help you. The 'Convenors Getting Started' document gives guidance; and 'Beacon for Convenors' contains detailed information about the system. Both can be found in the documents section of Cardiff U3A website.

If you do not use the Internet, then it is important to arrange for a member of your Group to be your Beacon 'Secretary'. Discuss this with the Groups Coordinator.

### **Group Membership and Keeping in Contact**

Keep the group membership up to date on Beacon by adding new members and removing those who no longer keep in contact or want to come along. This will automatically keep your email list up to date and identify those not on email.

Encourage any member who does not have an email address on Beacon to add their email address to their personal details, and ask members to keep their personal details up to date on Beacon.

Remind members in March that they need to renew their membership of U3A (these members will appear in red on your Group Members list). At the end of the membership renewal period remove members whose status is 'lapsed' or 'resigned' as they have not renewed.

Please arrange with members of your group who do not have email / internet access how you want contact to happen (i.e. you may offer to ring or write to them, you may want them to ring you, or maybe have someone act as a 'buddy' to pass on messages).

Encourage attendance by regular contact with group, being friendly and inclusive of all members; if a member stops coming you may wish to contact them to find out if there is a reason.

Please notify the Membership Secretary of any deaths or serious illness of a group member.

### **Who Can Join a Group?**

Membership of a Cardiff U3A group is restricted to current members of Cardiff U3A. You can check whether a person is a current member by looking at the drop-down list under 'Add Member by Name' on your Group's Membership page on Beacon. If there is a problem or dispute over a member's status, please seek help from the Membership Secretary. You may decide to allow members to join your Group online, and have Beacon send you an email if they do so. It would be expected that a member attends at least one meeting per term or contacts the Convenor if unable to attend. If you do not hear from or see a member for some time, you may contact them (via Beacon) to see if they wish to continue receiving information from you.

Some groups require a particular level of ability, and difficulties can be pre-empted by clearly stating that level in the Description of your Group. The same may apply to ownership of equipment needed. Convenors are asked to be flexible and it would only be in exceptional circumstances that a member would not be allowed to join a group. Please discuss with the Group Coordinator if problems arise.

Non-members are permitted to attend one General Meeting free of charge and two group 'taster' sessions for which they are required to pay any related fees. They should then be asked to apply for membership to U3A and the Convenor can check that they have done so on Beacon and then add them to the group. Repeated attendance by a non-member would disqualify that individual and possibly the other group members from U3A insurance cover.

The 'Two rule' also applies to people who may be a member of another U3A. They are expected to join Cardiff if attending meetings with us.

## **3 GENERAL GUIDANCE**

A few practical things will help you to run your group smoothly and will help ensure our u3a as a whole is run in an efficient and proper manner:

1. Keep a simple record of what your group does - this can be used to brief our wider membership through the website
2. If a member of a group (as host or otherwise) provides refreshments, the other members attending should contribute in some way. This may be by bringing something needed along, or contributing to the host's costs, at a rate agreed by group (not more than 50p per person).
3. Keep a note of your expenses that you wish to claim for (e.g. photocopying, printing from a PC, hire of DVD/video), keep receipts and complete an expenses claim form. We do not wish or expect a Group Convenor to be out of pocket. Guidelines for claiming expenses are given on the website.
4. Bookings of accommodation, transport and other services should NOT be made in the name of Cardiff U3A without the explicit agreement of the Committee. A Risk Assessment should be carried out for new venues. There is a form available to download from the website.

5. All attendance fees collected must be recorded by the Treasurer. Money may be submitted by bank transfer to The Cardiff u3a, Sort Code 40-16-35, a/c 51096850, referencing the Group's name (with an email to the Treasurer giving details of the amount paid), or by cheque made payable to 'Cardiff U3A' or in Cash (for which a receipt will be given). This is accounted for under each Group, but remains the property of Cardiff U3A, not the individual Group.

6. All invoices for room hire should be directed to the Treasurer who will arrange payment.

7. Any money collected for group visits, meals or other activities, should be passed to the Treasurer. Only transactions which take place directly between a member and a supplier do not need to be recorded in the u3a accounts.

### **Support within Cardiff u3a**

The Groups Coordinator should be the first person to turn to for help of any sort. If an issue cannot be resolved within a group or if a member's behaviour is disruptive, please talk to the Groups Coordinator. You may also have contact from time to time with other members of the Committee as explained in this Handbook. You will find all Committee members' contact details on the Cardiff U3A web site.

### **Email Addresses and Web Pages**

Each group is provided with a Generic email address of the form: the.group@cardiffu3a.org.uk. Incoming mail to this is forwarded to one or more email addresses supplied by the group convenor. Please check for emails at least weekly.

u3a members are strongly advised never to give their personal email addresses to anyone that they correspond with solely on u3a business.

Convenors must set up a dedicated 3rd party account (e.g. gmail) or use one provided by Cardiff u3a. All emails sent to your Group must be via Beacon. This automatically blind copies addresses to avoid members' personal emails being distributed and any changes to addresses should have been updated by the member.

Select your group's generic email address when sending an email through Beacon. Any emails sent outside of Beacon must not show recipients' address. Use bcc to list addresses.

Convenors are responsible for checking the accuracy of the information on their group web page and are advised to keep this information 'generic' to avoid frequent updates. They should inform the Communications Officer of any corrections, additions or amendments

(website@cardiffu3a.org.uk ). Convenors may change the information on Beacon about their group as and when appropriate. The Programme may be updated or an activity on a given date added on the 'schedule' which populates the information on the Calendar.

## **4 HELP WITH PUBLICITY**

If you need help in publicising your group on our website, or at monthly meetings please plan ahead, so as much as possible can be included. Please alert the Communications Officer and Groups Coordinator to any relevant circulation to your group members as they are not automatically notified of changes made to the information on Beacon. Please indicate if any of the

information has to be kept confidential and not used on the website, or in the magazine, or newsletter.

Each year in the Autumn, the Monthly Meeting is an opportunity for members to 'Meet the Groups'. Convenors, and/or their representatives are invited to attend and potential and current members circulate, stopping at your table if they wish to make enquiries about what you do.

### **Available Equipment**

Cardiff U3A has equipment, kept in the URC, which you may borrow

Speaker with built-in Amp

Radio tie mic.

Projector and stand

Display board

iPad

The Group is responsible for collection, installation, operation and return of all equipment. A record of who has borrowed equipment, should be completed. No software should be loaded onto the computer without the agreement in advance by the Communications contact ([comms@cardiffu3a.org.uk](mailto:comms@cardiffu3a.org.uk)). As personal equipment is NOT covered by the U3A insurance, members are advised not to use it for u3a business. If they choose to, they are advised to arrange cover under their Household Insurance.

### **Use of Paid Outside Speakers and Tutors**

One-off payment to an outside speaker and the reimbursement of legitimate expenses is acceptable, but no member of Cardiffu3a is permitted to gain a monetary benefit from any activity of Cardiff, or any other U3A. An interest group may consider encouraging their members to gain the knowledge from learning sources (see below); or inviting a member from a neighbouring U3A who has the required expertise to help. Out of pocket travelling expenses can be paid. From time to time, a group may need temporary cover for their usual tutor. If so, please discuss with the Groups Coordinator

The Third Age Trust advises against the use of paid tutors and highlights the legal and financial risks of such. In short, any such arrangements should be regularly reviewed by the committee to ensure that employment and tax laws are being followed. The legal obligation is to the Cardiff u3a committee i.e. the trustees (and not the group members).

Cardiff U3A have made the decision NOT to employ any paid tutors on a regular basis.

## **4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Each group should be self-funding and group members should aim to cover all the normal running costs of their group. However, the Committee understand how difficult it is for a newly established group to be self-funded, and appreciate that an established group may at times have a temporary drop in numbers. Thus Cardiff u3a is prepared to assist groups in the short term. All expenditure on Capital Items and expenses must be approved by the committee in advance. Please do not open a bank account, or use your own bank account, for the group and do not apply for money from any source. A record should be kept of any transactions (the group's ledger on

Beacon may be used for this or you may keep a hard copy) and receipts kept where possible. The Treasurer can advise if any upfront payments need to be made for any activity. If you wish to hold Petty Cash, please discuss this with the Treasurer.

### **Group Convenors' Day**

Each year a Group Convenors' Day is held to update you on any changes within u3a and as a platform to help both new and experienced Convenors. You have an opportunity to make suggestions but please email the Group Coordinator throughout the year if you have issues or suggestions.

## **5 LEGALITIES**

### **Insurance**

In your group activities you are covered by Public & Products Liability Insurance. This covers u3a members for loss due to accidental injury to a person or accidental loss or damage to property not belonging to them, as long as it arises from or in connection with a u3a activity. Should you ever experience such a situation, please contact the Secretary for advice and complete an Accident Report Form.

A copy of the Insurance policy can be found in Appendix 2 and Accident Report form in Appendix 3. Anyone giving lifts to fellow u3a members will be covered by their own motor insurance in the usual way and will NOT be covered by u3a.

### **Copyright**

You cannot legitimately copy material for use by your group without a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency which allows multiple photo/digital copying by our members for educational purposes. Cardiff u3a does hold such a licence. Note: This does not cover photocopying of copyrighted music.

### **Data Protection**

The Privacy Policy and Data Protection Policy can be seen on the Cardiff u3a website (<https://www.cardiffu3a.org.uk/documents-links>) Please read these. Members details should only be used for the purposes of u3a activities and should never be passed on to a third party (this includes members being able to see the email address of another member). Emailing your group from Beacon ensures that this is followed.

### **Charitable Status and Financial Matters**

As a charity, we are required to follow sound financial practices. This is one reason for the recommendations on bookings and money handling in this Handbook. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Treasurer ([treasurer@cardiffu3a.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@cardiffu3a.org.uk)).

## **6 SUPPORT FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE U3A FAMILY**

### **The South Wales u3a Network**

The South Wales u3a network provides a study day programme available to all members of local u3as. In addition, from time to time it runs workshops specifically for Group Convenors.

For details visit their website (<https://u3asites.org.uk/walesu3a/page/10321>).

### **The Third Age Trust Resource Centre**

The Resource Centre in the National Office (in Southwark) is currently being expanded. In addition to DVDs, educational downloads in the form of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), or TED talks, other U3A generated material may be found there. Visit the Resource centre on the Third Age Trust's website (+<https://u3a.org.uk/resources>).

From the Resource page there is a link to the Research Database which encompasses research about older learners and research by older learners including u3a members on any subject. If you can offer such publications, please contact the Resource Centre Manager with details of title, author, any public source and date, marked clearly for 'Research Collection'. Online courses are also available at: <https://www.u3aonline.org.au/courses>.

### **Third Age Matters and Sources**

Members receive the national Third Age Matters (TAM) five times a year, unless they have opted not to receive this. This contains news from U3As across the country, experiences, ideas, contact details and useful advertising. Some of these articles may be of particular interest to Group Convenors.

### **National subject coordinators and networks**

Group Convenors in individual u3as work together to share ideas and materials. Many subjects have a national Subject Coordinator whom you can contact directly. In some cases there is also material available online that you can use or adapt to meet your needs (as above). Contact details for the Subject Coordinator are given on the Third Age Trust's website.

### **Shared Learning Projects**

A typical Shared Learning Project (SLP) involves u3a members working with a local institution, such as a gallery or museum, on a project of mutual benefit. These co-operative ventures offer an exciting opportunity for sharing expertise and learning. The Third Age Trust website describes what shared learning projects are and how to start one. A database of past and current SLPs is available on line at: <https://u3aresearch.org.uk>

### **The Role of the Groups Coordinator in running your group**

- 1) The Groups Coordinator will facilitate communication between Group Convenors and the Committee and ensure that the Convenors have the necessary information for safe efficient organisation and running of their interest / study group(s).
- 2) Convenors will encourage new and continued membership of their interest / study group through promotion of their group and good communication with U3A and Group members.
- 3) Analysis of Information supplied by the Convenors will be undertaken by the Groups Coordinator in order that it is ensured that groups are sustainable, maintain financial viability, have suitable accommodation for size; and, in discussion with Convenors, consider merging or splitting of groups.

4) Support to Convenors (both Established and New) and New Groups will be provided by the Groups Coordinator.

5) There will be continual effort made towards the setting up of New Groups and recruitment of new Convenors.

A member of an interest/study group is defined as a member of Cardiff U3A who normally attends at least one meeting per term, or if unable to do so sends apologies to the Convenor.

A Role Description for Group Convenor can be found in Appendix 1.

## **6 Appendix 1:**

### **Role description: group convenor**

Group Convenors are vital to the success of a u3a. As the leader of an interest / study group he/she is paramount to providing the activities that make u3a what it is. A Group Convenor needs to have good rapport with their group members. He / she does not need to be an expert in the group's subject, but have the skills necessary for smooth running of the group.

He/she needs to be:

- A good organiser
- Friendly and Approachable
- Reliable
- Enthusiastic
- Good Communicator Responsibilities:

1. Be familiar with the content of the 'Handbook for Group Convenors' including accident reporting and insurance issues.
2. Be able to use Beacon as a Convenor or arrange with a member of group to be Beacon 'secretary'
3. Maintain the list of group members on Beacon.
4. Encourage members to update personal details on Beacon or inform the membership secretary if they do not have access to Internet.
5. Liaise with the Groups Coordinator regarding additional meetings; room bookings; developments for group; change of venues and maintain Schedule (Calendar) on Beacon.
6. Encourage new members to join (e.g. at 'Meet the Groups' event each Autumn) and assist with New Groups in related subject areas.
7. Ensure that monies collected are submitted to Treasurer with Attendance list(s) / Registration forms and liaise with the Treasurer over any payments made to Speaker(s).
8. Attend Group Convenors' Day or Arrange for a representative from your group to do so.
9. Be willing to help recruit, advise and support your Successor

The Cardiff u3a Magazine is published annually and Convenors are asked to submit articles about their groups' activities. This is a good platform to encourage new members to join their group.