

Coordinating Study Groups

The responsibilities of a coordinator

The minimum requirements of coordinators are that they:

- ensure the group's finances are managed at all times in accordance with the *U3A in Ludlow Maintaining Group Finances* guidelines; this is to protect the interests and funds of all coordinators and members;
- ensure all members of the study group are paid-up members of *U3A in Ludlow*; this is to meet the requirements of the U3A public liability insurance;
- report any accidents or damage to the Study Group Adviser;
- keep the Study Group Adviser informed about the study group's arrangements, so that the information provided to members and new members is always up-to-date;
- check the *U3A in Ludlow* website to ensure that the entry for their study group is correct and up to date;
- complete and return by 30th September the *Annual Study Group Financial Return*, which is sent out in early September;
- support members of the study group who may have disabilities by, for example, meeting in suitable venues or offering lifts, accommodating members with sight or hearing problems, allowing for members who may not be able to take their equal part in the work of the group;
- attend, if possible, the annual Study Group Coordinators' Meeting, information about which will be sent to you by the Study Group Adviser.

Operating a Study Group

Do members of the group have to be members of U3A?

Yes. However, non-U3A members may attend one taster session. At your first meeting after 31st March, you should confirm that members of the group have paid their annual membership to *U3A in Ludlow*. You can do this by asking to see their membership cards or contacting the Membership Secretary. Membership fees must be fully paid, in order to qualify for the insurance cover provided by The Third Age Trust.

Do I need to keep a record of group membership?

It is advisable for coordinators to keep a record of members and a register of attendance.

How do I encourage more people to join?

The U3A Study Group Adviser can help you inform U3A members about your group through the monthly news and the website. Members interested in joining can be invited for a 'taster' session. Even if the group is full, a taster session should be offered.

What happens when the group is full?

Keep a waiting list of people who want to join your group. When this list has three or four names on it contact the Study Group Adviser, who can consider setting up a further group with a new Coordinator.

What if someone in the group is not on email?

The Coordinator should ensure that all group members receive the information from *U3A in Ludlow* that is sent out by email. It may be that another member in your group (or you personally) will volunteer to keep the non-email members informed and up to date with activities. If this is a problem contact the Study Group Adviser.

Who pays the running expenses once the group is set up?

Study groups are expected to be self-financing and there is no budget for grants to study groups. Any cost involved in running a study group should be shared equally by all members of the group. The cost of any necessary equipment or resources should also be shared by members of the group. However, you can apply for a loan to buy equipment. Contact the Study Groups Adviser for details.

Do I have to keep records of money collected from members?

Either you, as coordinator, or another group member to whom the task is delegated, should keep a record of money that is collected and how it is spent.

If we meet in members' homes how much should we pay the host for refreshments?

No-one should be out of pocket when supporting *U3A in Ludlow*. The committee currently recommends a contribution of 50p for refreshments.

Are there any resources that the group can borrow?

U3A in Ludlow owns a digital projector and a flip chart with a stand that groups can borrow. Contact a member of the Committee to request, collect and later return these items. To ensure they are available for your group meeting, please order well in advance. If you think there are other items that should be purchased for the use of all study groups, please contact a member of the Committee.

The University of the Third Age central website offers information on resources which any U3A member may access. The *Sources* magazine, circulated to all U3A members with Third Age News, also contains information and ideas for groups.

Do I have to organise insurance for the group?

No. The Third Age Trust insurance covers U3A members during U3A activities. This includes private and public liability, equipment in transit and in use, as well as a copyright licence. (Note: this may not cover music; music still in copyright is not covered.) U3A also has a licence for showing films in study groups. The presence of people who are not members of U3A may compromise the insurance cover of the whole group. Full details are available from the Chair.

My group wants to arrange outings and will share cars. How do we reimburse the driver?

No-one should be out of pocket when supporting *U3A in Ludlow*. The committee currently recommends 10p per mile per passenger as a contribution towards fuel.

If you want to organise a more expensive outing, it might be helpful to talk to the Study Group Adviser.

Do I need to report an accident to a group member or damage caused during a group activity?

Yes. All accidents or damage, however small, must be reported on the Accident Report Form (available on the website) and passed to the Study Group Adviser, even if no claim is anticipated. This is needed to comply with our insurance requirements.

What do I do if I no longer feel able to coordinate the group?

Talk to the group about it. Perhaps the role can be shared. If not, and if the group wants to continue, they will need to find a new coordinator amongst themselves.

What do I do if there are changes to the group's arrangements?

Please contact the Study Group Adviser or another committee member.

What do I do if I need any help or advice?

Keep the Study Group Adviser informed of any changes. He is always available to give help and advice.

Financial Matters

*For full information on the procedures for accounting for study group members' money coordinators must refer to the **Maintaining Group Finances** section or contact the Treasurer.*

I collect a regular amount from group members to cover expenses. Over time money has accumulated. What do I do with it?

You can hold a maximum of £75 in cash to cover expenses. If you have more than this, pay the money into the *U3A in Ludlow - Groups Account* (see below).

In future, it is good practice to consider reducing the amount collected from group members and/or returning the surplus to them.

How do I pay money into the 'Groups' bank account?

Contact the Treasurer initially. If you will be using the account regularly you can have a paying-in book. Alternatively the Treasurer can give you the bank details for occasional banking.

Can I put study group money in my personal bank account?

No. Under no circumstances can money be banked in an account in personal names.

Group members want to pay by cheque. Who should cheques be payable to?

Cheques for study group expenses should be made payable to '*U3A in Ludlow – Groups Account*'.

What happens when I need to use the money in the 'Groups' account?

Contact the Treasurer.

Do I need to get receipts for study group expenditure?

Yes, wherever practicable. Most purchases will be for small items when till receipts are adequate. Other receipts should reflect that it is the group making the purchase, not you personally, so it may be necessary to ask for a written receipt.

I am hopeless at keeping records. Can another member of the group do the bookkeeping for me?

Certainly. Make sure they have the necessary information. You could give them this document.

Maintaining Group Finances

These notes have been put together to safeguard U3A study group coordinators who are handling members' money and the U3A committee members who, as Trustees of U3A in Ludlow, are ultimately responsible to the U3A members for how their cash is handled. It is vital that study group funds are managed at all times in accordance with these procedures.

Study Group Money

In accordance with The Third Age Trust recommendations, *U3A in Ludlow* has a Groups bank account which is administered by the Treasurer on behalf of individual study groups. Study Group coordinators are encouraged to make use of this account. For information on how to use the Groups Account contact the Treasurer. The Committee does recognise that Groups may need to have some study group cash available for paying immediate bills, however:

- Groups must hold no more than £75 in cash at any one time. Surplus money should be paid into the *U3A in Ludlow - Group Account*. The Treasurer will advise how to do this.
- **No study group money is to be held in a personal bank account**

Accounting for study group money

Our Independent Examiner annually carries out an overview of funds held by study groups. To facilitate this, study group coordinators who collect money from group members for any purpose (other than donations made to their host for refreshments) need to keep a record of income and expenditure.

The Treasurer is very willing to help coordinators set up a simple cash book for recording these transactions.

Year-end accounts

Accounting requirements differ according to the Group's income in the academic year (1st September to 31st August). There are three levels:

- Coordinators collecting more than £300 from group members
Coordinators must let the Treasurer have sight of their cash books on or before the *U3A in Ludlow* March and November monthly meetings. In addition coordinators will need to produce an income and expenditure and cash-in-hand statement by 30th September following each academic year-end.
- Coordinators collecting £100 or more but less than £300 from group members
Coordinators will need to provide the Treasurer with a simple income and expenditure and cash-in-hand statement by 30th September following each academic year-end.
- Coordinators collecting less than £100 from group members

There is no requirement for groups receiving less than £100 to show accounts to the Treasurer.

NB It is good practice for coordinators to show their group how their money has been spent, whatever the amount collected from members.

If coordinators experience any difficulties, they should contact the Treasurer at the earliest opportunity.