



What is U3A?

Each U3A is a community organisation which promotes healthy ageing by sharing educational, creative, leisure activities provided by their own members. There are no qualifications for membership and no degrees or diplomas are awarded.

History of U3A

The U3A movement had its beginnings in Toulouse, France in 1973. A successful summer school run by the University for retired people, led to the very first *Université du Troisième Age*. The concept quickly spread throughout France and to other European countries and North America. The French model centres around universities, relying heavily on their facilities and tuition although there are no exams and costs are kept to a minimum.

The first Australian U3A was established in Melbourne in 1984 and quickly caught on in other communities around Australia. In WA the first U3A was formed following a meeting in 1986 at the University of Western Australia

Australia follows the British model. Rather than relying on traditional universities to provide courses and tutors, members themselves volunteer their skills, knowledge, and life experiences to source speakers, and provide courses and activities for members. Whichever model is followed, U3A is non-religious, non-political, and respectful of everyone's right to privacy and individuality.

U3As in Australia are autonomous, managed by the members themselves and the only restriction to the curriculum is the expertise available within the community.

U3A Perth has twelve branches covering the metropolitan area. There are also separately incorporated U3A's in some country towns.

Setting up a U3A Perth Branch

First Steps

Would you like to start a new U3A branch? If so, we are happy to help you with your first steps.

The following will help you get started.

Your first step is to gather a small group of friends or colleagues (two or three) who are keen and will support you to get a new branch going.

Then contact U3A Perth (u3aperthgensec@gmail.com) and make yourself known to the New Branch Liaison person. He/she will be able to help you with information and resources.

You need to gauge the interest in your community for a possible new U3A group. Approach your local council as they may be able to help with publicity, and even suggest possible venues at little or no cost. If they have a Seniors' Expo or Have-a-go Day, arrange to be a part of it. This is an excellent opportunity to gather names and email addresses from those who show interest in your display.

Step Two is to hold a **Public Meeting**.

You need a venue that is preferably easily accessible by public transport, and with convenient car parking.

Publicity is all-important. Your aim is to ensure the local community is aware of the proposed U3A. Once you have booked a venue and sorted out a date and time for the public meeting, draw up a simple flyer or leaflet. Approach your local library, and places in your community where retired people may gather – eg gyms, local coffee shops and other businesses, churches, and other community organisations. Ask if they will display your poster and leaflets to advertise the Public Meeting. Some libraries and other places may not accept leaflets or flyers. Instead, they disseminate community information by having have a large screen with a continuous loop running. Check out what facilities your library has and make use of them. Write an article and submit it to your local newspaper. Check if they offer free advertising space for community groups. Don't forget local social media. You can put information on the U3A *Facebook* page. You may be able to have a small stand at a shopping centre – just a chair, table, and your leaflets to hand out. The New Branch Liaison person from Council will be able to provide you with U3A publicity material and a banner to display. Don't forget to talk about your intentions to anybody and everybody in your community who will listen.

Your first public meeting

U3A Perth Council will assist you to organise this meeting by providing a speaker to explain what U3A is about. They may suggest you invite members of other U3As to chat informally about what activities their U3A has and why they enjoy being a member.

The Public Meeting itself must be organised well so it runs smoothly. This is the moment when you will discover if it is worth continuing to get a new branch up and running, or not. You must enthuse everyone there with the possibility.

A possible programme

1. Welcome everyone. Introduce yourself. Explain clearly what your aims are.
2. Introduce the aims, objectives, and operations of a U3A group by showing U3A Perth Council's scripted PowerPoint presentation, or by arranging a speaker from another U3A.
3. Record names and addresses of all persons attending who show interest in joining, and if feasible, sign up as many as possible. Arrange for payment by credit card for those who wish to join immediately.
4. Allow plenty of time for questions and discussions.
5. Arrange for copies of the latest issue of INFORM and membership brochures to be given to those who attend.
6. Confirm or elect a small **Steering Committee** from those who attend the meeting and arrange for them to start meeting regularly as soon as possible.
7. Prime objective of the Steering Committee is to organise a few activities to start as soon as possible and to find a suitable venue for them. Your local council, schools and churches are the best places to start looking for venues, as all control suitable venues that may be under-utilised or unused.
8. It may be possible and certainly advantageous, to have a date, time, venue, and speaker programme for a general meeting already in place. You do not want to lose the initial excitement.
9. Finish with refreshments and an informal social time.

If all this sounds a bit daunting, the U3A Perth New Branch Liaison person will help with all details.

Now you are up and running

Confident you have sufficient support for a potentially viable membership, you now make the decisions that will shape your U3A Branch. Involve as many people as possible in decision-making. The more volunteer workers you attract from your membership, the better placed your U3A will be for development. Members need to quickly appreciate it is a self-help organisation, and they will get more out of it by putting more into it.

Once you have decided on a name for your branch, the New Branch Liaison person will arrange for your branch, with contact details of at least two people, to be added to the U3A Perth data base. This will enable your foundation members to be identified as such.

Once someone has paid their membership fee, they will automatically receive all communications about U3A Perth events and regular copies of the magazine INFORM. Members can opt to receive the magazine either in digital form or as a hard copy.

At your first or second general meeting you need to democratically elect your first formal Committee. You need to call for nominations for executive positions:

- Chairperson
- Deputy Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Program Co-ordinator.

It would also be helpful to elect a number of general Committee members to take on certain roles, e.g. technical advisor, ongoing publicity, refreshments, greeters at the door, etc. The more people committed to growing this new branch, the better. It is quite likely this newly elected Committee is the same as the existing Steering Committee, but it does not have to be. The important issue is for the Committee to be democratically elected from among the membership.

Once you have held at least two general meetings, your elected Committee is in place, and there are at least six people who have paid membership fees, you can be formally recognised and welcomed as a stand-alone branch of U3A Perth.

Delegate to U3A Perth Council. Initially you will be represented on U3A Perth Council by the New Branch Liaison person. As soon as you can, you need to appoint a delegate from your branch to be a voting member of Council. Council is the management body of U3A Perth, made up of delegates from each branch. It is the management board of U3A Perth and it is important all branches are involved in the decisions made by that body. Council meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 1.00pm at Citiplace on the forecourt of Perth Railway Station. It is responsible for insurance, public liability, copyright, CAL License, incorporation - those serious matters easier done by groups working together. Council also organises events open to all members - three free Perth Lectures each year and an annual day-long Seminar. It oversees the Choir, City Courses, INFORM magazine, Film Crew, promotion of U3A, the U3A Perth website and social media. It is advantageous for a branch to be actively involved in Council.

Planning Your Program

Your next step is to set up a program of talks, activities, courses, for the next two to three months. Most U3As in WA operate on a weekly or fortnightly meeting, but this is up to the local group. Each branch of U3A Perth is autonomous and their program choice of outside guest speakers, talks by members, activities, courses, excursions and social gatherings is entirely up to their members.

There are lists available of speakers willing to talk to U3A groups. One list has U3A members who can give fascinating talks on a wide range of topics. A second list has guest speakers from the community who are willing to speak to U3A groups. As a volunteer organisation, U3A does not pay speakers. Most branches will offer their speakers a gift of a bottle of wine or a voucher to cover travel costs.

The scope of a U3A branch program depends on the realisation by all members that the future life of a U3A branch depends on their willingness to contribute their particular talents. A survey of members' interests, and informal chats over a cup of tea or coffee are invaluable in discovering members' hobbies, life experiences, and interests. These can then form the basis of your initial program and it will help people get to know one another. At these early meetings it may be a good idea to ask members to speak for 5-10 minutes to introduce themselves. You may suggest they tell a story that happened to them in their working life, or a place they have visited or lived in, or when and how they come to be living in Perth. Giving a theme like this often helps people overcome their reluctance to speak in front of a small audience.

Your Committee will be responsible for co-ordinating the programme, producing and publish information about the speakers and activities, and making this information known to members.

Although the principal intent of the U3A movement is a continuation of learning, and most activities are directed to this aim, it is also an association of people in the third age of life who see value in meeting in a relaxed and harmonious environment. It is therefore good if your programme includes social activities such as a walking group, dining-out group, coffee & chat mornings, board games, outings, etc.

Website & INFORM

A U3A Perth website is maintained with a page for each for each branch where information about them and their talks programme and activities is listed. Each branch contributes details of their activities to the web manager who shares them with the INFORM editor. INFORM is the magazine distributed to each member either electronically or in hard copy five times a year. All branch activities are open to all U3A Perth members.

Both the web and INFORM include details about City Courses, Perth Lectures and the annual Seminar. These are available to all members of U3A Perth branches.

Contributions of photos and articles, whether from an individual or on behalf of the branch, are always welcomed by the editor of INFORM. INFORM deadlines are the 20th of the months of January, March, May, July, and September. Issues are distributed mid to late February, April, June, August, and October.

Insurance

As a branch of U3A Perth your group is covered by the U3A Perth membership of the NSW U3A Network Policy with AON. As a new branch you do not need to link to an existing branch to be covered. Public insurance is one of the responsibilities accepted by U3A Perth Council on behalf of all branches. The insurance covers public liability, directors, tutors, volunteers, and a small accident cover for volunteers.

Rules of Association

U3A Perth, as an incorporated body, has Rules of Association that cover the running of each branch. Committee members should read these and operate the Branch accordingly. They are on the website u3aperth.au

Covering your expenses

All members of U3A Perth pay a \$45 annual membership fee of which a proportion (approximately 45/50%) is returned to the branch to cover some of its running expenses. This money or disbursement is based on the number of your registered members, and is made in two tranches, usually in March and September.

In addition, most branches charge a small entrance fee to their meetings to cover the cost of room hire, tea/coffee, etc.

Branch expenses may include, but are not restricted to:

- rental of premises where meetings are held
- purchase and maintenance of equipment
- communications and advertising.

U3A Perth will provide up to \$1000 seed money for new branches. There are no restrictions as to how this amount is used - it is a local decision. Until you have your own bank account, all Steering Committee expenses will be charged to the Council's account via the General Treasurer. Once office bearers are in place, you can open a bank account with all monies then handled by your treasurer.

To open a bank account, you need the Minutes of an AGM or Special General Meeting. The Minutes must contain the name of your elected treasurer, plus two members who will be the signatories to the account. Banks today have not made this an easy process but the General Secretary, (Christine Oliver) or the

General Treasurer (Nigel Penfold) are happy to help and to provide any necessary paperwork , eg Certificate of Incorporation.

Funding

There are a number of opportunities for not-for-profit entities to obtain funding in the form of grants for equipment or events. For branches the most common source of possible funding is your local council.

Don't Despair!

It may take some time to get from your initial idea to a fully functioning branch. Then it will likely be a slow growth as you gradually build up numbers. The success of a U3A branch depends on members who are willing to take on committee positions and other roles such as greeting members at the door as they arrive, publicity, putting out chairs, and making sure the urn is on in good time for the cuppa! If you do find yourself in any sort of difficulty or impasse, contact the New Branch Liaison person or Council president, who will help identify the problem and suggest ways to overcome it.

People to help - Useful Contacts

Judith Amey, New Branch Liaison and NFORM Editor judith.amey45@gmail.com

Liz Balding, U3A Perth President lizbalding653@gmail.com

Christine Oliver, General Secretary u3Aperthgensec@gmail.com

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