

# The East Grinstead u3a Sci and Tech group – 2022 questionnaire

## The questionnaire – Initial conclusions

Questionnaire design can be a black art. There is a great skill in leading the responder through the designed path if you allow for different options. Our questionnaire was therefore a very simple one, with single choice; multiple choice, and open text questions. The single and multiple choice questions are easy to analyse and produce interesting answers if you choose the questions. But asking people to give responses to open text questions is much more difficult to analyse. I have therefore analysed the single and multiple choice questions and made some relevant conclusions – attached. The two sets of verbatim questions are appended in text form, and you can make your own conclusions: I have commented on the verbatim questions as well.

## Single and multiple-choice questions

There were 18 questions. I have marked the responses with YELLOW (Good news) where there is a clear conclusion; AMBER (More to discuss) where we need to draw out a bit more information or where the conclusions are unclear, and RED (We have a problem) where I can see an issue:

### The good news – YELLOW:

- **How long have you been a member of Sci & Tech?** Nearly 20% of respondents have been with the group for 10 years or more, and a further 40% have been members for 3–6 years. Interestingly, 13 members have joined in the last 18 months or so.
- **When, and how often we meet up.** There is a strong preference to meet monthly, on a Friday afternoon.
- **Communicating with members.** Over 90% of members wanted email communications. *{But there is a small problem. See AMBER below.}*
- **Should we have an annual break?** 29 respondents were completely flexible and 7 wanted no break at all, but 10 wanted a summer break and 7 would like a Christmas break.
- **Should we split the group into two?** “If it ain’t broke – don’t fix it” – 45 said NO.
- **Could we improve and if so how?** 26 wanted to see an increased variety of topics. Roughly a third each of members wanted to see more presentations by members; and/or more video input and/or more online shared learning courses.
- **Should we work with other u3a Sci & tech groups – regionally or nationally?** The idea of sharing talks and or presentations with other u3as was endorsed by 19 members but a minority preferred to keep ourselves to ourselves.
- **What do members really appreciate about the Sci & Tech group?** Four yellows here. 80% of respondents thought the subject matter we presented was OK. 66% agreed that our talks help them to appreciate how much we owe to past scientists, engineers and mathematicians. 58% felt it was important to keep up with advances in technology, and 42% appreciated the social aspect

### More to discuss – AMBER:

- **Attendance rate.** Not analysed here but analysed through the monthly register. Prior to the pandemic we could reckon on between 30 and 45 regular attendees. Regular attendance post pandemic has dropped more nearly to 27. We need to ask why. At one time there was a “Three strikes and you are out” policy for groups where there was pressure on numbers.

Happily our group can cope with up to 100 members if necessary, so we need place no restriction. However it is depressing if a member has made a great effort to prepare a talk and less than half the registered members turn up. *{We do ask that if you cannot make a meeting that you should send in an apology. If you are absent without apologies for a protracted period you will be deregistered. This will help us to plan our accommodation and registration fees.}*

- **Meeting location and parking arrangements.** Two thirds of members were happy with the Glebe Centre but one third would prefer to meet closer to the centre of East Grinstead. Parking was thought to be inadequate by 5 members but the rest felt it was OK. *{We appreciate your comments and are actively looking at a move to alternative premises. St John's Church Felbridge has similar facilities and significantly better parking and we await a quotation for charitable organisation hire}*
- **Communicating with members (Effectively).** Although 90% of members see email as the way for us to communicate, it looks as if emails aren't given the same urgency as letters dropping onto the doormat! Only 30% of members check throughout the day; a further 42% check once a day; and 22% check every 2 days. Three members only check weekly or when they remember. *{So we need to sharpen up our act a bit: if the cap fits.....}*
- **Should we have some meetings by ZOOM?** More than half of members want to have a mix of face to face and online meetings. So we should explore the options there. It's worth mentioning that we have registered as a Sci & Tech group prepared to share our talks (and use other u3a's tasks as well.
- **How about joining the leadership team or making a presentation?** Not especially popular. Half of respondents claimed to feel uncomfortable about making a presentation. 13 members were happy to do so, but 4 of them wanted help to prepare. 8 members expressed an interest – and one member is happy to be a "leader in waiting", which is great. But 23 members claimed other priorities and 2 members felt they were not adequately qualified or did not have sufficiently scientific background. *{A bit of a misunderstanding here. We are all in the group together regardless of our backgrounds, and it is equally possible to stand up and ASK questions as it is to EXPLAIN things. So ANYONE can start a topic.}* 16 members couldn't think of an appropriate subject to talk about. *{That was a real surprise. We have published a brainstormed list of subjects on several occasions. I will update and circulate again. You will see in the verbatim comments there have been some really good ideas proposed.}*
- **Money matters.** We asked four questions. Half of members would be happy to pay three termly instalments in advance, but that would imply a solid commitment to attend every meeting or lose some money. Strangely although a 55% of members are happy with online banking payments, a sizeable 26% prefer to pay in cash. We need to explore this subject further to make sure we go forward in the most appropriate direction.

## • Verbatim answers - Your programme ideas please!

I have excluded around 10-12 "Don't know" or "no opinion" answers, together with "happy as it is". Other than that, these are your helpful verbatim answers.

1. I have provided multiple presentations already. But science and history could be explored in more depths. E.g. science and the first world and second world wars
2. Members should be encouraged to present talks and contribute to discussion groups on interesting relevant topics
3. Environment and power provision
4. The periodic table - how it was devised and what changes/additions there have been
5. Anything on trains and the railway and aircraft.

6. More work on environmental issues/solutions
7. Recycling, smartphone tech.
8. More chemistry
9. Perhaps more sessions on new technology to help us keep up to date with the modern world
  - a. More on alternative energy sources
  - b. Nuclear fission v nuclear fusion
  - c. Extracting greenhouse gases from the atmosphere - how realistic?
  - d. Hydrogen as a fuel of the future
  - e. The Amazon - has Bolsonaro pushed it over its tipping point?
  - f. Are trains & buses really better transport options?
10. Hannah Fry series on The Genius of Modern Life *{What a great series! Available on BBC iPlayer}*
11. The Jumbo years (747 history). Codes and Ciphers
12. More in-depth topics
13. More on the Bluebell railway and on civil aviation at Gatwick
14. Space
15. Current developments in new energy sources and battery technology. What will power cars of the future?
16. Difficult as my background is in accountancy! Appreciate those with knowledge who do step forward!
17. TED Talk based discussions. Question and answer sessions. Internal talks on basic aspects of the major Science disciplines and their derivatives.
18. Tends to be more technology than science
19. Everything is interesting!
20. Making better use of my smartphone
21. 2 short presentations sometimes with Royal Institute style practical input with audience participation ? Not expert led either ?
22. Explanation of how electrical energy generated by solar panels in space may be transmitted back for use on earth.
23. TED talks and discussion
24. Anything scientific
25. Anything scientific
26. More from Dave Goulson
27. Technology Developments, Global Challenges, Life Experiences
28. Encourage members to present their individual experiences gained during their careers.
29. A presentation on electric vehicles, cars, vans, trucks etc
30. Starlink internet, satellite design, network integration etc.
31. Some more on the biological side of science. I enjoyed a presentation on the manufacture of pills.
32. Ask members to provide a summary of their individual education/career experience on which to base requests to them for short talks/presentations
33. More TED based talks/discussions. Some Question and answer sessions. Sessions on basics/fundamentals of the basic Sciences and their derivatives.
34. The Environment
35. Geology, Meteorology
36. Everyday Science
37. I have enjoyed the range and variety of topics covered so far and I'm happy for this to continue
38. Advances in Green Energy production
39. Innovations with commercial potential
40. This will be my first meeting, so I am a little unsure. Interested in how things work, maybe taking things apart.

## Verbatim answers - External VISITS

I have excluded 3 “Not answered” and 3 “Not interested” questions together with any answers where the responder was either satisfied with any visits we could arrange, or else liked the concept but had no positive suggestions. That left a hit list of sensible comments and ideas. Museums and transport figure repeatedly and there are sensible suggestions about visiting sites we have visited in the past, e.g.;

- Duxford
- Gatwick air museum
- Pumping a pumping station
- Several museums
- Bletchley Park
- London flood defences – (The Thames Barrier)
- The Bluebell Railway
- LT Acton depot
- A brewery (like Harvey’s)
- The South Godstone harp building company

*{Transport to distant sites is now becoming increasingly expensive where coach travel is involved. I would suggest that shared car transport is perhaps the best way to go, or the use of trains – when they run...}*

### **Here is the filtered list:**

1. Royal Engineers Museum, Chatham area
2. Tempsford. Old warden. Duxford Cosford
3. Yes but coaches are expensive - members could help with transport
4. Shuttleworth Museum or anything else of interest - I'm happy with anything!
5. Recycling plant locally.
6. Occasional visits would be welcome but I cannot think of a particular place at present
7. London flood defences; water pumping stations e.g. outside Horsted Keynes, one in Forest Row
8. Yes even if a cost is involved
9. Gatwick Air Museum, Bluebell Railway; Easyjet's maintenance hangar at Gatwick
10. would be interested
11. Automotive and or aero museums or similar
12. Scientific & technical exhibitions
13. Transport depot Acton? (London Transport), aircraft museums
14. Brewery? A major distribution centre, like DHL or similar. Some of the businesses on the Manor Royal industrial park.
15. Harvey's brewery or similar
16. Local Engineering Companies
17. London Sewage works, London Water pumping station
18. If not too far away (I dislike travelling by coach)
19. Not too far away
20. Bletchley Park, & the Harp maker visit again please ,
21. Science and technology based museums and exhibitions could be very interesting.
22. Recycling centre.
23. Return to Bletchley Park
24. Local water companies?
25. Some of the industries/businesses on the Crawley Manor Park industrial estate
26. Eden Valley museum looks interesting.

**The responses to specific questions are listed overleaf on the two following pages.**

## Analysis – Specific queries – I

Membership length	
< a year	13
1-2 years	6
3 years	9
4 years	6
5 years	6
6-10 years	10

Type of meeting	
Face to face	25
Face to face and Zoom	28

Meeting location	
GC is OK	37
Prefer EG centre	16

Preferred day	
Monday	4
Tuesday	1
Wednesday	3
Thursday	7
Friday	37
Saturday	0
Sunday	1

Preferred time	
AM	2
PM	46
Either	5

Preferred frequency	
Monthly	52
Fortnightly	1

Email checking	
Regularly throughout day	16
Once daily	22
At least every couple of days	12
Once weekly	1
Only when I think about it	2

Working with other u3as	
With local u3as	13
Good idea - sharing talks	19
Better to keep it local	8
Good idea - but not if online	1
Local preferred	1

Making presentations	
Happy to do so	9
Yes - but need help to prepare	4
Cannot think of a suitable subject	16
I am uncomfortable about making a presentation	26

## Analysis – Specific queries – II

Parking provision	
OK	49
Inadequate	5

Other comments	
None	51
Felbridge is good	1
Problem with transport	1
Cannot hear well	1

What you like about our group	
Subject matter OK	42
I like participating in Q&A sessions	16
Keeping up with advances in technology	31
I appreciate the social aspect	22
Helps me appreciate how much we owe to past scientists etc	35

Annual break?	
None	7
JULY + AUGUST	10
Christmas period	7
Completely flexible	29

Communications	
Email	48
Face to face only	1
Landline phone	1
Via website	2
WhatsApp group	1

What about improvements	
Increase variety of topics	26
Get more members to present a talk	15
Longer time needed at meeting	2
Simplify the "Attendance fee" payments	0
More video presentations	14
More free online courses	15

Splitting the group	
Leave as is	45
Depends on type of split	1
Not bothered Y or N	1
Unsure	1
Aviation section?	1
Not had enough time yet	1

Joining the Admin team	
Happy to join the admin team	8
Happy to become a leader in waiting	1
Too many other commitments etc	23
I don't feel qualified	1
I don't have science background	1

Methods of payment	
Prefer cash	19
Happy to pay three times a year	24
Happy about online payments	29
Online u3a renewal OK	24