



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

# **Sevenoaks U3A**

## **Group Organisers' Guide**



**University of the Third Age**

Reg. Charity No. 1051712

[www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk)

## Acronyms:

<b>EC</b>	<b>Executive Committee (of Sevenoaks U3A)</b>
<b>GC</b>	<b>Groups' Co-ordinator</b>
<b>GDT</b>	<b>Groups' Co-ordination Team (chaired by GC)</b>
<b>GO</b>	<b>Group Organiser</b>
<b>MTTL</b>	<b>More Time To Learn (TAT publication July 2014)</b>
<b>TAT</b>	<b>Third Age Trust</b>
<b>U3A</b>	<b>University of the Third Age</b>

## Useful contact details:

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## Websites:

U3A National	 <a href="http://www.u3a.org.uk">www.u3a.org.uk</a>
U3A Sevenoaks	 <a href="http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk">www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk</a>

# Group Organisers' Guide - U3A Sevenoaks

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## Introduction

This booklet is produced as a guide to the new or intending Group Organiser, as well as a reference for the more experienced Organiser. It may also be of use to the general **U3A** member because it explains how a group runs, and what is expected of the newcomer. It is also meant to act as a supplement to ***More Time to Learn (MTTL)***, printed by U3A National Office in July 2014. Backed by Government funding this is a comprehensive manual on the philosophy and practice of the shared learning model or **Informal Adult Learning (IAL)** and we may refer to it from time to time. The National Office Advice Sheet No.14 for Group Organisers offers additional information. Copies may be borrowed from the Groups Co-ordinator or downloaded from the National Website. **MTTL** uses the terms **Interest Group** and **Group Convenor**. To avoid confusion we will continue to use the terms **Study Group** and **Group Organiser (GO)**. Also rather than **Group Development Co-ordinator** we will use the term **Groups' Co-ordinator (GC)**, who leads the **Groups' Co-ordination Team**.

This ***Group Organisers' Guide (GOG)*** is an introduction to resources and methods used in Sevenoaks. It is in three broad sections:

- **Starting the Group:** this lists the questions everyone would want to ask at the outset when setting up a group, and provides some guidelines or suggestions based on the experience of others in the U3A
- **Maintaining the Group:** this summarises the changing priorities of an established Study Group, both as a social and as a learning group.
- **Appendices:** there are eight appendices which cover subjects helpful to Group Organisers, for example on Insurance, Resources, Halls for Hire, Organising Visits and Copyright.

Sevenoaks U3A Website: [www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk)

## **Starting a Group**

### **What is a U3A Study Group?**

The U3A is constituted as a self-help educational charity although for many groups the main purpose is not primarily about learning, but may be taking exercise (eg walking), playing games (eg chess, bridge), or being creative (eg painting, pottery). Self-help means that there is usually no teacher or instruction manual but books may be used in research or as a core text. The members themselves decide how delivering the Group's programme is to be shared out. The member(s) taking responsibility for a meeting choose their own topic or activity, when and where to meet, and how the meeting will run. Everyone makes some contribution to what is a shared-help group. The U3A motto enshrining this is *'Those who teach shall also learn, and those who learn shall also teach'* (Peter Laslett).

There are no qualifications or exams and the ethos of any group should be generous, welcoming and non-judgemental. The goodwill created in the groups becomes the dominant note of the U3A as a whole in which friendship, respect and good humour are paramount. The most important people in a U3A are the Group Organisers, because the atmosphere they create in their groups facilitates the realisation of these principles.

### **What is the Study Group's aim?**

Learning, making, playing or doing through sharing. As a rule, one or two members will prepare a chosen topic or activity. This may be planning a walking route or setting up facilities for games or creative activity. For learning activities member(s) leading the session will explain what they have learned to the others in the group. This can be done in different ways as set out on p17. Remember the basics of the U3A:

- U3A is a self-help educational body. The majority of its members are retired. A U3A group should always be interactive. Members are interested in sharing activities - thinking, making, playing and doing.
- To maintain concentration, people need an interesting and varied presentation. Greater impact may be achieved by reinforcement with a printed handout, or an illustration.
- Access to the Internet provides a range of readily available educational material to support group activity.

## What does running a group involve?

The GO is the person who pulls the group together.

There are two roles in running a Study Group. The first is an administrative role maintaining the list of members' contact details, providing all group members with a copy, and having responsibility for recruiting new members at the Open Afternoon, or mid-year by telephone.

The other is a leadership role which involves encouraging and organising members to run meetings, putting together a programme for the term or year, and giving support and advice when requested. The two roles are often carried out by one person. Some groups have a GO plus an expert, for example a native speaker for a languages group.

If you are anxious about committing yourself, it is easier to set a limit at the outset eg "I will be the Organiser for three years, and then hand it on." Alternatively, a Short Group (see page 6) designed to run for just a handful of sessions may be the answer. This gives you and the members a chance to explore your subject, and then decide how to proceed.

## How do you form the group?

The GC is the first point of contact for anyone wishing to explore the possibility of starting a new group. The **GC** may have a register of members' interests, or a list of people who have expressed an interest in the topic or activity, or may know of a waiting list for the same or similar activity which might potentially form the nucleus of a new group. You may be an enthusiast who gathers together other members, or a group may evolve through casual discussion among friends, or may result from work done in a different Study Group (eg a **Migration** group grew from **European Studies**).

A preliminary note in the Newsletter or on our Website to measure interest may be a good starting point and the GC will advise you. However the group starts, it is important for its founder members to meet and sift through the ideas that are being put forward. To sum up:

- Contact and invite the GC to a meeting
- Float the idea among friends and see how they react
- Announce collect the names of those who are interested

## Making progress

At that first meeting, notes should be taken on the main decisions and then circulated. The things that need to be considered include:

- Who will be the GO, and might others take on administrative or leadership roles to assist. These roles need to be discussed and defined, and made clear to everyone involved.
- What is the group to be called?
- What are its aims and how are these best met?
- Where and when will it meet and how often?
- What resources will it need?
- How is the work to be shared in a fair way?
- How long is the group expected to run or how long will a topic last?
- Are there any costs involved and how will these be shared?
- Tell the GC and supply your email address, or find someone who will act as the email Contact.

## What should the group be called?

Choose a short, simple name that expresses exactly what it will cover eg **Walking** or **Wine Appreciation**. Put the key word first. **Music Appreciation** is better than **Getting more out of Music**. The name needs to be self-explanatory in the Handbook. If it is a popular subject and is likely to go on to have several cloned groups, then anticipate **London Studies 1, 2 and 3**. Try to keep with the same name from the start.

Some subjects are more suitable than others. A slant that emphasises personal involvement will make the best use of the members' experience. Resources, facilities and accommodation are all limited, so a **Chemistry** group may not take off if there is no lab, but a **Science Discussion** group will.

Because it is flexible, and deals with small numbers, the U3A can easily include visits as part of the study programme. If this is so, name the group accordingly as, for example, **Gallery Studies**, and then everyone will know you are regularly going to see current or permanent exhibitions. (See Visits in Appendix 8.)

## **Where should it meet?**

This is usually in members' homes, but if the group is large or needs more space to operate such as **Painting and Drawing** then the group may hire a hall. Charge members enough to give a surplus in case there are sessions that are less well attended, or think about charging per term. One member may offer their home for all the meetings, but this can become a chore. Venues should be accessible, and parking can also be an issue. Those without transport need to be considered too.

## **And when?**

At a first meeting, the members find a date by consensus. Two hours for each session is normal. A U3A group will usually meet on a weekday, in daylight hours, starting in October as a rule, with 2 or 3 months off in the summer. A **Garden Group** however may close down in the winter, or develop an alternative programme.

## **How often?**

The majority of groups meet monthly, eg on the first Thursday morning in the month. Avoid 'fortnightly' in favour of eg 1st and 3rd Tuesday. Don't go for three-weekly, which is too complex in the diary. Some groups alternate an introductory talk at one session, with a visit at the next session. Work out together what suits your subject best.

## **How big should the group be?**

There is no hard and fast rule. For groups meeting in members' homes, the size of the smallest living room sets the limit at around 8-10. Twelve can work well, on the basis that not everyone always attends, but groups of six or seven can thrive. If demand exceeds the practical size of the group, let the GC know so that consideration can be given to forming an additional group.

## **What is a Short Group?**

It is a normal group in every way, usually quite specialised, and designed to last for a handful of sessions only. Examples we have run in the past are Garden Design, The Marriage of Figaro (read and discussed in French), Fungi, PowerPoint, Heraldry, Wild Flowers and Money Matters. These groups can be great fun, adding variety to the U3A year and creating a new mix of people and subjects. They recruit as necessary, and have sometimes been repeated the following year. They have to be quite focused and well-structured

because there is no spare time to rearrange the topic. A Short Group is a good way for a GO to test the waters.

### **What standard do we aim for?**

Many groups have no entry level requirements. A language group eg **French Conversation** may state that everyone must be fluent enough to hold a discussion. If it is **French for Beginners** however there may be no entry level but more able members should not be taken on because they will become frustrated and distract the group from its purpose. With time, members' knowledge and confidence will increase and the level of work will go up naturally (see page 11). In a **Book Group**, make clear the kind of books you intend to read, whether bestsellers, the Booker Prize shortlist or 19th century fiction. You will then attract members who can sustain the group.

It is vital to make all this clear in the Newsletter or the Handbook entry advertising the setting up of a new group.

### **How about day-to-day advice?**

If you want to talk to someone about any aspect of your group, you can approach the GC. Other GOs in Sevenoaks or a nearby U3A running the same sort of subject would also be keen to help a new group start. Then there are National Subject Networks. Advisers can be contacted through the National Office Website to provide help and advice in many different ways. Some produce an email newsletter for their subject. Relevant articles in back issues of **Sources Magazine** can be downloaded from the national website. See more under **Resources** in Appendix 4.

### **How long does a Group run?**

There may be a natural timescale, but most groups run on from year to year and close only if there's no one prepared to be the GO, or numbers fall. Members of a group often find that they are comfortable together, and with their level of work, but have come to the end of the original topic. They have finished with **Medieval Art and Literature** and want to move on to something else. **Medieval Heroines** or **Buildings in the Middle Ages** would expand the work already done or they may wish to choose a new and unrelated subject. The GC should be kept informed.

## **Maintaining the Group**

Setting up a group is one thing – maintaining it in a healthy condition may be quite another. The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the points which lead to a successful established group – one which is meeting its aims and is enjoyed by its members. Being a GO is generally a very enjoyable and fulfilling role. However, there are some tasks which require thought, planning and preparation, and will not just happen. Enthusiasm for the topic may not, on its own, be sufficient. Being willing and able to share your enthusiasm with others is the key to success.

## **Organisation and planning**

However long the group has been running, it is still worth spending time during the first meeting of the new year or, better still, the last meeting of the year, making plans for future meetings, agreeing topics, who is to lead them, who will host each meeting, and then producing a programme. As the year goes on, there may be a need to make changes, but the group will feel much more secure if members can see ahead. In some groups, such as book groups and language groups, this will mean having time to do some reading or research. Also, those who have agreed to prepare presentations will be able to schedule time to do the work. Once agreed, everyone should be given a copy of the programme. If changes are made later, these need to be circulated so that people are kept up to date. Members should also be given a list of the contact details for the whole group. This helps with communication and car-sharing.

At the first meeting of the year, it may be helpful to confirm the 'ground rules', especially if new members have joined, for example:

- Everyone contributes in some way or another
- Everyone learns through the unique U3A shared learning model
- Everyone's contribution is equally valid and useful
- Everyone listens to others in a polite and respectful way
- Everyone shares the responsibility for making the group work
- Consider GO succession planning. The GO may want to continue running the group but a change may bring a fresh approach

Then there are the more practical things, such as:

- Members always inform the organiser or host if they are unable to attend a meeting
- Members make a contribution to the host (usually 30p) for coffee
- Members share cars or offer lifts, sharing costs as appropriate.

### **Keeping the group together**

It is important for the **GO** to keep in regular and frequent contact with members. This is so much easier in these days of e-mail (although those without e-mail should not be forgotten).

Communication will vary according to the type of group, and the way in which it operates. The following is just one successful pattern of contact:

- A couple of weeks ahead, contact the person who is preparing a presentation for the next meeting, to check that all is well, and offer help if necessary.
- About a week before each meeting send round a reminder of the topic and the venue, or other arrangements.
- Afterwards, send round a brief summary of the meeting (this is helpful for people who were unable to attend).
- Between meetings, if appropriate, send round a note of any relevant items of news – eg an exhibition, an article or a radio or TV programme which might be of interest to group members.

However it is done, frequent communication helps members to feel involved in the group all the time - not just at the meetings.

Another way to encourage bonding of the group is to plan a social event, perhaps a pub lunch or an outing, from time to time. This helps members to get to know one another and can be particularly supportive during the summer break when there may be no meetings. For many U3A members, the social element is at least as important as the shared learning activity.

### **At the Study Group meetings**

Generally the GO will run the meeting, first of all welcoming members, dealing with any administration, giving apologies and introducing the presenter. Try to start on time and keep an eye on

the clock, so that sufficient time is available for discussion – one of the most essential ingredients of most U3A group activities. It is equally important to finish on time, perhaps with a brief summary of the session, so that people can get away to whatever comes next in their busy lives.

Everyone appreciates thanks, and it is usually the role of the GO to make sure that this courtesy happens. The member who has worked hard at preparing a presentation, or has done all the organisation for a trip, deserves acknowledgment. The contribution of the person who has hosted the meeting, perhaps having moved the furniture around or tidied the house beforehand, should also be mentioned.

## **Discussion**

Someone needs to undertake the role of 'chairperson' during a discussion, if only to ensure that people don't all talk at once. This role is often taken by the GO, but not always. Try not to allow one person to dominate the discussion. Make sure that everyone who wants to, has the chance to speak whilst not pressurising those who want to take a back seat for a while. Encourage people to keep to the point and not wander off into an irrelevant discourse. Insist on only 'one meeting' going on so that everyone can listen to the points being made. People chatting in the background will not benefit the group and is discourteous to the speaker, unless a specific decision has been made to break into small groups.

## **Providing support to the group**

Some established groups can be quite challenging, and the quiet or shy member may find this difficult to cope with. The GO may need to play a sensitive role in making sure that every member has a chance to play a part in the proceedings.

Introducing a session, or making a presentation, may not come naturally to everyone. If members are inexperienced or nervous about doing this, the GO should be alert to this, and suggest ways of approaching the task, for example, to work with another group member, to choose a topic about which they know a good deal already, or to limit the length of the talk.

New members coming into a long-established group may need particular support. They should be introduced to existing members and made to feel welcome and included by everyone. It can be quite daunting for a new member if the group has become at all exclusive or cliquish. A GO may need to spend time explaining how the group

runs and the standard it operates at, rather than assuming the new member will just absorb it. A newcomer may not wish to undertake a major role for a while, and this should be respected.

### **Is the standard still right?**

After a year or two, the group will acquire confidence from its increased experience, and level of knowledge. It may want to start to tackle more ambitious projects. It will also become clear that some of the members have a specialist interest or background which can be of benefit to everyone. This is good, except that as time goes on it is more difficult to integrate new members. They are starting from scratch, so try to be understanding. They too will have something special to offer. Help to keep them on board. An occasional recap or a list of past topics may be useful.

### **It can't be that easy**

The vast majority of U3A groups are successful and happy, but occasionally the GO will need to be alert to things going awry.

- One very dominant member may be upsetting others.
- Difficulties might be caused by occasional disrespectful remarks, or dogmatic views too strongly expressed.
- People who are keen to express an opinion may not wait until the presentation is finished before interrupting.
- The group may appear to be 'stuck in a rut'.
- If a member stops attending try to find out why.
- Behaviour that impacts other members and impairs group function should not be ignored.
- If you have a serious problem in a session you can ask a member to leave, but contact your GC as soon as possible.
- If you cannot resolve an issue yourself involve the GC who will involve the **Executive Committee** if exclusion from a group is considered.

### **GOs do not have authority to exclude a member from a group**

### **How are things going?**

The best way to prevent such difficulties arising may be to have an open and honest feedback session at least once a year raising issues such as:

- Is the subject matter and format of the meetings right?
- Is the frequency, length, time of day of meetings right?
- Do members enjoy and benefit from the sessions?
- Is there enough variety in the approach taken?
- Is the level of study appropriate or is it either too demanding or basic?
- Are topics covered in the way in which members anticipated?
- Is the group meeting its goals, or do the goals need to be changed?
- Is it time for the group to move on to a new but related area or to examine a topic from a different point of view?
- What would members change?
- Should the group work towards sharing its work with other U3A members – perhaps publishing a booklet, adding something to the website or preparing a presentation for a wider audience?
- Are there spaces for new members?
- Is there a waiting list? If there is, pass the names on to the GC who may suggest starting a new group.

### **How long will the group run?**

There is no simple answer to this. Many groups run on from year to year with the same GO. Some continue on but with a change of GO. Others run a natural course and close after a few years. Some may decide to close down for a year or two, and then start up again with a slightly different focus. There's nothing wrong with any of these scenarios.

In order to distribute the load of the GO, it is often a good idea to divide the tasks so that for example one member takes on part of the administration role, leaving the organiser to run the meetings. This person may become a co-organiser who can run a meeting in the absence of the GO. Such an arrangement can be a real support to a GO and may lead to finding someone who is prepared to take on the full GO role later on.

GOs will sometimes have agreed from the start to take on the role for a limited period. This gives the group time to plan and work towards another group member coming forward to take over. Five years is the maximum time as a GO after which to at least review the situation. A GO may feel that after a few years in the role they have had enough. If a new organiser does not emerge, then the group can close with no hard feelings in the knowledge that the group has satisfied its members and achieved its aims.

### **Enjoy the role**

The vast majority of GOs enjoy their role, growing, developing, and gaining confidence over time knowing that they are part of the core of their U3A. Without its GOs the U3A would not exist. No GO is alone. There are many others from whom help and advice can be sought. In Sevenoaks U3A, members of the Groups Co-ordination Team will be happy to provide support. Never be embarrassed to ask for help or advice – there is plenty of experience out there.

**Finally, and most importantly, HAVE FUN!**

# **Shared Groups between Sevenoaks and Knole U3As: Statement of Principles**

## **Why do we need an agreement on Shared Groups?**

The purpose of having an agreement on shared groups is to enable Sevenoaks and Knole U3As to work together for the mutual benefit of all members living in Sevenoaks in a way which treats everyone fairly and consistently, and does not lead to territorial disputes or conflict.

## **Agreed principles**

Both U3As are agreed in principle that groups may be advertised to members of the other U3A as Shared Groups where numbers are not a constraint such as hall or sports groups. This is already the case for Science, Industrial Heritage, Bridge, Computers, Cycling, Golf, Circle Dancing and a number of others. In such cases members of the parent U3A are not disadvantaged by having members of the other U3A join their group. Indeed this arrangement can reduce the cost per head to members of hiring halls or other facilities

Other smaller and perhaps more specialist groups can be advertised or opened up in other ways to members of the other U3A only if:

- every attempt has been made to recruit from within the parent U3A.
- both GCs agree that such arrangements would be to the mutual benefit of members of both U3As.
- the GC of the parent U3A is satisfied that the Shared Group is potentially healthy and viable and has given express permission.

Any loans of equipment paid for by one U3A Executive Committee would remain the property of the U3A that incurred the costs. In the event of a need to dispose of assets these would be administered in accordance with the constitution of the relevant U3A. Should the GO and the majority of members of a Shared Group no longer come from the parent U3A, a decision to list the group as belonging to the other U3A should be reached by discussion between the GO and the GCs of both U3As, bearing in mind this financial condition.

## Helping your U3A

Each Study Group is an integral part of the local and indeed regional U3A Network, and has a vital role in making the whole organisation work well.

A Study Group can liaise with the Executive Committee and any sub-committees to suggest ways they have found to enhance the learning experience for everyone, for example:

- Spare places on Group Visits may be offered to those who are not members of the group, perhaps to make it financially viable. Perhaps a visit to a more distant venue may be organised using a coach for convenience. A group may possibly recommend a visit it considers suitable for the whole U3A.
- The group may have come across an excellent speaker who can be recommended for the Monthly Meeting.
- A topic and speaker may be recommended as suitable for a Study Day which opens up the subject to many more people. Approach the GC initially.
- A short item in the Newsletter will bring to the notice of members in general the day-to-day work of the group, might gain new recruits or if the group has no spaces, be instrumental in firing up a second group.
- A Booklet about the group's work may be of interest to other members. The Publications team can help to edit and publish this. A number of titles to date have been produced.
- Photographs or even work schedules can be placed on the website: [www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk). This can have a real impact on attracting new members, both to the group and to the U3A.
- Most importantly, parallel groups should try to liaise with each other, to share programmes and new ideas, develop resources and perhaps think of events where the members of 'Subject Networks' come together and cross-fertilise.

All the contact details are in the current Handbook and on the Website.

## **Conclusion**

We hope this booklet has helped. We have tried to avoid talking educational theory, and stressed that 'informal adult learning' - which is at the core of the U3A - is a simple concept and accessible to everyone.

A U3A does embody some unusual features that assist in the learning process and these should be emphasised when running any group:-

- the members of the group construct their own 'syllabus' or programme of study
- members choose the aspect of the subject they want to research and talk on
- the members support each other in the development of the topic
- they also share the administration of the group

### **Why does this system work so well?**

- A Study Group is a working co-operative.
- There is no sense of competition or marking or grading.
- Everyone's experience and background is respected.
- The group will develop a store of communal expertise, built up over several years, which is very satisfying to the individuals in the group.
- Sharing this study method with others, who may know more about different aspects of the topic, helps to reinforce the learning process.
- Older people learn in a different way, through experience, both their own and other people's.
- And not least . . . members of a Study Group often become good friends and go on enjoying each other's company in different situations.

**We are sure you will enjoy working with your Study Group.**

*Ken Brown  
May 2015*

## Frequently asked questions

### **Can friends who are not U3A members attend my group?**

Yes, but only on a one-off basis. See **Appendix 2: Insurance** for further details. Please make sure that everyone in the group is a paid-up member. A simple way to do this is to ask them to bring their membership card to the first meeting of the year. If you prefer, ask someone else to do this or check names with the Membership Secretary.

**Are there any grants available for my group?** Yes, there may be, depending on what the money is needed for. For further details see **Grants** on page 28.

**Can U3A supply any learning materials for my group?** The Third Age Trust can be useful. It has a Resource Centre as well as a website providing signposts to other educational resources. Our website also has a number of educational links that provide access to a wide range of educational and course materials. Look at **Appendix 4: Resources** for more details.

**Can I photocopy written materials for my group?** See **Appendix 5: Photocopying and Digital Copying** for details of what you may and may not copy. This system, previously arranged through National Office, has changed recently.

**How do I get hold of a laptop computer and projector?** Sevenoaks U3A has a stock of such items for loan. See **Appendix 4: Resources** for further details.

**What do I do if there is a waiting list of people who would like to join my group, but there is no space?** Pass the names to the GC (see Handbook) who may start another group.

**Who can I talk to if I want help with the running of my group?** This is discussed on page 7. Other GOs and members of the Group Development Team (see Handbook) may be able to help.

## Appendix 1: Giving a presentation to your group

The aim of these notes is to help members in any U3A study group to give a better talk. This type of group will usually rely on the preparation of material by one of the group which is to be shared with the other members. The session generally lasts for 1 ½ - 2 hours and can be on any of a range of topics such as History, Science or Literature. If the session lasts two hours the person introducing the topic should not talk for more than 40 minutes at the most. Below are some suggested ideas to aid your presentation.

- **Handouts:** Keep these simple and make sure they are useful. Too many and your group may start to read through a sheaf of pages and become distracted.
- **Don'ts:** In the internet age, there is a growing tendency for a speaker to hand out a list of websites and suggest the others can go home and consult it. This is not a presentation! The speaker must absorb any material in person and then give a review as part of the talk. If the group did read it up at home, there would be no need for an introduction to the subject.
- **Getting a theme:** The key to giving a good presentation is working out what is necessary to get your group discussing the subject effectively – and no more. You are only introducing it. Make sure you can cover the topic in the time available. You cannot say everything; the discussion is at least as important as the introduction and once you have said your piece, let others debate the issues you have raised. A good discussion can lift the group.
- **Using Visual Aids:** A model, a drawing or picture, an illustration in a book or a map, whatever is relevant and to hand can provide a really good stimulus to the discussion. Make sure it can be seen by everyone or is suitable for handing round.
- **Summing Up** can be a very useful way of bringing things to a close. Sometimes the Group Leader can do this, as well as keeping control of discussion. The member who is introducing the subject is then not chairing the meeting as well.
- **PowerPoint** is a boon to the amateur presenter, and to almost every study group in a U3A. Images and photographs can be

scanned in and shown on a screen and the slides can have text, images, music, video and links to the Internet for specific material as required. Slides can include bullet points to guide discussion, act as a prompt, or reinforce some difficult points. However, you still have to give the talk and describe what is happening in the slides, and why you have chosen particular graphs or facts. Do not make your presentation too long with lots of slides. Make sure the slides are relevant, easy to read and leave enough time for a useful discussion. PowerPoint is an aid to delivering a talk and not the subject of the talk. Technical Support Group members (see Handbook) can provide help.

**Remember, the important thing is to learn from the material you are presenting and enjoy it!**

## **Appendix 2: Insurance**

Sevenoaks U3A is covered by a Public & Products Liability Insurance Policy provided by the Third Age Trust. This is intended to indemnify Sevenoaks U3A against compensation which they become legally liable to pay (usually through negligence) following injury or property damage sustained by a third party, as a result of a U3A activity. It does not cover pure accidents where no legal liability has been established. Latest Insurance cover notes can be downloaded from [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk).

### **How does this cover apply to Group Organisers?**

This policy has been set up to protect all U3A members, and includes 'member to member' cover, so if somebody is injured while undertaking a U3A activity, and legal liability due to negligence can be proven, the insurers deal with any claim.

### **The insurance applies when groups are held in members' homes.**

It also applies if accidents occur while a group is out walking, or some other outdoor activity, provided it can be shown that the U3A, its agents or members have in some way been negligent in causing injury to the victim.

However it does not provide personal accident cover. Members are responsible for their own health and safety, and should satisfy themselves that any U3A activity is safe and suitable for them. Almost all U3A activities are covered, but activities in any craft with an engine are excluded. If you are contemplating using machine/power tools or participating in potentially hazardous activities like abseiling, white water rafting or quad biking consult National Office in advance.

### **Does this insurance cover non-members?**

The general rule should be that every member of a group should be a paid-up U3A member. However, there are occasional one-off situations when cover will still apply. For example, if a non-member wants to try a U3A activity before deciding whether to join the organisation; or a friend or spouse of a member wishes to attend a group on a very occasional basis; or a grandchild accompanies a member on a walking group on one occasion.

***See also the Members area of the Third Age Trust website ([www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)) from which this information is taken.***

## Appendix 3: Health and Safety

GOs should try to anticipate risks, although no formal 'risk assessment procedure' is necessary. For example:

- **In the home:** avoid trailing wires etc which might trip people.
- **For an outdoor activity:** members should satisfy themselves that it is safe and suitable for them. GOs may tell their members that they undertake the activity at their own risk. Take a mobile phone in case of emergencies.
- **Electrical equipment:** should be checked for safety on an annual basis. GOs should ensure that tools and other equipment are in good condition and used with care
- **If an accident occurs during a U3A activity:** the Chairman should be informed as soon as possible.
- GOs should obtain an **Accident Form** from the GC or download a copy from the National Website, complete it and give it to the Chairman.
- **In an emergency:** call emergency services immediately, and do not attempt any first aid until advised to do so. Make sure you know the Postcode of your location as Emergency services use Satellite Navigation to locate your position. If not in a location with a postcode, use a mobile phone as this will provide GPS location data.

## **Appendix 4: Resources**

**Laptop computers, projectors etc:** Sevenoaks U3A owns a stock of audio-visual aids. These can be borrowed free of charge by individual members as well as by GOs. They are much in demand and need to be booked in advance, and returned immediately after use. These items can also be hired by other organisations for a small fee. Custodians of these resources are listed in the Handbook and on our website.

**Library books:** sets of books for use by a group can be obtained free of charge from local libraries. It is wise to order well in advance.

**Internet:** many group members and GOs have access to the internet, and this can be a rich source of information when undertaking research for a presentation. However, bear in mind that not all the information out there is 100% reliable or accurate. Our website has a comprehensive range of information about our groups and also carries links to external educational and other sites plus other local U3As that are relevant to our activities at [www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk) .

**The Third Age Trust (TAT):**  
**U3A National Office,**  
**19 East Street,**  
**Bromley, BR1 1QH ☎ 020 8466 6139**  
**Website: [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)**  
**Open Monday to Friday, 9.30-5.00**

**The TAT Resource Centre** (☎ 020 8315 0199), is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9.30 – 4.00. Material such as CDs and DVDs can be provided on loan, but this stock is being reduced as ever more on line material becomes available. The only cost to the group is that of return postage. The (TAT) Website has a wide range of material which can be downloaded.

The TAT website has information about U3A and, once you have set up an account with a username and password, you can go to the

Members Area which gives access to a further range of topics, such as:

- Subject advice: each subject has an Adviser you can contact directly. Some subjects have Subject Start-up Booklets.
- There may also be material available that you can use or adapt to meet your needs
- Advice sheets on general administrative matters
- Events, publications, document downloads, and online courses

**Sources:** The U3A subject-orientated educational bulletin which is published three times a year, delivered to your door with **U3A News**, can be a helpful source of material for GOs. Recent issues have covered geology, archaeology, gardening and aspects of science. Back numbers can be downloaded from the website.

**OpenLearn** (part of the Open University) [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

This site provides a huge variety of free information and courses.

**U3A Signposts** <http://worldu3a.org>

Here you will find signposts to educational resources of a mostly non-computer nature to be found on the world-wide-web. History, Philosophy, Art and Poetry links are there in profusion. Well worth a browse!

The GC and members of the Group Development Team will be happy to offer advice and support. Contact details can be found in the current Sevenoaks U3A Handbook and Website.

## **Appendix 5: Photocopying and Digital Copying**

Sevenoaks U3A is covered by an Agreement with the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA), arranged through the Third Age Trust, for which it pays an annual fee.

This allows multiple photocopying of books, journals and magazines for educational purposes, within clearly defined limits as set out below, without having to approach the original rights holder on each occasion, or to maintain a record of what has been copied.

It also allows digital copies (scanned or retyped) to be made.

This Licence offers the following rights:

- To photocopy from any publication published in the UK (and some other countries\*) extracts up to 5%, one chapter or one article, whichever is the greatest
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- To store copies for one year
- To copy entire works for visually-impaired students
- No music, maps, newspaper articles, photographs or images may be used without the express permission of the copyright holder
- Written material which is now out of copyright (ie where the last surviving author died 70 or more years ago) may be used freely.

Members should be aware that downloading copies of material from the Internet for the use of a Study Group may not be legal. This makes the organisation of work more difficult and it may be simpler for each member of a group to buy a copy of a core text. Many titles are available second hand on commercial websites, and at very low cost.

***Please note that this licence does not apply to music or to live performances. Seek advice from the Third Age Trust if in doubt.***

***\*Some American publications are not covered by the agreement. A list of American publishers covered by the agreement can be seen on the CLA website – [www.cla.co.uk](http://www.cla.co.uk)***

## Appendix 6: Halls for Hire

### Guidance:

- Agree a cost range beforehand with your group members.
- Check availability and cost (tel. contact listed after each venue).
- Some venues listed with telephone number only may be suitable.
- Your own church or village hall may have a suitable room. For a new venue ensure it meets your requirements before deciding to use it.

### Disabled Members may need (depending on disability level)

- A Disabled parking bay
- A Ramp for building access
- A Ground floor or upper floor room with lift
- Disabled toilet facilities
- Space for wheelchair or mobility scooter
- A loop within the sound system

### Community Centre

Located off Cramptons Road, Bat and Ball, Sevenoaks. There are three spaces to hire, the Main hall (seating capacity 220), the Small hall (about 100) and the Bar area (about 60.) Only the Main hall has a kitchen, which is charged separately. This is the best hall in the area as it has dedicated parking, a stage, a full range of audio/projection equipment, and an excellent caretaker service which arranges seating or tables to suit the event. Run by Sevenoaks Town Council and charged by the quarter hour, so not low cost. Bookings Secretary ☎ 01732 459953 [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

### Otford Village Hall

A useful trio of rooms, Main Hall, Club Room and Hope Room, the first two with ceiling mounted screens. The Main Hall has a stage and seating for about 200. The Club Room has a capacity of 80, and the Hope Room (can be noisy if the Main Hall is in use) can take about 20. All have kitchen facilities. Rooms charged by am/pm session at low cost. Paying Parking is available. ☎ 01959 525181 📧 [ovmh.secretary@otford.net](mailto:ovmh.secretary@otford.net)

### Holmesdale Bowling Club

Off Worships Hill, Riverhead. A pleasant, airy room with a kitchen. There are two sections which are both accessible, the first is an open area, where chairs can be placed to suit a discussion, or a PowerPoint presentation, plus a bar area to the rear with sturdy tables and chairs. Accessible and with a reasonable amount of parking. The room is charged by the hour.

✉ [brenda.margaret.bennett@googlemail.com](mailto:brenda.margaret.bennett@googlemail.com)

### **Riverhead Church Hall**

The light and airy hall is equipped with chairs, tables and a fully equipped kitchen. Ample free parking. Repeat bookings are welcomed and reduced rates are then available.

Margaret Nicholas ☎ 01732 457324 ✉ [magnicholas@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:magnicholas@tiscali.co.uk)

### **Riverhead Village Hall**

The main hall (13.5 x 6.5 metres) and small committee room are available for hire. Facilities include comfortable seating and tables for up to 90, kitchen, committee room for smaller meetings. Disabled access, including toilets. Very reasonable rates.

Alison Tilbury ☎ 01732 461278

**Sevenoaks Outdoor Bowling Club, Hollybush Lane:** clubhouse for hire £12 an hour Monday and Thursday am or other by arrangement.

Barbara Ide ☎ 01732 460231 ✉ [Barbara@haresfield.org.uk](mailto:Barbara@haresfield.org.uk).

### **St Ediths Hall, Kemsing**

There are two halls, one accommodating 200 people and the other 80 people, and a small meeting room, together with a large preparation and serving kitchen. There are ample tables and chairs for all seating styles. Reserved parking. Wheelchair access via ground level entrance.

Mrs. Cole ☎ 07927 505649

### **Indoor Bowls Centre, Hollybush Lane**

This accommodates 25-30 and parking is available.

Glynis Burton ☎ 01732 451889

### **Chevening Sports Pavilion**

A medium sized room with kitchen facilities, and moderate parking. Opposite the primary school so exit can be tight at going home time.

☎ 01732 450595 Gordon & Viv Lee

**Cornwall Hall (Methodist Church, The Drive)**

One very large and two smaller halls, using a modest kitchen. Adequate parking.

Mrs. Alex Knight ☎ 01732 463991 ✉ [alexmknight@mac.com](mailto:alexmknight@mac.com)

**United Reformed Church** One very large and a small meeting room. Parking is adequate for a study group.

☎ 01732 456763

**Kippington Centre** A modern hall (holds 80) and large well equipped kitchen, all centrally heated; disabled access, adequate parking for a Study Group.

☎ 01732-451117 ✉ [office@stmaryssevenoaks.org](mailto:office@stmaryssevenoaks.org)

**St Luke's Church Hall, Eardley Road** ☎ 01732 454426

**Friends Meeting House, Holly Bush Lane** ☎ 01732 455484

**Otford Church Hall** ☎ 01959 523185

**Otford Library.** Small space for up to 16. Kitchen available. Very warm and comfortable. Chairs/tables available. Parking for 5 cars. Paying village car park.

☎ 0300 413131 ✉ [janetdavies@kent.gov.uk](mailto:janetdavies@kent.gov.uk)

## **Appendix 7: Money Matters**

### **Charges**

If your group charges regularly, for photocopying, hall hire, buying a specialist journal to share etc, then say so in the Handbook so that everyone knows the costs up front. There is no charge for joining the group as such, or taking part in its core activities. If the Organiser has extra expenses for letters or phone calls, then there is a simple levy of £1 a year per member, or as decided. A GO should not commit to expenditure beyond a level that the group can and will meet. For more detail, members could consult **Information for Treasurers** (May 2011) or a member of the Executive.

### **Coffee and Tea**

It is the norm throughout the U3A to pay 30p for refreshments, and this goes to the host. If he or she prefers, there could be a charity box instead. Some GOs waive the donation because they are not doing any driving that day, or it suits them better to host all the meetings.

### **Grants**

Sevenoaks U3A will make a start-up grant of £75 for a new group that requires essential 'hardware' (not normally books) to begin work. For example, the **Chess** group bought 6 matching boards and playing sets. The materials always belong to the U3A and must be returned if the group disbands. For an established group needing more advanced equipment, a continuing grant of £100 is available. Ask the GC for details and an application form.

### **Hall Hire**

As groups grow they may want to move to a hall. The costs need careful management and again should be clearly set out in the Handbook. You can collect payment each session, but it may be easier to charge per term, or for the year. A separate 'bursar' for the group is always a good idea, to spread the work. It is advisable to give a receipt for larger sums and keep proper records, so that all transactions are transparent.

### **Surplus**

Some groups end up with a surplus. It is reasonable to hold up to £50 in the group as petty cash, but any more than that should be passed to the U3A Treasurer. More angst is caused by money than

anything else in a U3A, so be aware of that. Any money spent by the group should benefit all the members equally.

### **Self-financing groups**

Never open a bank account or put members' money into your personal account. Give receipts and keep records.

## Appendix 8: Organising Visits

The flexible nature of the U3A, where the Study Group members make all their own decisions, means that visits are often an integral and attractive part of the year's programme. Some groups, such as **London Studies**, **Gallery Studies** and **Industrial Heritage**, construct the learning component round the visit. Our nearness to London and its mass of resources means group visits can be very exciting. Museums, galleries, churches, important private houses and public buildings: all offer great potential for learning.

Arranging a visit is no simple matter, however, because the logistics of access and timing have to be worked out. Think hard about how much walking your members can do in a day. Remember a lunch venue has to be arranged, and perhaps tables booked. There is a lot of pre-planning, and it should be shared. The member(s) responsible for any presentation may offer to take on organising the visit and doing a dry run. Think about costs and keep them modest.

### **Transport:**

**Private car:** This is usually the simplest way to travel to places in Kent, or south of London. Try to keep the number of cars down, perhaps arranging to meet at one member's house with good parking, and then all go in the fewest cars. A donation to petrol costs is reasonable - or the non-drivers could buy the driver lunch that day.

**Public transport:** Usually members go by train to London. They may start from different stations, but travelling together is fun and the discussion is often useful, before and after the visit. Be aware of special rail travel offers, for example for four people travelling together. Remind members to renew their Travel Cards to keep costs down.

**Minibus:** It can work out either cheaper or simpler (if you are visiting two art galleries for example) to hire a minibus. It is also great fun, because everyone can relax and talk on the journey. The Social Events team has the name of reliable minibus hire companies.

## **Longer Visits**

Some groups decide to run their own Study Trips, and they are insured to do that under the terms of the Tour Operators' Liability Insurance, arranged through National Office. This would cover short trips of a few days, arranged to look more closely at some aspect of shared study. However, those going on the trip should also have private travel insurance, checking that their policy covers domestic travel too.

## Notes

## References

Time to Learn in Sevenoaks, Issue 2011 and 2013 – Magda Sweetland, Celia Smith.

### **Third Age Trust**

More Time to Learn, Issue July 2014

Advice Sheet 6: Sorting out problems/grievances, February 2011

Advice Sheet 14: For Group Leaders/Co-ordinators/Facilitators, January 2014

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