



Group Convenors Guidelines

1. Introduction

This document provides general guidance for u3a Group Convenors. The running of a group and its administration will vary greatly, depending on its needs. Group Convenors are vitally important. A u3a is mainly a collection of interest groups and without group convenors it could not exist. This guidance is intended to help you address current issues you may face when taking over the role of convenor of an existing group or starting a new one. If you find they are not sufficient for your needs or there are any omissions or errors then do not hesitate to speak to the Interest Groups Co-ordinator.

Thank you for volunteering. All you do for our u3a is very much appreciated.

The Group Support team oversee the running of the groups within Beccles u3a. They help in the formation of new groups, maintain contact and support within the groups, provide guidance on how to run groups and report to the Executive Committee at their monthly meetings.

A member of the groups' support team (GST) is assigned to each group and he or she will provide advice and help on group matters or will refer the convenor to someone who can. In turn, the convenor must keep this GST member informed of any changes made in the running of the group. It is particularly important to let the GST member know if the group convenor plans to step down or if the group is being wound up. Changes of venue or meeting dates must also be reported to the Webmaster so that the website can be updated. Email: - web.becclesu3a@gmail.com. Alternatively, the convenor can update their own web pages, for which training can be given.

The Third Age Trust, our parent organisation, is an excellent source of all kinds of information and material, which you may find useful in your group activities. It publishes a Newsletter, Third Age Matters, four times a year, and has a website www.u3a.org.uk, which we recommend you visit. Members are advised to register and create an account to gain full access; the National subject advisors and resource centre are particularly useful for Group Convenors.

The role of the Group Convenor

The role of the Group Convenor will vary according to the type of group being run. In some groups, convenors follow a structured plan that might involve some degree of guidance and tuition, e.g. digital photography or bridge, whilst in others the role is that of co-ordinating events and people, e.g. eating out, theatre visits. The Group Convenor is responsible for the content, duration, and administration of the group's meetings. The venue, frequency and timing of meetings, and other housekeeping details should be discussed and agreed by the group.

The Group Convenor should not feel that they have to do everything themselves. Group members should be willing, if it is appropriate, to take on some of the tasks of organising and running aspects of the group's functions.

The Group Convenor should consider appointing an Assistant Convenor. The only responsibility the Assistant Convenor need have is to run the meeting on the odd occasion the Group Convenor cannot attend, but this ensures there is no need to cancel a meeting at short notice. You can also, at your discretion, encourage an assistant convenor to run a meeting occasionally under your guidance, which may help a possible successor to gain experience.

The Group Convenor should engage members as much as possible in whatever activity is being practiced. Most people like to take an active part rather than a passive part in what is going on. This can be as simple as conducting a question and answer session at the end of a talk.

In some study groups there may be a variation from beginner to skilled/experienced member. The group leader needs to pitch the meeting content so that it is not too advanced for beginners yet does not bore the experienced member. Alternatively, you may feel it appropriate to run the meeting in separate streams or give extra tuition to the novice. Special attention in this respect also needs to be given to pacing the introduction of a new member into the established group.

Membership of a group

The Group Convenor should ensure that all members of the Group are members of our u3a. This is an insurance requirement. The simplest formal way of doing this is to check their membership card when they join or renew. If in any doubt contact the Interest Groups 'Co-ordinator. Soon after the beginning of each membership year, it is important that new membership cards are seen by the group leader, and membership numbers noted.

A Group Record Sheet

The Group Convenor should keep, with the individual member's permission, a record of group members 'name, membership number, telephone number and email address. This information should not be shared outside of the Group but used for communication purposes only.

A Register of Attendance

The Register of Attendance should be completed at every meeting. This should include the members name and number as shown on membership card. Beccles u3a has a standard register that all groups should use. This can be photocopied when required for a Groups Survey and sent to the Treasurer for analysis. This will make the task easier for both the Group Convenor and the Treasurer.

Attendance at meetings

Any member unable to attend a group meeting should advise the Group Convenor.

Any member who decides to leave the group should advise the Group Convenor accordingly, so that their place may be available to someone else.

Any member who has not attended or been in contact with the Group Convenor for **THREE** meetings may forfeit their place in the group, if the Group Convenor feels this is necessary.

The group size will vary depending on the activity and the venue. Once a group declares it is full the Group Convenor should inform the Interest Groups 'Co-ordinator and put in place a Waiting List. If the Waiting List is in excess of 5 people an additional group should be considered.

Starting a New Group

Any member can put forward suggestions for a new group they themselves would like to set up or suggest an activity/interest group they would like to see established. Ideas for new groups are always welcome and full support will be given by the Interest Groups 'Co-ordinator and the support team in order to ensure the new group becomes established and has an active membership.

Publicity for your Group

Publicity for your group can be achieved via a variety of methods:

Website: - Group Convenors must ensure that their group page on the u3a website is kept up to date and contains appropriate photographs. The Interest Groups 'Co-ordinator can liaise with the Webmaster to promote interest groups on the Latest News page. Members can make contact with the convenor via the "Bird" on their group's page. The information should be updated at regular intervals to keep the page fresh and attractive.

Newsletter: - Groups can also insert details of group activities in the quarterly Newsletter.

Contact: Itsup.becclesu3a@gmail.com: Contact web.becclesu3a@gmail.com

Monthly Meeting: - Announcements for groups can be made at these meetings and notices placed on the Groups Notice board.

Resources for Group Convenors

Equipment for groups

Beccles u3a has the following equipment for the use of Groups: - projector and screen, A3 and A4 laminator and 2 flip charts. Additional equipment can be purchased and used for the benefit of all groups.

The u3a projector and screen may be used by all interest groups, and can be booked by convenors, or their assigned deputies, by contacting Sally and Chris Greenhill using the Projector Guardian link or by telephoning 01502 715733. When collecting the projector or screen you will need to show your current Beccles u3a membership card, confirm your group name, and the in/out dates

Meetings for Group Convenors

Every year there is a get together for Beccles u3a volunteers. These events are held to give Group Convenors and other volunteers an opportunity to raise issues for discussion with committee members and can also be a way of thanking all volunteers for their efforts during the year. This event enables Convenors to mingle with fellow Convenors, discuss best practices and share experiences.

Finance

It is essential that the Group Convenor maintains details of the Group's income and expenditure and submits a return income and expenditure account three times a year as requested to Lacey Baxter.

The periods for Expenditure returns are:-

April > July (due 10th August)

August > November (due 10th December)

December > March (due 10th April)

It is important to submit a return even if there are no financial transactions.

All groups are self-financing and all members must pay their share of the group's expenses. This includes any start-up costs. This is the way most u3as run their groups and is the only really sensible way to do it, given that the costs involved can vary widely between groups.

The important rule however is that the convenor should not end up out of pocket.

If the group meetings are held in a hired venue then at each meeting the convenor should put out a register of attendance and contribution sheet so that each member can sign in and pay some fixed amount of money to cover the hire of the room, the provision of any refreshments and the cost of any incidental expenses, such as postage, the convenor may have incurred. If a surplus is slowly accumulated by the leader then this must be given back to the group members in some way.

This is usually done by occasionally having a meeting free of charge. The Group Convenor is advised not to hold more than **£70** in surplus money in their home.

There are financial and other risks involved when groups organise their own visits, theatre trips, etc. and the u3a produces guidance which helps organisers to minimise the risks. Groups should consult

the Treasurer on these. u3a policy is that the trip organiser must require those who plan to attend to pay in advance with cash, cheque payable to Beccles u3a or bank transfer. This money must then be lodged with the u3a Treasurer who will make the relevant payments with a u3a cheque or bank transfer.

Group Convenors must not handle payments for trips through any other bank accounts. Receipts must be provided for trip payments made.

The paper trail of monies in and out must lead back to the Treasurer, who has the overall responsibility for money in our u3a.

The reason for these controls is that the u3a Executive Committee members are also our u3a Trustees and are, technically and ultimately responsible for such accounts; so they need to be aware of what they are committed to. The Treasurer has to record for all group funds in the annual accounts

Equipment purchased by a group becomes the property of our u3a, and needs to be identified as such. Details of any such purchases should be given to the Treasurer who will arrange its entry on the u3a Asset List. If a group closes all the assets should be passed to the Executive Committee.

Health and Safety

If a group meets in a public venue rather than in a private home, the group convenor needs to be aware of the Health and Safety regulations of the venue in which the group meetings are held. If you hold your meetings in a public venue, such as a church or community hall, library or church rooms, make sure that a venue risk assessment is carried out. Although this may in practice mean no more than making sure the group knows where the emergency exits are and assembly points in the event of fire, identification of any potential obstructions and tripping hazards and availability of disabled access, it is important that this assessment is completed prior to the meeting.

A risk assessment form should be completed prior to use of the venue. When you arrive for your meeting, a day of use checklist could also be completed to reassure yourself that everything is in place. A pro-forma of this day of use checklist is also available. If you have any safety concerns then do not continue if they cannot be resolved at the time to your satisfaction. Further copies of the Venue Risk Assessment Checklist and the Venue Checklist - Day of Use are available from the Interest Groups 'Coordinator if you require them.

Accidents/Incidents

A requirement of the insurance is that in the event of a member of your group suffering an accident, he or she must complete an Accident and Incident Report Form as soon as is reasonably practical following the event and return it to the u3a Secretary. Accident forms should be returned not later than 24 hours after an incident, because if certain types of accident occur the Health & Safety Executive has by law to be informed within 48 hours. This will ensure that an accurate record is kept should there be further consequences, either medical or legal. Completed forms should be returned to the u3a Secretary.

Full policy documents are in this handbook.

Accessibility Awareness

To identify and support members and prospective members who have disclosed a difficulty relating to visual and hearing loss, mobility and general health issues.

To provide, where reasonably practical, suitable material to enable members with some visual loss to access information.

To be aware of the limitations of group members and to 'make allowances'. Slow the pace, allocate more time, seat members in the most accessible area, and meet at a different location - perhaps the disabled member's home.

If a member requires extra support to attend a group, they should be given the opportunity to bring a companion/ carer with them.

When on outings, Group Conveners should make sure that members have all the relevant information available. Ease of access, condition of paths, transport being used. Circumstances can, and will, change for any one of us and we must remain adaptable and to do our best to support all our members.

Communication is important and we need to be aware that not all of our members have access to a computer.

To promote Beccles u3a as an organisation this continues to achieve equality and diversity in all its activities.

If you have any concerns please do contact the Accessibility Officer, via the website contacts page.

Insurance

Every member of every u3a in the country is covered by an insurance policy taken out by The Third Age Trust. All u3as have a Public and Products Liability Insurance. It insures a u3a member against compensation claims arising from injury or damage to property suffered by a third party, or claims arising from the failure of a product, for which failure a u3a member is held to be legally liable. The above is intended only to be a brief description of the insurance. Please refer to the Appendix for the insurance cover.

Licences, Copying/Photocopying

A small amount of personal copying of copyright materials for specified reasons is allowed under the "Fair Dealing" arrangement made in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The broadly accepted guidelines for the amount of a work that may be copied under "Fair Dealing" allow the copying of:

- one article from an issue of a journal
- up to one chapter or 5%, whichever is greater, of a book
- one poem or short story of up to ten pages from an anthology

Fair dealing does not apply to films, sound recordings or broadcasts.

The photocopying of printed music is almost always illegal. See www.mpaonline.org.uk for more information.

Recorded Music. The PPL licence supplied by The Third Age Trust gives u3as permission to play recorded music in public.

DVDs/Videos. The Third Age Trust has no blanket licence arrangement with film copyright holders or organisations. Groups are usually covered by an exemption in the Copyright Law which allows the use of videos or DVDs for educational purposes.

For more information, please check the UK Copyright Service.

Data Protection

The u3a is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into force on 25 May 2018. It governs all personal information gathered and stored by the Beccles u3a including all that gathered within groups. The executive committee have strict procedures in place for handling membership information for the whole of Beccles u3a.

Permission must be specifically sought from each member of the group for their details to be shared with other members of the group. When a member leaves the group, his or her information should be deleted unless permission is specifically given for it to be retained.

In addition to name, membership number and contact details (email address and or phone number), photographs are considered as personal data so permission should be sought for their use.

When emailing members of the group it is recommended that the message should be sent to oneself and blind copied (bcc) to other members of the group.

In Case of Emergency

Beccles u3a has a duty of care towards its members and so it has a legitimate interest in collecting information on whom should be contacted 'in case of emergency'. Beccles u3a considers that the group convenor should hold this information in case anything happens during a meeting. The collection and use of this information should comply with the Beccles u3a data protection policy.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, well-being and human rights thus enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

If you have concerns about a member's well-being as a result of Beccles u3a activities, please consult a member of the committee.

Grievances and Complaints

All members of Beccles u3a are required to comply with the code of conduct (appendix D(xi)). If there is a complaint then the person complaining should follow the Beccles u3a Complaints procedure. The Beccles u3a committee are committed to dealing with complaints quickly and fairly.

FOR HELP AND ADVICE CONSULT YOUR GROUPS' SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER

Useful contacts

Groups generally: groups.becclesu3a@gmail.com

Groups' Support Team members:

GST 1 grp1.becclesu3a@gmail.com

GST 2 grp2.becclesu3a@gmail.com

GST 3 grp03.becclesu3a@gmail.com

GST 4 grp4.becclesu3a@gmail.com

GST 5 grp5.becclesu3a@gmail.com