

## **Handbook, technical guide of conditions to create a third age university (U3A): The Portuguese model**

by Luis Jacob (Escola Superior de Educação de Santarém)

### I – RUTIS' PRESENTATION

RUTIS (Association of Third Age University Network) is a private and a Non Profit Association, created in 2005, with its headquarters in the city of Almeirim in the centre of Portugal, which promotes the active aging and supports the Portuguese Senior Universities (US). RUTIS is the official entity that represents the Third Age Universities in Portugal.

RUTIS has 346 (July of 2019) Third Age Universities associated, distributed through all the country and Portuguese islands; this corresponds to 45.500 students and 5.500 volunteer teachers.

The Portuguese model of U3A is characterized by being created by entities legally constituted, public or non-profit; the teachers are volunteers; the US must have at least classes in four different areas during nine months per year and at least have 50 students.

The idea to create RUTIS emerged during the II Third Age Universities' national meeting in 2003 but was only legally constituted as an association on the 21st of November 2005 but only recognized as a private institute of social solidarity and public utility in May 2006. All projects developed by non-lucrative associations, associations that promote volunteering, associations that develop activities for the senior population and that have insurance for the participants can be associated to RUTIS.

RUTIS has done work to show the importance of the Third Age Universities in the community, in active ageing and in the health of the people who attend this social response and we saw our hard work recently recognized by the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 76/2016 in which RUTIS was indicated as the framework of "senior universities", assuming itself as a fundamental partner for the development of policies of Active aging and social economy. The results of the action of the "Senior Universities" - are unquestionable as to the well-being that they offer, both in the reinforcement of the perspectives of insertion and social participation, and in the improvement of the conditions and quality of life of the people who attend them.

Our main goals are to develop activities for the Third Age Universities, its students, teachers and managers, to raise funds and find sponsors to support the U3A, too promote volunteering amongst seniors and for the seniors, to increase the active aging and to develop didactic resources for senior education.

During the year we organize and promote several activities that have as target group the third age universities, such as talents shows; Music, theatre, sports and dance festivals; Coordinators meetings; Erasmus projects; Congress; Travels and National meetings.

RUTIS has a national student card, an U3A management software and a specific personal accident insurance. See [www.rutis.pt](http://www.rutis.pt).

## II – THIRD AGE UNIVERSITIES’ PRESENTATION

1 – THIRD AGE UNIVERSITIES’ ROLE In order to improve the life quality of the senior population and the lifelong learning, RUTIS suggests the creation of a technical guide to regulate the Third Age Universities.

The Third Age Universities first started during the 70s in the University of Toulouse in France. The basic principles are still intact which are: develop the social interaction between the seniors, avoid social exclusion and promote the possibility for the elderly to learn and teach.

A Third Age University or Senior University (U3A, UTI) is a social and cultural answer, well developed in terms of equipment’s whose aims are to create, to develop and to organize cultural activities regularly, providing non-formal education, leisure activities, social gatherings and events for people over 50 years old.

Several national and international studies show that the Third Age Universities, despite being an educational project are, as well, a social and health project since it contributes with the improvement of the seniors’ life quality and avoids social exclusion.

## 2 – THE THIRD AGE UNIVERSITIES IN PORTUGAL

The first third age university in Portugal was created in Lisbon in 1978 and five more were created in the 80s: 3 in the north and 2 in Lisbon.

It was noticeable a growth in Third Age universities in Portugal during the second half of the 90s but it was in 2000 the great “boom” of universities reaching 100 in 2008.

Most of the Third Age Universities are part of associations without profit and 40% are managed by the seniors. There are also universities that are managed by the municipality, by rotaries, by private institutions of social solidarity and by professional schools.

The Third Age Universities do not work in the main education system and are true to the basic principles of informal education as well as the majority of them work with volunteer teachers.

- Today (July of 2019) there are 346 Third Age Universities in Portugal that are associated to RUTIS.

- There are 45.000 students and 5.500 volunteer teachers in the third age universities.

- 75% of them use the term Third Age University, Senior University or Third Age Academy.
- In average the third age university has 150 students and 22 teachers.
- The average level of education of the students is the 9th grade and the ages flow between 60-70 years old.
- 70% of the students are women.
- The average monthly payment is 12 euros

### III – GENERAL RULES

#### ARTICLE 1ST

##### DEFINITION

1 - A Third Age University (UTI or U3A) is a social and cultural answer, well developed in terms of equipment whose aims are to create, to develop and to organize cultural activities regularly, providing non-formal education, leisure activities and social gatherings and events for people over 50 years old.

#### ARTICLE 2ND

##### RUTIS' MEMBERS 5

1 – All projects that follow the specifications of this guide and that formally request to be part of the network are members of RUTIS.

#### ARTICLE 3RD

##### DESIGNATION

1 – The universities can use the following names: Third Age University, Senior University, Senior Academy, Cultural Institute, Senior Club or any other that users the terms “Seniors” or “Third Age”. “Universidade Sénior” is a trade mark registered by RUTIS.

## ARTICLE 4TH

### MAIN GOALS

1 – The Third Age Universities' main goals are as followed:

- a) Improvement of the senior's life quality.
- b) Development of activities in the social, cultural, educational, training, personal and social development and leisure fields and preferably for people over 50 years old.
- c) Active civil role and self-organization of the elderly population especially after the retirement.
- d) Education related to citizenship, health, tolerance, volunteering and lifelong learning.
- e) Collaboration in academic and scientific investigations in the fields of gerontology and andragogy.
- f) Dissemination of services, rights and duties of the seniors.
- g) Encourage volunteering activities in and for the community.

## ARTICLE 5TH

### PROMOTING ENTITIES

1 – The entities that can promote Third Age Universities are as followed:

- a) All associations that are legally constituted, with non-profit and created specifically for this purpose.
- b) All associations that are legally constituted, with non-profit and that already exist for other purposes such as Private Institutions of Social Solidarity, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Development Associations, Cooperatives, Foundations and others.
- c) Public institutions such as Municipalities and educational establishments.

2 - The Third Age Universities can be aggregated to other associations.

## ARTICLE 6TH

### STUDENTS

1 – It is given preference to those over 50 years old but having into account the respect for the rights of no discrimination regarding sex, race, language, nationality, religion, politics, educational level and social condition.

## ARTICLE 7TH

### TEACHERS

1 – The Third Age Universities should work in majority with volunteer teachers over 18 years old, encouraging the social volunteering.

2 – The teacher can be students and vice versa.

## ARTICLE 8TH

### SOCIAL ACTIVITIES:

1 – The Third Age Universities should encourage socializing, volunteering, civic participation, solidarity, citizenship and social support among seniors and the community.

2- The Third Age universities should promote visits to cities, monuments, natural parks, cinemas, theaters, exhibitions and museums and the organization of lectures, seminars, courses, parties and contests.

3- The Third Age Universities should promote the dissemination of information, knowledge, traditions of and for the seniors.

## ARTICLE 9TH

### TRAINING ACTIVITIES:

1 – The Third Age Universities are autonomous in the construction of their syllabus.

2 – The Third Age Universities must have at least three of the following areas:

a) Social and Human Sciences (Portuguese, Languages, History, Sociology, Health, Psychology, Biology, Anthropology, General Culture, Literature, Citizenship, etc.).

b) Computers and new technologies.

c) Arts (Music, Singing, Theatre, Decorative arts, Painting, Tapestry, Ceramics, etc.)

d) Mobility and sports (gymnastics Yoga, Dancing, aerobics, swimming, etc.)

3 – The syllabus should focus on the dissemination of national cultural heritage, promote mobility and encourage the use of new technologies by seniors.

4 – The Third Age University can create a Pedagogical Council, which will include board members of the association, teachers and students, to organize the educational component of the university.

5 – The training component is always in a non-formal system, considering this as an educational or training process more or less organized that happens outside the traditional school system without certification purposes or official recognition.

#### ARTICLE 10TH

##### FACILITIES 8

1 – The Third Age Universities should seek to provide the following facilities (can be owned, leased or transferred), a single building or scattered:

- a) Living room.
- b) Classrooms, properly equipped.
- c) Multipurpose room and / or auditorium.
- d) Gym and / or pool.
- e) Administrative and storage facilities.
- f) Sanitary facilities

#### ARTICLE 11TH

##### ORIGIN

1 - The Third Age University can be provided:

- a) By the willingness of seniors who are organized in associations created for the purpose.
- b) By the will of an existing association that wants to aggregate a Third Age University.
- c) By the will of various entities, which through an agreement between all or by creating a new organization that gives life to Third Age Universities.

#### ARTICLE 12TH

##### ORGANIZATION

1 – In order to achieve the goals the Third Age Universities should:

- a) Have a comprehensive schedule, preferably during working hours.
- b) Organize social and cultural activities for at least 9 months in each calendar year.
- c) Schedule and timely publicize their activities.
- d) Promote exchanges with other similar institutions.
- e) Create new activities regularly.
- f) Promote the participation of people from different cultures, knowledge, ages and locations.
- g) Consider the real needs of students.
- h) Have insurance for students.
- i) Provide a student and teacher ID card.
- j) Have organized accounting.
- k) Deliver to the volunteer teachers the Volunteering Program, stating the rights and duties of the volunteer, as well as the conditions of exercise of volunteering.
- l) Deliver to the students the service contract, stating the rights and duties of the U3A student.

#### ARTICLE 13TH

##### HUMAN RESOURCES

- 1 - The Third Age Universities should have a board or a core management, perfectly recognized and accepted.
- 2 - The Third Age University must appoint a coordinator with organization functions, representation and animation, paid or voluntary.

#### ARTICLE 14TH

##### FINANCING

- 1 - The revenues of the Third Age universities are:
  - a) The student's fees.
  - b) Donations or contributions of individuals, companies or the government.
  - c) Sponsors.

d) The provision of services.

[Usually there are three types of fees:

- Single value. The student pays the same amount regardless of the number of subjects they attend.

- Single value, with extra: The student pays the same amount regardless of the number of subjects they attend, but pay an extra for a special discipline, e.g. swimming, painting, yoga, etc.

- For package: The student pays a value of three / four / five disciplines to choose from and then pay more for each additional discipline.

There are still Third Age Universities that charge jewel (first registration). The average tuition fees are 12 euros (2018).]

## ARTICLE 15TH

### INTERNAL REGULATION

1 - The Rules, approved by the management of the Third Age University should always be delivered to the student and are to be included, among others, the following:

- a) Objectives and operating rules.
- b) Rules of admission and frequency.
- c) The value of student fees.
- d) Services offered.
- e) Schedules and locations of services.
- f) Rights and duties of students and university.

## ARTICLE 16TH

### STUDENTS DUTIES

1. The duties of the students are:

- a) Maintain a good relationship with the other students, university, staff and the institution in general.
- b) Timely pay the tuition and the school insurance.
- c) Have a receipt of delivered values.

- d) Active participation in the activities of the university that please him.
- e) Comply with the regulation, the values and ideals of the institution.

#### ARTICLE 17TH

##### STUDENTS RIGHTS

1. The rights of students are:

- a) The right to know the rules of the university.
- b) The right to participate and leave the university at will.
- c) The right to participate actively in the universities activities.
- d) Right to individuality and confidentiality.
- e) The right to claim or indicate suggestions about the services provided.
- f) A student card and an insurance provide by the U3A.

#### ARTICLE 18TH

##### THIRD AGE UNIVERSITIES' DUTIES

1. The duties of the Third Age University are:

- a) Ensure the proper maintenance of facilities and services.
- b) Comply with and enforce the regulation.
- c) Ensure the normal operation of the university.
- d) Comply with the duties of the students.
- e) Promote a safe school for students.
- f) Create means of identification for students.
- g) Provide a receipt of all delivered values.

Jacob, Luis (2019), *Handbook, technical guide of conditions to create a third age university (U3A): The Portuguese model* in Minute book of III international scientific conference of educational projects for seniors, (pp. 11-19), RUTIS, Portugal.

## ARTICLE 19H

### APPLICABLE LAW

1. Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 76/2016 for U3A: Republic Diary. 1st series - N.º 229 - November 29, 2016
2. Voluntary Law: - Decree-Law no. 389/1999, of 30 September - Bases of the Legal Framework of Volunteering
3. Law no. 71/1998 of 3 November - Bases of the Legal Framework of Volunteering