

Overview of Bicester u3a

The ethos of the u3a Movement is based on three principles:

The Third Age Principle:

Membership of a u3a is open to all in their third age.

Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.

Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a U3A can do.

Self-help learning principle:

- Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire.
- Learning is **by the members, for the members**.
- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers. They are all U3A members.

. The Mutual Aid principle:

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of the Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the u3a movement.
- u3a members, group leaders and committee members receive no payment for services to any u3a.
- Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions kept as low as possible.
- Outside financial assistance for the u3a should only be sought if it is first discussed by the committee and is deemed not to imperil the integrity of the u3a.

Bicester u3a Organisation

Bicester u3a is a Registered Charity (no. 1094759) and a member of The Third Age Trust. To maintain charity status and benefit from Third Age Trust provisions including the insurance they provide, there is a need for group leaders and committee members to manage finances in specific ways and adhere to other policies requirements including data protection and risk assessments. The group leader handbook outlines how the policies and procedures apply.

A voluntary elected Executive Committee run Bicester u3a in line with our own written constitution. All elected committee members function as Trustees of our charity and must comply with, Charity Commission Guidelines in their work. According to our constitution, there should be a maximum of 15 trustees on the committee and a minimum of 5. The 'officers' of the committee are, Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Business Secretary and Treasurer. These and other members of the committee take on specific responsibilities and commitments on election and the committee alone is

responsible for the running of Bicester U3A. The committee has the power to co-opt members to the committee between AGM's if the need arises. The committee meets about ten times a year. Ideally committee members will hold any one post for a maximum of three years. The constitution states that in total nine years is the maximum that any individual may be a committee member.

Communications

It is important to keep all members fully informed about what is going on within the Bicester u3a. We do this in a variety of ways:

- 1) **Monthly Meetings.** All monthly meetings start with the announcements by the Chairperson of items affecting all members. Group leaders can also give out information affecting their groups (contact the Chairperson/Group Co-ordinator in advance) and *sometimes group leaders give a short talk about what their group does*, to encourage new members to enquire/join.
- 2) **Information Board.** At all monthly meetings, we use our double-sided display board to put up all the latest notices, *including information from group leaders about their groups' forthcoming events*. On the reverse side, there are spaces for notices from U3A National Office and from Thames Valley Network, which both offer interesting opportunities throughout the year for members.
- 3) **Written information.** Sometimes we send written information on behalf of the committee to group leaders, *asking them to pass on this information to all the members of their group*. Sometimes we send messages directly to individual members.
- 4) **Newsletter.** Newsletter editor is normally a job allocated to a committee member. We produce a newsletter in February, May, August, and November. We distribute it to all members, mostly by e-mail for economic reasons, but also by hard copy to those without computing facilities. *The newsletter editor requests a quarterly update from group leaders to help publicise group activity*.
- 5) **Website.** Bicester u3a webmaster is a committee member job. The webmaster regularly updates the website. The website gives information on u3a activities for people wanting to join and for existing members. *Group leaders are requested to supply information to the webmaster about their groups and keep the information updated*. Apart from showing photos of past events, the website gives general information about Bicester U3A itself. Email contacts of committee members are on the website. You will not find contact details of any individual group leaders on the website for data protection reasons, see membership information leaflet. The website also provides links to National and regional u3a organisations that offer a wealth of help, advice, and extra activities such as talks and visits. See **u3a** Trust, and regional Thames Valley Network (TVN), Our own web address is, [Bicester u3a: Home \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://Bicesteru3a:Home(u3asites.org.uk))
- 6) **Beacon administration.** Bicester u3a Beacon administrator is a committee member job. The beacon administrator has a general overview of how we store contact details of members and details of groups and their membership on a central database called Beacon. The data base makes group administration tasks streamlined. It automatically addresses data protection responsibilities. *It is recommended that all group leaders use Beacon*.
- 7) **Membership information leaflet.** The committee produce an annual membership information leaflet in January each year. *It contains contact details of all Group Leaders and Committee Members as well as a list of monthly talks and events for the year*.