



U3A Canberra POLICY No. P40

<u>Communication Channels Policy</u>	
Publication date: 19 Oct 2023	Applies to: Communications Team
Responsible person: Communications Manager	Scheduled review date: At least once every three years as determined by the Committee
Approved by: Committee meeting 9 October 2023	Authors: Alex Gosman (Communications Manager)

INTRODUCTION:

U3A Canberra operates a number of communications channels. The overall purposes are to keep members informed and, where appropriate, to showcase U3A Canberra in order to promote membership recruitment.

The nature of information provided, and communications channels used, may change over time as the nature of U3A events/courses change, or members expectations evolve.

The managers of U3A-ACT Inc.'s (U3A) regular communication channels (Newsletter, Website, eBulletin and Facebook) as well as the U3A Secretary receive many requests to publicise material. It is not always clear whether the material is appropriate for dissemination, or when it is suitable, which is the most appropriate communication channel.

PURPOSE

This policy is designed to provide guidance for:

1. The acceptance for dissemination of notices/advertisements for events/activities etc. and
2. The allocation of these and of U3A content across the communication channels.

DEFINITIONS/KEY WORDS

Outside bodies: Individuals when not acting as members of U3A, organisations, associations, clubs or businesses that are not part of U3A.

Immediate relevance – where an event is happening in the next few weeks or bookings are required in the next few weeks or a Committee decision needs to be conveyed to members in a timely and transparent manner (eg as was the case with advice on COVID restrictions)

Current forms of communications to U3A members and potential members are at Attachment A

POLICY

1. Information is communicated to U3A members in a variety of ways.
2. The overall “responsible person” for the Communication Channels Policy is the Communications Manager.
3. The manager of the particular communication channel has the right both to edit the material submitted and to refuse to disseminate material that he/she believes is in breach of this policy.
4. Any issue concerning material for publication from a member or an outside body that cannot be resolved by the channel manager, will be referred to the Communications Manager for resolution in the first instance. If not resolved by the Manager, the Complaints and Disputes Policy applies.
- 5 All external communications must go through the Communications Manager or through another person authorised by the Communications Manager.
- 6 When the U3A Communications Manager, or the managers of its communication channels, receive requests from outside bodies to include notices/advertisements in U3A’s communication channels, the following will apply:

- 6.1 All notices/advertisements must be consistent with the Objects and Rules.
- 6.2 The subject matter must be of likely interest to a significant number of U3A members.
- 6.3 The subject matter, tone and content of the notice/advertisement must not bring the good name and public reputation of U3A into disrepute.
- 6.4 The event/activity being advertised must be not-for-profit.
- 6.5 The event/activity being advertised must generally be of major significance and likely to attract a reasonable number of members who might not be aware of it without its being advertised by U3A.
- 6.6 Where a member or an outside body request that an item be published in a particular U3A channel, that channel manager may refer the request for publication in another channel. It may be appropriate to advertise some notice/advertisement across multiple channels and this would be at the discretion of the communications leads (for example Tuesday Forums are advertised in eBulletin and website and on occasion Facebook).
- 6.7 Notices/advertisements relating to events/activities, whether local or outside the ACT and surrounding region, may be publicised in any or all of the communication channels depending on timeliness and, for hard copy publications, availability of space.
- 6.8 Priority will be given to material emanating from U3A.
- 6.9 An event/activity that is similar in content to courses offered by U3A and competes with U3A courses will not be advertised other than in exceptional circumstances. Advice on whether advertisements for particular events or activities should be rejected should be sought from the Chair of the Courses Sub-Committee (CSC) or his/her nominee.
- 6.10 Request for the placement of Notices requesting volunteers from U3A membership for external events (eg Lifeline Bookfair) or for assistance with academic activities (eg clinical trials) must be consistent with the demographics of U3A membership.

- 7 When the manager of a U3A's communication channel receives a request for the dissemination of material from U3A members, the following will apply:
 - 7.1 The subject matter must not be of a personal or commercial nature, for example, advertisements relating to house renting or cars for sale;
 - 7.2 The subject matter, tone and content must not bring the good name and public reputation of U3A into disrepute;
 - 7.3 In determining the allocation of content among the regular communication channels, the purposes and proposed contents for each channel, as detailed in Attachment A, should be taken into account;
 - 7.4 In particular, non-time-constrained items referred to the Newsletter Editor for publishing in hard copy may be abbreviated or delayed for publication in a later issue depending on availability of space;
 - 7.5 To be included in e Bulletins, content must be required to be publication within a short timeframe or of a particularly topical nature (eg Committee meeting reports);
 - 7.6 Death notices and funeral notices will not be published;
 - 7.7 Obituaries will only be published in the Newsletter in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the President; and
 - 7.8 The above will not preclude mention of the passing of a course presenter or event leader as the reason for a cancellation notice.

Attachment A

Current forms of communication to U3A members and potential members

1.1. e Bulletins

Purpose

• This is a members-only channel for the rapid dissemination of information to the membership

Content

- What is on in the immediate future
- What has changed
- Other urgent messages or announcements, including announcements from the U3A Committee, such as committee meeting reports

Timing

- Monday (general update)
- Friday (courses update).

Format

- Irregular, short, sharp, easy to read and digest
- Text only
- Published as required, only to members.

1.2. Newsletters

Purpose

This is a publicly accessible document to provide information of less immediacy and showcase U3A Canberra activities to both the public and members less frequently than the eBulletin.

- Available on the public and members-only websites.

- Content**

- Calendars of events that are relatively long-term
- Non-urgent communications from the Committee or not time relevant
- Reports on U3A courses and other activities;

- Profiles of U3A members: Committee members, volunteers, course leaders
- Thought pieces — such as, 'From the President', 'From the Editor', major issues that need members' attention, but are not of permanent relevance
 - Letters to the Editor.

Timing

- Regular publication, currently six times a year.

Format

- Longer articles, dealing with issues in detail
- Photos or other relevant graphic material □
Comment/issues.

1.3 Website

Purpose

*U3A Canberra website. There are two elements:

-A publicly accessible element to showcase U3A and permit easy application to join. By its nature it will also allow members easy access to non-sensitive information (without the need to log-in).

-A members-only element. Via a log-in portal on the public website, members will be given information limited to members, for instance to facilitate creation and enrolment in courses.

- Public website
- Members-only website
- Information of immediate and longer-term relevance to members
- External promotion and communication, such as examples of courses with the intention of attracting prospective members
- Key information relevant to members - enables members to interact with the organisation
- Administrative support - enables Committee members and volunteers to undertake necessary tasks.

Content

Typical content of members' website;

- What's on, what's changed, other messages or announcements - listing events and activities (U3A and other), day-by-day as well as longer-term
- Up-to-date prospectus and information on current status of courses (Find a course)
- Promotion of important upcoming courses and activities
- Pages enabling existing members to renew their membership and to
- book for courses online
- Needs to have the facility for members to contribute articles, images etc

- Course Leader information pages - guidelines and forms □ Corporate information including:
 - Lists of Contacts and Links to other organisations
 - Objects and Rules, Annual Reports and other documents

not suitable for the public site.

Timing

- Online, immediately available, up-to-date but dependent on members' viewing.

Format

- Agreed body of content, with allocated responsibilities for maintaining currency and permanence of information □ Members' website for members-only information.
- Public versus members-only information.

1.4. Facebook

Purpose

- U3A Canberra operates a private Facebook page to provide greater opportunity to disseminate information including multimedia and it offers members a channel for open discussion.

Content

- Promotion of coming events and courses
- Short reports on recent past events with the use of photographs and providing the opportunity for feedback of those events

- Raising and debating issues in detail
- Facebook open for posts by current U3A members only.

Timing

- Monitored regularly in order to keep communication respectful and relevant.

Format

Short, sharp features with photograph.