

Setting up a new group in Monmouth u3a

The **purpose** of this document is to give guidance to Monmouth u3a members on how to set up a new group within Monmouth u3a.

The **objective** is to ensure that new groups:

- Simulate learning, friendship, and activity
- Thrive beyond their first year, replacing members when others leave
- Operate within u3a national guidelines and insurance compliance
- Comply with the Charity Commission's regulations, including audit requirements.

Step 1: Submitting a proposal and gauging interest.

Any proposals for a new group should be referred to Monmouth u3a's Groups Coordinator.

Proposals should include:

- Contact details (email address/telephone number/s) of the member proposing the new group
- The proposed group's aims/purpose, in about 30 words;
- Whether it will be run by a member, or if a tutor/trainer needs to be employed? (See guidance note 1, below.)
- Has a suitable venue been identified? Yes/No/Where?
- Has a convener been identified, if so, who?

The Groups Coordinator will check if an existing group does not already exist to avoid duplication. They will then post a notice on the website and email all Monmouth u3a members (using Beacon, the u3a membership database) to establish if there is enough interest amongst the membership to make the new group viable.

Step 2: Compiling further information.

If there is sufficient interest amongst the membership, further information will be required by the Groups Coordinator:

- Contact details of convener
- A description of what the group will offer:
 - the subject matter
 - activity type – talk, discussion, activity-based, visits
 - if relevant, pre-requisite level e.g. language beginners, conversation, or advanced.
- Group size – minimum/maximum numbers
- Location of venue, e.g. convener's home/hired venue/external visits
- Proposed day, time and frequency e.g. weekly/bi-monthly/monthly – check Activities Day by Day on the website to find suitable time slots
- Any fees to be charged? If so
 - amount and frequency, e.g. annually, per session or per meeting.
 - cost of tutors
 - venue costs

All groups must be financially independent and cover their own costs. All money collected by groups should be done via the Treasurer. See Guidance notes below on employing tutors, and payments for speakers/venues.

Step 3 – Committee review.

At the next appropriate Committee meeting, the Groups Coordinator will report all the relevant information to the committee for a decision as per the following:

- a) **Accepted** – full information has been received and the group is ready to start
- b) **Agreed in principle** – more information is required prior to a decision being made
- c) **Rejected** – e.g. duplication of group/activity not covered by u3a insurance

All decisions will be recorded in the minutes.

Step 4 – Action after the committee meeting.

The Groups Coordinator will inform the proposer of the Committee's decision and work with the proposer as relevant:

- **Accepted:** the Groups Coordinator works with the proposer to develop and promote the new group
- **Agreed in Principle:** if more information is required, the Groups Coordinator will liaise with the proposer for the proposal to be resubmitted to the Committee
- **Rejected** – Groups Coordinator to explain the reason this decision was made.

Step 5 – Promoting the new group.

If the proposal is accepted, the Groups Coordinator will support the proposer and/or convener to:

- Finalise the convener, tutor, venue and cost details
- Publish details and start date of the new group in the Monthly Newsletter
- Liaise with the website manager to create a page for the new group on the Monmouth u3a website
- Promote the new group at Monthly Members' events
- receive applications from Monmouth u3a members to join the group

Step 6 – Setting up and running the new group.

The convener, with the support of the Groups Coordinator, will set up the group in line with Monmouth u3a requirements:

- Assimilate the Guidance for group conveners provided on Monmouth u3a's website
- Compile Risk Assessments as per guidance on [Monmouth u3a's website](#)
- Liaise with the Treasurer regarding finance – see guidance on financing groups below
- Undertake training in using Beacon, in order to manage members
- Undertake training in using the u3a website to promote the group
- Set up the new group on Beacon and add/update group membership details **regularly**
- Book venue and/or external tutor if required
- Undertake on-going promotion of the group in the Monthly u3a Newsletter
- Engage regularly with the Groups Coordinator
- Respond in a timely manner to queries, particularly those coming from the website (and check spam from time to time in case they have gone there).

Guidance notes, provided by the Third Age Trust (TAT)

1. Employing tutors

The Trust is against having paid tutors in principle but u3as are independent charities and it does happen. Paid tutors must not be a member of any u3a.

The Trustees must ensure that the tutor is self-employed, pay their own tax, and have Public Liability insurance. HMRC will have issued them with a UTR (Unique Tax Reference) number which a paid tutor should be able to produce along with a copy of their Public Liability Insurance certificate as evidence that the tutor is not an employee. A once-a-year check to ensure that these measures are still in place is essential. It is the Trustees' responsibility, not the members.

The group using a paid tutor cannot be subsidised by the u3a. If members want to have a group with a paid tutor but the Committee does not agree, an option is to make the group a non-u3a activity.

2. Paying speakers

Based on our Mutual Aid Principle the intent is to not need to pay for speakers. Certainly, u3as cannot pay a fee to speakers who are members of a u3a. However, it is allowable to pay pre-agreed reasonable expenses to speakers, including u3a members. For external speakers – only if payment is necessary – then the following should be followed. The speaker's fee and expenses should be agreed beforehand. The cost should then be reimbursed to the speaker through the u3a's accounts. If the Speaker wants to donate their fee to a nominated charity, then this needs to be recorded in advance. Two methods are possible. The first way, if the speaker is to be paid in cash or by a cheque made payable to them, would be for them to sign a receipt for the u3a's records and then hand the value of the fee to the charity of their choice. The second method would be to ask the Speaker to sign a declaration like the example below and then the fees can be paid directly to the charity. In both cases, it should be recorded in the account as "speaker fees".

Example declaration

To Monmouth u3a:

Please pay the fee/expenses due to me as speaker at your u3a on to the following charity:
..... Being a donation paid on my behalf to that charity.

Signed Date

3. Group finances

Interest groups are expected to be self-financing and can collect such sums of money as the group members and leadership deem to necessary to undertake their activities. The funds of these groups belong to the u3a. Groups are permitted to make expenditure deemed necessary by the group members and the group convener and can withdraw money on request from the ringfenced funds held by the u3a on their behalf, as appropriate. The Treasurer, Groups Coordinator and convener need to agree what financial records they intend to keep in order to:

- Allow the Treasurer to keep accurate accounts for presentation to the AGM, for discussion with the Trustees, and to meet regulatory requirements
- Allow the group members to understand how their monies are being managed
- Maintain transparency and the trust of all concerned
- Minimise the risk of error and potential loss of funds
- Allow group leaders to maintain cash floats

Check list		Completed Date	Further action required.
Step 1: Submitting a proposal and gauging interest	Is there enough interest in the proposed group to move forward?		
Step 2: Compiling further information	If sufficient interest, further information compiled and presented to Committee.		
Step 3: Committee review	Committee reviews proposal and accepts, agrees in principle, or rejects.		
Step 4: After committee meeting	Groups Coordinator reports committee outcome to proposer.		
Step 5: Promoting New group	Groups Coordinator supports proposer to promote and set up group.		
Step 6: Running the group	Groups Coordinator supports convener in establishing and running the group.		

Notes:

For further information on the role of the Groups Coordinator & Group Convenor follow the links below.

<https://monmouthu3a.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Role-Description-Groups-Coordinator-Monmouth-U3A-SC-July-23.pdf>

and

<https://monmouthu3a.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Role-Description-Group-Convenor-Monmouth-U3A-SC-July-23.pdf>