

Guidance Document for Group Leaders

THE GROUP COORDINATOR

The role of Group Coordinator is shared by two members of the committee who can be contacted by email at groups@rru3a.org.uk.

The role of Group Coordinator and / or Assistant includes:

- Managing the Groups table at Friday Meetings
- Maintaining Group Notice Boards
- Responding to requests from members who wish to join groups
- Updating Beacon with accurate details
- Updating website as appropriate
- Look to create new groups when sufficient members are on a waiting list.
- Recruiting new Group Leaders
- Informing our members of groups actively seeking new participants
- 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 is to guide a group of people through a programme of study or activity.

Anyone wishing to start an interest group should notify the Group Coordinator. A notice can then be circulated via all available communication channels e.g. website, bulletins and an announcement made at a monthly/general meeting, asking those interested in such a group to inform the Group Coordinator. The Group Leader will contact all those interested and suggest a date for meeting. 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.

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

Setting Goals

- 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 or activity, the timescale etc.
- How can we achieve this?
- What common knowledge do we have already?
- What resources can people contribute?
- Can the wider u3a offer resources or specialist advice, as they have Subject Advisers for many areas – see <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/subjects>
- How will we organise the group?
- Who will do what?
- It helps learning to build in changes in delivery and study techniques. What study/learning methods can we use?
 - o Books, DVDs, PowerPoint presentations, online material, online courses etc.
 - o Are there volunteer experts who can be invited to demonstrate skills or give occasional talks?
 - o Demonstrations, trips/events etc. u3a resources.

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. If the Group Leader has opted for access to Beacon then it is preferable for all emails to be sent through

Beacon. Group members may prefer to communicate with each other using personal email addresses, but this should be agreed at the outset with all members, and with new members as they join the group.

If the Group Leader resigns or stops being the Group Leader ALL member information MUST be deleted from personal devices to comply with GDPR.

Once all of these and any other matters have been decided, inform the Groups' Coordinator or committee member responsible, so that all u3a members are aware the group is now active.

TYPES OF STUDY AND ACTIVITY

There are various types of study and activity, which may be supported by group member or u3a learning resources, for example:

- Teamwork. A small team of group members share the delivery and facilitate the study or activity.
- Leader led. The Leader facilitates the planning of activities. Once the programme has been determined, individual members take responsibility for the various elements of the programme/administration. The Leader continues to manage sessions.
- Teacher led. Here the member with the necessary expertise leads sessions. Other members take on the necessary administration.

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.

The Group Leader should manage the session in respect of both timing and content.

SOME POINTERS ON RUNNING A GROUP DISCUSSION

The group should agree to some ground rules. It is important:

- Everyone has a chance to speak.
- Everyone listens.
- Everyone's opinion is valued and respected even if people differ in views.
- Discussion is kept on the subject.

Managing a Group Meeting

Some ways of starting a discussion:

- Each member makes a short contribution to the topic (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).
- An artefact/article/picture etc. which illustrates the topic is introduced and an explanation is given regarding its selection.

Ways of ending a discussion:

- Try to end discussions on a positive note.
- Members can take it in turns to comment on or sum up what has been discussed.
- 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 may participate less than others. A member trying to dominate the group needs to be managed. A member who never speaks may still be getting much from the discussion, but should be encouraged to express their views.

Encourage a culture of planning

Regular planning sessions can contribute to the success of the learning or activity programme. Within our u3a, these are often held on an annual basis (often prior to the end of the year).

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

- Which activities or learning can be planned in advance, time-tabled to specific dates?
- How can a programme be determined in allocating shared responsibilities?
- Are any changes required?

The following points should be observed:

- a) **Keep a register including e-mail, telephone numbers and ICE numbers.** This information may be accessed from Beacon.
- 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 Coordinator of any changes to the group membership or timings, for updating on the website.
- d) Only take new members from the waiting list through the Group Coordinator.
- e) Ensure the website information is accurate.
- f) Keep to start and finish times.
- g) Establish a kitty for expenses, if applicable.
- h) We would recommend a payment of 50p 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.
- i) If a member stops coming, try to find out why.
- j) Guests should be fully paid up members and encouraged to confirm joining after one visit but this should be subject to the waiting list.
- k) If required, bank facilities may be available through our u3a main account. Please contact the Treasurer if you require more information. (Never open a bank account for the group.)
- l) Give receipts and keep a record of expenses.
- m) If there is a change in leadership, the Group Coordinator must be informed.

VENUES

It is important to agree on the meeting location and it is up to individual Group Leaders which format works best for the group. When discussing where to meet it is useful to consider where people live and the size of the group, and whether a central location is more convenient.

Meeting in homes

Most groups operate well by meeting in people's homes, which naturally limits the size of the group. Many members are very happy to host a meeting on a rota basis. This also keeps the cost down!

Virtual and hybrid meetings

New ways of meeting virtually have been introduced since March 2020 following the Covid-19 outbreak. Many groups have met successfully on Zoom and some continue to do so. Hybrid meetings have been set up where groups include vulnerable members unable to meet face-to-face – in these meetings some members will meet and others will join via Zoom.

Hiring a venue

Some of the rru3a groups already hire venues for their activities and the Groups' Coordinators can provide you with an up to date list of these. If however you wish to use a different venue you should provide details to the Groups' Coordinators and Health & Safety Officer so that they can obtain the Risk Assessment for the venue.

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.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Each group leader is responsible for completing a risk assessment for the group's activities. This should be agreed with members of the group. The form may be downloaded from our website and when completed emailed to the Group Coordinator.

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 Treasurer.

In the case of an accident, you should complete an [Accident Report Form](#) as soon as possible and send it to the committee member with Health and Safety responsibility to hold on file should any further action be required.