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Established in 1995

WHAT IS A U3A?

History

U3A stands for **University of the Third Age**. There are U3As all over the world. A U3A is a university in the original sense of the word: a community of people devoted to learning, and its members are in the Third Age.

The **U3A** movement started in Toulouse, France in 1972 at the Faculty of Social Sciences. These were courses attached to formal universities and designed for older people to improve their quality of life. This academic model of learning for mature aged people spread and is used in many other countries, particularly in continental Europe.

By the early 1980s, this scheme reached the United Kingdom where its nature was radically changed to be more a self-help organisation reducing the need for dependence on outside resources. The UK model is also used in Australia, Cyprus, Dominica, New Zealand and South Africa.

The “Third Age” often called “The Age of Active Retirement” after the “First Age of Childhood Dependence” and the “Second Age of Employment and Parental Responsibility”. U3A is a learning co-operative of older people, which encourages healthy ageing, enabling members to share many educational, creative and leisure activities all on a voluntary basis.

Although it is called a ‘University’, being in your Third Age is the only qualification needed. There are no educational qualifications required or given. Those who teach, those who learn, are all members of U3A. A tutor in one activity is likely to become a student in another.

It is acknowledged that retired people have a lifetime of experience and, collectively, a vast amount of knowledge. This is used to arrange a syllabus for each subject where each meeting is normally led by a member of the group with specialist knowledge. Each U3A group pays a capitation fee to the national coordinating body, and has access to a vast range of resources including a multi-media lending library, special interest newsletters and contacts with other groups with similar interests. Summer schools are held by special interest groups. Most importantly, each Group is an absolutely autonomous entity, self-financing and self-managing. Most groups are regional in nature, and this has led to the creation in some countries of variations on the U3A.

Courses

Typical courses include, educationally, Art, Classical Studies, Conversation, Computers, Crafts, Debate, Drama, History, Languages, Literature, Music, Sciences, Social Sciences, Philosophy, etc. Some study groups do not have a prepared syllabus, but draw on reports of current affairs in their topic subject to prompt conversation and research. Some groups are designed to cross disciplinary boundaries, for example, combining Society, Technology and Science in a fashion not practical in more formal academic environments. U3A groups are well positioned to conduct serious research into local history and genealogy.

Some groups aim to bridge the generation gap in the field of information technology opening up an exciting new world to many who might have been oblivious of it otherwise. Internet marketing is especially important for members in more remote locations. There are also many less-educational activities - 'Games', including bridge tuition and duplicate bridge playing groups; 'Health, Fitness & Leisure', including countryside walks, Theatre/Concert Clubs, Travel Clubs, Dance in all its forms etc.

Newsletters

Many U3As publish local newsletters as do some of the special interest networks. The Third Age Trust, the national coordinating body in the UK, publishes an educational bulletin, "Sources", for subscribing U3A members three times annually.

The U3A can also provide a valuable resource in considering many local and national issues. Membership includes many with experience and expertise in almost all walks of life and letters. Although strictly non-political, U3A members have time to reflect in a mature fashion on such topics as the operation of public services, crime and punishment, the future of energy supplies, public funding of the arts and so on, and can reply to invitations to engage in public consultations with carefully considered and argued responses

THE HISTORY OF HUME U3A

Established in 1995, Hume U3A was formed by an initiative of Broadmeadows Council at a Public Meeting on 21st April 1995. We had 30 very enthusiastic people attend the meeting with 16 enrolled on the day. Basic Art, Local History and Line Dancing were the first courses organised.

By the time of the inaugural meeting at Broadmeadows Town hall on 17th August 1995 we had grown to 77 members, with two further courses added.

At the Tenth Anniversary of the inaugural meeting, we had over 300 members enrolled in our U3A.

The year 2004 saw us as part of the Hume Global Learning Village, another Hume City Council initiative, which draws together all providers of education within the community. With the opening of the new Library in Broadmeadows, the Global Learning Centre, we have been very fortunate to have the co-operation of the management and staff and conduct a number of courses in the wonderful facilities that they provide.

In 2007 we formed a partnership, which we still enjoy, with the Dallas Brooks Community Primary School and moved our office to their Community Hub.

Wish to see you soon!

Luke Peers

President
Hume U3A