

U3A ACT GUIDE FOR COURSE LEADERS 2011

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U3A ACT GUIDE FOR COURSE LEADERS

The U3A was established to provide low-cost educational opportunities for retired people in a pleasant social environment. Its general philosophy is to foster a wide range of courses, the primary determinant being the willingness of people to offer courses that appeal to U3A members and thus provide learning or other activities of interest to them.

This guide provides background information for course leaders relevant to the U3A ACT environment. If additional information is required or if potential course leaders have any queries, members of the Courses Sub-Committee (CSC) are available to assist - CSC members are listed on the back page of the Newsletter in accordance with the venue or activity they are responsible for.

Who can be a course leader?

Essentially a course leader can be anyone willing to run a course on a voluntary basis on an area of interest to them. There is no requirement that leaders be members of U3A, though it is a requirement that attendees be members of U3A. Previous experience as an educator or a group leader is not essential but course leaders will need to have qualities to enable them to develop and present lectures or talks to members, or organize and run other activities as courses for members.

What courses can be run?

There are many possibilities as to the courses that can be run. Reference to the current Prospectus shows a diverse range of courses on offer, not just lecture-type courses on specific subjects but also discussion groups on current affairs or books, music-based activities, and courses essentially recreational, to highlight a few. There are no particular rules concerning the nature of the courses offered. However the CSC may discuss with a course leader any proposed course which may involve potentially controversial subjects/activities to determine its suitability to be offered for members. Potential course leaders are welcome to discuss course possibilities with a member of the CSC prior to finalizing a formal course proposal.

Courses can occupy anything from one 2 hour session to weekly sessions lasting for many weeks or even most of the year. Thus course leaders can set the length and timing of a course to meet their own circumstances.

What is involved in being a course leader?

Course leaders are asked to comply with U3A policies and practices as set out in the Course Prospectus (obtainable from the U3A offices, Hughes and Cook), on the website (www.u3acanberra.org.au), and in the following notes.

Course leaders are asked first to submit a Course Proposal form to the CSC for approval. The proposal form requires an outline of the proposed course content, duration, venue, proposed limits on the number of participants, fees applicable to the course, and course pre-requisites such as texts/level of knowledge/skill required etc. Course Proposal forms are obtainable from the U3A offices at Hughes and Cook and are also available for download from the U3A website (see the

Course Leaders tab). Where possible the CSC would prefer to receive course proposals in electronic form, preferably submitted through courses@u3acanberra.org.au to facilitate ease of recording (or alternatively, in hard copy through the Hughes Office). All courses run for U3A each year must be recorded on the courses database, the record being derived from the course proposal form.

Developing a Course proposal

The following guidance is provided for course leaders in developing a course proposal:

- **venue:** Course leaders need to secure a venue. Relevant considerations may include location, likely hire costs (if any), and the availability of suitable facilities (e.g. kitchen/audio visual facilities or other essential equipment), parking, etc.

While many courses are run in community facilities, clubs and similar venues, U3A itself hires three rooms of varying sizes (from 12 to 30 people maximum) at the Hughes Community Centre. It also has three rooms in the Cook Community Hub (for 12 to 50 people maximum) and at least one room at University House at the ANU. Enquiries about bookings at U3A venues should be directed to the U3A Rooms and Equipment Bookings officer (for Hughes & Cook rooms) or the relevant course coordinator (for University House bookings).

Other commonly used venues can also be gleaned from the current Prospectus.

Assistance with identifying venues can also be sought through members of the CSC.

- **enrolment procedures:** U3A ACT's general practice is for course leaders to take the enrolments for their course. This enables members, if necessary, to clarify the nature of the course etc directly with the leader when seeking to enrol. And the leader will know when sufficient enrolments have been received. However, in some situations it may be preferable for a person nominated by the leader to take the enrolments. Course leaders also need to determine matters such as whether waiting lists will be maintained and the process for enrolments (normally 'first in first served'.

Regarding enrolments:

- it is advisable to set a date and time (e.g. 8 June after 9am) for the start of enrolments and to strictly adhere to accepting enrolments only from the time specified to ensure fairness to all;
- normally phone and email enrolments need to be offered to make it fair to all;
- in rare situations email only enrolments may be warranted;
- for equity reasons, individual enrolments are required. A member is not permitted to enrol their member friends (family partners excepted); and
- course members must have current year U3A membership.

As a suggestion, it can be helpful when accepting enrolments by phone to seek an e-mail address from the student as this can be useful in notifying course members of changes to times, venues or other changes to course arrangements, or in providing any course material to members.

Note too that U3A is concerned to ensure that members have fair access to courses. Leaders are therefore encouraged to take at least 2 new members into courses, to take waiting lists and, desirably, to create what opportunities they can to open their courses up to new enrollees e.g. by adhering to a policy of accepting enrolments on a first-in-first-served basis and not carrying whole course enrolments forward from one year to another to the exclusion of prospective new members.

- **course fees:** Course costs must be met by participants. These include room rental costs, refreshments (if any), and any specific costs incurred by the leader in convening the course (such as telephone, photocopying, equipment hire, etc). Note that for venues at Hughes Community Centre and our Cook facility there are preset room rent fees per person per session. At University House at the ANU the rent charged for a room needs to be met by the course. The course proposal should indicate the likely costs involved so that these can be included in the course notice to members.

Similarly, the costs of courses run in rooms in Clubs or other venues, must be met by the participants. This may include (usually modest) membership fees for a Club.

- **appointing a Treasurer (mandatory):** All course leaders must appoint a Treasurer, usually a volunteer from among course participants – the course leader should not have to assume this role along with presenting the course. Financial matters are solely managed within the class and there is no formal reporting to U3A. However, for courses held at Hughes Community Centre, Cook and University House there are specific procedures for remitting the rent fees and the record of member payments to the U3A Treasurer. Please refer to your Course Coordinator for details.
- **maintaining records of class enrolments, payments, attendance and U3A membership numbers:** It is recommended that our ‘Class Enrolments and Payments Record’ (or equivalent) be used for this purpose – these are available from U3A offices and available for download from the website. For courses held at Hughes Community Centre, Cook and University House a copy of this Record must be sent to the U3A Treasurer. For other venues, there is no requirement to formally submit this form to the CSC. Recording of participants’ U3A membership number verifies that they are current members of U3A – members should wear their current membership badges to classes.

Separately, courses are required to maintain an attendance record for each session of the course (an Attendance Record sheet is available on the website but also at U3A offices). This record is to be forwarded to the U3A Secretary at the conclusion of the course. These will be retained for at least 3 months into the subsequent calendar year for insurance purposes in case of an accident or incident arising in relation to a course.

- **obtaining assistance with running courses:** U3A (as an essentially volunteer organization) has limited capacity to provide assistance to course leaders in the running of their courses. It is therefore suggested that course leaders invite course participants to assist as necessary (e.g. organizing room seating or setting-up and re-instating a venue to its original set-up; organizing refreshments; and arranging guest speakers).

- **changes from initial course notification/cancellation/postponement of courses:** Any significant variations to the advertised course description or details, cancellation or postponement, or changes to the operative dates should be notified to your Course Coordinator as soon as possible to enable notification to U3A members as necessary (e.g. via the U3A Newsletter) and any updating of the courses database.
- **casual visitors to courses** (members and non-members): Although membership of U3A is a pre-requisite for participation in available courses, the occasional casual visitor may attend classes at the discretion of the course leader.
- **equipment available to course leaders:** U3A has a variety of audio-visual and other equipment installed at both Hughes and Cook, as well as portable equipment (computer/projectors/white boards etc) which is available for loan to course leaders for use in the U3A facilities and/or external venues (see below).

In relation to the in-built audio visual equipment at Cook and Hughes, however, inexperienced leaders should take the time to familiarise themselves with the equipment in advance of the first session of the course, using the instructions provided. If there is a problem, assistance can be provided over the phone by people whose phone numbers are listed in the relevant U3A offices.

Those using U3A equipment away from the storage location are responsible for its collection from U3A and prompt return. For enquiries about available equipment and for equipment bookings the contact is the U3A Rooms and Equipment Bookings officer (for contact details see the listing on the back of the U3A Newsletter).

Training and other support available to course leaders

The U3A Courses Sub-Committee periodically runs sessions to assist prospective course leaders to gain an appreciation of what is involved but also to provide general guidance on the use of audio-visual equipment in courses. These are notified in the Newsletter and on the web-site. Some equipment training may be done on a one-to-one basis as convenient. Other avenues of assistance and support include:

- consulting with leaders of similar courses to gain an appreciation of how they run their courses
- with the leader's permission, sitting-in on a session of courses similar to a proposed new course
- discussing issues about planning or running a course with CSC members
- accessing course resource material available through:
 - (1) U3A Network -NSW Resource Library: <http://courses.u3anet.org.au> (material sent electronically is free of charge – CD of material costs \$6 including postage).
 - (2) U3A Online Inc: www.u3aonline.org.au (site licences cost \$20/course – a site licence is valid for use of the course material for one year).

OH&S, insurance, copyright and related legal considerations

- **Occupational Health and Safety:** Course leaders (and course participants) must have due regard to good OH&S practices with regard to any physical activity they engage in such as setting up rooms, moving equipment, courses involving physical activity, arrangements for refreshments, etc. Any limitations on room loadings and room setups as part of compliance with fire regulations or venue regulations must be strictly adhered to.

Course leaders are asked to be mindful of the OH&S issues as mentioned and on behalf of U3A help to ensure good OH&S practices are followed by all participants in their courses. Where an accident to a member arises during a course or at a course venue a report needs to be completed promptly.

Related documentation: Accident/Incident Report, Class Attendance Form, Safety Information Sheet are obtainable from the website but are also available from U3A offices.

- **Insurance:** U3A's Public Liability insurance covers course leaders and Committee members when acting under the aegis of U3A, including when performing in public and at U3A social functions. It covers leaders against liability to the public for injury or damage – with usual exclusions for negligence, acts of warfare, etc. Thus it is important for leaders to observe good OH&S practices in setting up and running their course.
- **Copyright:** Course leaders are required to observe copyright rules. This essentially involves 'fair dealing' with material generated by others. Course leaders need to be very cautious in reproducing multiple copies of copyright material: to comply with the law, this should be limited to short extracts only.
- **Obligations in relation to illness of a course member:** While course leaders are not directly responsible for course members, they should assist (as is reasonably appropriate) any course member who may be hurt or fall ill, and ensure significant incidents are notified to the CSC so that any insurance or other liability issues can be addressed. The Accident/Incident Report pro forma document is available on the website for this purpose. Guidance material in relation to the handling accident/illness situations is also publicly displayed in our facilities in U3A facilities at Hughes and Cook.

U3A encourages members to provide at least emergency contact details on the back of their membership cards – this information can be useful in responding an accident or illness situation arising during a course, provided members are wearing their cards.

Miscellaneous

- **Ground rules for running a course:** It may be wise to establish and have the course members agree to certain ground rules for running a course. The course leader needs to exercise control to enable the course to run smoothly so that the planned material or activity can be completed in a session and in a friendly atmosphere. Thus, for example for a lecture-type course, there may need to be rules about when questions will be taken, about avoiding heated debate between course members, limits on discussion or argument, tea break length, etc

with a view to ensuring smooth running of the course for the benefit of all members. It could occur that a course includes as a participant an ‘expert or a knowledgeable person’ in the subject of the course – these should not be discouraged from attending or providing their views, but the leader needs to control the situation so that the course is not ‘high-jacked’ by that person.

- **Dealing with a disruptive course participant:** Fortunately instances of disruptive course members are rare. But should a course leader encounter a situation in which a particular person is disrupting the class, clearly there is a need to address the situation in fairness to others. The existence of ground rules agreed by course members at the start of the course may prove helpful in addressing the problem.

Strategies for handling such instances could include:

- reasoning with the person concerned, pointing out that all members have an equal right to contribute to the discussion or activity but are being denied that opportunity by the disruptive person’s behavior or actions;
- consulting with other course members on how the issue might best be resolved;
- consulting with your Course Coordinator on ways to deal with the situation;
- asking the disruptive member to leave the course, and offering to refund any fees paid.

At no time should the course leader or other class members make physical contact with the disruptive person, as this could be construed as assault. If the person is threatening or becoming aggressive to the leader or other class members then the course may need to be ended that day and class members asked to leave in order to ensure the safety of all.

All instances of disruptive occurrence should be reported to the relevant Course Coordinator.

- **Handling non-payment of fees/non-membership:** In the unlikely situation a class participant refuses to pay the necessary fees or proves not to be a member of U3A they should be respectfully reminded of their obligations and asked to leave the course.
- **Collecting fees:** In particular circumstances, course leaders may choose to allow one week before fees are collected to allow enrollees to make a judgement about whether they wish to continue with the course. This may for example be appropriate for a language course (where a certain starting proficiency is needed) or where an attendee needs to gauge the suitability of joining, say, a current affairs discussion group. However where course members need to pay for room hire charges, a contribution ought to be recovered from an attendee who doesn’t intend to continue with the course. Normally enrollees should have sufficient information about the course from the course notice or from contact with the course leader when enrolling or prior to the course starting to gauge the suitability of the course for them.
- **Waiting lists:** Course leaders may opt to maintain a waiting list for oversubscribed courses. For some courses (e.g. current affairs, play reading, or book group) people from the waiting list could be sought to replace members who leave the course during the year. In some situations the course leader may be able to offer a repeat course and to offer first places to those on the waiting list.

- **Equipment:** U3A holds a substantial range of equipment. Apart from the built-in audio visual equipment we have in Cook Rooms 1, 2 and 3 and Hughes Rooms 2 and 3, U3A holds a broad range of equipment held mainly in the store rooms at Hughes and Cook which is available for use by U3A course leaders (and members). However, it does need to be booked through U3A Equipment and Bookings (see the back page of the Newsletter) in order to avoid potential clashes.

A short list of some of the items available for loan includes: data projectors; laptop computers; overhead projectors (several); slide projectors; document camera; digital piano (recently purchased); public address systems; screens; lecterns; DVD/VCR player; whiteboards; hi-fi audio equipment; heaters; fans; etc.