

# Olympiad Teacher Voices

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## **Why do you, as a teacher, take part in the Olympiad round 1?**

Our students apply to top universities, and this is a valuable addition to their GCSE and A-level grades, to help them with their application. We have mostly Year 12 students who take part, with some Year 13 students (usually the ones determined to beat their performance in Year 12). It helps to stretch them to the level they will need to attain in order to be successful in reaching their chosen university. The papers also give them experience of chemistry beyond the A-level, which will again be useful to them in their A-levels, interviews, and in the future. It is a way they can distinguish themselves from other good students who haven't taken part. Students taking part in the Olympiad will have better problem-solving skills, due to the unfamiliar settings they need to apply their knowledge to. It is also nice to have a lot of students receiving awards! Finally, as a top-performing school, this is something we should take part in.

## **What do you think your students get out of the competition?**

UCAS personal statements and their subject references are probably their main motivation, but they are also competitive, and take part just for the challenge. The papers develop their chemistry and problem-solving skills.

## **What role do the round 1 competition and Olympiad past paper questions play in your teaching and learning?**

They are very helpful. Students access them at home, and the keen ones will work through them before the Olympiad. I use them in the extension sessions, where I pick questions to go through.

## **How do you and your students prepare for round 1?**

I run extension chemistry sessions, where I teach the parts of the A-level that students will not have covered by the time they sit the paper, and also go through past paper questions. With more experience of the papers, I am now better able to cover topics that I know tend to come up, and that they find difficult.

## **What advice would you give to a school that is taking part in round 1 for the first time?**

I encourage students by reminding them they have nothing to lose by taking part, and that there are always accessible parts to the questions. Also, chemistry knowledge is only part of the challenge – you can get a long way with the questions with good mathematical ability and problem-solving skills. Any marks scored are commendable, as the papers are hard. I also learn from the papers myself – there are always things I am picking up that I use in my 'normal' teaching.

The Chemistry Olympiad is the leading chemistry competition for students in the UK. To find out more about this opportunity to challenge your chemistry students visit [rsc.li/olympiad](https://rsc.li/olympiad)

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