

# Guidance Document for Group Leaders

## **THE GROUP CO-ORDINATOR**

The current Group Coordinator is Jan Brown [groups@RRU3A.org.uk](mailto:groups@RRU3A.org.uk) .

The role of Group Coordinator and / or Assistant includes:

- Managing the Groups table at Friday Meetings
- Maintaining the Group Folder Manual and Group Boards
- Responding to requests from members who wish to join groups
- Updating Beacon with accurate details
- Updating Web site as appropriate
- Look to create new groups when more than a few members are on waiting list
- Recruiting new group Leaders
- Maintaining 'groups seeking new members' list
- Co-ordinating support for new groups or groups that may be in difficulties.
- Liaising with the committee on all aspects of interest groups.

## **STARTING A GROUP**

**The principal role of a Group Leader/Contact is to guide a group of people through a programme of study and/or activities.**

Anyone wishing to start an interest group should notify the Group Co-ordinator. A notice can then be circulated via all available communication channels e.g. newsletter, website, bulletins and an announcement made at a monthly/general meeting, asking those interested in such an interest group to sign their names on a list and agree to meet together at a certain place and time. Members at that meeting will then discuss informally the framework of the group. It has been found that interest groups get off to a better start if emphasis is placed upon the group members sharing the responsibilities of running the group rather than asking one person to take on everything. It can be difficult to find a person willing to take on all the responsibility but if, at this first informal meeting, people are asked to volunteer to take on aspects of running the group, no matter how small, the group is more likely to get off the ground. The notion that an 'expert' will deliver a 'course' should be discouraged.

U3A is a co-operative and mutually supportive organisation, not a service provider. Naturally an 'expert' is a huge asset but the ethos of co-operation should still be foremost. The Group Co-ordinator may well play a vital role here, helping to seek out suitable people to co-ordinate the group.

At the first meeting, the group members might find the following topics useful to progress things:

### **Setting Goals**

You might like to consider the following:

Where and how often shall we meet?

What would we like to do? Include the range, content and nature of the subject to be studied, the time scale etc.

How can we achieve this?

What common knowledge do we have already?

What resources can people contribute?

How will we organise the group?

Who will do what?

What study/learning methods can we use? Books, DVDs, PowerPoint presentations, online material, online courses etc. Volunteer experts who can be invited to demonstrate skills or give occasional talks. Demonstrations, trips/events etc. U3A resources.

Remember people may not concentrate fully on a topic for more than about 30 minutes if the same method of delivery is used e.g. an unsupported talk or lecture. It helps to build in changes in delivery and learning/study techniques.

When discussing where to meet it might be useful to consider where people live. If they are travelling from a wide area, the location could be moved on a rota basis or it might be more convenient to meet at a central point. The important thing is to agree about the location.

### **Communication**

Email is a useful way to get a message around the group quickly, so ask group members to provide contact details and ensure you keep them secure and up to date and only use them for internal communication. Once all of these and any other matters have been decided, inform the Groups' Co-ordinator or committee member responsible, so that all U3A members know of the group's existence and the appointed person can help with advice and practical arrangements.

### **TYPES OF STUDY**

There are various types of study. Aim for a good mixture of them.

- Teamwork. A small team of group members share the delivery and facilitate the study.
- Leader led. The Leader acts as a leader to facilitate the planning of the learning activities. Once the programme has been determined, individual members take responsibility for the various elements of the programme/administration. The Leader continues to lead sessions.
- Teacher led. Here the member with the necessary expertise leads sessions. Other members take on the necessary administration.
- Resource Centre led. Enthusiastic members, keen to pursue an interest but without expertise amongst them, join together and contact the Resource Centre to supply them with the non-book materials they need.

More information can be found in *More Time to Learn*, which is available as a hard copy free of charge to U3As from the National Office and as a download from the national website.

### **THE GROUP LEADER'S ROLE**

No one person should have to carry the load of running an interest group. Ideally the group should have **regular planning meetings** (see below) to decide on their programme and share out the preparation tasks. As many group members as possible should participate in preparation for the sessions and the sessions themselves. If people are nervous this can be done in pairs or threes and need only be a five or ten minute contribution. It is one of the tenets of U3A that Group Leaders are drawn from the membership and that group members must also be members of U3A. The role of the Group Leader is to guide a group through a course of study in which they may, or may not, lead the learning. Different subjects will make different demands on the group.

The Group Leader should keep control of the session in respect of both timing and content. Timing is especially important if members have been asked to contribute prepared pieces. If time runs out members may feign relief, but might actually feel disappointment that they have wasted preparation time. If this becomes a regular occurrence, members may stop preparing and sessions become disorganised.

### **SOME POINTERS ON RUNNING A GROUP DISCUSSION**

Group discussions can be formal or informal. In an informal setting the discussion will begin, wander in all directions and then, when everyone has had enough, stop. This can work for a while but most people can find this disappointing and it can lead to discussions being dominated by a few members. In a formal discussion a chairman is appointed and is responsible for ensuring that the discussion is conducted in a fair and democratic manner.

Whichever style is chosen, the group should agree some ground rules, for example,

- Everyone must have a chance to speak.
- Everyone should listen.
- Everyone's opinion is valued and respected even if people differ in views.

### **Managing a Group Meeting**

#### **Some ways of starting a discussion:**

- Each member makes a short contribution to the topic (30 seconds/1 minute?).
- Each member gives a one-word reaction to the topic.
- Members take it in turns to make an opening presentation (5 minutes?).
- Members offer a personal anecdote (needs to be planned).
- Everyone should keep to the point.
- An artefact/article/picture etc. which illustrates the topic is introduced and an explanation is given regarding its selection.

### **Ways of ending:**

- Try to end discussions on a productive note.
- Members can take it in turns to sum up what has been said.
- Each member to say, briefly, what they have learned/found interesting.
- Ask the group for comments on how the next discussion could be conducted based on what has been learnt from this one.

### **Techniques and tips:**

- Break the group into pairs or small groups and then feedback to a general discussion.
- Produce artefacts, leaflets, collages, photo-montage displays, short videos etc. to summarise discussion group outcomes. (This is a long-term activity.) These can be displayed at monthly meetings, study days etc.
- Compile key-word summaries.
- Allow time for socialising, some of the best discussions take place over a cup of tea.

Remember, some members will be less active than others. A member trying to take over the group needs to be dealt with but a member who never speaks may still be getting much from the discussion.

### ***Encourage a culture of planning***

Many U3As have found that regular planning sessions can contribute towards establishing a lively, dynamic interest group. The best ideas come from an open 'brainstorming' session where everything and anything relevant to the topic can be suggested. Even frivolous suggestions can trigger unusual or exciting practical suggestions that might have stayed dormant otherwise. Negative comments should not be part of the discussion until a good selection of possibilities has been identified. At this stage the practicalities can be assessed but constructive comments should be encouraged. Bald negativity tends to restrict the part of the brain that produces creative/problem solving thoughts.

When planning future programmes, the following points should be considered:

- Should the group continue as before?
- If not, how should things change?
- Has the time come to split into sub-groups?
- Is a breathing space needed before starting again?

### ***When a group has been formed, the following points may help:***

#### **U3A Insurance Cover**

U3A meetings, including group meetings, are covered by a Third Age Trust Public and Products Liability insurance. Non-members are also covered providing they are monitored to ensure their attendance is limited to one or two sessions only. Any queries can be dealt with by the current Hon. Treasurer.

In the case of an accident, you should complete an Accident Form [attached] as soon as possible and send it to the current Health and Safety Trustee to hold on file should any further action be required.

### **The following points should be observed:**

- a) Keep a register including e-mail, telephone numbers and ICE numbers.
- b) Make sure your group are all fully paid up members of U3A. You can always check with the current Membership Secretary or Group Coordinator.
- c) Inform Group Co-ordinator of any changes to the group membership and/or timings.
- d) Only take new members from the waiting list through the Group Co-ordinator.
- e) Circulate information from the monthly email update to those members who don't have email.
- f) Ensure the website information is accurate.
- g) Keep to start and finish times.
- h) Establish a kitty for expenses, if applicable.
- i) The National recommended payment of 30p is payable to the host for refreshments. Other charges to cover actual costs such as photocopying or providing resource material should be made transparent at the outset to any new member joining a group.
- j) If a member stops coming, try to find out why.
- k) Guests should be fully paid up members and encouraged to confirm joining after one visit but not before anyone waiting.
- l) Never open a bank account for the group. If required, bank facilities may be available through our U3A main account. Please contact the Hon Treasurer if you require more information.
- m) Give receipts and keep a record of expenses.

## VENUES FOR HIRE:

The following halls/rooms are available for hire. This can be helpful if more than one group would like to combine for a lecture or slide show:

**Please note** that when booking a venue, it should be in the name of **Reigate and Redhill U3A** and not your own name although this can be used to send invoices. This will ensure that the Trust Public Liability is properly covering the venue, members, guests and speakers attending.

### **United Reform Church, Park Lane East, Reigate**

Booking Tina Kruszynski, Church and Community Manager – telephone 01737 249766  
Park Room – up to 40/50 - £22 per hour with tea facilities

### **Reigate Quaker Meeting House, Reigate Road, Reigate**

Booking – John Mansfield – 01737 762446

1. Meeting Room – up to 100 - £20 for 3 hours – no tea facilities
2. Committee Room – up to 30 - £20 for 3 hours with tea facilities
3. Basement – up to 25 - £10 for 3 hours – no tea facilities

### **Colman Redland Centre, Croydon Road, Reigate RH2 0NA**

Two halls and a meeting room for 12/15 people. Booking 07850 280569

**The Salfords Village Hall** costs £19. 50 for two hours

Contact is Claire Minter 01737 780339

### **Woodhatch Centre booking – Jo on 01737 2271030**

Small meeting room upstairs - seating 14 max - £11.50 per hour

Green room downstairs - seating 40 max - £14 per hour

### **Reigate Baptist Church Sycamore Walk, Reigate RH2 7LR**

Booking – Lisa on 01737 248258

Vine Room (seating 20) £27.50 for 4 hours. Hot drinks extra.

Reduction in price if you state you are an educational charity.

### **Tesco Community Hall Tesco Gatwick Extra. , Reigate Road, Horley, Surrey, England, RH6 0AT**

Booking – Angela 07756 577059 Lisa 07756 577058 or via

<https://www.hallshire.com/halls/view/2849/gatwick-community-room#cform>

Lovely room for hire for FREE with own disabled access toilet, free tea and coffee facilities.

20 chairs, 4 tables, 4 small stools, 4 tall stalls, 8 beanbags, floor mats, whiteboard, flip chart, WiFi.

Free easy parking.

Suitable for charities and small groups, meetings, training, No children's parties.

You must have your own Public Liability Insurance.

## TRANSPORT HIRE

Graham Bailey– Four Seasons coaches

16 and 26 seater

01737 822333

Derek Freeman - Taxi

8 seater

01737 226212

Any queries, please contact the Group Co-ordinator by email [groups@RRU3A.org.uk](mailto:groups@RRU3A.org.uk) or 01737 225681