

Terms and Conditions of use for the Beacon System

1 Introduction

The Beacon System is a computer system operated over the Internet to support the operation and administration of individual U3A organisations. Beacon supports multiple individual U3As, each operating on and viewing only its own data.

The Beacon system has been created under the U3A ethos of learning and mutual-help between members and the Beacon team consists entirely of volunteers.

This document explains the basis on which the system is provided by the Beacon team to U3As for their use and are the Terms and Conditions which each U3A agrees to when they apply to use the Beacon System.

Any part of the document may be changed to comply with changing circumstances, best practice recommendations or regulation. Applicant and participating U3As will be given advance notice of any changes.

Terminology used in this document

Beacon team	A number of volunteers who between them run the Beacon system. Any reference to 'we' or 'our' refers to the Beacon team.
U3A	A University of the Third Age organisation for a locality, affiliated to the national Third Age Trust.
Participating U3A	A U3A which is using the Beacon live system.
TAT	The Third Age Trust.
Member	A person who is, or has been, a member of a participating U3A, and whose membership details are held within the Beacon system.
User	A member who has been registered as an authorised user of the Beacon live system and who has a password for access to the system. They will have access privileges depending on their role within their U3A.

2 Data usage and privacy policy

The Beacon system stores personal contact data about members of the participating U3As within its database. This data includes the addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of U3A members, and may store other data related to their activities within the U3A. Beacon uses this data to make it available online to users of the system. The data may also be used by authorised members of the Beacon team for uploading and making backups of the data, and for investigating system problems.

For each participating U3A, data about that U3A's members is made available only to users who belong to that U3A. The U3A may choose to make it available to 1 or 2 supporters from a Regional Support Team during their period of migration and early use.

If online payment of membership fees is enabled for a U3A, the collection of payment information such as credit or debit card number and other account

information is delegated to the PayPal system. The Beacon system does not have access to this data.

Beacon is hosted by a commercial hosting system, which stores the data. Personal contact data is held in encrypted form on these computers. The Beacon system takes a number of security precautions to protect personal data held within Beacon, but is not responsible for the consequences of any unauthorised access to that data.

3 A participating U3A's responsibilities for security

Each participating U3A is responsible for deciding which of its members may have a Beacon user account, and the privileges they shall be allocated. Note that only current U3A members already on the Beacon database can be registered for an on-line Beacon account.

The participating U3A is responsible for ensuring that its Beacon users keep to the following conditions. This may be done by including or referencing them in the U3A's data management policy. It is strongly recommended that Beacon users should confirm that they have read and agreed to the participating U3A's data management policy before being registered as a user.

The Beacon team reserves the right to suspend or terminate any user's account if they don't abide by these conditions.

1. Access to data within a Beacon account is controlled by the user's name, password and the privileges allocated by the U3A.
2. Rules on password composition are imposed by Beacon, but it is a user's responsibility to ensure that their password is of sufficient strength and to keep it secret from others.
3. On any computer used by a user to access Beacon, it is the user's responsibility to ensure that suitable security measures have been taken to keep that computer free of viruses and other malware which might enable unauthorised access to Beacon.
4. Users should not allow anyone else to use their Beacon account.
5. When using a shared computer, users are recommended to only use a Beacon account within a personal logon on the shared computer.
6. When using a Beacon account on a public computer, e.g. in a library, users should use the 'In Private mode' (IE) or equivalent, if available, and ensure that form history is not enabled. They should not tick the 'Local computer' checkbox at login so that cookies are not stored.
7. Users should always logout of their account when finished. Beacon will automatically log out users who make no input after 15 minutes.

4 System Availability

Beacon is being developed and supported exclusively by volunteers, all of whom are members of their own U3As with many other things to do in life. It is therefore not possible to give participating U3A's a commercial service level agreement or to have binding response times when issues occur.

In the first 6 months of live use, Beacon did not experience any significant period of non-availability and it is anticipated that disruption of service in the future will be rare. Nonetheless, all software systems suffer failures from time

to time and it is to be expected that this will occur at some time for Beacon. How long it will take to get Beacon back up and running will depend upon the availability of our support team, which we are seeking to strengthen, but in the worst case it could be several days or a week or more.

Inconvenient though it might be, non-availability of this order is unlikely to seriously threaten the operation of any U3A, any more than if a key officer were to be unavailable due to illness.

Our commercial hosting contract is subject to a service level agreement and server and system software failures should therefore be rectified within a few hours. The commercial hosting system on which Beacon runs has an expectation of 99.9% uptime.

5 Backup

All Beacon data is automatically backed up daily and kept for a month, with selected backups retained indefinitely. This can be restored following any major server failure. However, participating U3As should be aware that they may lose data changed since the previous backup (i.e. up to a day before), so it is advisable to keep the original data sources (e.g. membership forms) for 24 hours before disposal.

These data backups are intended to protect against major system faults. They cannot be used to recover from mistakes affecting a single U3A. In such cases the Beacon audit log will often allow overwritten or deleted data to be recovered (by re-entry). It is the U3A's responsibility to use the Data Backup facility to make a copy of its own data at regular intervals, particularly before making large-scale data changes.

6 User Support

The Beacon project aims to provide support to users to provide guidance on how to use the system, and to investigate apparent limitations or faults in the system. This is provided in three ways.

1) The User Guide is available as a pdf document online. Please report any errors or omissions to support@u3abeacon.org.uk.

2) Network of volunteer supporters across the country, organised into Regional Support Teams. These are volunteers who are themselves users of Beacon and may be able to answer users' queries quickly. Each U3A that is using Beacon or that has applied to use Beacon is allocated to one of these teams. As of May 2016, in some areas these teams are in the early stages of growth with limited knowledge, but it is anticipated that these will mature as the number of U3As using Beacon in a region grows.

3) Online Beacon Forum which is at <https://forum.u3abeacon.org.uk>

It is necessary for a user to register separately to be able to post messages to the Beacon Forum. Users can use this forum to get support with any problems using Beacon, to submit details of any bugs or usability issues encountered, or to post suggestions of changes to Beacon that might benefit users. Other forum users are encouraged to respond to items on the Forum if they are able to contribute to an answer.

The Beacon team monitors the Forum, in particular those items that concern problems or possible faults, and aim that all these will be responded to by the team if necessary. No guarantee is given to the timescale of a response, and users should not expect to get a prompt response from the Beacon team.

For issues unable to be resolved by support team or forum, users should request support by sending an email to support@u3abeacon.org.uk quoting the id of the thread on the Forum where the issue was raised. This should not be done before at least a week has elapsed since the issue was raised on the Forum, unless it concerns a critical system failure.

7 Future enhancements

The Beacon system is provided on the basis of the functionality available in the demonstration system when a U3A completed and submitted its application form. As all U3As have individual procedures and policies, the Beacon team gives no guarantee as to fitness for purpose.

A number of proposed enhancements have already been identified for the future and users may suggest enhancements, new features or improvements to usability via the Beacon Forum. Priority will be given to changes that benefit Beacon participating U3As generally.

It is anticipated that there will be an ongoing programme of Beacon enhancements although, being dependent upon volunteers, it is not possible to commit to a schedule.

The Beacon team cannot guarantee that any particular changes will be made or in any particular time scale.

8 Charging policy

Beacon has been developed by a small team of U3A volunteers. The team is hoping to attract more volunteers with good PHP software experience to add more sustainability. However, it is not prudent, for a system which many U3As may depend on, to be potentially subject to loss of expertise.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Third Age Trust needs to ensure that the software can be supported and enhanced if the current team of volunteers (and any additional volunteers) become unable or unwilling to continue.

The NEC has decided that there is a need for a contingency fund should paid support be required at some time in the future.

That being so, a small charge will be made on each U3A using Beacon from April 2017. This will be no more than 50p per member per annum.

The funds so raised will be held by the Third Age Trust and ring-fenced solely for the use of the Beacon system. Beacon will continue to be run on a not-for-profit basis and so the charge would be reduced or waived if it is likely to raise more funds than necessary. This would either be because there were sufficient extra volunteer software effort or because there were a much larger number of U3As using the system.

The charge will be collected each year and based on the number of current members as at 1st April starting with April 2017. The Third Age Trust will administer the collection. Each year participating U3As will be provided with a simple financial statement of the amount collected and how the fund has been spent.