

SOUTH LAKES U3A

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GROUP CO-ORDINATORS

These notes are provided to assist Group Co-ordinators with the smooth running of their groups, with particular reference to:

- Protecting the health and safety of group members;
- Ensuring financial probity and compliance with the requirements of our auditor and the Charities Commission;
- Meeting the terms of our insurance arrangements;
- Supporting the management and operation of the organisation as a whole.

ORGANISATION

1. Your main task is to organise the activities of the Group in accordance with its members' wishes. It is recommended that each Co-ordinator appoints a deputy for their Group, who can take over in your absence and possibly share the work of running the group.
2. You should acquaint the Group with the safety regulations relevant to the venue of each meeting and advise members as appropriate.
3. Where a group involves physical activities you must also make it clear to members that they take responsibility for their own health and safety while participating. While our insurance covers members' liability for injury to another person or accidental damage to property not belonging to members, it does not cover injury to members themselves or the loss or damage to their own property.
4. If an accident should occur during a group meeting, please complete an Accident form and send it to the Secretary
5. You should maintain a list of your group members, together with their contact details. Every six months or so it's useful to review this list and remove any members who no longer attend meetings.
6. Please ensure that all persons attending group meetings are fully paid up members of the U3A: this is essential for insurance purposes. If in doubt you should ask to see the person's membership card, or contact the Membership Secretary. If any persons attend meetings of your group who are not members, you should inform them they must pay the U3A subscription, or leave the group. Note that with your permission non-members are allowed to attend two "try out" meetings of any group prior to joining the U3A (they should pay the appropriate attendance fee).
7. At each meeting every attendee should sign or initial against their name on an attendance sheet or in a book. You should keep these records for at least six months.

FINANCE

8. Where rental costs are incurred for the accommodation of group meetings you need to collect the appropriate fee from each attendee. This is currently (October 2015), £1 per person per session.
The numbers attending group meetings and the fees collected should be recorded on the Income Return Form and submitted to the Assistant Treasurer at least quarterly at the end of March, June, September and December, or more often if you accumulate a large amount of collected money – say whenever you have accumulated £100.
Payments to the Assistant Treasurer should preferably be made by cheque payable to South Lakes U3A for the net amount due, ie the amount collected less any allowable expenses deducted (with receipts where applicable).
Allowable expenses for your own administrative costs include postage, photocopying and telephone calls @ 10p per local call.
9. All room hire fees are pooled. Some of the larger groups generate more income than cost, so we are able to support some less well attended groups. However, where numbers fall and remain at unsustainable levels, we may need to consider different ways of enabling a group to continue, such as a smaller room or meeting in each other's homes.
10. Where no rental costs are incurred, eg meetings in member's homes, the walking groups etc, the numbers attending group meetings should be recorded on the Attendance Return Form and submitted to the Assistant Treasurer quarterly at the end of March, June, September and December. Allowable expenses for your own administrative costs including postage, photocopying, members' name badges and telephone calls @ 10p per local call can be claimed via the Expenses Claim Form, a copy of which can be obtained from the SLU3A website or from the Assistant Treasurer.
11. Your group must be self-funding (whether you collect attendance fees or not), ie each group must cover its own costs for refreshments, social activities, visits to other venues, speaker's expenses, gifts, prizes and any materials used such as shuttlecocks, playing cards, drawing paper, books etc - it will be necessary for you to keep a record of monies collected from the group members to pay for these costs. (None of these costs should be included on the Income Return form).
If you are unsure about whether you can claim expenses for a particular item then please contact the Assistant Treasurer for clarification.
12. Exceptionally, Co-ordinators can request special funding from the Committee, in advance, for the cost of an item which you consider would benefit your group, eg computer software or language CD's that are outside the scope of normal expenses. There is a Request for Special Group Funding form for this purpose, a copy of which can be obtained from the SLU3A website or from the Assistant Treasurer.
If you want to apply for such a purchase you should state on the form the cost, benefit and any potential for use by other groups.

13. Coordinators are encouraged to try to minimise the costs involved in running their groups - mainly meeting room rental. The Room Bookings Officer can advise on the availability and costs of different venues, and where practical you should consider the possibility of meeting in members' own houses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

14. The Vice Chairman provides a general oversight of all activity groups and is the person to whom you should refer any problems or substantial changes to your group's operation (e.g. changes to meeting day or time, change of Co-ordinator or contact details, closure of the group etc). The Vice Chairman will forward this information to the Web Editor, the Room Bookings Officer, and the Newsletter Editor.
15. It is essential that you inform the Room Bookings Officer and Newsletter Editor (and of course your group members) of meeting dates for each term so that appropriate bookings can be made and the dates listed in the newsletter. Remember to take account of Bank Holidays when deciding on dates.
16. Please inform the Room Bookings Officer as soon as possible if you cancel a meeting, as we may have to pay the rent for a booked room even if there is no meeting.
17. Co-ordinators are encouraged to produce brief reports on their group's recent activities for inclusion in each newsletter edition and on the web site. This provides interest to all SLU3A members and members of the public interested in joining us
18. Information for each newsletter issue must be passed to the Newsletter Editor at the latest (and preferably earlier) by 10th March, July, and November respectively.
19. Our web site has a separate page for each group or set of similar groups, containing details of the group's meeting day, time and location; a brief description of what the group does, and the group reports sent to the Newsletter Editor. Co-ordinators should occasionally check that the information on their page is correct and pass any amendments and additions to our Web Editor. If you do not have internet access you can obtain a printed copy of your group's page from the Web Editor. Short items of immediate interest (for example changes to meeting dates) can also be passed to the web editor for inclusion on the Latest News page.
20. You are encouraged to attend the Group Co-ordinators Meetings, where problems or topics of general interest can be raised.

RESOURCES

21. A digital projector and a laptop computer are kept in secure cupboards at both the Castle Street Centre and Abbot Hall Social Centre. Other laptops are also available. To request access to a projector or laptop refer to "CONTACTS FOR GROUP CO-ORDINATORS" in the current Newsletter.
22. Wi-Fi internet access is available in the Abbott Hall Social Centre and in certain rooms in the Castle Street Centre and the Beck Community Centre.
23. There is a wealth of resources available for use by U3A groups on the Third Age Trust website at <http://www.u3a.org.uk>.
24. Copies of the various forms referred to in this document can be found on the SLU3A website, or obtained from the Secretary or Treasurer.