

U3A BRISBANE TUTOR GUIDELINES - DISTRICTS

[City Precinct, Southside, Westside, Wynnum, Northside, Logan]

Introduction

U3A is a worldwide self-help, not for profit organisation promoting low cost educational opportunities in a friendly, social environment. U3A or University of the Third Age was established in Brisbane in 1986 and currently has more than 3000 members, with more than 280 classes every week. Our target membership is the over 50s as we recognise that we don't stop living and learning as we age. We retire from work, not life!

Our sole purpose is to provide members with the stimulus of mental and social activity, and the satisfaction of a continuing contribution to society. We are a modern community of learners, but one catering for those in the third stage of our lives and operating without reference to qualifications or awards.

Districts

While most of the classes are held in the U3A city rooms, a number are held in the districts as listed above. Districts operate as a service to those members who for whatever reason are not able to - or prefer not to - travel into the city. District classes operate in principle exactly as the city classes although mostly without the class cost.

Each district [except Logan] has a Coordinator who generally oversees the activities and supports the tutors in their work. In Logan, a small sub-committee undertakes these tasks.

What Qualifications do I need to become a Tutor?

Tutors are vital to U3A. Without them, we would not exist. In general, tutors have a passion for their subject which they share with their class. They do not need to have formal qualifications in that area but an expertise which they are willing to impart to others. A tutor is anyone willing to run a class on a voluntary basis and who has the qualities that enable them to develop and present interesting lectures and talks on their given subject. The only areas where qualifications are required are those of nutrition and health where information given in class must follow mainstream practice so members are not put at risk.

Guidelines for Acceptable Types of Classes

A set of procedures has been adopted explaining U3A policy, as follows:

- No class, or class-associated activities, should be used to advertise goods or services in which a tutor or class member has any financial interest.
- Where religion is involved in the subject-matter of a course, the only acceptable treatment is through comparative religion. There should be no classes that advocate a particular religion or ideology and there should be no proselytising.

- The only classes dealing with health or nutrition that can be accepted are those run by people with recognised formal qualifications in those fields.
- Classes on alternative or controversial subjects should be examined by the Management Committee or its appointed representatives before being allowed.
- Any tutor who, in the judgment of the Management Committee, causes concern with class content will be required to submit a plan setting out the subject to be taught and how contentious issues will be addressed in class. This should go to the Management Committee for consideration and approval.

What Classes do we Operate?

A huge variety of classes is conducted. Members are part of our diverse community and have wide ranging interests. Reference the current Class Schedule to view the varied types and topics of courses. We welcome new topics and areas of study. We do, however, have a system of oversight of new courses. Before developing your new class, you should refer to the Guidelines for Acceptable Types of Classes in the Tutor section of the U3A website. If the District Coordinator or the Logan sub-committee feels unsure whether your course meets our requirements, s/he will pass the outline to the Management Committee for its sub-committee to make the final decision on the suitability of the class.

How do I Start?

You will need to complete a Tutor Application Form which can be downloaded from the Tutor section on the U3A website, or alternatively, you can collect a copy from our Creek St office or arrange to have it mailed to you. The completed form is to be forwarded to the appropriate District Coordinator - email addresses for the Coordinators are listed at the foot of these Guidelines. Please note that the form may ask you to send it to the Tutor Liaison Officer - this applies only to those tutors who are offering a class in the city.

The Coordinator will then contact you to discuss your proposed course content, any prerequisites such as level of knowledge/skills required, and your preferred day/time of the week.

There is no requirement for tutors to become financial members unless you also wish to enrol in courses conducted by other tutors. It is a requirement that all class attendees be financial members.

Getting Started

New tutors will be invited to an orientation at which you will receive a briefing on the support available to assist you. It is strongly recommended that you attend this session.

The Tutor and About Us pages of the website provide some useful links, information and downloads. Go to our homepage and see the options along the top of the page.

Tutors have the freedom to develop the content and format of their classes but it is expected that they will be conducted in accordance with adult learning principles, enabling respectful participation by all students and accommodating a variety of learning styles. You are to refrain from any comments/actions that could be seen as promoting your personal business or ideology or placing members in a vulnerable situation financially, physically or psychologically.

Managing your Class

Attendance records are kept for all classes.

The Login section on the right-hand side of our homepage will give tutors individual details of your course and includes secure facilities on how to manage class lists, send bulk emails to students, change subject details and much more. It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with this section as it will assist you in managing your class. Tutors need to register on the website using the Website Registration menu option before they can access this information.

From time to time, a member may ask you if s/he can attend your class to confirm that the class is what s/he is wanting. It is your decision as to whether you permit this to happen.

Class Enrolments

Members request enrolment in classes either online or directly with the tutor. The office does not take enrolments. Members may assume their enrolment is accepted by you if they don't get a reply to the contrary. It is imperative that you check regularly for the enrolment notification emails. Please reply to them promptly.

Before accepting an enrolment you should ensure that the member is currently financial, and, if not, advise the member that attendance cannot commence until membership fees are paid.

Tutors will need to be registered before they are able to confirm membership status.

Tutors can set a limit on the number of members who can enrol in their classes. This is easily done on the website. It may be appropriate to maintain a Waiting List if your course is oversubscribed. That way you can replace students who have cancelled out of your class.

U3A is keen to ensure that members have fair access to classes so tutors are encouraged to create opportunities to open up classes to new enrollees by:

1. adhering to the policy of accepting enrolments on a first in – first served basis;
2. not carrying whole class enrolments forward from one term to the next to the exclusion of prospective new attendees;
3. advising students that if they attend on an ad hoc basis or only occasionally, their place may be offered to someone on the waiting list; and
4. offering a second class.

Class Timetable

Our academic year is based on the Queensland State School term dates starting in late January and finishing in early December. It is divided into four terms. Each term has a new timetable although many classes are 'full year' classes and thus run in all four terms. There are a small number of classes which are conducted through the holidays as well.

The Class Schedule for each term is published two weeks before the end of the preceding term and can be viewed online or in the printed version. The courses available are listed in the Schedule and details given on the enrolment procedure. Members will then begin contacting you to enrol in your class. You will be asked by the Coordinator quite early in each term to give her/him the details for your course in the following term for publication. It is essential that you check the details carefully to ensure that they are correct.

The class timetable is formulated as much as possible in consultation with the tutors and every effort is made to meet your needs. However, in such a large organisation with limited resources, it is inevitable that everyone's needs cannot always be met.

Managing your Students

A great majority of the time, students are respectful, polite and engaging. However, there are times when conflict may arise. If possible, resolve any issues privately one on one. You can remind the person that U3A Brisbane has a Code of Conduct (on our website) which will be adhered to. If you experience unacceptable or intransigent behaviour, report it to your Coordinator who will complete a short form detailing the incident/s and the person/s involved which will then be passed to the Management Committee. The Management Committee receives reports from students from time to time about tutors so it is in your best interest to report a problem immediately to the Committee so the matter can be dealt with in the early stages.

If the Committee does receive a complaint from a student about you, a member of the Committee will approach you to discuss the problem.

Promoting your Course

The E-News and the website are the principal ways of promoting courses to members. You may also advertise your course on our Facebook page. Contact the Publicity Officer on publicity@u3abrisbane.org.au to organise this. If you choose to do a flyer or a notice for the E-News, you must submit it to your Coordinator who will obtain editorial approval. Once approval is given, flyers can be displayed for only one month on the City rooms' notice boards and must not be handed out individually. As space is limited in E-News, notices to promote classes will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

Student Privacy

Tutors are responsible for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of students' information. This applies both to personal information shared in class and contact information provided by the office.

Costs

When agreeing to become a tutor you do so in the knowledge that you are a volunteer and that you can make no money for yourself. You cannot gain reimbursement for your transport costs or request payment for time spent on preparation of lessons. Everyone at U3A is a volunteer and no one receives money for the time or effort they put in. Failure to meet this requirement may lead to your course being discontinued by the Management Committee.

For photocopying costs, you may charge your students 10 cents per black and white sheet and 20 cents per coloured sheet.

If students in your class require a textbook or special equipment, include the requirement in your advertised class description so students can purchase it before the start of term.

Copyright Material

U3A Brisbane holds a licence allowing the reproduction of copyright materials in class for educational purposes. There are still strict restrictions with large fines applicable to those who exceed the rules. It is essential that you familiarise yourself with detailed information available under Copyright in our Tutors section.

Please note that it is illegal to copy commercial CDs and music.

Fire Alarms

Please be aware of any requirements for responding to fire alarms which apply in any building in which you offer a class. It is important to follow the instructions of the designated person in the building if a fire alarm sounds or a similar emergency arises.

First Aid

Any accident or health incident needs to be documented - please advise your Coordinator.

Occupational Health and Safety

It is expected that tutors and class participants will follow good OHS practices. Again, when an accident or incident arises during a class session, an Accident/Incident Report needs to be completed promptly. Forms can be obtained from the office. Anything considered unsafe should be reported to your Coordinator and directly to the appropriate person at the venue.

Holidays and Absences

If you become indisposed or decide to take a holiday during term, it is recommended that you find someone in your class to facilitate it in your absence.

If your absence is unplanned, you are able through the U3A website to email all the students in your class. Also, U3A has an SMS alert system in place where the office can alert your students to an unplanned absence. Provided you notify the office in time for it to send the alert out to your students, it may save them a wasted trip and will promote good relationships.

Management and Administration

U3A Brisbane is managed by a 10 person volunteer Management Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting each April. The Committee is ably supported by a large team of volunteer coordinators, tutors and administration staff. It takes all of us to run this organisation. We are all volunteers and we do what we do because it is our choice.

During term, the office is staffed Monday to Friday from 8.30am – 3.00pm by our friendly, helpful office volunteers. During school holidays, the Creek Street office is open at advertised times with only a skeleton staff . Notices on door and in the E-News will advise you of these times. You can contact the office at mail@u3abrisbane.org.au

Thank you again for volunteering to be a tutor. Your input is much appreciated and you will find your task easier if you familiarise yourself with the various policies outlined in this document. The Management Committee hopes you gain success and enjoyment from your new role.

Email addresses

District Coordinators' email addresses can be found on the Contact page of the U3A Brisbane website.