



Volunteers Handbook

First edition: March 2017

Principles of U3A

The following principles are based on the philosophy of the UK Founder of the U3A movement, Dr Peter Laslett.

- To provide affordable learning opportunities for older people, using the skills and abilities of the members themselves;
- Those who learn shall teach and those who teach shall learn, and there shall be no distinction between the two;
- There shall be no qualification for membership, and no awards, degrees and diplomas shall be given;
- The emphasis shall be on learning for the love of it, and shall include an emphasis on the values of making things and improving skills of all kinds;
- Learning shall take place in a friendly, supportive and social environment;
- Those joining U3A shall pay for its upkeep;
- There shall be no payment to any person (member or non-member) for teaching or providing a service to members except in the case of reimbursement for such expenses as travel, photocopying, etc.;
- The curriculum of a U3A shall be determined by the needs/preferences of members and according to the resources available to it; and
- To be at all times, non-political and non-sectarian in our approach.

Introduction

U3A ACT is an entirely voluntary organisation run in various countries throughout the world. Members run it and we benefit by learning and enjoyment. All members are volunteers. Course leaders volunteer their time to develop and deliver courses. And course participants are also needed to support their course leaders with simple tasks like setting up the room, organising tea and coffee and other routine tasks needed to make a course run.

Other volunteers put their hands up to take on tasks big and small perhaps by joining a committee, organising a course, excursion or event, or by contributing to the overall administration of U3A.

Our most important volunteers are our course leaders without whom we would have no U3A ACT. The course leaders' pages on the website provide detailed support to this group, as do the volunteer Coordinators of the Courses Subcommittee.

This handbook is intended to help those volunteers who contribute to the administration of U3A either within a course, on the committee, subcommittees, working groups, running offices, processing payments, managing our website and technical equipment, organising lectures and seminars, parties and concerts, etc.

In it we aim to introduce U3A ACT, outline the way we organise ourselves in Canberra and provide a ready reference to contacts you may need and sources of help.

Most of us find our volunteering interesting and fulfilling, and enjoy the camaraderie of working together to help make U3A ACT a vibrant organisation that enhances the lives of our members, most of whom are no longer in full-time employment.

Welcome! Let's help to find a way in which you can make a contribution.

U3A ACT

U3A in the ACT grew out of a meeting organised by COTA in October 1986. U3A had started in Australia in Melbourne a little earlier and COTA was interested to see whether the idea would catch on in Canberra. The idea was enthusiastically received and a committee formed with the aim of starting classes in February 1987. From about 100 founding members, the organisation grew rapidly and has increased in size every year since. In 2016, we welcomed our 5000th member!

A large organisation such as this needs a management structure. In recent years we have organised ourselves into teams each responsible for different functions with a team leader and a reporting line to the committee which has overall management responsibility. If you look at the back page of the Newsletter you will see the functions listed and a contact for each.

U3A ACT is an incorporated not for profit organisation registered in the ACT. Our constitution (known as our Objects and Rules), policies and practices are based on ACT law and you can find this under the governance tag on the website.

Volunteer roles

These days we can expect to have much longer period of active life after retiring from full-time employment than previous generations. Although no longer in full-time employment, we often have family commitments and want to take the time to explore new interests and see the world. Volunteer roles should take no more time than you are comfortable in giving. Clearly some roles are more demanding than others, but no one should be doing more than the equivalent of a day a week and most people will put that kind of time in over a fortnight or a month. However you decide to contribute, we expect you to show commitment and to be reliable in the service you offer.

Service cornerstones for volunteers are commitment and reliability. However, your availability may change over time, for example as grandchildren start school and as ageing parents reach higher levels of dependency. It is important that you select a role that matches the time you have available and wish to give. You can step up or down as circumstances change.

Sometimes it is difficult to find the right role or you may need a change. Our volunteer liaison officer can help you (volunteerliaison@u3acanberra.org.au).

All volunteers should have someone to report to and know how to get help and to arrange for the function to carry on perhaps when you are unwell, have family commitments or travelling. A team approach is fundamental and every volunteer role should have a back-up person who can be called upon when the need arises.

There is an expectation on those who lead teams of volunteers that they will provide advice and support, encourage team members to work harmoniously and productively together, and also ensure that the voluntary efforts of team members are properly appreciated.

Expectations as a volunteer

Volunteers can expect to:

- choose the roles that suit them
- be given clear guidance as to what is expected of them
- be given the training, help, support and resources that they need to carry out their tasks
- work in a healthy and safe environment
- have their needs outside the organisation respected
- have their thoughts and opinions listened to; and
- be thanked for their time and effort.

In return volunteers should:

- carry out their tasks reliably and diligently
- work in the best interests of the organisation
- seek help whenever it is needed
- support other team members

- inform their team leader of any instances or periods of unavailability as far in advance as possible; and
- comply with all of the organisation's policies and procedures, and with its code of conduct.

U3A ACT policies you should observe

The statements in the Code of Conduct are fairly straightforward but as volunteers you need to be aware of a little more detail.

Code of Conduct U3A ACT Inc.

U3A ACT is a volunteer association that is built upon the contributions of our members. In order to support the objects of the association members are expected to:

- Work cooperatively with other members
- Value what each member contributes to the association
- Display respect and courtesy for fellow members and refrain from any form of harassment
- Behave with honesty and integrity
- Act responsibly so the reputation of our association is maintained
- Follow the rules, policies and procedures of our association particularly our safety and wellbeing obligations
- Respect the confidentiality of members' information
- Use U3A ACT Inc. resources appropriately, noting that all our funds come from membership fees
- Resolve any disputes as quickly and informally as possible.

Rules especially in relation to safety and wellbeing The rules are found under the governance tab/corporate documents on our website. In regard to safety and well being, you should be alert to potential hazards for members and draw attention to any problems. In the case of accidents or health related incidents, it is important to report these on the accident/incident report form (also on the website) to the Secretary (secretary@u3acanberra.org.au). This is a legal requirement, important for our insurance policy and also to enable the committee to consider whether any remedial or preventative action should be taken to ensure a safe environment for our volunteers and members. Fortunately such incidents and consequential reports are extremely rare.

Confidentiality Under privacy laws, personal information can only be collected and used for specific purposes clearly described when the information is given. We cannot use this information for another purpose. We expect all volunteers – course leaders, course participants and administration volunteers to be diligent in this regard.

Money If your role involves spending money on behalf of U3A, we need you to make sure you follow the rules. You need to seek approval to spend from an authorised person,

usually your team leader, who will then approve the expenditure and the Treasurer will reimburse you. With prior approval, you can send an invoice to the Treasurer or ask the purchasing officer or the Treasurer to make an approved purchase for you on the U3A credit card. Office staff manage petty cash for certain purchases.

Complaints and disputes If a member complains to you about a membership issue, suggest they write to membership@u3acanberra.org.au. Courses complaints should be referred to chairs@u3acanberra.org.au. If in doubt, refer them to suggestions@u3acanberra.org.au. There will be a response. Similarly we have a formal dispute policy in the rare cases where discussion fails to resolve issues.

A full list of our policies and procedures is on the website at www.u3acanberra.org.au/policiesandprocedures/

U3A beyond the ACT

U3A ACT is an independent body and we have become part of the NSW network of U3As. This comprises 67 U3As in NSW. Together we can share ideas about running U3As and offer support to other groups. There is an annual conference to which all are invited. U3A ACT will host this conference in Canberra in 2018. For further information see www.nsw.u3anet.org.au

In addition, there is a national information exchange body bringing together individual networks. This is the U3A Alliance Australia or U3AAA. See www.u3aaa.org

Your U3A

We hope you will enjoy U3A ACT and volunteering to play your part in keeping this great organisation working today and ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

TEAM	DESCRIPTION OF FUNCTION	SKILLS REQUIRED
Operations support	Running the offices in Hughes and Cook <i>9.30-1.00 and 1.00-4.30 shifts, volunteers offer to work when available for half a day</i> Purchasing and equipment bookings <i>As needed, largely from home</i>	General office skills provided in training
Events	Tours – <i>depends on the role volunteers choose</i> Tuesday forums – <i>organised by a committee meeting in the first half of the year</i> Occasional seminars University of Canberra liaison – <i>first point of call for the University or members seeking to audit courses</i>	General office skills Hospitality
Secretariat	Secretary to U3A <i>ensures legal governance requirements are met, monitors correspondence, leads Secretariat team</i> Meetings secretary <i>coordinate agendas and distribution of papers for monthly meeting</i> Minute secretary <i>attend monthly meeting and prepare draft minutes</i> Document management <i>scans and saves documents to Google Centralised Electronic Registry</i>	General office skills. People with an interest in governance may find this work interesting The Document management team requires a scanner at home and an ability to manage files in Google docs
Treasury	Treasurer <i>Responsible for financial management of the organisation</i> Banking team <i>Manages our accounts</i>	Experience in financial management and being comfortable with accounts
Volunteer liaison	Links potential volunteers with team leaders	People skills
Public officer	Statutory reporting to ACT Registrar-General and Australian Charities & Not-for-profits Commission	Usually a role for a committee member