



GROUP CONTACT'S HANDBOOK

Cupar U3A



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With grateful thanks to Perth U3A for their generous permission to use their handbook as inspiration.

1) INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Executive Committee of Cupar U3A, we hope that this handbook will provide information for you as Group Contact on organising and administering your group. Groups are the lifeblood of any U3A and Group Contacts are essential to keeping the groups going and keeping the U3A together. Without you, the groups could not function and the U3A would fold.

This handbook has been prepared as an online resource, with other resources from the National U3A website listed at the end of the document.

The handbook is not exhaustive, but provides the main information you require. If you feel there are gaps, or if you spot errors and consider changes should be made, then please get in touch.

THANK YOU

2) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A GROUP CONTACT

The group contact is the main link between the Executive Committee and the members of the group. Information will be passed backwards and forwards via the contact. The committee hold an annual group contact event, where experiences can be shared, concerns raised and discussed. Group contacts should

- Ensure everyone is a member of Cupar U3A
- If you wish to communicate via email, it is useful to get permission from the members to use email addresses directly, rather than bcc.
- Where there are “subs” to pay, for room hire for example, then the contact needs to ensure that receipts and invoices are available for viewing quarterly by the Treasurer. The Beacon system will also need to be updated regularly to maintain the group accounts.
- Our committee prepare stories for the media, as well as producing newsletters every 6 months. It is hoped that information will be forthcoming from the group contact, or another group member, on group activities to support these articles. Text and pictures if possible are great.

3) RULES FOR INTEREST GROUPS

Cupar U3A, like all UK U3As, have to abide by the rules and regulations laid down by the National Head Office and we must keep to legal requirements of the United Kingdom. On the Cupar U3A website, we have listed several different policies and procedures, all of which are relevant to you.

All members of the group must be members of Cupar U3A. Guests may attend one or two meetings whilst they consider whether they wish to join the group or not. After that, they must join Cupar U3A if they wish to continue attending.

If the prospective member is also a member of another U3A, then they will still have to join Cupar U3A – the U3As are separate and autonomous. There is however a reduced rate for those who are members of a different U3A.

Current Cupar U3A policies are:

GDPR

Equality and Diversity Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Privacy Policy

Data Protection Policy

Complaints Policy

Grievance Policy

Disciplinary Policy

Correspondence and Communication Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Copies of all Cupar U3A policies and procedures can be found at the Committee page of Cupar U3A website, under Policies and Procedures. A copy of the Cupar U3A constitution is also on that page.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/cupar/page/93114>

4) SETTING UP A NEW INTEREST GROUP

Whether the group to be set up is a completely new interest topic, or the group is an additional group for a topic where there is already an established group, then in both cases the main question is around numbers.

The topic can be advertised around the existing membership via Beacon emails and mentioned further afield using electronic and paper media. Once you have the numbers (we suggest at least 3 to start with), then you can decide on other issues:

- **How often will you meet?**
You may want to meet monthly, fortnightly or weekly. The choice is yours.
- **Which day – and at what time of day – and for how long will you meet?**
All these to be agreed by consensus. It can be difficult to find a time when all are available. We retired people lead such busy lives!
- **Where will you hold the meetings?**
Many of our groups meet in each other's homes. In that way there is no charge for venue and the refreshment cost is shared. If you do this, then have some ground rules regarding refreshments – for example, no fancy cakes (this will ease pressure on the host).

If you cannot meet in each other's homes, or you decide not to, then there are several venues in and around Cupar where you can meet, although there may be a charge. Some venues don't charge but accept that you will all buy refreshments. The committee have a list of venues and contact details for your use.

- **How many should be in the Group?**

This depends of course on the interest topic, but also on the venue. Using your own home will be restrictive to numbers because of the size of your living room, parking facilities etc.

- **Who will be Group Contact?**

This can be a difficult thing to agree first of all – but it is essential that someone agrees to be the named person for keeping everyone informed of, for example, where the next meeting will be, or to pass on information from the committee.

- **What will you do when you get together?**

This is for you all to decide, following discussion amongst group members. It may be that there is an expert in the group who is happy to lead, or you may decide on taking it in turns to lead on a particular theme.

5) SUPPORT FOR GROUPS FROM CUPAR U3A

Cupar U3A has a maximum of 12 members on the Executive Committee, with a range of experience.

Group Liaison

One of our committee members which you will want to get to know is our Group Liaison person. The Group Liaison person holds an annual group contact meeting, where new group contacts can meet with more experienced group contacts and also with members of the committee. The annual meeting is an ideal opportunity to share experiences and raise issues of concern with the committee.

The Group Liaison person is also happy to take queries from and offer advice to group contacts, throughout the year.

Membership secretary/Beacon contact

Our membership secretary is also the Beacon contact. Beacon is the electronic “database” for our membership. The membership secretary keeps a record of member contact details, and group lists of members. All members sign their permission for this record keeping on the application form they complete on entry. The membership secretary also needs to know who is in your group.

Treasurer

Our treasurer is an important person - especially if you decide to use public venue rather than a private home. If money needs to change hands, then the treasurer needs to know, and he/she needs to see your records on a quarterly basis. You may log financial details in the Beacon system, but there is still a need to keep evidence of the transactions for our files.

Website administrator

The website administrator keeps a record of all groups for viewing by the public on the Cupar U3A website. The group name and the group description on the group webpage are for your group to agree. If there are changes to your arrangements, then please let the web administrator know so that information can be kept up to date.

Newsletter editor

Cupar U3A's newsletter editor will periodically request support by way of articles and accompanying images for the newsletter. If your group is doing something interesting, then it is good to share this with all our members.

New member liaison

New members can feel a little lost, if they have never been in a U3A before. Our new member liaison person organises morning or afternoon tea sessions for new members. These are vital to give new members a sense of belonging to the U3A, not just to a group. Please encourage your new members to take part in these.

6) SUPPORT FOR GROUPS FROM U3A IN SCOTLAND

U3A in Scotland is the network for U3As in Scotland – currently over 50 U3As. The U3A in Scotland is run by a committee elected at its Annual General Meeting and is governed by its own constitution. U3A in Scotland is a Scottish Charity and all U3As in Scotland are members. U3A in Scotland work with member U3As to organise Study Days. They ran a Summer School for the first time in 2016, and summer schools take place every two years thereafter. The next summer school is in 2022 in Stirling.

In addition to the U3A in Scotland, Scotland has its own Trustee/Director on the Third Age Trust Board of Directors. The Trustee is an elected representative and meets regularly with other Trustees to decide on national matters. The Trustee acts as a two-way conduit, taking comment from Scottish U3As to National Executive, and also giving information to Scottish U3As on National matters.

It is also worth thinking about – if you are all beginners and looking for assistance, whether any of the U3As close by are offering the same subject. Try Perth, Dundee, Kirkcaldy (Fife U3A) or Kinross-shire. All these U3As have different groups and some of these may be willing (or even keen) to meet up and share ideas.

7) THIRD AGE TRUST SUPPORT FOR U3A GROUPS

There are 1057 local U3As across the United Kingdom with over 450,000 members.

The main support from the Third Age Trust comes from the website. The website (link given below), is a vast resource. It contains links to publications, to support from subject advisors and gives information on future events. There is a telephone contact and the staff in the office are extremely helpful. If they don't know the answer, then they can tell you who to contact to get an answer.

- <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

Resources for groups include advice and support from Subject Advisors, with newsletters, handbooks and the facility to email queries to the Subject Advisor. Currently there are 65 Subject Advisors, on topics from American Archaeology to Yoga, via Exploring World Faiths, Maths & Stats, Memory Maintenance and even Puppetry!

There is also a DVD lending library to search for items which can be borrowed.

8) ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/FURTHER READING

Note that for some of the Third Age Trust webpages, you may need to register and create a password.

- Third Age Trust:
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>
 - 020 8466 6139
- Third Age Trust advice for Group Convenors (Group Contacts by another name):
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/supporting-your-members/220-group-convenors>
- Third Age Trust subject advice and information on advisers:
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/resources/subjects>
- Third Age Trust access to DVDs and other resources:
 - <https://library.u3a.org.uk/liberty/libraryHome.do>
- Third Age Trust advice on Insurance and Safety:
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/insurance-and-safety>
- U3A Plus website:
 - <https://plus.u3a.org.uk/>
- Third Age Trust advice on Accessibility for Disabled Members:
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/supporting-your-members/222-accessibility-for-disabled-members>
- Third Age Trust advice on Supporting Members with Vision Loss:
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/supporting-your-members/224-supporting-members-with-vision-loss>
- Third Age Trust advice on Supporting Members with Hearing Loss:
 - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/supporting-your-members/223-supporting-members-with-hearing-loss>
- Link to other Scottish U3As:
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/code/index.php>
- Advice on using MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses):
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/advice-on-moocs/home>
- U3A in Scotland:
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/scotland/home>

- Cupar U3A website:
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/cupar/home>
- Cupar U3A contact details:
 - 07754 689 640
 - cuparu3a@gmail.com
- Cupar U3A Groups – More Time to Learn U3A booklet:
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=952&page=2>
- Cupar U3A publications:
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/cupar/page/77132>

9) FORMS

- Cupar U3A accident report form:
 - <https://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=952&page=2>

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