

## So what is U3A?

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All U3As are different however there is a core of shared values and behaviours.

A U3A (University of the Third Age) is a self-help organisation providing learning, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment for people in their active retirement years, usually described as over 50 who are no longer in full-time employment.

U3As are learning co-operatives and draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership. Some also invite guest speakers.

U3A is an international movement and run entirely by volunteers. Each U3A is independent and run by an elected management committee of members. Everyone is encouraged to be involved in the running of their U3A.

Whilst passive members may think they are getting a good deal, it is those motivated members who teach and are involved in the administration who receive most benefit. Sharing knowledge and life skills with an appreciative audience does wonders for self-esteem. Stretching abilities and learning new skills to maintain a website or write a newsletter keeps you sharp and can give a great feeling of accomplishment. Volunteering also gives a sense of purpose to our lives. There is a growing body of research that shows volunteering is associated with better physical and mental health.

U3A believes in learning for pleasure. It provides the opportunity to mix with alert, like-minded people who enjoy doing new things. There is no accreditation, no assessments nor qualifications to be gained.

Groups usually meet during the day, wherever a room can be begged or borrowed. Courses, too numerous and varied to list, can last an hour or a lifetime.

For a small annual membership plus costs, if any, members may enrol for as many courses as they wish.