

# Evaluation Report – Top Class Final Events 2011



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## Background

This competition (Top Class) runs each year over several weeks from March up to the Olympiad in June/July. The grand final is a stage show before an audience of pupils, teachers and parents. In 2011, this event was held on the 28th and 29th June 2011 at the Drama Theatre at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, Norfolk.

The web site for this competition can be found at;  
<http://www.norwichscienceolympiad.org.uk/>

## Scope and Method of this Evaluation

Over the past two years (2009/10), the on-line competition has been the subject of evaluation. Two reports have been produced (one for each year) to reflect the impact of this stage of the competition. What was required in 2011 was an evaluation that provides anecdotal information about the impact of the 'Final Events'.

To gather this information a survey was developed. This survey was designed to be completed by those attending both evenings of the Final Events. A copy of the survey was left on the seats of the audience on both evenings along with something to write with. The event team collected the surveys at the end of the evening. The administrative assistance of Vanessa Tarling (School of Chemistry, University of East Anglia) is gratefully acknowledged.

The survey questions were developed from an analysis of the responses to an earlier survey which was developed and administered by Dr. Malcolm Seddon. The survey used in this evaluation is at Appendix A.

All responses were entered into a database. The text analysis tool SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences ®) was used in the analysis of responses.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For copies of these reports please contact Dr Steven Wilkinson at [steven.wilkinson@uea.ac.uk](mailto:steven.wilkinson@uea.ac.uk)

## Event Feedback

### Question 1

The audience capacity on each evening was c180 people. The following table shows the number of completed surveys collected on each evening of the Final Events.

Which Grand Final did you attend?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup> June	53.2%	84
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> June	46.8%	74
<i>answered question</i>		158
<i>skipped question</i>		1

This represents a response rate of c44% of all potential responses assuming that the venue reached full capacity on both evenings.

### Question 2

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they were a Teacher, Pupil or Supporter. The following table shows the response to this question.

Are you a		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Teacher	6.5%	10
Pupil	32.3%	50
Supporter	61.3%	95
<i>answered question</i>		155
<i>skipped question</i>		4

### Question 3

Respondents were asked what they thought the pupils most gained from this event. The following table shows the response to this question.

What do you think the pupils most gained from this event?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Achievement	52.1%	76
Experience	67.8%	99
Confidence	60.3%	88
Knowledge	54.1%	79
Fun	69.2%	101
Teamwork	63.7%	93
Comment	50	
<i>answered question</i>		146
<i>skipped question</i>		13

There was only 11.6% difference between the lowest scoring response 'Achievement' and the highest scoring response 'Fun'. Teachers and Supporters rated 'Experience' the highest, whereas Pupils rated 'Fun' the highest. Several respondents indicated that all of the listed elements applied.

The open-ended comments included the following ideas;

#### Enjoyment

Enjoyment of the event was indicated with the terms 'amazing' and 'exciting'. It was felt that the competition was a great 'experience' and 'opportunity'. Making science 'fun' was appreciated. Respondents felt that the event was 'far better' than expected.

*A well anticipated event which I am sure many stories will be retold.*

Supporter 2011

#### Fun

The fun element was particularly appreciated. The 'fun' element contributed to the 'educational' and 'confidence' building outcomes for students. The 'Buzzer' rounds were regarded by one respondent as 'the funniest'.

#### Organisation

The organisation and planning of the event was particularly praised with terms such as 'excellent event' and 'well done'. It was thought that the events contained a good variety of activities and was 'well put together.'

### Additional 'Most Gained' Elements

The open-ended comments further emphasised the elements of 'confidence' and 'team building' as positive outcomes for students from this event. The 'competition' aspect was also indicated; one respondent suggested that they felt the 'pressure' and another suggested it was 'nerve-racking'. Others indicated that the event was 'educational'.

*It was a lot of fun and we learned some things we didn't know before.*

Pupil 2011

### Question 4

Respondents were asked how much they enjoyed the event. The following table shows the responses to this question.

How much did you enjoy it?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 Not at all	0.0%	0
2	0.0%	0
3	0.0%	0
4	0.7%	1
5	0.7%	1
6	4.5%	6
7	9.0%	12
8	18.7%	25
9	22.4%	30
10 A Great Deal	44.0%	59
<i>answered question</i>		134
<i>skipped question</i>		25

### Question 5

Respondents were asked what they thought were the best features of the Final Events. The following table shows the responses to this question.

What do you think were the best features of the grand final?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Atmosphere	76.3%	106
Format	44.6%	62
Venue	30.2%	42
Organisation	46.8%	65
Production	43.9%	61
<i>answered question</i>		139
<i>skipped question</i>		20

While some respondents felt that all of the listed features applied, all response groups (Teachers, Pupils and Supporters) agreed that the 'Atmosphere' was the best feature.

The open-ended comments included the following ideas;

#### Well Done

The level of work invested in creating this event was acknowledged with terms such as 'well done', 'well produced' and 'well organised'. Respondents felt that the organisers and presenters gave a 'professional' and 'polished performance'.

*What a triumph for the organisers.*

Supporter 2011

#### Quality

The quality of the production was commented on. Respondents felt that the quality of the events contributed to a 'buzzing', 'tense' and 'exciting' atmosphere. In particular the format was regarded as high quality with comments such as 'brilliant'.

#### Stage Setting

Respondents were impressed with the 'props and equipment'. However, on the first of the evenings (28th June) there were some technical problems. Respondents noticed that the screens were faulty and the audience had difficulty seeing the images and text, particularly during the audience participation activity. Other respondents felt that the acoustics were 'loud'.

## Question 6

The final question asked respondents 'Would you change anything?'. 110 responses were given to this question.

These comments included the following ideas;

### No

The largest response theme suggested that nothing be changed. Amongst these responses were comments such as 'fantastic already', 'glad I came' and 'have one every week'.

*A great experience  
- wouldn't  
change a thing.*

Supporter 2011

### Suggestions and Criticisms

Several suggestions regarding this event were made. These suggestions included the following;

- More team activities.
- Both of the following - More buzzer rounds & No buzzer rounds
- Fewer rounds

Some criticisms were also offered.

These included the following;

- Scoring. There was some disparity in the scoring of certain activities. On one reported occasion both teams were declared drawn, when it remained possible for one of the teams to still win.
- Audience Quiz. It was felt by some that this activity could have been better presented.
- Length. Certain activities were considered 'too long' – for example 'Cross cross'
- Team Make-up. There were several comments regarding the make-up and participation of teams. In one instance the number of participants in the competing teams differed. This was regarded as unfair. In another instance, certain participants appeared on stage more than once for their team. This was also regarded as unfair.
- Organisation. Some respondents felt that the organisation was 'shambolic at times'. An example of this was 'in some circumstances the music had started before the teams had opened the envelopes.'

### Invigilating

A range of suggestions were made regarding the invigilation of the activities. During one particular activity, the ability for a team to anticipate the answer was regarded as unfair. This activity required the viewing and then the reviewing of a video. It was suggested that the video be shown only once. It was also felt that questions should not be allowed to be answered until after that question had been asked. It was noted that after a team had 'buzzed', they were able to confer before giving their answer – and that this also was unfair. Others felt that some teams were waiting for the other team to answer first. Further, it was suggested that teams should be given longer to answer. There was some concern regarding the behaviour of the audience. It was felt that the audience should not be allowed to shout advice or provide the answers and that if this occurs points should not be awarded.

### Copying

There was concern that an element of 'copying' detracted from the competition. This mostly occurred on the event held on the 29th June and involved the 'circuit board' and 'special cake bake' activities. Suggestions to overcome the potential for copying included the following;

- "Make the teams move back to back when the trolleys are in the middle"
- "Place a screen between teams"
- "Maybe get the teams to write their answers and then display/reveal their answers."
- "I would have the circuit boards facing the children."

### Climate

The first of the evenings was held on a day where particularly high temperatures had been experienced, leading to comments such as 'Too hot in audience' and 'Very hot - no air conditioning'. The climate in the auditorium posed some measure of discomfort. It was suggested that air conditioning be made available.

### Visuals

The visibility of some of the screens was difficult for sections of the audience. This was in part due to the lighting. Suggestions to overcome this problem included the following;

- "Make the visuals clearer"
- "Turn down the lighting (particularly when the audience need to see the screens)"

### *Scoring*

There were concerns about the scoring. It was thought that the same scoring method should be used for all questions. A further suggestion was that points should be deducted for an incorrect response.

### *Program*

The program was generally regarded as successful, however some respondents felt that it was slightly disorganised (in particular on the evening of the 28th) and that the program over-ran till 9.30pm – which was thought to be too late for the younger children. A further suggestion was that a program be provided so that the audience can be informed of the order of activities.

### *Consumables*

It was suggested that consumables be provided – in particular ‘water’ and ‘popcorn’!

## Findings

From this feedback, the following findings can be drawn.

- The Final Events were widely regarded as highly successful and enjoyable. In particular, they provided students with a positive and ‘fun’ experience.
  - The organisation of the events was mostly praised, however some feedback suggests there remains scope for improvement. In particular, it was suggested that the program run to time.
  - The students had ‘fun’ and gained ‘experience’, ‘teamwork’, ‘confidence’, ‘knowledge’ and a sense of ‘achievement’. These events were regarded as ‘enjoyable’, and ‘educational’.
  - The audience enjoyed these events a great deal with the best feature of the events being the ‘atmosphere’. The events were regarded as being of a high quality.
  - While the staging of these events was regarded as being of a high standard, it was also noted that there were technical difficulties, particularly on one of the evenings.
  - The climate in the auditorium was uncomfortably hot – particularly on the first of the events.
  - Contradictory suggestions were made regarding the number and make up of the rounds.
  - Criticisms were made of the scoring, audience participation, length of certain activities, the make up and number of participants on the competing teams, and some aspects of the organisation.
  - Concerns regarding the invigilation of activities included the management of questions and answers, participants and the audience. Responses were concerned with achieving a ‘fair’ competition.
  - The potential for teams to copy each other detracted from the ‘fairness’ of the competition.
- The visual displays were not clear or visible to certain elements of the audience on particular occasions during the events. This was particularly a problem for the audience participation activities.
  - The scoring system received some criticism.
  - While there were some criticisms and ideas for improvement, overall, the feedback from these events was very positive and all associated staff should take credit for what can be widely regarded as successful events.

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