

Good afternoon,

My name is Ian Ross and my main role on the Committee is to support the Groups. May I start by echoing Nigel's thanks to the conveners, group leaders and group members, who run their own show and make the interest groups successful through their active leadership and participation.

For our 620 members, we currently have 67 interest groups and our records indicate that a large majority of our members participate in at least one group. Many groups meet in members' houses, which they often prefer, but when a larger space or special facilities are needed, we will help find a suitable venue and subsidies are usually available.

Some recent new members have expressed frustration because the groups they are interested in are full, and it is true that about 80% of our groups are at or close to their maximum number. There are of course waiting lists and other ways round this, such as moving to larger premises or dividing the group in two and one of the roles of the Committee is to help resolve these situations, while recognising there may be other issues. For example, more advanced groups understandably may not wish to be held up by beginners.

According to our records, the following groups could accommodate more members: Aviation, Carpet Bowls, Creative Cards, Current Affairs 3, French 2, French 4, German Conversation, Latin, Maths, Poetry Studies, Popular Music 1, Recorder Group, Russian, Spanish for Holiday Makers 2.

French 4 have specifically requested more members, but they should be reasonably advanced. Two of the groups in greatest demand among new members are Bridge and Elementary French and we would love to hear from anyone willing to lead a new group in either of these areas.

We are always keen to foster the formation of new groups, as that is a sign of the vitality of our U3a. Mo Wright has recently started a Theatre Visit Group, and the first event (Thoroughly Modern Millie) is very well supported and Barbara Ashford has just formed a Poetry Studies Group. Thank you Mo and Barbara.

One of the key skills for group conveners or leaders is how to facilitate groups and foster the active participation of all group members. If you need help in this area, there is a pile of booklets on the table, prepared by the parent U3a body, which contain some useful tips.

Two other new groups which have been suggested are Photography and Elementary Science. Could I have a show of hands from those who might join a Photography group? ..... and an elementary Science Group? And another bridge group?

Does anyone have any questions or suggestions as to how we can further optimise our groups?