**CHAIR’S REPORT**

*This is intended to cover all aspects of the society other than finance (covered by Treasurer’s report) and newsletter (covered by Secretary/Newsletter Editor’s report)*

1. **Membership**

We currently have 575 full members who paid the £5 fee, 183 associate members and 43 full free members (these are either OU staff, or students who have contributed to the society). Of these 801, 769 were current OU students at the time of joining.

1. **Merchandise**

We have extended our range of merchandise. We now offer:

* A wide range of mugs
* Personalised “name mugs” (name in symbols plus amino acids, and chosen molecule from caffeine, theobromine, tannin or ethanol on the other side)
* “male scientist” and “female scientist” 16 Gb USB sticks
* Teddies
* Credit-card sized powerbank

The merchandise is primarily sold at events.
There seems to be a considerable appetite for it, and selling online would be attractive. However, we are limited by storage (under my kitchen table!) and by the lack of anyone who could take responsibility for posting it out regularly.

1. **Website**

The new website generally works well from a functional point of view, and doesn’t have the security issues the old one had. The main improvement which would make our lives much easier is if we could have new members automatically activated once they had paid.

In terms of content, the website is nowhere near at its full potential. We need volunteers to source news items, update content etc.

1. **Revision Weekends**

In 2015, Alchemy ran two highly successful revision weekends (March 2015 for S347, and September 2015 for S104, S345 and S377).

Although everything ran smoothly – students and tutors were happy, and the finances added up – it was decided to “decouple” the revision weekends from Alchemy for 2016 onwards.
This was because their being run by a society rather than a limited company exposed the committee members to unlimited financial liability if something did go badly wrong – and we are all quite attached to our savings and houses!

A non-profit-making company called “Alchemy Enterprises” was set up to deliver such events in future.

1. **Social Media and Forums**

The main Facebook group continues to be lively (470 members). The Maths Agony Aunt group has not really taken off. The forum on the VLE is pretty well dead, but we do have members who are not on social media, so we need to retain it. The Twitter account has 98 followers.

1. **OU Students’ Association**

Societies are being taken increasingly seriously by OUSA, and we definitely have a “voice”. I am chair of the Societies Standing Committee, and will keep pushing this! The increased funding being offered societies, and the grant available for conference are examples of this.

The OUSA Central Exec now includes a new role – VP Community – who has societies in her remit. Since two of the Alchemy committee (myself and Anca) are also on the OUSA Central Exec, we have plenty of opportunity to do some bending of ears!

I will encourage continual review of how societies can further be supported by the Association.

1. **Events**

Alchemy has had a presence at the following events this year:-

* S215 Residential Schools on campus
Anca and I each attended for one day (hence covering the two between us), sold our (and OUSA’s) merchandise, gave people sour sweets, talked to people etc
* Science Revision Weekend in Yarnfield

A mixture of selling merchandise, awareness raising (particularly regarding availability of our past paper solutions) and an opportunity to get some planning done

* OU Students’ Association Conference on campus

We were part of the societies expo in the Jennie Lee Building. More merchandise selling, but also making molecules out of balloons, sour sweets, “pin the element on the periodic table”, sherbet…

Trips have included:-

* Diamond Light Source (organised by Greg – joint with Fusion)
* New Scientist Live
* Andre Geim lecture

We feel trips have been distinctly lacking this year. Would anyone like to help?

1. **Alchemy and LHCS**

Just to put on record our appreciation for the continued help and support offered by the department – including, of course, spending Saturday giving us talks and showing us round.
We do value this - and OUSA are looking at using Alchemy and Fusion as an exemplar on societies and departments working together.