

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Aims and guiding principles

Preamble

The Universities of the Third Age (U3As) in the United Kingdom are autonomous, self-help organisations run by the voluntary efforts of their members. All U3As are members of the Third Age Trust (a Registered Charity) which is their national support and advisory body. The word “university” is used in its original sense of people coming together to share and pursue learning in all its forms. U3As have the following aims and guiding principles:-

Aims

- To encourage and enable older people no longer in full-time paid employment to help each other to share their knowledge, skills, interests and experience.
- To demonstrate the benefits and enjoyment to be gained and the new horizons to be discovered in learning throughout life.
- To celebrate the capabilities and potential of older people and their value to society.
- To make U3As accessible to all older people.
- To encourage the establishment of U3As in every part of the country where conditions are suitable and to support and collaborate with them.

Guiding Principles

U3As are guided by the following principles.

1. Programmes:

- U3As offer learning activities which reflect members’ wishes and which aim to satisfy the widest possible range of interests: educational, cultural, recreational, physical and social (Laslett Principles 6,9,14 & 15).
- U3As seek resources appropriate to their learning: from their own memberships, from the Trust’s national support systems and from outside organisations, both local and national. (Laslett Principle 12)
- U3As make use of new technologies as they become available.

2. Purpose, Styles and Methods of Learning:

- The pleasure of learning is a driving force in the work of U3As.
- U3As neither require nor award any qualifications. (Laslett Principles 2, 8 & 14).
- By sharing their learning, U3A members help one another to develop their knowledge, skills and experience. (Laslett Principle 1).

- U3As arrange and support their own programmes as appropriate to their chosen learning activities. (Laslett Principle 10).
- U3A members regard themselves as both learners and teachers. (Laslett Principles 1 & 7).

3. Funding

- U3As are funded in the main by the subscriptions of their members. Funding from outside sources may be sought on occasions and is accepted only if there are no conditions attached which might conflict with the Trust's aims and guiding principles. (Laslett Principle 3)
- Members undertake themselves, without payment, the many and varied tasks necessary to run their U3A. Usually, paid tutors are engaged only when special expertise is necessary to ensure the health and safety of members taking part in certain activities, when U3As do not have an appropriately qualified member available. (Laslett Principles 4 & 5)

4. Reaching Out

- U3As take every opportunity to promote the benefits of learning later in life and the attractions and advantages of the U3A way of learning. They make membership available to the whole spectrum of older people in their communities. (Laslett Principles 2 & 8).
- U3As keep in touch with members and former members who, for a variety of reasons, can no longer take part fully in U3A activities; in order to maintain their interest in learning and to offer friendly support, a fundamental part of U3A life. (Laslett Principles 7).
- As appropriate, U3As offer voluntary assistance in learning activities to educational and cultural bodies in their communities. (Laslett Principles 5 and 7).
- U3As collaborate with institutions such as museums, galleries and libraries, in learning partnerships in which both U3As and the institutions themselves may benefit through research, advancement of knowledge and mutual respect for capabilities. (Laslett Principles 6, 13 & 14).
- U3As engage with local and national government departments and other agencies that formulate lifelong learning policies and practices in order to influence those that relate particularly to learning in later life. (Laslett Principles 12 & 15).
- U3As are ready to collaborate with institutions undertaking research into ageing and the position of older people in society. (Laslett Principles 16 and 19)

5. Association.

- U3As collaborate with each other to share expertise and facilities and offer systems of support. They may form themselves into regions or neighbourhood associations. (Laslett Principle 18).
- U3As work, individually or together, to establish and support new U3As.