

# Olympiad Teacher Voices

**Karen**

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

I think it's an aspirational type thing, where students can pit their wits against other students in the country and see how they do. I always tell them that the questions are going to be really hard, because they are, and tell them to have a go and just see how well they can do. How well can you use your chemistry in real life situations?

## **Why do your students want to take part in the Olympiad?**

To be able to pit their wits against other people and see how they're performing. It is a competition after all, so it is that competitive element.

As I have quite a big cohort here, I invite my top students to take part. Straight away, the fact that they have a personalised invite motivates them – I've said to them, 'I think you're good enough to do this,' and that motivates them.

## **What do your students get out of taking part in the Olympiad?**

They get how difficult chemistry can be and how what they're doing at A-level is only the tip of the iceberg - there's a lot that they could go on to learn.

## **Do you use Olympiad past paper questions in any of your preparation or classes?**

I tell the students that there are past papers, but there is no expectation for them to do any and most of them just have a go. They don't revise for it. It's a case of, 'Let's just see how we get on as a one-off.'

## **How do you prepare for round 1?**

They just give it a go – and with the pressure of doing their A-levels I don't want to give them any extra work to do really.

## **What do your students find most challenging and how do you overcome this?**

They find the organic the hardest bit. I think that's mostly due to the timing of when we do it, because by the time they do the paper they have covered quite a lot of the A2 physical chemistry content and the inorganic, whereas the organic bit is the last bit we do.

I also think that the specifications, whatever specification you follow, doesn't necessarily get them to problem-solve so much in organic, it's more about doing the functional groups that they need to know rather than going beyond that. And I don't get them over that hump really, I just tell them to have a go and try and use the knowledge that they have got.

## **What advice would you give a school that was thinking of taking part in Olympiad round 1 for the first time?**

I would say you need to select your students to do it, because they are hard questions and I think by doing that selection process you're saying to the student, 'You know what, I think you're good enough to do this,' and therefore you get their participation. I personally wouldn't go massively into prepping them for it because it's an added bolt-on really. Obviously you can tell the students that there's stuff available for them to have a look at, but I think that the questions are so diverse each year that it would be very difficult to actually revise for it. So I would just say to have a go.

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://www.rsc.li/olympiad)

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