



u3a Guidance: Being Non-Political

Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance explains what it means for u3as to be non-political under charity law and within the spirit of the u3a movement. It aims to help committees, group leaders, and members understand how to engage with issues, speakers, and discussions appropriately.

u3a Charitable Object

Most u3as are charities whose charitable object is: "The advancement of education and, in particular, the education of older people and those retired from full-time work, by all means including associated activities conducive to learning and personal development." To pursue this object, u3as can explore a wide range of topics, including current affairs, public policy, and history provided they do so for educational purposes, not to promote or oppose a particular political party or viewpoint.

What Being Non-Political Does Not Mean

Being non-political does not mean avoiding political topics entirely or preventing members from expressing political opinions. Members are free to hold and discuss political opinions, but they should do so in an educational, balanced, and respectful way that aligns with the u3a ethos. Engaging with relevant political issues allows u3as to exercise their voice and be an important advocate in their communities.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Activities

Acceptable examples include:	Why it's acceptable
A current affairs group discussing different political systems or government policies as part of learning.	Educational and balanced exploration
Inviting MPs, councillors, or candidates from different parties to discuss their roles or public service.	Fair, educational engagement
Respond to Government consultations on matters relevant to u3as, their Interest Groups and their members.	Civic engagement
Campaign on issues that relate to u3as' charitable objects.	Civic and educational engagement



Promote or sign parliamentary or local government petitions that are relevant to u3as' charitable objects.	Civic engagement
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What Non-Political does mean

should not:

- Support or oppose any political party, candidate, or government.
- Allow its events, communications or resources to be used for party-political campaigning.

This neutrality protects the u3as' reputation, ensures compliance with Charity Commission guidance (CC9: Campaigning and Political Activity by Charities), and helps all members feel welcome regardless of their personal beliefs.

Unacceptable examples include	Why it's not acceptable
Endorsing a political party, candidate, or campaign (verbally, in print, or on social media under the u3a name).	Breaches charity neutrality

Practical Guidance for Committees and Group Leaders

- Keep activities educational and link them to learning.
- Be inclusive and ensure discussions welcome different perspectives.
- When inviting speakers on political or policy issues, aim for a range of views, and provide clear guidance about focus of talk.
- Ensure newsletters, websites, and social media posts remain neutral and factual.

Summary

u3as are non-political organisations, but their members are individuals who can and should explore ideas including political ones as part of lifelong learning. The key is how those discussions take place: respectfully, educationally, and without promoting a party or campaign. By maintaining neutrality, u3as uphold their charitable status, inclusivity, and the spirit of learning for all.