

# SANDBACH & DISTRICT U3A

## HANDBOOK FOR GROUP LEADERS

### INTRODUCTION

This Leaders' Handbook is in two sections:

- **Section A** (Operation of Existing Groups) deals with the practical procedures and rules for running groups.
- **Section B** (Setting Up, Organising, and Leading Educational Groups) is concerned with the business of setting up new groups, and increasing the type and range of activities covered.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The Committee is made up from the following positions:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Official U3A Email</b>
Chairman	chair@sandbachu3a.org.uk
Deputy Chairman	Official email not available
Secretary	secretary@sandbachu3a.org.uk
Treasurer	SandbachU3ATreasurer@live.co.uk
Programme Organiser(s)	SandbachU3AProgramme@live.co.uk
Membership Officer	Official email not available
Webmaster	SandbachU3A@hotmail.co.uk
Social Mornings Organiser	Official email not available
Almoner	Official email not available
Newsletter Organiser	newsfeed@sandbachu3a.org.uk
Other Committee Member(s)	Official email not available

- If you need to contact a member of the committee either use one of the official email addresses shown above or dial 0844 58 60670 and leave a short message when prompted. This will enable a committee member to contact you.
- A list of the names of all current Committee members with full contact details is published periodically and available on request.

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## **Section A: OPERATION OF EXISTING GROUPS**

### **A.1 Operating a Group**

#### **A.1.1 Committee Representative**

Each committee member is responsible for keeping in touch with a small number of group leaders, and can be used as a point of contact when required. A list of the groups with the allocated Committee members is available on request.

#### **A.1.2 Absence of Group Leader**

If Group Leaders are unable to take the group because of planned or unexpected events, they should if possible ask a deputy to take the group. If sessions must be cancelled, they should give as much notice as possible to all members of the group\* and the Programme Organiser. Group Leaders should plan holidays when it suits them rather than feel constrained by the schedule of group activities.

\* In anticipation of the need to inform group members of events such as a cancellation, leaders should set up a system to achieve this. Leaders may delegate the task to some members who each take responsibility for informing other members in a cascade process.

#### **A.1.3 Annual Enrolment**

On enrolment day (usually the first Wednesday in September) Group Leaders should attend, if possible, to register members in their groups. If they are unable to attend they should ensure that someone else is present to register them. Before adding a member to a group register, Group Leaders should ask to see a current year membership card and insert the card serial number (CSN) on the group register alongside the member's name.

#### **A.1.4 Joiners & Leavers after Enrolment**

Current members re-join either by post, by attending the U3A desk in Sandbach Library, or at the annual enrolment day each September. New members may join, and current members may re-join, at the U3A desk in Sandbach Library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday morning each month (9:30am to 11:30am). The new members state the groups they wish to join and receive the contact details of the leaders of those groups so they are able to contact them to see if there are vacancies.

Leaders should make arrangements for new members joining an established group to be welcomed, introduced to the rest of the group, shown around and given appropriate assistance to help them integrate into the group. It is a good idea to ask an existing group member, rather than the leader, to help with this.

If the number of members in a group reaches the maximum allowed by the leader, any new applicants can ask to go on a waiting list until an existing member leaves the group. Group Leaders should inform the Programme Organizer if a group becomes full or a previously full group has a vacancy.

If a member of a group that is full fails to attend three consecutive meetings without warning the Group Leader, that member will be deemed to have left the group and the first member on the waiting list may be invited to join.

If a member or would-be member of a group is unable to participate in the normal activities of the group without significant assistance, he or she should be accompanied by a companion to provide the necessary assistance. The companion should also be a U3A member. (Companions should be offered free membership unless they take part in activities on their own account.)

#### **A.1.5 Informing Members**

Group leaders should inform the members of their groups of the dates when the term / course starts and ends.

Group leaders should announce forthcoming events and other information passed on from the Committee and should also ensure that their members are able to see copies of the monthly newsletters. Newsletters are emailed to all members who provide an email address. They are also available on the website ([sandbachU3A.org.uk](http://sandbachU3A.org.uk)) and on the desk at Social Mornings.

For the purpose of keeping them informed, Group Leaders should keep contact details for all the members of their groups. In addition, Group Leaders should obtain from each member the phone number of the person to contact if the member is taken ill during the class. It is a good idea for members write their ICE (In Case of Emergency) phone number on the back of their membership cards and also to store them in their mobile phones.

Before arranging to take the group on a trip, Group Leaders should check with the Social Committee to avoid clashing with one of their trips. (See also section A.3.4 Study Trips & Holidays)

#### **A.1.6 Insurance Cover**

Sandbach U3A carries public liability insurance cover for damages caused by negligent acts or omissions by ANY of its members. There is no extra insurance cover applying to Group Leaders nor is there a need for such cover.

(See also section A.3.4 Study Trips & Holidays)

#### **A.1.7 Venue Bookings and Changes**

If a meeting falls on a public holiday, it should be cancelled unless the number of members agreeing to attend makes it financially viable.

If the Group Leader decides to continue the activities through the summer break, the Programme Organiser(s) must agree to the extra hire of premises.

Please inform the Programme Organiser(s) in advance if for any reason your group meeting is cancelled or not held in its normal venue on any occasion so that the venue charges may be avoided.

## **A.2 Preparation**

### **A.2.1 Photocopying**

Photocopying facilities are available to Group Leaders at CVS, Hope Street, Sandbach where the U3A has an account.

### **A.2.2 Session Venue**

Group Leaders should familiarize themselves with fire safety procedures, i.e., type of alarm (bell, buzzer, siren etc.), fire escape routes and the assembly point where these are in place (e.g. hired rooms), and explain these at the beginning of their first meeting and again when new members join.

In the event of a fire, Group Leaders should:

- pick up the register, if it is safe to do so, so that they can check that everyone is safely outside
- account for all members at the Assembly Point,
- remain at the scene until instructed by the Chief Fire Officer.

### **A.2.3 Electrical Equipment**

Group Leaders using mains powered electrical equipment should have a risk assessment carried out and all pieces safety tested as and when determined by the assessment. This is free to the Group Leader and can be arranged through the committee chairman.

## **A.3 Session Activities**

### **A.3.1 Accidents**

If an accident occurs during a group session, the Group Leader should take appropriate action at the time and subsequently complete an accident report form and submit it to the committee member responsible for communications with the group. Group Leaders should be aware of the post code for their location so that they can quote it if they summon the emergency services. A copy of the accident report form can be downloaded from the "Forms" section of the website – [www.SandbachU3A.org.uk](http://www.SandbachU3A.org.uk).

### **A.3.2 End of Session Action**

Group members are encouraged to help set up and clear away any tables and chairs required for the session. It is not the sole responsibility of the Group Leader.

### **A.3.3 Refreshments**

If refreshments are taken during the sessions, Group Leaders may set up a rota to prepare them and wash up afterwards. A contribution may be charged to cover the cost, but each group makes its own arrangements for purchasing and storing the refreshments and administers its own refreshments account.

### **A.3.4 Study Trips & Holidays**

Holidays and trips out are an important part of the U3A and a good way to enjoy a social event or go on a study trip with other members of your group. The Third Age Trust have issued advice

on how U3A holidays and trips out should be organised to ensure that neither participating members nor organisers put themselves at risk. The guidelines are published on “Advice Sheet 8 - Social Events and Travel” which can be obtained from the Member’s Area of the Third Age Trust website <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>, or by contacting a member of the Committee who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

## **A.4 Money**

### **A.4.1 Session Fees & Group Registers**

Group Leaders do not have to pay either the annual U3A membership or session fees.

Group Leaders, or their appointed deputy, record in the register the names of members present and collect the appropriate fee as agreed by the committee and advised by the Programme Organiser. The overall aim is to charge the expenses of hiring venues fairly and avoid causing Sandbach U3A significant losses.

The Group Leader, or appointed deputy, completes the register and should pay the money regularly and frequently into the bank, so that the Treasurer has a relatively up-to-date view of the finances.

Banking times will of course vary to suit the leader, depending on the size of the group and amount of money accumulated.

Also, if possible, banking should be completed by the end of each term (i.e. by the end of December and the end of May), to coincide with copies the registers being handed in (see below), in order to facilitate reconciliation.

Please ensure in any case that all the money is banked before the end of the financial year on 31st August.

As each register sheet is full the Group Leader should pass it to the Treasurer to allow for the reconciliation of accounts. Group Leaders may obtain a new register form from the committee desk in Sandbach Library on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, or from the “Forms” section of the website – [www.SandbachU3A.org.uk](http://www.SandbachU3A.org.uk).

If the group activities continue after the form is handed in, the Group Leader should take a copy of the names on the register form beforehand. Group Leaders should pass their registers to the Treasurer:

- when they are full,
- at the end of each term (December and May) or
- when the activity ends.

Group Leaders should return ALL registers to the Treasurer in December and May. The Treasurer requires the registers as early as possible to complete the accounts during the summer break.

To ease the delivery of registers to the Treasurer, Group Leaders may leave them in Sandbach Library, either in the communications box under the U3A noticeboard or left with one of the committee members who staff the enquiry desk on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month.

Alternatively copies of the completed registers may be emailed to the treasurer (sandbachu3atreasurer@live.co.uk).

Paying-in books do not need to be returned to the Treasurer unless that group is finishing, or all the slips have been used. Group Leaders should give the Treasurer notice that they need a new paying-in book so that they can receive the new book before the current one runs out. The old paying in book should be returned to the treasurer when completed.

#### **A.4.2 Group Leader Expenses**

Group Leaders will be recompensed for any reasonable expenditure incurred in running their groups, e.g., stamps, materials, travelling expenses etc. If Group Leaders wish to spend a significant amount, they should consult a committee member before incurring the expense. Group Leaders should complete an expense claim form, which can be downloaded from the "Forms" section of the website – [www.SandbachU3A.org.uk](http://www.SandbachU3A.org.uk), and pass it to the Treasurer using the communications box in Sandbach Library.

## **Section B: SETTING UP, ORGANISING, AND LEADING EDUCATIONAL GROUPS**

### **B.1 Sandbach So Far**

Sandbach U3A has a good number of highly successful groups. Questionnaire feedback has shown how much these are appreciated, and that leaders are thought to be doing an excellent job. However, it is also the case that we are under pressure because of our success. Ideally we need more groups – and therefore we require more leaders. The notes presented here are roughly based upon parts of a Handbook for Leaders produced by the Third Age Trust, but shortened and contextualised for our purposes at Sandbach.

### **B.2 Our Sandbach Groups**

Quite a number of our established groups at Sandbach roughly fall into two main sets. There are those that involve physical activity of some kind (e.g. bowls, walking, dancing etc.) Secondly, there are those that involve Arts and Crafts in the widest sense (e.g. painting, papercraft, needlework). In many ways the content, organisation, and the best teaching approach (if that is the appropriate word) is largely a matter of planning or skilled demonstration. We are fortunate that we have leaders with the necessary skills or organisational abilities, or, in one or two cases we have been able to employ experienced practitioners.

A third set of groups which make an important contribution to our programme is somewhat more diverse in character. Examples are Astronomy, Creative Writing, and Computing. The words ‘more serious’, more academic, more ‘meaty’ are some of the adjectives that have been used to describe these groups. It has also been said that we have fewer of these kinds of groups at Sandbach U3A as compared with some other U3As. The following comments relate to ways in which such groups can be organised.

### **B.3 Kinds of ‘More Serious’ Groups**

This necessarily loose categorisation draws on that provided in the documentation from the Third Age Trust.

1. Expert Presentation: Requires somebody who knows about the topic area already, and who is confident about standing up and doing the presenting. It also requires a considerable input of time and effort.
2. Taught sessions with Participation: Some upfront ‘teaching’ goes on, but there is also an expectation that group members will contribute ideas and informed discussion. (e.g. Interactive History)
3. Shared Contributions and Presentation: Involves a group of people who have a strong interest in an area, but who are not well informed experts. Participants work together to develop their knowledge and understanding. Either working individually, or perhaps in pairs, members of the group take it in turns to assume responsibility for investigating a particular

topic. Then they share their findings with the rest of the group. This kind of shared learning has made a strong contribution in many U3As. It is dependent on participation and commitment by the members, but is a good way to learn because of the active involvement. (e.g. Poetry Together, Book groups & Philosophy)

4. Discussion: An effective group is likely to have an agreed agenda of discussion issues. In our current world there is no shortage of issues on which most of us have some views. Sharing these views - both agreements and disagreements can provide an enjoyable and absorbing way of increasing understanding. Such a group is likely to work better if there is some advance preparation and 'mugging up', but a small amount will go a long way.

Of course, this listing of types of groups is by no means complete. It does not refer to the demonstration and support approach which is characteristic of skill related groups. Managing a language group will have different kinds of demands.

#### **B.4 The Leadership 'Thing'**

Leadership within a group is important, but, even if we have got used to using the word within Sandbach U3A, terms such as convenor, facilitator or co-ordinator probably better describe quite a bit of what goes on. It is likely to be of benefit if leading is shared and distributed through a group, and involves consultation, support and advice giving. Thus discussion of the leadership process, and how things are going generally within the group can be useful to do now and again. It also might be helpful for us to discuss and share leadership and group management matters between leaders.

#### **B.5 Getting Started – Setting Up a New Group**

Ultimately, the 'health' and vitality of Sandbach U3A is dependent on its groups and their success. As we get more members we need new groups to emerge and develop. Many Sandbach groups have been started up by individuals with a particular interest or special expertise. We hope that individuals will continue to come forward in this way. An initial brief outline in the newsletter or posting on the website is the best way to get things going.

A group of people with a common interest could constitute another start up situation. Some further development of ideas and plans would then enable a new group to begin operating. Sharing this knowledge on the website and in the newsletter might provide a basis for starting up new groups.

#### **B.6 Sources, Resources and Local Support**

As many members will be aware there are various sources of support within the national U3A organisation, we can probably also call on support and ideas from neighbouring U3As, and we hope that we can provide support and encouragement within Sandbach U3A.

##### National Subject Co-ordinators.

These people provide information on particular study group subject areas. There are often start-up leaflets, newsletters and booklists. Some can be downloaded from the members' area of

the national web-site, or they can be obtained by contacting the co-ordinators directly. Contact details are available in issue of U3A News. In terms of possible new groups for Sandbach there is a Jazz national co-ordinator.

### **B.7 U3A Sources.**

This publication has been made available to all members from June 2008, but it has been published for the last ten years. Many back issues are available for browsing (or print out) on the national web-site.

### **B.8 U3A Online Courses.**

These contain a substantial amount of material. The cost, especially for untutored courses is very reasonable. Their content is then available to be used as the basis for a local study group. Obviously the areas covered are limited but if interests coincide with one of these then it could make for an easy way of starting up a group.

### **B.9 Neighbouring U3As.**

Ideas and support may be available from neighbouring U3As such as Alsager, Congleton or Holmes Chapel, who may run groups covering a different range of topics. It is worth checking their websites.

### **B.10 Support Within Sandbach U3A.**

We hope to increase the support we can provide within Sandbach U3A. It would be good if we could use the considerable experience of existing leaders to support those who are new to this game – if it is wanted.