

The University of the Third Age (U3A) began in France in 1972. The French model was quite different from the UK one, in that U3As in France were tied to existing universities on an extra mural basis. However, in the UK, U3As are self-help endeavours, consisting of groups of people joining together to share their knowledge, skills and experience in an informal association of their own design. The term university is used in its original sense - a group of people coming together to share their love of learning. Qualifications play no part in U3A life. What matters is fellowship in learning and enjoyment. Membership is open to all men and women who are third-agers, no longer in full time employment.

In 1982, the first U3As were established in the UK. The movement continues to grow rapidly with on average 50 new U3As a year. They vary in size from under 20 to over 2500 and each U3A devises its own programme and sets its own membership fee.

What is the Third Age Trust?

The Third Age Trust is the national representative body for more than 880 Universities of the Third Age throughout the United Kingdom, with over 297,000 individual members. It is a Registered Company, (whose liability is limited by guarantee) and a Registered Charity. The members of its Board of Directors, the National Executive Committee, elected by U3A members, are also its trustees. They administer the Trust in accordance with its Articles and Memorandum of Association. Broadly speaking, the memorandum sets out the objects of the organisation and the powers it has in furtherance of these objects and the articles state how the Trust is to be administered, as required by Company law and the Charity Commission. The U3A logo and title, which are officially registered trademarks, are for the exclusive use of members of the Trust.

The NEC and Trust Administration

The NEC manages the business of The Trust and meets as a full committee for 2 days every 2 months, to consider policy matters, raised by its various sub-committees and working parties, as well as matters raised by U3As, U3A members, regions, networks and external organisations. The three main sub-committees are: the Standing Committee for Education, the Development committee and the Finance committee. In addition to the above, there is a Research committee and steering groups are established from time to time to organise specific events, for example, the biennial conference.

Other NEC activities

In addition to serving on the sub-committees and working parties individual NEC members can be involved in:-

- Links with external organisations e.g. Open University, NIACE, WEA, Age UK etc
- Responding to papers/research on Lifelong Learning
- Publicity and awareness
- Attendance at local, national and international U3A conferences and those of other related organisations.

How the Trust is Financed

All the day-to-day expenditure of the Trust, such as the National Office staff, running costs and NEC expenditure is met from the per capita membership subscription, currently £3.50 per annum, merchandise sales, advertising revenue and a 'Friends of U3A' scheme.

The National Office

The National Office is located in Bromley. It is open from 9.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. There are currently 6 full-time members of staff and 7 part time including two Education & Development Officers.

The National Office acts as a central clearing house for all enquiries and is responsible for the day to day administration of The Trust. It provides back-up support to assist in the formation of new U3As and provides advice to all groups on constitutional, legal and insurance matters. It also services the NEC and its sub-committees and is responsible for the administrative organisation of the National Conference and AGM.

How can Members influence the Trust's activities?

The most effective way in which U3As may influence the Trust's activities is by participating in the election process for both regional trustees and officers by sending members to represent them and vote on their behalf at the Annual General Meeting or by submitting proxy votes. Any U3A may submit motions to the AGM. There is no restriction upon the number of individual members who may attend the Conference and/or AGM, but only voting representatives may participate in AGM business. Third Age Matters, Sources, National Mailings and Chairman's letters provide other ways of communicating between the NEC and local U3As and new means are constantly being sought.

In other words, the Trust is administered by the NEC for the benefit of the membership.

Summary

The purpose of this paper has been to:-

- create a realistic impression of the role of the Trust; what its responsibilities are and how they are carried out.
- show that the Trust and the local U3As together form a partnership which represents the U3A movement in the UK and is based on mutual support and co-operation.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2012-13

CHAIRMAN	Barbara Lewis	01923 260410
VICE CHAIRMAN	Beryl Mellish	01425 275588
VICE CHAIRMAN	Janet Whitehouse	01992 812503
TREASURER	John Ellison	01524 733400

MEMBERS	Adrian Breacker	01480 385424
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	Gwen Dawe	0191 521 2991
	Anthony Hughes	01792 363923
	Pam Jones	01993 773860
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SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/COMPANY SECRETARY

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EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS

Carole Millin	07507 852967
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