

Uppsala Senioruniversitet

Background and organisation

A general principle in Sweden is that life long learning should be open to everybody at no or minimal cost. Adult education at Universities of the Third Age (UTA) has developed outside the regular educational system as a part of an Adult Educational Association called “Folkuniversitetet”.

Uppsala is the oldest UTA in Sweden and was founded in 1979. The organisation is separate from Folkuniversitetet but gets financial support from the state through Folkuniversitetet. To be able to use the facilities of a UTA you have to be a member. You can become a member of the Uppsala UTA if you are 58 years of age or if you are retired or if you are married to a retired person. There are no requirements except that you pay your membership fee – at the moment about 25 euros per year.

Uppsala Senioruniversitet has about 3 000 members, three fourths of our members are women and the average age is 74 years. The total number of UTA members in Sweden is over 15 000 out of a total population of ca 9 million people. There are 30 UTA's in Sweden – most of them located in cities with universities or colleges.

The UTA in Uppsala is run by retired people/members on a voluntary basis all together more than 80 people organized in different working groups. However, Folkuniversitetet provides us with office space.

The purpose of the Uppsala UTA is:

- to arrange different study activities for the members (lectures, study circles, study tours and visits)
- to stimulate research-oriented studies
- to maintain contacts with similar organisations within or outside the country

There are four different kinds of activities:

Separate lectures in various subjects, every fortnight (no other costs than the membership fee)

Lecture and seminar series, ca 15 – 20 each semester, generally 30 – 200 people (costs ca 30 euros/semester)

- multidisciplinary lecture series (e.g on history, art history, music, health, environment, current research topics)

Study circles, ca. 80 each semester, less than 20 people per circle
(costs 30 – 60 euro/ semester)

- study circles in religion, philosophy, natural and social sciences etc.
- study circles in languages – both modern languages and e.g. Latin
- study circles in information technology
- research oriented circles

Study visits and tours, ca 20 per semester (varying costs)

- study visits in Sweden and abroad, sometimes prepared through a study circle before the trip
- trips to cultural activities (theatre and opera performances, concerts, museums, exhibitions etc.)

Research-oriented studies

In Uppsala there are many former university teachers among our UTA members who continue to do research after their retirement. Some of the lecture series also deal with current research frontiers. Uppsala UTA aims at introducing the latest research findings to older people and to be a meeting point for scientific knowledge and life experiences.

Uppsala UTA also aims at stimulating research-oriented studies, which seems to be unusual among other Swedish UTAs. The work of “research-oriented study circles” has been printed in a report series in Swedish – with short summaries in English. The most recent ones have dealt with:

- care and support of elderly people by their next of kin
- what actually happened when we ourselves were young?
- to become and to be retired - promises of a happy future?
- equal opportunities for older citizens

International contacts – AIUTA and EFOS

In the statutes of Uppsala UTA it is stated that we should maintain contacts with other similar organisations both within and outside the country. It is thus important for us to belong to international organisations of UTA's.

Since 1980 Uppsala UTA has been a member of AIUTA/IAUTA (International Association of Universities of the Third Age). Our UTA also has a member on the Governing Board of AIUTA.

Uppsala UTA is also a member of EFOS (European Federation of Older Students at the Universities) since 2006. This membership allows our members to participate in EFOS' meetings in any of the member countries: The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Sweden. Uppsala is also represented on the Governing Board of EFOS.

Contacts with UTA's abroad is a way of getting new ideas which can enrich our own activities, and the International Committee of the Uppsala UTA is actively seeking contacts through our membership in AIUTA and EFOS in various ways, with the aims:

- to participate in research and development projects together with other UTA's supported e.g. by the EU Erasmus+ programme.
- to participate in AIUTA's and EFOS's international conferences
- to organize bilateral exchanges between groups of members of the Uppsala UTA and members of UTA's abroad.