

Exeter U3A – Information for Committee Members

Introduction

If you are reading this you are probably thinking about joining or have just been co-opted or elected to the committee and are wondering what you have let yourself in for! The most important thing is that the other committee members will be delighted to have you on board and will be happy to offer support and encouragement as you learn about the running of Exeter U3A.

Exeter U3A is

- an independent, unincorporated members association governed by its own constitution;
- a member of the Third Age Trust; and
- a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales which means that all committee members are also Trustees of a registered charity

This information document is intended to help you understand your role and responsibilities in each of these areas and direct you to more detailed information.

Being a Trustee of a Registered Charity

Trustees are the people who lead the charity and decide how it is run. They use their skills and experience to support their charity, helping it achieve its aims. [The Essential Trustee](#) provides detailed guidance on the key duties of trustees. We have to make an annual return to the Charity Commission giving information about our trustees and our financial position. When you join the committee you will be asked to sign a declaration that you are not disqualified from being a trustee.

The Third Age Trust (TAT)

As a member of the Third Age Trust, Exeter U3A adheres to the [Vision, Mission and Principles](#) of the u3a movement which is non-religious and non-political. We pay an annual membership fee for the services provided by the Third Age Trust which include:

- Insurance Cover
- Training and Workshops
- Advice and Guidance
- Learning Resources
- Use of our Sitebuilder Website

Lots of useful information can be accessed on the [National u3a website](#). You will need to create an account and log in to see all of it. There is also a monthly [National u3a Newsletter](#) that you can sign up to receive.

In addition to the annual membership fee we pay postage for our members to receive the Third Age Matters magazine which is published five times a year and we also pay a fee to use the Beacon software to manage our membership and financial records.

On a local level Exeter U3A is part of the South West Region, supported by a regional trustee, and we are also part of the informal Devon Link network.

Exeter U3A

Exeter U3A was founded in 1994 and currently has around 700 members and around 65 active groups. We are governed by our [Constitution](#) which was last updated in April 2021.

Exeter U3A Committee

Our committee consists of between 5 and 15 committee members including the officer roles of chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. All committee members are elected or re-elected annually at the AGM and may serve for 3 consecutive years in any officer role or as a non-officer committee member. Each committee member can serve for a total of 9 years in a combination of roles. Up to 12 committee members can be elected/re-elected by the members at the AGM and up to 3 additional members can be co-opted by the committee during the year.

The committee usually meets every two months, currently on the first Monday afternoon of the month at the Mint. The schedule for the year is fixed in advance to fit with publication of the Newsletter and the AGM. All committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings as far as possible, to read all paperwork in advance of the meeting and to be actively involved in discussions and making decisions where necessary on all agenda items.

Lots of information about us can be found on our [website](#). The [committee](#) page is particularly relevant to committee member as it includes:

- Job descriptions for the various committee roles
- Minutes of recent committee meetings
- Minutes of previous AGMs

- Annual Reports and Accounts for recent years
- Policy documents and when they were last reviewed

In addition to all the online information mentioned above your fellow committee members are always willing to offer help, support and advice. If you have been appointed to a specific role on the committee you will receive initial training and ongoing support from the previous post-holder or another committee member. If you are thinking of taking up a specific role in future you will be given the opportunity to shadow and work alongside the current postholder to build your confidence before taking over.

Communication with our members

There are a number of ways we communicate with our members as follows:

- Our **website** is a permanent source of information on our organisation and groups and how to contact us.
- The bi-monthly **newsletter** includes committee notices and contact details.
- Our **monthly meeting**, usually held at the Mint on the fourth Thursday morning of the month, has a section at the beginning of the meeting for committee notices. Before the meeting starts a powerpoint presentation of **rolling news** plays on a loop and includes committee notices.
- We hold a bi-monthly **convenors café**, usually in the morning on the second Monday of the month, where group convenors can discuss any problems they are having and new convenors can get support and information from more experienced convenors and committee members.
- If necessary, we can **e-mail** 98% of our members via the Beacon system and we also write to those few members who do not use e-mail.

Thank you for your commitment

By now you may be wondering what you have let yourself in for – there may seem to be a lot to learn. Whilst it is true that being a committee member involves some work and responsibility it also has its advantages. You will get to use existing skills and develop new ones working as part of a team. You will have the satisfaction of helping to run an organisation that enables all its members to contribute to and enjoy the many activities on offer. Hopefully you will also make some new friends and have fun along the way.

So thank you for coming forward to help Exeter U3A continue to thrive.