

New Member Information Pack

Groups

The key part of any U3A are the “interest” groups. How we create these is always dictated by the desire of someone to lead the group and the interest of the members. As a result there is no set formula as to which groups we have in our U3A and there also tends to be a natural lifecycle for an individual group.

The Group Organiser has a key role in encouraging the formation of new groups, helping sort out issues that arise, supporting the transition to a new leader or closing down a group as appropriate. Apart from that we tend to allow the groups to operate fairly autonomously (inside an appropriate structure). As a result groups tend to meet on the most appropriate time and frequency to meet the needs of that particular group.

Therefore as a member you can help influence the direction of a group.

We do not dictate the number of groups we should have within the U3A, since it is controlled by the interests of the membership. However most U3As seem to reach an equilibrium which allows sufficient variety for the membership balanced against the cost of supporting the groups.

A yearbook is produced for publication in August at the start of the Academic year which provides the membership with details on all of the groups that are available to join. Contact a group leader to join a group.

Hook Meetings

With the exception of August the whole of our U3A is invited to a meeting at the Elizabeth Hall, Hook from 14.00 to 16.00 on the second Wednesday of each month. We tend to have an attendance of about 130 to 150 members.

In October to November and January to June there is a standard format to these meetings. The chairman opens the meeting and is responsible for announcing any appropriate notices provided by the Central U3A, local organisations or Group Leaders/ members. The floor is then opened up to anyone else who wishes to make announcements to the group.

The programme secretary then introduces the guest speaker for their day and, along with questions from the floor, this normally takes until after 15.00 when tea/ coffee and biscuits are provided.

Annual Registration

Annual registration takes place on the second Wednesday in September and replaces the normal Hook Monthly meeting. All group leaders are invited to attend or send a representative. The idea of the session is to allow members to meet with the Group Leaders and register for the sessions that interest them.

In reality many members already pre-register for a group, especially if they were a member the previous year and also we are looking at on-line registration in the future. However we treat the registration as a social event, allowing members to meet up with other members, the group leaders and to consider the benefits of joining new groups.

AGM

The AGM takes place on the second Wednesday in July, replacing the normal Hook meeting. We follow the recommended format for an AGM with a summary of activities being provided by the chairman and Treasurer, discussion and voting on any proposal and changes to the constitution, plus voting for the officers and trustees of the committee.

In recent years we have also provided some additional entertainment e.g a guest speaker. This is organised by the programme secretary.

Social Events

The Hook meeting at Christmas tends to be different from the normal meetings. Food and wine are provided and the entertainment is often "in-house" with Christmas Carols usually led by "Strings and Things" from our U3A.

Under consideration are various activities throughout the year which are open to all U3A members e.g Quiz evenings. The aim again is to encourage members to widen their participation in the organisation.

Publications/ Communications with U3A membership

Apart from the meetings described above the aim is to have regular communication with all members throughout the year. Traditionally this has been via surface mail. Increasing postal costs and the changing population within our U3A has encouraged a move to E-mail. Currently we have some 85% of our members receiving our communications via e-mail dependent upon the type of communication. Although we actively encourage the use of e-mail whenever possible, we will continue to provide communications via post for as long as required.

The majority of financial transactions are via cash or cheque but we are looking to use electronic banking in the future.

We use membership cards, which are sent via post to all members. We encourage members to wear these to help you get to know fellow members.

Website

The Basingstoke and Old Basing U3A maintains its own website and much of the communication to members is available on the site. In addition the site has the facility to allow external communications to reach the committee members. This is used by members, prospective members and external organisations.

<http://www.basingstokeoldbasingu3a.co.uk/>

Monthly Notices

One to two weeks after each Hook meeting (with the exception of the September registration) a monthly notice email is created. This mainly covers items raised at the Hook meeting, including information from Central U3A and other organisations. This is sent to all members and to Group Leaders for them to read out key items at their next meeting for the benefit of those people without email.

The facility exists to send out ad-hoc versions of this document as required e.g if we receive a short notice of an event.

Trustee report

The income of our U3A is now over £25k pa and we are required to submit an annual trustee report to the Charity Commission. The content of this is mainly the information that is presented at the AGM in July. Therefore the report is produced in a form suitable for our members, we advise them of this in the appropriate monthly notice email and a copy is made available on the website.

AGM Notice

All U3As are required to send out information to all members at least 3 weeks in advance of an AGM. We do this 85% via email and 15% via post.

Renewal letter(s)

Starting in July renewal letters are sent to all members. Since there is a form that requires completion, we use email for this where possible only posting to non-email members. Follow-up reminders are via physical post.

Membership card and Year Book

Once members have registered we send them a copy of the year book plus their membership card via post.

Special Event Days

Many U3As have regular events such as study days. Our U3A has attempted various forms in recent years. We have found that the most successful and least disruptive events for our U3A tend to be ones aligned to our Hook monthly meetings e.g displays from our groups or a themed session.