

Organising your group

There are as many ways of establishing and running a group as there are people to run them! The traditional concept of the leader being the one with knowledge and expertise in the subject area is only one. At the other end of the spectrum a group could be run on a self-help basis, where none of its members has any expertise, but all share a willingness to learn and take an active role in the learning process. In between these extremes is a myriad of alternative models you may consider.

It is especially recommended to consider whether the person who leads the activity/discussion is necessarily the best person to take on the administrative role of 'leader'. Having a deputy to share the load and represent the group alongside, or in place of, the leader is very helpful from everyone's point of view. Delegating the administrative tasks amongst the group also lessens the load and builds on the 'shared learning' ethos of the u3a.

New groups should start with a planning meeting to discuss the best way forward. The members can compare differing ways for the group to operate and decide on a preferred model, allocating various personnel for the necessary tasks. The suitability of the venue and the preferred maximum group size might also be discussed.

It is good practice for established groups to also have a planning meeting annually, to discuss any changes needed in the way the group functions. This enables the group to be revitalised and ensures it meets the needs and expectations of the members.

Funds are usually available for setting up a new group, or occasionally to existing groups. Speak to the Groups Coordinator and/or Treasurer to discuss re-imburement if you wish to purchase resource assets for your group. As well as meeting with your group regularly, there are a few administrative duties which need to be done. All or any of these may be carried out by any member of the group, but please ensure that someone has overall responsibility for their completion. More details can be found under the relevant headings.

1. Make a list of all members with their contact details and, if possible, their U3A number.
2. Keep a register of attendance and fee payments. Meeting Fees are set by the committee and are payable per member per group attended. In some cases this may be done by an annual payment in advance. In others on a session by session basis. Fees will vary according to the meeting venue, with the aim always to ensure any hire costs are covered. Meetings cancelled (e.g. bank holiday dates) should be entered on the register as 'nil attendance'. Current Ledbury u3a Members and non-u3a members have an entitlement to one free 'taster' session for any group.

3. If the group wishes, and circumstances allow, arrange for tea/coffee and biscuits for each meeting. Decide with the group how this will be paid for, ensuring any monies paid only cover the cost.
4. Pay the group fees to the Treasurer quarterly, preferably at the times specified (Oct: Jan: April: July/15th Aug latest), using the paying in form supplied.
5. Submit updated information on your group and its activities for the newsletter to the Newsletter Editor up to three times a year, before the deadline published on the back page of each newsletter. This information can also be used to update our website.
6. Check the membership annually, prior to the Open Enrolment Meeting in September, to ascertain if infrequent attendees wish to remain in the group. This will clarify if you have space for new members.
7. Attend the Open Day Meeting annually, together with another group member if possible, with some information on your group's activities displayed to promote interest in the group and attract new members. If you cannot attend yourself, please arrange a group member to take your place.
8. Send a list of all current members with their contact details and, if possible, their u3a number, to the Membership Secretary and Groups Co-ordinator annually by early November.
9. Notify the Membership Secretary if a member of a neighbouring u3a, who is not a member of Ledbury & District u3a, attends your group.
10. Attend the Group Leaders' meetings, or arrange a substitute from the group.
11. Arrange for your group to take its turn to serve refreshments at Monthly General Meetings, in accordance with the rota published on the website and in the Newsletter.
12. If a member stops attending, try to find out why.

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