

U3A Brisbane Annual report for 2022 AGM

Prepared for the 2023 AGM

We had hoped that in 2022 U3A Brisbane could return to a more normal mode of operation and that with Vaccinations available we could reintroduce many of the classes that could not be offered in 2021 as they had not been able to operate under the COVID rules. We had also hoped that capacity rules could be eased.

However, in January 2022 the Omicron strain of the virus was identified. We took enrolments for Term 1 but could not open for the first 2 weeks of the year due to a government lockdown. To make up to members for this disruption we made fees for Face-to-Face classes in Term 2 voluntary as we had done in Term 4 2021. Fortunately, many members still paid the full fee to support us. Many Tutors again reverted to Zoom to continue.

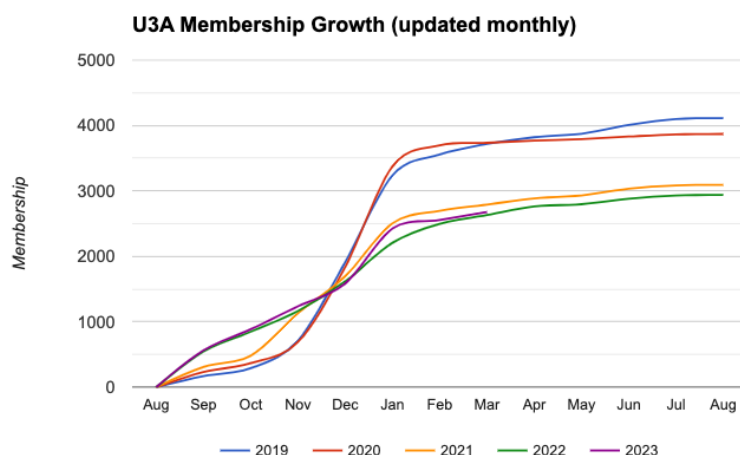
Fortunately, as the year progressed, and more people became vaccinated the situation improved. [On the 31 October](#) there were no longer any public health directions in effect. Therefore, in Term 4 we no longer required our vaccination Policy and some of our popular classes could return including cards, mah-jong, etc and our capacity rules could also be eased. The uncertainty and fear of the virus continued however, and members remained concerned about using Public Transport and attending Face-to-Face classes. Members are gradually gaining more confidence as we progress into 2023.

The main outcomes resulting from the continued COVID threat were:

- a drop in membership numbers.
- reduced class fee income.
- a continued reduction in the number of possible Face-to-Face classes for much of the year
- a continuation of capacity rules which were eased but still in place

Membership

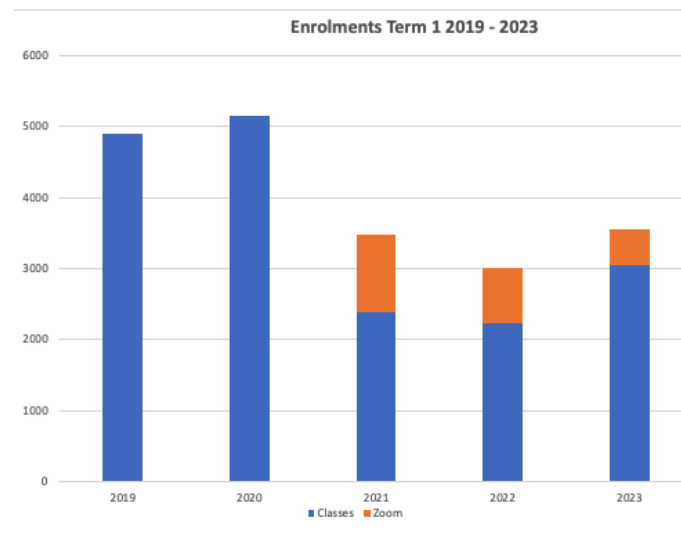
Our paid membership for 2022 was 2939, a drop of 5% from the previous year. This reflects our projection that there would be a further drop in membership in 2022 but not as great as the 20% drop experienced in the previous year and so was not unexpected.



Our Tutors and Members have shown great resilience in moving to different modes of teaching and learning as required because of lockdowns. Their support has been so important in keeping U3A Brisbane viable.

Enrolments

Our enrolments have followed a similar pattern to our Membership as would be expected. Many are still cautious in returning to Face-to-Face classes.



Financial position

Our Treasurer Joan Mackay will shortly be giving an overview of our financial position. Joan took over the position of Treasurer from Lyndall Beattie after the 2022 AGM.

It is noted that we also passed a motion to increase our membership fee to \$45 at that AGM but this did not come fully into effect until members were required to renew their Membership in September. Zoom fees were also no longer voluntary for the first time in Term 4.

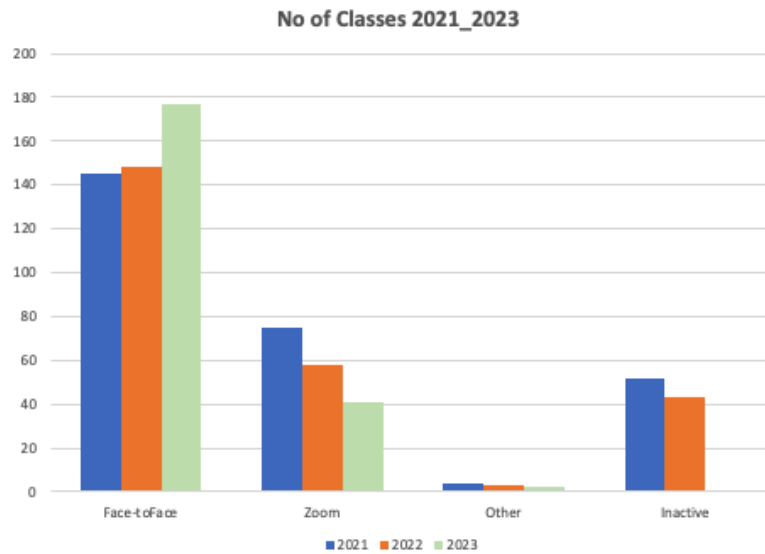
Classes and Tutors

U3A Brisbane continues to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for our members to gain new skills, extend their thinking into new directions and make new friends.

Our online classes are continuing and have proven to be very successful and offer opportunities for members who are not able or not prepared to return to Face-to-Face classes.

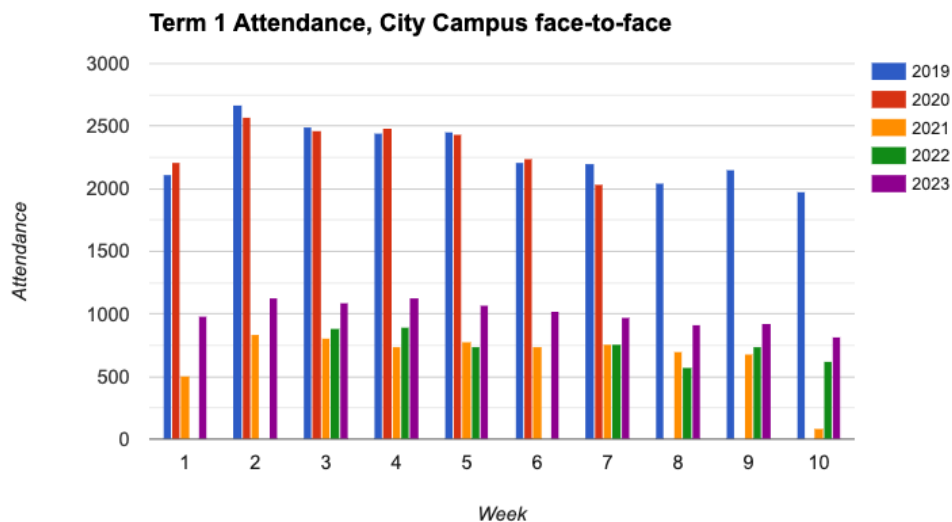
In 2022 Term 1 we had 148 Face-to-Face classes, 58 Zoom classes and 3 other classes. Now in Term 1 2023 we have 177 Face-to-Face classes, 41 Zoom classes and 2 other classes. You will note comparing these numbers that as the COVID danger has eased many Zoom classes

have returned to Face-to-Face. All classes are now able to return depending on tutor availability and the number of inactive classes is now 1.



Attendance

It should be noted that the attendance graph only represents attendance in our city campus. Attendances for online classes are not generally recorded.



Special Events

We have continued to offer monthly Zoom Presentations to members. These have been extremely popular. The speakers have been organised by our current Secretary, Mary Denver. She has done an excellent job. Thank you, Mary.

Our Social Committee of Marianne Jones and Angela Butler continued to organise events in 2022. The organisation of these events always depended on the current COVID situation and the rules needing to be applied. Thank you, Marianne, and Angela, for bringing some

joy into our lives despite the uncertainty. In Term 1 2023 a new group of volunteers took over organising our Social Calendar. We welcome Heather Dowling (Coordinator), Liz Crunkhorn and Colin Watford and we look forward to a busier Social Calendar in 2023 as the danger eases.

Class Scheduling

The recruitment of new tutors and the allocation of classes to our classrooms and venues is the responsibility of the district coordinators. Gail Hawkins manages these tasks for general classes in the two, city campus venues as well as our online classes, and does a magnificent job. Gail has done a remarkable job in organising classes in Term 1 2022/23. For all of 2022 these classes started at staggered times and extra times had to be allocated between classes to allow for movement of students with minimal congestion and extra cleaning. However, I am pleased to report that in 2023 the strict precautions are no longer necessary. Members can now use the kitchens and it is very positive to see members making use of the foyers between classes sitting and chatting together.

Peter Jones organised the computer classes so that we had a combination of classes in the Lab and online. Peter retired from his position of Computer Coordinator in 2023 and with a reduction in the current number of computer classes now operating this task has been added to Gail Hawkins area of responsibility. Thank you, Peter, for taking the Computer Section through the last 3 years and to Gail for accepting the increased responsibility.

In the districts, our appreciation is owed to the district coordinators, capably overseen by Mary Calder, for the great job they do in allocating tutors to the various suburban venues, namely Bernadette Ketter (Logan), Gabrielle Power-West and Carmel Lafferty (Westside), Rod McLary (Northside and City Precinct), Pat Collins (Southside) and Chris Hobbs (Wynnum). (Gabrielle coordinated Westside for the first 6 months of 2022 and Carmel took over in June.)

Accommodation

In previous years we have had increasing demands for more classroom space. COVID has changed this. We are still running at less than full capacity and are fortunate that many classes now run online or as Concurrent (Hybrid) Face-to-Face and Zoom classes. Falling membership is also having an impact.

The drop in income because of the falling membership and the reduction in class sizes has reduced our income considerably. We have managed to retain the Adelaide St venue because our original financial position pre COVID was strong, and we have managed to repay our loans in the past 3 years so that we are currently debt free.

Administration and IT

Throughout 2022 our wonderful office team led by Yvonne McGann maintained our administration and contact with members often working from home with occasional trips to the city when necessary. Yvonne is ably supported by day leaders Mary Calder, Mary-Anne Scott, Rod McLary, Eve McCormack as well as many other volunteers.

It is important to note that the ability to work from home and manage the Administration of U3A remotely is only possible because of our online Management System. Greg Taylor wrote the software and manages our database system. He also manages the website and

mailing lists and continues to improve our systems each year so that we can take advantage of the efficiencies enabled by the digital revolution. Our IT systems and website are critical to both administration and member interaction. We place great emphasis on ensuring that our systems incorporate best-practice database technology and security measures. We are grateful to Greg for the many hours of dedicated effort needed to ensure this.

Communications and Publicity

The increasing cost of postage and the restrictions on Face-to-Face communication means that we rely mainly on electronic methods of communication with members. In the case of emergency, we can send SMS messages to targeted groups through our Administration System. This was once again a feature implemented by Greg.

Our popular eNews was edited by Jean Smith in the first half of 2022 and when Jean retired it was taken over by Jane Elliott in June. Our thanks to Jean and Jane and to Greg Taylor who manages the formatting and distribution. The eNews is our main communication vehicle for informing members of any news, changes, or events. We especially thank Jean for her excellent job editing the eNews for many years and other U3A Brisbane publications. We are also grateful to Jane for volunteering to take over this important role and doing it well.

Our other main vehicle is the quarterly Class Schedule and our thanks to the tutors and Coordinators who help compile and check the data and to our IT Manager, Greg Taylor, who organises the email distribution. The Class Schedule is available for download from the U3A Brisbane website.

The website particularly is a valuable information source and members should check this site regularly for important announcements. Detailed information and instructions for using the current technology is available here. Members can also check if they have paid class fees and obtain a list of their recent transactions. This is done through the Member Dashboard.

There is also a list of Social Events that is updated regularly and a list of coming Zoom Presentations. You can enrol in these through the website.

Strategic Plan

The 2021 Strategic Plan is available on our website. There were 4 Goals identified:-

- Maintain and Grow Membership
- Recruit Tutors and Classes
- Succession Planning
- Accommodation and Financial Planning

The first item on the list to 'Grow Membership' is now becoming more urgent as our numbers are not growing fast enough. We need many more new members to replace the COVID exodus which occurred over the 2020 -2021 years.

New Constitution

Our new Constitution has been officially approved. Once again I would like to thank Rob Hill for all the work he put into this.

Management Committee

The Management Committee, consisting of Deslyn Taylor, Gabrielle Power-West, Joan Mackay, Mary Denver, Nick Bricknell, Martin Bridgstock, Mary-Anne Scott and John Galligan have worked together to ensure that U3A Brisbane is still financially viable, debt free and has been able to retain our Adelaide St venue as well as our Creek St site despite major hurdles such as increases in rent at Adelaide St and sharp increases in Body Corp fees in the case of Creek St. Thank you to all.

Nick Bricknell and Martin Bridgstock are leaving the Management Committee and I wish them both well. Nick has been with us for a short time but we have valued his contribution. Martin has been a member of the Management Committee for many years. I was very pleased that he continued on the Management Committee when I became President in 2020. Martin was Secretary in 2020 and helped guide the new committee through our first year and has stayed on to support through the last 3 years. Thank you, Martin.

New President

I finish in my role as President at this AGM and hand over to my Vice President Gabrielle Power West who will be the new President going forward. She will do a marvellous job. The last 3 years have offered many daunting tasks and each time we thought the crisis was coming to an end a new version of the Virus appeared and the crisis continued.

Appendix 1 gives a summary of the previous 3 years as we battled to stay viable.

I thank all the members of the Management Committee during this time for their support and positive outlooks and willingness to make often difficult decisions. I would also like to acknowledge the Volunteers under Yvonne McGann who often had to work from home and who risked using Public Transport to come into the city when necessary to ensure that U3A Brisbane ran as smoothly as possible.

Our continued operation would have been almost impossible without the wonderful creative support and expertise of our ICT Manager, Greg Taylor. Greg made the impossible possible by writing entire new online payment systems, a QR Code attendance system and much more to enable us to work remotely for long periods of time and when we returned to Face-to-Face classes to do so with minimal risk.

In 2022:

- we started Term 1 two weeks late because of a lockdown related to the Omicron strain
- we retained our Vaccination Policy until Term 4
- we updated our Covid Safe Plans continuously depending on Government advice.
- we continued our Zoom classes, and the Zoom class Fee became compulsory in Term 4.
- we encouraged the use of the Forum which was available on our website.
- we revised our Constitution in line with new requirements and it was officially approved.
- we increased our Membership fee to \$45
- we retained our Adelaide St Venue
- we completed a Technology Survey of our members.
- we again began to plan sharing our rooms with ILSC, an International Language School located in our Adelaide St building (this arrangement was implemented in 2023)

The Future

We are still in a viable financial position although we still need to repay some of the Adelaide Street rent which was deferred in 2020 as part of the arrangements with the landlord. The costs for both Adelaide St and Creek St have risen.

ILSC is again using our rooms at night by arrangement, and this helps to allay the costs mentioned above.

Membership is a concern but is steadily growing. There were 65 new members in March 2023. Currently enrolments in Term 2 2023 are underway. We are looking at ways to increase membership numbers and hope they will grow more quickly if stability continues.

Our members have been amazingly resilient and without their support U3A Brisbane would not have been able to continue in these difficult times.

Thank you

Deslyn Taylor
President
U3A Brisbane

Appendix 1

The COVID Years

U3A Brisbane closed on 13th March 2020. The city venues did not reopen for classes until Term 1 2021 but with limited Capacity such as the 4 square metre rule and a COVID Safe Plan. Many classes moved online using Zoom while others e.g., card games could not resume until much later. Some classes began with COVID Safe plans in the Districts in Term 4 2020. Masks were compulsory for much of this time and are still recommended if in a congested area. It is only now in 2023 that our venues and classes are almost operating as they were before COVID although still with some precautions.

In 2020 :

- we moved rapidly to implement online classes. Many of which continue.
- we reduced costs and obtained rent relief for Adelaide St.
- we negotiated a more flexible lease arrangement for Adelaide St.
- we implemented COVID Safe Plans and returned to face-to-face classes in a small way in the districts in Term 4
- we implemented upfront class fees for City Campus and voluntary fees for Zoom classes.
- we implemented QR Code attendance recording.

In 2021:

- we implemented COVID Safe Plans for our city venues
- we implemented upfront class fees for City Campus and voluntary fees for Zoom classes.
- we implemented QR Code attendance recording.
- we repaid our Bendigo Bank Loan
- we developed a Strategic Plan to guide us through until 2024
- we implemented a Vaccination Policy
- we revised our Constitution to meet current government rule changes.

In 2022:

- we started Term 1 two weeks late because of a lockdown related to the Omicron strain
- we retained our Vaccination Policy until Term 4
- we updated our Covid Safe Plans continuously depending on Government advice
- we continued our Zoom classes and the Zoom class Fee became compulsory in Term 4.
- we encouraged the use of the Forum which was available on our website
- we revised our Constitution in line with new requirements and it was officially approved
- we increased our Membership fee to \$45
- we retained our Adelaide St Venue
- we completed a Technology Survey of our members
- we began to plan working with ILSC again (this arrangement was implemented in 2023)

NOW In 2023:

- we started the year without lockdown.
- we are debt free
- our face-to-face classes have mostly returned with Recorder classes, Cards, Mah-jong etc.
- we are continuing with Zoom Classes and some members are enrolling from different parts of Qld and Australia to take advantage of these.
- we currently have an understanding with ILSC and they are using up to 3 rooms per night
- our Social Team is able to be more active organising events.