

Biggar and District U3A

U3A Groups—Guidelines

Format of Groups

The main object of the U3A is to provide the *advancement of education, and in particular the education of middle-aged and older people who are not in full-time gainful employment.*

Interest Groups are members of a U3A who choose to pursue an interest together. The size of such groups varies from as few as two or three to hundreds. The way each group operates, its choice of venue and subject matter, is determined by the group members themselves, operating within the rules of its U3A.

Firstly it is important that each Group is a democratic, autonomous entity; accessible to all U3A members. It is self-financing and self-governing with a Facilitator. The Executive Committee does not have involvement in day to day running of the individual Groups.

Functions of a Facilitator

The definition of a facilitator is a person who enables things to go easily and is selected from among the members of the Group. The main function is to make the domestic arrangements, keep members informed and to act as a contact with the Executive Committee via the Group Co-ordinator. The facilitator is not a leader and does not need to be an expert on the subject of the Group. It is recommended that a deputy is appointed to assist the facilitator and cover periods of absence. It is important that the facilitator ensures that each participant is a member of Biggar and District U3A.

The Group Co-ordinator will arrange meetings of facilitators as required.

Responsibilities of Group Members

Individual members must do everything they can to make the facilitator's role as easy as possible. This may mean replying to requests for information or payments as promptly as possible by the methods agreed with the member e.g. E-mail or telephone. The method used should be agreed as early as possible. It is recognised that the experience in the group will vary from beginner to the more experienced; no-one should be too shy to put forward a constructive idea because they think it is too simple. They should also be willing to help with the organisation of the group if required.

Financial matters

The Groups are self-funded by the members. They are, therefore, responsible for hiring the venue, purchasing materials, refreshments, travel etc. In some Groups payment for an activity has to be collected some time ahead of booking; if a Group requires a large deposit the facilitator, or deputy, can contact the Treasurer for a loan. It is difficult to specify detailed arrangements for terms of booking, but as a general principle once a member has booked a place they cannot expect a refund if their personal plans change. Each Group should keep appropriate records of financial transactions.

Numbers of members in an Individual Group

When the number of members in a group exceeds a number appropriate for the activity it would be sensible to form a second group. The facilitator of the first group should be advised of the formation of another group. If it proposed to set up a second group the Group Co-ordinator must be informed. Similarly if it is necessary to close a group the Group Co-ordinator must be informed by the facilitator or their deputy.

Publicity for Groups

The facilitator, or the deputy, of each group is given an opportunity to give notices at the Open Meetings and other information may be displayed on the display area at the meeting. The facilitator or deputy should ensure that the website is kept up to date in consultation with the webmaster. Occasionally a group may wish to publicise activities further afield. Any such notices must be displayed in a responsible manner, and must clearly state that the group is part of Biggar and District U3A.

Depending on your particular interest, there is plenty of scope for other groups to be started. If you would like to be involved in something new please contact the Committee members who will be only too pleased to help.

The main thing—LEARN & HAVE FUN