

Faringdon & District U3A

Guidelines for Interest Groups

Introduction

Special Interest Groups are a vital feature of U3A, providing opportunities for learning together, sharing experience and expertise, and making new friends. Many groups evolve from an initial meeting of sometimes less than half a dozen members who shared a common interest, and work together to organise a regular programme of activities. Don't worry if there are only a few members to start with, as numbers will almost certainly increase as the Group develops. Don't hesitate to contact the Faringdon and District U3A Groups Coordinator at any time for advice and help about any aspect or running a Group.

The national U3A Resource Centre has a wide range of material and many subject areas are supported by a National Network Coordinator: details are in Third Age Matters [TAM] or on the website [www.u3a.org.uk]. The education magazine Sources (published occasionally with TAM) as well as Study Days and Summer Schools provide more in-depth coverage of a wide range of subjects.

Faringdon & District U3A has developed these informal guidelines for the formation and running of Groups, and dealt with questions as they have arisen. This document seeks to collect together current practice for the information of existing Group Leaders and to provide guidance and help for members who wish to start new Groups.

Please note that this document is not intended to be overly restrictive or prescriptive, but rather a help to Group Leaders and prospective Group Leaders to make their role as straightforward as possible.

All suggestions and comments are most welcome and should be made to the Groups Coordinator.

Setting up a Group

1. A Group can be started by any member of Faringdon and District U3A. If you are thinking about setting up a Group, discuss with the Groups Coordinator about a possible day and time for regular meetings, and arrange an informal meeting to gauge the level of interest, possible topics for initial meetings, and so forth.
2. In setting up a Group the following points should be noted:
 - a. The interests and objectives of the Group should be within those of U3A as defined by the constitution.
 - b. There should be no existing group covering the same area of interest that is able to accept more members.
 - c. The prospective Group Leader/ Facilitator should keep the Groups Coordinator informed about details of the Group (name, meeting place and time). The Groups Coordinator will pass on the agreed information to the U3A Committee and Newsletter Editor.
 - d. In case of doubt or disagreement in relation to setting up a new Group, the matter should be referred to the U3A Committee for a decision.

Membership

3. Any current member (i.e. having paid their U3A subscription for the current year) of Faringdon and District U3A can belong to any Group, subject only to a clear reason (e.g. meeting space) that the number of members in the group must be restricted.
4. A member should register their interest and contact details with the Group Leader and should seek to attend a reasonable number of the Group's meetings.

5. Any member of Faringdon and District U3A may attend a Group meeting on an occasional basis.
6. A non-U3A member may attend one Group meeting subject to the prior agreement of the Group Leader (see 16) and payment of any fees and expenses paid by the other members of the Group for that meeting.

Finance

7. Each Group is expected to be self-financing and self-accounting and can decide to build up a small reserve to cover miscellaneous expenses etc. by, for example, charging each person attending a meeting a fee.
8. The Group should agree the person to be responsible for the finances, and he/she should keep an account of income and expenditure.
9. At the end of each financial year, each Group Leader must make a brief financial statement to the Faringdon and District U3A Treasurer (if this is a "nil return", the statement can be verbal or by email) that may be independently examined.
10. The Faringdon and District U3A Committee may give a grant or loan to cover start-up costs for equipment, supplies, etc. Once a Group is established, capital expenditure in excess of £50 must be agreed by the Committee.
11. If the financial arrangements of the Group are such that a bank account, separate from the Faringdon and District U3A main account is appropriate, this matter should be discussed with the Faringdon and District U3A Treasurer. Where a Bank Account is opened, it must have two signatories and there should be regular reporting of income and expenditure agreed with the Treasurer.
12. It is recommended that any significant financial commitment (e.g. coach hire or booking a venue) should be discussed with the Faringdon and District U3A Treasurer in advance. Further, the Treasurer, Chairman or Groups Coordinator must be informed if it becomes apparent that the Group may not be able to meet its financial commitments.
13. If a Group hires a venue and pays rent directly to the venue owners, it is essential that the booking is clearly understood to be on behalf of Faringdon and District U3A and that receipts are obtained.

Accidents and Insurance

14. U3A Public & Products Liability Insurance is intended to cover liability for acts which might arise from an accident caused by the negligent act or omission by a U3A member, which injures someone else or damages their personal property during or in connection with a U3A activity. This insurance is not a substitute for members' own house, contents, motor or travel insurance. Equipment owned by Faringdon & District U3A is covered against accidental damage whilst being used on U3A business. Any questions relating to insurance should be directed initially to the Faringdon and District U3A Secretary who holds the insurance documentation.
15. Any member attending a U3A group meeting is covered by U3A insurance.
16. Guests who are not U3A members attending for a 'taster' session are NOT covered and this should be made clear to them by the Group Leader.
17. The Group Leader should have a Faringdon and District U3A Accident Form available at each meeting (copy attached). In the event of an accident it should be completed and signed and given to the Groups Coordinator (with a copy to the Secretary) as soon as possible and in any event within seven days after the incident.

Meeting Times and Arrangements

18. The Group Leader and Group members should decide on the day and time of meeting, making sure to inform the Groups Coordinator of their decision. When deciding on meeting times, Groups should avoid clashes of days and times with other Groups as far as possible. The Groups Coordinator keeps a list of Groups with their meeting days and times. The Groups Coordinator should also be informed if the Group changes the day and time of meeting on a permanent basis.

19. The Group is responsible for making its own arrangement for meetings - transport, venue, equipment, speakers, etc. and for any costs incurred.

20. If the meeting is in a private home, then it is prudent for the householder to check that it does not contravene any insurance or letting arrangements.

Photocopying of books, journals and magazines

21. Faringdon and District U3A pays an annual licence fee to the Copyright Licence Agency [CLA] offering the following rights:

- Right to photocopy from any publication (book, journal or magazine) published in the UK (and other countries) extracts up to 5%, one chapter, or one article - whichever is the greater.
- Right to copy onto acetate or enlarge copies
- Right to digitally copy (scan or retype) and to use these digital copies with digital whiteboards, within Virtual Learning Environments, email and so on
- Right to store copies for one year
- Copy entire works for visually-impaired students
- No records to maintain

Any questions relating to the licence should be directed to the Faringdon and District U3A Secretary who holds the licence documents.

Transport and Outings

22. Each Group is responsible for making its own travel arrangements for visits and outings.

23. Group Leaders should consider whether a formal risk assessment or collection of Next of Kin data is needed. Advice should be sought from the Groups Coordinator.

24. In cases where travel is by private car, passengers may make a suitable contribution to the driver towards expenses; the driver should ensure that such payment does not contravene his/her insurance cover.

Ending a Group

25. If a Group Leader wishes to stand down for any reason, the Groups Coordinator should be informed as soon as possible. Group members should try to identify a new leader if they wish the Group to continue. The Groups Coordinator can help in this process if required.

26. If a Group becomes inactive through lack of support, resignation of the Group Leader or for any other reason, the Groups Coordinator should be informed and be given any relevant information (e.g. list of members, programme details, etc.) in case the Group (or another with similar interests) is re-formed at a future date.

27. Any equipment, supplies, and similar items bought with a grant from Faringdon and District U3A funds must be returned to the Group Coordinator.

28. Any remaining funds and other assets (e.g. equipment, supplies, etc. bought by the Group), should be disbursed as agreed by the Group members. If there is no agreement, these will be held by Faringdon and District U3A in case the Group (or another with similar interests) is re-formed within two years; after this time the Faringdon and District U3A Committee will discuss how such assets might be disposed of.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

29. GDPR guidelines for group conveners:

- Each Group Leader is encouraged to keep a list of Group members, with contact details. These are for use only within the Group and should not be shared with parties outside Faringdon and District U3A.
- The Groups Coordinator will maintain a list of Group Leaders with their contact details (address, telephone number and e-mail address) which will be available to the U3A Committee and other Group Leaders for use in connection with Faringdon and District U3A only.
- The only people able to access data covered by this policy should be those who need to communicate with or provide a service to the Faringdon & District U3A members.
- Faringdon & District U3A will provide induction training to committee members and group conveners to help them understand their responsibilities when handling data.
- Committee Members and group conveners should keep all data secure, by taking sensible precautions and following the guidelines below.
- Use password protection on laptops and PCs that contain personal information.
- Strong passwords must be used and they should never be shared. The recommendation is that these are long (at least seven characters) and have a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers and the special keyboard characters like the asterisk or currency symbols. Passwords should not be written down somewhere where they can be easily accessed and identified.
- Ensure laptops & PCs have up-to-date anti-virus & firewall software.
- Use password protection or secure cloud systems when sharing data.
- If a laptop is stolen or lost that holds a large amount of member information, please contact the Faringdon & District U3A Data Protection Officer.
- When emailing, use 'blind copy' so that email recipients don't see each other's email addresses.
- Data should not be shared outside of the U3A unless with prior consent and/or for specific and agreed reasons.
- Member information should be kept up-to-date to ensure accuracy.
- Communication should be appropriate – inappropriate communication would include sending U3A members marketing and/or promotional materials from external service providers.
- Next of kin data should be protected in the same way as Members' data.
- Photographs are classified as personal data. Where group photographs are being taken members will be asked to step out of shot if they don't wish to be in the photograph. Otherwise consent will be obtained from members in order for photographs to be taken and members will be informed as to where photographs will be displayed.
- Were a data breach to occur, action should be taken to minimise the harm. Initially this should be reported to the Faringdon & District U3A Data Protection Officer.
- Committee members/group conveners who hold information should delete or return all data when relinquishing their roles.