Kingston u3a

[www.kingstonu3a.org.uk](http://www.kingstonu3a.org.uk)

The u3a, the University of The Third Age, is not actually a university! We are a national network of self-help groups run by and for older people.

The idea of setting up free classes for retired people was started in France in 1971 and the organisation has spread worldwide. It was started in England in 1982. Each u3a is an independent local educational charity. All u3as are members of the Third Age Trust, which is their national support and advisory body. There are over 1000 u3as with a total membership of 400,000 throughout the UK.

The Third Age Trust believes that retired people have a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills which they might like to share with others. Members form groups to learn or take part in activities, but there are no ‘terms’ and no examinations. New groups can start at any time during the year and the group members decide how often to meet: typically, weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Kingston U3A was established in 1991. It has about 800 members and more than 80 groups. Most are held in members' homes, which limits their size but means that costs are minimal.

If you cannot join the group of your choice because it is already full or held on an inconvenient day, please telephone the appropriate Group Coordinator and ask to be put on the waiting list. Phone numbers can be found in the Newsletter which is sent to you when you join. When a few people have given their details for a waiting list, we try to help them to form a new group. There is further information on our website which is updated regularly.

Groups are self-financing. Some, such as Singing and Art hire a hall or engage a tutor. Other groups have books on loan, use tapes, videos, DVDs or magazines. All these items are funded by members of the groups concerned. If a group meets in a member’s home, it is usual to make a contribution of 50p for refreshments provided.

There are coach trips and visits to places of interest in and around London, and holidays in the UK and Europe have been arranged. Walking groups offer walks locally and in London. Such events offer the chance to get to know what others are enjoying.

Interesting speakers can be heard at the afternoon Monthly Meeting, usually held on the first Monday of the month, unless it is a Bank Holiday, when the meeting will be held on the following Monday.

There are Shared Learning Projects usually held in museums where members from several U3As work with museum staff. Study Days are held at the Menuhin Hall, Stoke d' Abernon, Surrey. Three-day Summer Schools are held at various university campuses.

A printed newsletter is produced by Kingston U3A every three months and mailed or emailed to members, giving an up-to-date list of groups. A bulletin is e-mailed to members in the intervening months.

National Office send out the magazine u3aMatters five times a year, which contains information about activities in other U3As. This is included in your subscription, and is posted direct to your home.

Each u3a is entirely run by volunteers. The group leaders are volunteers, and every group has a second organiser who assists the group leader, and can step in to run the group if required. Some volunteers host groups, even if they are not the group leaders. A team of volunteers makes and serves tea at the monthly meetings. We are totally dependent on people willing to give up some of their time to the organisation and it is an excellent way to get to know other members, and to make good friends. We hope that as you become more at home in our u3a, you will feel comfortable enough to find a way to volunteer as well.

Our subscription year runs from October 1st to September 30th the following year. The annual subscription is £15 for a single person and £24 for two members at the same address. New members joining after 31st March and before 31st July pay 50% of the appropriate fee for the current year. New members joining after 31st July pay the full subscription, which is credited to the following year.

Please contact the Membership Secretary if you require further information, on membership@kingstonu3a.org.uk

We hope to see you soon!