

Operational Guidelines – U3AC Courses Committee

These guidelines aim to assist U3AC in providing each year a varied programme of activities which will satisfy as many as possible of the reasonable expectations of its members. Minority interests will be covered as far as is possible within budgetary and administrative constraints.

The aims of the Courses Committee are:

- To ensure the provision of courses, group activities and visits meeting the desires and aspirations of the membership in general.
- To inform, educate and entertain in the widest sense
- To enable the development of new skills and the renewal of old ones
- To inspire members to develop and maintain intellectual curiosity
- To help members remain physically active and healthy
- To support minority and unconventional interests
- To support people at all levels

And to do this:

- Within the ethos of U3AC (use of volunteer tutors, support for minority interests, etc.)
- Within the financial constraints (currently based on fixed price for membership with additional charges for some courses)
- In a sustainable manner.

1. Division of responsibilities:

- i. **Courses Committee** has final responsibility for approving each year's programme of courses.
- ii. Until this approval is given, the programme drawn up by staff remains provisional.
- iii. In practice, the above means that staff will continue to prepare the programme as in previous years, but will refer any issues of concern as they arise to the Committee for final decision.
- iv. Issues of concern might for example include: cost/availability of suitable specialist accommodation; appropriateness of a course offered; tutor issues; low predicted enrolment; possible overlap with other similar courses. (N.B. This is not intended to be a complete list of possible areas of concern, but simply examples of the types of issues which might arise.)
- v. The provisional programme will be referred by staff to the Director of Studies (Courses), who will consult as widely as is practicable with Committee members before approving the programme, with any necessary amendments.

2. Use of accommodation

- i. Priority will be given to maximising room occupancy at U3AC's Bridge Street premises.
- ii. It follows that activities which do not occur on a regular weekly basis may need to be accommodated in premises which can be rented on an occasional basis.
- iii. The permissible enrolment to a class should normally relate to the size of the room allocated – i.e. if the capacity of the room is eighteen, the normal expectation is that

enrolment of up to eighteen will be allowed. Where tutors feel a lower limit is required, a case should be submitted to the Director of Studies (Courses).

- iv. Courses Committee reserves the right to withdraw courses whose enrolments fail to reach 50% of the allocated room's capacity.
- v. External accommodation will normally only be rented in cases where either:
 - a) A course necessarily requires facilities or levels of space which cannot be provided at Bridge Street; and/or
 - b) Bridge Street accommodation is fully occupied.

Where external accommodation is rented, its cost should normally not exceed £49.50 per member. Where a higher cost appears unavoidable, no commitment should be made without prior approval from the Director of Studies (Courses), who will if she/he feels it appropriate consult the Treasurer.

3. Course Programme

- i. U3AC's philosophy is basically co-operative, in that courses are normally taught by volunteer tutors drawn from the membership.
- ii. Normally, no payment is made to tutors.
- iii. Courses Committee will aim each year to provide a programme which;
 - a) Can be delivered within existing financial and administrative resources.
 - b) Is adequate to meet most of the reasonable expectations of members
 - c) Avoids duplication of provision unless justified by levels of demand. N.B The intention here is to facilitate the most efficient use of available accommodation, from which it follows that where course are offered in a member's own home, a more relaxed view can be taken.
- iv. Whilst most courses will continue to be proposed by prospective tutors themselves, there may be occasions on which the Courses Committee pro-actively seeks to find tutors able to offer courses in areas of particular interest to significant numbers of U3AC members. This will normally be achieved through informal approaches to members known to have the requisite expertise. Only in cases where real, known demand cannot be met in this way, will consideration be given to using paid tutors. All use of paid tutors will require the prior approval of the Director of Studies (Courses). Where that approval is given, the expectation will normally be that course members will cover most or all of the additional cost through payment of an additional fee.
- v. Whilst the length of a course depends on the tutor's view of how long it needs to last, the normal expectation is that courses will run for up to two terms. Where a third term is required/desired, tutors must accept that accommodation may be changed, if required to ensure maximisation of room occupancy. It must also be accepted that, where two similar courses both wish to continue into a third term, merging of classes may be required unless both have maintained more than 50% attendance.
- vi. Courses Committee reserves the right to refuse an offered course in certain circumstances, e.g. duplication of provision; unsuitability of topic; over-provision of courses; non-availability of suitable accommodation; excessive cost of necessary accommodation (not an exhaustive list).
- vii. Whilst there is no formal training programme for tutors, Courses Committee will always make every effort to provide advice, assistance and support on request.
- viii. All U3AC members have the same rights to apply for courses each year. There is no preference for those wishing to re-enrol for a course attended in previous years. (The only exceptions to this are the Investment Clubs, which require members to make an ongoing financial commitment and which are therefore permitted to operate to different rules, though they are expected to make some provision for the acceptance of new members each year).

- ix. Courses Committee may from time to time consult members to identify areas where course provision is felt to be inadequate.

4. Course costs

- i. The basic cost of courses is covered by the annual subscription.
- ii. Courses which make use of particular materials (e.g. art materials, computer programmes etc) may make a charge to cover the cost. This will normally be specified in the course catalogue.
- iii. Whilst it is accepted that some courses are necessarily more expensive to run than others, and that a degree of cross-subsidisation is therefore essential to the provision of a balanced programme, Courses Committee reserves the right to reject particularly costly courses if their inclusion in the programme would place undue financial pressure on the organisation.
- iv. Field courses, visits etc may also incur a charge to cover costs. The U3AC office should be informed of proposed visits which involve the hire of coaches etc.

Where for any reason changes during a course lead to it no longer meeting the above guidelines, The Director of Studies (Courses) will determine the course of action to be taken.

Approved by Council: 6 February 2013

Next review date: February 2026