

Aims and Guiding Principles

A University of the Third Age is a learning co-operative of older people, which enables members to share many educational, creative and leisure activities. Activities are organised mainly in small groups that meet regularly, often in each other's homes. Members, through sharing their knowledge, skills and experience, learn from each other.

Although all local U3As remain operationally independent, they are members of The Third Age Trust. As such they must abide by both the original Objects and Principles written by Peter Laslett in 1981 and the and the Principles of the U3A Movement (2014).

The Trust is a national, umbrella body (a registered charity and limited company) which represents all U3As in the UK at national and international level. It is run by a National Executive Committee democratically elected from the membership and offers a range of services, to support and advise local U3As.

The U3A movement is growing all the time; approximately 50 new U3As are started every year. They pursue an amazing range of topics; some academic, some practical and others recreational. Most local U3As offer a combination of opportunities to study, create, socialise, and contribute greatly to members' overall health and wellbeing.

U3A is the only national education organisation in the UK run entirely by its own members.

The U3A Movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main principles:

The Third Age Principle

- a) Membership of a U3A is open to all in their third age, which is defined not by a particular age but by a period in life in which full time employment has ceased.
- b) Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a U3A.
- c) Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a U3A can do so.

The Self-help Learning Principle

- a) Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members.
- b) No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- c) There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all U3A members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

- a) Each U3A is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the U3A Movement.
- b) No payments are made to members for services rendered to any U3A.
- c) Each U3A is self-funded with membership subscriptions and costs kept as low as possible.
- d) Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the U3A movement.