

LSESU Economics Society Essay Competition 2026

In partnership with Aseeder Education

Guide for Candidates

Introduction

We are most delighted to welcome your participation in the LSESU Economics Society Essay Competition 2026, hosted in partnership with our sponsor Aseeder Education. This guide includes general instructions on how you should format and submit your work, as well as helpful materials recommended by some of our adjudicating professors.

Important Dates

Registration Open – 01 Jun 2026 | **Submissions Due – 01 Sep 2026** | Results – Oct* 2026

Essay Prompts

Essay prompts are created by professors in the Department of Economics at LSE, who will read the top five submissions on their prompt and decide prompt winners and runners-up. This year we have five professors who proposed the following essay prompts for exploration:

1. **Prof. Sir Christopher Pissarides** – Labour

Evidence shows that workers like work from home, say one day a week, but they hate monitoring devices that the firm might use to see how they allocate their time during the home day. What do you think the firm should do, if it wants to motivate its workers by giving them something that they like, but at the same time ensure it gets its money's worth during working hours?

2. **Prof. Ricardo Reis** – Policy

Following a sharp rise in UK energy prices, prepare a brief for a central bank on how monetary policy should respond. Take into account that the UK is a net importer of energy, and that the Bank of England has a mandate of keeping inflation steady at 2%.

3. **Prof. Silvana Tenreyro** – Technology

Suppose AI reduces the number of people needed to perform a large fraction of jobs, threatening to cause high unemployment. What measures should be put in place to limit inequality in pay (and, ideally, also in hours worked)?

4. **Prof. John van Reenen** – Inequality

Is it possible and desirable to raise taxation on the top 1%?

5. **Prof. Michael Gmeiner** – Environment

How will development and adoption of climate-friendly technologies affect inequality and the distribution of wealth?

* We have made changes to the results release timeline due to several requests to release the results before UK Oxbridge deadline (15 Oct) and US Early Decision deadline (1 Nov). We believe we will be able to release the results before these dates, but this will depend on the number of submissions we receive. Registrants will be notified of the exact results day once submissions close on 1 September. (Added 28 Jul 2026)

Grading rubric and scale

We will use the following grading rubric to assess your essay.:

Criteria	Marks	Guiding Questions
Argument and originality	25	- Is the argument well-articulated, logically consistent, and innovative? - Does it go beyond textbook answers and provide original insight?
Application of theory	20	Are relevant economic models, frameworks, or concepts used correctly and effectively to support the argument?
Evidence and example	15	Are claims supported by empirical studies, historical examples, case studies, and/or credible data?
Critical analysis and evaluation	15	- Is there engagement with opposing views, trade-offs, limitations, and/or alternative explanations? - Are counterarguments addressed thoughtfully?
Structure and clarity	10	- Is the essay clearly structured with logical flow? - Are the introduction and conclusion effective? - Is the language precise?
Citations and sources	10	- Are high-quality sources used (academic, institutional)? - Are references cited correctly and consistently?
Relevance to topic	5	Does the essay stay on topic and directly answer the question asked?

Grades will be distributed between 0-100 based on the below scale:

Grade	Range	Mark Descriptors
Distinction	70-100	- Offers a rigorous, original argument informed by advanced economic theory and evidence. - Shows excellent structure and clarity, with each section logically building on the previous. - Critically engages with competing views and policy trade-offs. - Demonstrates wide reading and proper referencing (e.g., peer-reviewed articles, institutional reports). - Sophisticated use of data or case studies. - Strong integration of interdisciplinary insights (where relevant) - Clearly answers the question posed
High Commendation	55-69	- Presents a coherent and mostly well-structured argument. - Applies relevant economic concepts with reasonable accuracy. - Engages with some empirical or historical examples. - Displays effort at critical engagement, though limited in depth or scope. - Mostly accurate referencing, though with some inconsistency. - Some minor misinterpretations or superficial coverage of certain key aspects.
Commendation	40-54	- Attempts to engage with the question, though may deviate slightly or show limited structure. - Uses economic terms or data, but not always effectively or accurately. - Makes a reasonable but underdeveloped argument. - An attempt at referencing correctly. - Lacks depth in critical analysis or fails to engage with counterarguments. - Descriptive rather than analytical in tone.
Participation	0-40	- Fails to address the question directly or substantially. - Contains major factual or conceptual errors. - Lacks economic reasoning or misuses key terms. - No clear structure or argument. - References are missing, incorrect, or not credible. - Language may be unclear or disjointed.

Results

On results day, tentatively set to be in November 2026, you will receive a mark out of 100 and a decision on whether you've been selected for any awards. We will grant the following awards for essays of exceptional quality:

Award	Awardees	Prize
High Distinction	Top 5-10%	• Certificate from LSESU Economics Society • Eligibility for Cambridge Economics Elite programme
Prompt Podium	3 per essay prompt	• Certificate signed by LSESU Economics Society and adjudicating professor for each essay prompt
Prompt Winner	1 per essay prompt	• Certificate signed by LSESU Economics Society and adjudicating professor for each essay prompt • £50 money prize
Overall Winner	1 across all entries	• Certificate signed by LSESU Economics Society and adjudicating professor for each essay prompt • £100 money prize
LSE Offer Holder Winner	1 winner out of LSE offer holders	• Certificate signed by LSESU Economics Society and LSE's head of Department of Economics • £100 money prize

Even if you were not granted the above prize, the number mark you receive will tell you how your essay performed on an objective grading scale outlined above.

Due to the large number of submissions we receive, we cannot to provide feedback on individual essays. The decisions are final and we will not accept any appeals.

Citation style

Candidates are recommended to use Harvard (as per LSE conventions), but any citation style will be accepted as long as they are consistent.

Formatting your essay

We will not penalize essays based on formatting, but please do try to adhere to the below so that we can read your essay without getting distracted:

- Use font size 11 to 12 for body text.
- Choose a professional font such as Times New Roman or Arial.
- Ensure that any visual material included are of legible size.
- Name any visual material included (Figure m, Diagram n, ...) and refer to them.
- Submit a pdf file. This ensures your submission will not be corrupt.

Word count

The word count for this competition is 1500 words, excluding titles, subtitles, and references.

AI and Plagiarism

Plagiarism and AI-generated content are strictly forbidden and adequate referencing is vital. All essays will be screened and any found to be in breach of these requirements will be disqualified.

General Advice

As per the grading rubric and scale, candidates are encouraged to:

- Provide well-reasoned, original, and empirically valid arguments
- Weigh up their arguments by addressing potential counterpoints
- Maintain structural and semantic clarity throughout the essay
- Employ evidence from professional sources and reference them with consistency
- Focus on the prompt you have chosen to explore

Helpful Materials

Below includes various academic articles, commentaries, reports, etc. that can help candidates start thinking about their chosen prompt. While it can guide the initial stages of your exploration, please beware that your essay is not merely a review of the materials. Such works will not score high marks.

All recommended reading materials can be accessed via the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ltX2N_BdsE01p7k-M6deJ52tD5VQb9XI?usp=sharing

1. **Prof. Sir Christopher Pissarides** – Labour

The professor has not recommended any specific material for this prompt and suggested that students conduct independent research for materials. There is a wealth of reading available online and beyond readily available in various newspapers and academic articles.

2. **Prof. Ricardo Reis** – Policy

Bank of England – Monetary Policy Report April 2026 | BoE Monetary Policy Committee

3. **Prof. Silvana Tenreyro** – Technology

The 2028 Global Intelligence Crisis | Citrini Research & Alap Shah

Automation and New Tasks: How Technology Displaces and Reinstates Labor | Daron Acemoglu & Pascual Restrepo

4. **Prof. John van Reenen** – Inequality

Top Income Inequality and Tax Policy | Richard Blundell

How Much Tax Do The Rich Really Pay And Could They Pay More? | LSE Online Event

5. **Prof. Michael Gmeiner** – Environment

IPCC Sixth Assessment Report – Technical Summary, TS.D (p71-99)

UNDP Human Development Report 2020, Chapter 3 (p69-93)

Enquiries

If you have any questions, you can reach out to us by emailing Economics@LSESU.org or texting any of our social media outlets.