

# **The History of U3A in Scotland and Background**

The University of the Third Age in Scotland was founded in Scotland in 1987 just five years after the movement was established in the UK. In 1995, Scotland had 10 U3As and Edinburgh hosted the national conference in 1996. By 2003, there were 15 U3As and by 2011 the number had risen to 37, from Shetland in the north, Coll in the west, Wigtownshire in the south and Aberdeen and East Berwickshire in the east.

An informal meeting of representatives from each U3A in Scotland met for the first time in 1997 and became a central focus for organising conferences and study days. This group was formalised to become the Scottish Committee of Regional Contacts until the name "U3A in Scotland" was adopted under the constitution approved in 2001. All U3As in Scotland affiliated to the Third Age Trust are entitled to be members of U3A in Scotland.

U3A in Scotland meets three times a year - in February, June and October with the annual general meeting in June. At the AGM the Chair presents his or her annual report as does the representative from Scotland on the National Executive Committee of U3A in London. The annual accounts are presented for approval. Representatives from all U3As in Scotland later elect from their number, the principal office-bearers, i.e. Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

Regions are becoming more central to the organisation of U3A although they differ in style throughout the UK. U3A in Scotland is anxious to continue facilitating and providing opportunities for U3As to come together for conferences and study days. They also wish to provide support for existing U3As and to become a driving force for the formation of new U3As in Scotland.

## **Background to the Constitution of The University of the Third Age in Scotland**

Under the aegis of the Third Age Trust, the University of the Third Age (U3A) is a movement that encourages people no longer in full time employment to keep their minds active by discovering the satisfaction of learning for pleasure in friendly surroundings away from the pressures of academic studies with no age or ethnic barriers.

It is not an institution but a self-help voluntary educational co-operative in which members share their knowledge and experience with each other.

The Universities of the Third age in Scotland, all autonomous units in themselves, form an Area of the Third Age Trust. The Area provides one of the 13 "catchment" areas in the UK from which representatives are elected to serve on the National Executive Committee of the Third Age Trust in London.

They also come together voluntarily as a Region of the Trust. The Region provides a vehicle for regular communication between U3As in any particular geographical district. It is possible to have more than one Region within an Area, but, to date, both functions are combined in Scotland.

Informal links, known as Neighbourhood Groupings, may be formed by local U3As where for geographical reasons it would serve a useful purpose to facilitate mutual support and development.