



Guidance for Seaton u3a Group Leaders

1. Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to organise an interest group for Seaton u3a. We are sure you will find it a rewarding experience; however, it might seem a bit daunting at first. This guidance is intended to provide advice and support.

The u3a ethos is based on 3 principles:

- a) Third Age:
 - i. Open to all in their third age
 - ii. Lifelong learning and positive attributes of belonging to a u3a
 - iii. Ability for everyone wanting to join a u3a can do so
- b) Self-Help Learning:
 - i. Wide range of topics and activities as possible
 - ii. Learning is by the members, for the members
 - iii. No qualifications are sought or offered – learning for its own sake with enjoyment being the prime motive
 - iv. No distinction between learners and teachers – all just u3a members
- c) Mutual Aid
 - i. Each u3a is operationally independent but adheres to u3a movement
 - ii. No payments made to members for services to any u3a
 - iii. Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions kept as low as possible
 - iv. Outside financial assistance only sought if it does not imperil integrity of the u3a.

Definition of Group Leader: Within this document the term “Group leader” is defined as the person held responsible for the activity. This could be the organiser of a one-off event (eg Xmas lunch organiser), the Committee member annually nominated as the “monthly meeting organiser” as well as the Group Leader of a specific regular Group (eg Jazz Appreciation).

2 Setting Up a New Group

2.1 Overview

- a) Groups should adhere to the u3a motto of “Learn, Laugh, Live”.
- b) “Group Leader” is not for life! The Leader does not have to be an expert or a teacher – just willing and reasonably well organised!
- c) The u3a’s principle of ‘self-help’ means that Groups cannot directly employ instructors or trainers (one of the rules of U3A Trust). However, a Group can arrange for a

commercial organisation to run sessions for members if specialist facilities are required eg gym, swimming pool.

- d) Groups do not have to be long-term; Groups can be short-term arrangements for the completion of a specific project, objective or collaboration.
- e) A prospective new Group Leader should discuss their idea with the Group Coordinator and committee. A pre-meeting with members who have expressed interest may also be appropriate to clarify how the Group is expected to be organised.

2.2 Advertising

- a) A new group should be advertised in the monthly bulletin and at monthly meetings. A draft objective and 'modus operandi' should be described.
- b) Interested members should be asked to provide their contact details to the Group Coordinator or emerging Group Leader.
- c) All ~~U3A Seaton~~ ~~Seaton u3a~~ Groups are advertised on the ~~Seaton u3a~~ ~~U3A Seaton~~ website. <https://seaton.u3asite.uk/groups/> The prospective Group Leader should write a short description of the proposed Group and ideally a photograph once the Group is active to the Groups Coordinator.
- d) Seaton u3a may contact neighbouring U3As (eg Lyme, Sidmouth, Honiton) to suggest that they offer attendance to Seaton u3a groups with space places.

2.3 Potential Venues

Venue	Max no. of people	Parking?	Facilities	Other notes
Marshlands	Approx. 20	Limited free spaces on site	Kitchen; projector & screen	
Gateway	Approx. 90 in hall Approx. 14 upstairs	None free	Kitchen; sound system; screen on stage Screen on wall	Centre of town; stores u3a projector
Lounge, Methodists	Max 8	Free	Kitchen	
Small hall, Methodists	Max 25	Free	Kitchen	
Large hall, Methodists	Max 80	free	kitchen	
United Reform Church, Cross St	Max 50?	None free	kitchen	Centre of town
Masonic Hall, Queen St		None free		Centre of town; bar possibly
Eyre Court	16 seated at tables; 20 seated in rows?	Limited free parking on site	bar	Centre of town; Free to use as expect group members to buy drinks from venue

Depending on the size of the Group and equipment required, the Group can meet in members' homes.

Other venues in Beer, Axmouth and Colyford could be considered: they might be able to offer better and free parking opportunities!

2.4 Set Up Costs

- a) Seaton u3a committee would consider funding a specific required asset for a new Group on a case-by-case basis. The prospective Group Leader should apply to the committee for consideration.
- b) Any new Group is expected to be self-funding with respect to venue hire immediately.

2.5 Resources

- a) Seaton u3a own the following assets:

What	Where
Microphone system	Gateway
Projector	Gateway
Amplifier	Jazz Appreciation GL house
Airpot hot water dispenser	TBCSecretary's house
Sound system	Jazz Appreciation GL house
PA system	Secretary's house
Trolley for moving equipment	Jazz Appreciation GL house
Laminator	Photography GL house

- b) If assets are to be shared between Groups, booking may be required.

3 Running a Group

3.1 Overview

- a) The Group should be self-financing, neither loss-making nor profit-making over a period of several months.
- b) Attendees of the Group must be paid-up members of Seaton u3a (otherwise they are not covered by insurance). Visitors are allowed to attend once on a "try-it-out" basis and should pay if the Group is "pay-as-you-go".
- c) The Group Leader is responsible for maintaining a list of Group members and ensuring attendance is noted for each meeting (for Health & Safety reasons). Contact details of Group members/attendees are available on Beacon database and can be accessed directly or via any committee member.
- d) Group Leaders must ensure that personal data (eg email addresses) is kept private and not shared across all members in any communications eg email addresses should be "BCC-ed".

- e) Emergency contact details ~~are~~ may be available on Beacon database¹; if Group Leader does not have personal access then they can contact any committee member to help. The Group's Risk Assessment may suggest that the Group Leader should also have a copy.
- f) The National u3a Trust has 90+ Subject Advisers who can be contacted for resources and ideas. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/subjects>
- g) The National u3a Trust also has a number of Subject Networks enabling Groups to collaborate. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/subject-networks>
- h) If there is a change to the time, day, venue or Group Leader, the (outgoing) Group Leader should inform the Group Coordinator immediately.
- i) The Group Leader may wish to delegate some responsibilities to other group members eg taking register, giving out change, making tea and coffee, welcoming new attendees etc.
- j) The Groups Coordinator and Seaton u3a Committee are happy to be approached for reasonable support and guidance to any Group Leader upon request.

3.2 Welfare Issues

- a) The accessibility needs of group members should be identified and accommodated where practicable and reasonable. **See Seaton u3a Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.**
- b) The Group leader must be aware of their venue's Health and Safety Policy eg fire evacuation routes and meeting points, location of extinguishers etc
- c) It may be appropriate for some groups to have agreed ground rules (eg debating and language Groups); for example
 - i. Listen to each other
 - ii. Allow others to speak
 - iii. Agree to disagree amicably
 - iv. Be respectful
 - v. Have patience with and encourage those who are slower to learn
 - vi. Encourage all Group members to participate
- d) Group Leaders with support from Seaton u3a committee should write a formal Risk Assessment for each Group. These only need to be amended if a significant change to the Group's equipment, membership or practices change, but should be reviewed at least annually. **See Seaton u3a Health & Safety Policy**
- e) Group Leaders should inspect any equipment they use at least once a year and report the results of that inspection to Seaton u3a Secretary.
- f) Specific advice about safeguarding issues (eg attendees with dementia) can be requested from the Seaton u3a Safeguarding Officer. **See Seaton u3a Safeguarding Policy.**
- g) If an incident occurs during a meeting which results in injury, requires medical attention or damages property, the Group Leader must complete an **Accident Report** and send it to the Group Coordinator. The Accident Report form can be downloaded from the Seaton u3a website.

¹ Members will be asked to supply emergency contact information during the 2026 membership renewal period

- h) Sometimes issues can arise that disrupt the smooth running of a Group and spoils the enjoyment for everyone. Don't leave this problem too long: seek help from the Groups Coordinator, Safeguarding Officer or committee – we are here to help you! **See also Seaton u3a Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.**

3.3 Financial Arrangements

- a) Groups should be self-financing so the Group needs to cover venue, refreshment and any other meeting costs.
- b) Group Leaders are responsible for collecting monies from Group members.
- c) Group Leaders should pay monies to cover venue hire (if appropriate) promptly into the Seaton u3a bank account with the reference being the name of the Group. Paying-in slips can be requested from the Treasurer to facilitate payment if BACS is not being used.
- d) The Seaton u3a Treasurer is the person responsible for paying for the venue eg Marshlands, Gateway, Methodists church etc, but the Group Leader is responsible for booking the venue. Group Leaders should inform the Treasurer of all bookings and/or cancellations to facilitate checking of receipts and payment of invoices.
- e) No Group should retain a long-term surplus of funds: if they do, this should be discussed with the Treasurer. Remember all Group funds belong to Seaton u3a!
- f) Group Leaders should be prepared to supply a **simple** financial statement to the Seaton u3a Treasurer at least once a year. **See Seaton u3a Finance Management Policy.**
- g) The Group leader should ensure the Group's attendance fee is sufficient for them to recover the cost of any refreshment provision they have incurred.
- h) If a Group becomes non-self-financing then, at the discretion of the Committee, it may be granted money for a short term deficit.²

3.4 Membership

- a) Early each May, Seaton u3a Membership Secretary or Groups Coordinator will provide a list of known Group members and their membership status of "lapsed" or "renewed". Any "lapsed" Group member should not be allowed to attend Group meetings after 1 May as it is against u3a Trust insurance.
- b) Each January, Seaton u3a Membership Secretary or Groups Coordinator will provide a list of known Group members for the Group Leader to review and correct as appropriate.
- c) The Group Leader should notify the Seaton u3a Groups Coordinator of any changes to the Group's membership during the year so that the information can be updated in Beacon.
- d) Membership forms can be printed off from the U3A Seaton website <https://seaton.u3asite.uk/membership/>. Otherwise double-sided forms can be requested from the committee.

² In the past this has been stated as "up to 3 months" but this explicit duration has been removed so each situation can be considered on a case-by-case basis

3.5 Copyright and Insurance

- a) Seaton u3a purchases a CLA licence from u3a Trust each year which allows some materials within limits for educational use within Groups.
- b) Seaton u3a, through the u3a Trust, also has a PPL (Phonographic Performance) PRS licence to cover the playing of music and an MPLC licence to cover the showing of films.
- c) All these licences have limitations: further information is available on the “support for u3as” section of the u3a Trust website. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/members-area/support/advice-and-guidance>
- d) Seaton u3a is covered by the u3a Trust insurance. Details including the cover note and FAQs on insurance can be found on the u3a Trust website <https://www.u3a.org.uk/brand-guidelines/insurance>

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4 Closing a Group

- a) If the Group Leader is facing issues, they should discuss them with the Groups Coordinator.
- b) Before closing a Group, the Group Leader should try to find a replacement Group Leader and inform the Groups Coordinator.
- c) All Group assets funded by U3A Seaton or its members should be returned promptly to the U3A Seaton.
- d) All Group funds should be returned promptly to the U3A Seaton account with a statement to support the transaction sent to the Treasurer.

5 List of Relevant Policies and Documents

The following Seaton u3a policies are available on the Seaton u3a website:

- a) Privacy & Data Protection Policy
- b) Finance Management Policy
- c) Health & Safety Policy
- d) Risk management guidance
- e) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- f) Safeguarding Policy
- g) Complaints Procedure
- h) Disciplinary Policy
- i) Member Code of Conduct
- j) **IncidentAccident** report form

6 Adoption and Review

This guidance should be reviewed at least every 3 years with opportunity for input from Group Leaders.

This guidance was presented to Group Leaders on 24 November 2025 following its ~~acceptance~~ adoption by the committee on 15 September 2025. It was revised following review by the Group Leaders.

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