THE PERSE
UPPER SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE

The Perse School Cambridge Aristotelian Award for Research

YEAR 9 RESEARCH ESSAY COMPETITION

A competition for Year 9 pupils across the UK to promote independent research skills

1,500 word essay

Choose between five essay titles in each category:

Arts/Humanities or Sciences

THE WINNER OF EACH CATEGORY WILL BE AWARDED £70

FOUR HIGHLY COMMENDED ENTRIES IN EACH CATEGORY WILL BE AWARDED £20

SUBMISSIONS

Please submit your entry online at:

https://form.jotform.com/PerseSchool/y9-aristotelian-award

The deadline for submission is

5pm on Friday 9 January 2026

Winners will be announced by the end of April 2026

If you have any questions or queries regarding the competition please email: **researchessay@perse.co.uk**

Further information on submission, essay titles and rules are available from **https://research.perse.co.uk/aristotelian/**

PerseResearch

The Perse Cambridge Aristotelian Award for Research

Year 9 Research Essay Competition

Purpose of the competition

This competition has been set up to promote independent study skills in Year 9 pupils while simultaneously providing an avenue to explore super-curricular interests in the arts, humanities and sciences. This competition is split into two categories (arts/humanities and sciences). Prizes are awarded to winners in each half of the competition.

Eligibility

This competition is open to all students in Year 9 (or equivalent).

How are the winners chosen?

Essays will be judged based on the quality of the essay. The best essays will critically discuss both sides of the argument (where applicable) before reaching a conclusion. They will have logical and coherent arguments and refer to a wide range of sources.

The essays will be marked by a team at The Perse School, Cambridge. Personal information (school, name, etc.) will be removed from the essay submission before the essay is passed on to the marking team to safeguard the integrity of the competition.

Prizes

The winner of each category will receive a prize of £70. There will also be eight 'Highly Commended' prizes (four for each category). These prizes will be worth £20 each. Winners will be announced by the end of April 2026.

High quality submissions may be published on The Perse School's website. Students selected for this will be emailed in April 2026.

Essay questions

Students should answer one question from one of the categories.

Arts/Humanities

1. Should AI juries replace human juries?
2. As online translators become more powerful and prevalent, what might the study of languages look like in the future?
3. What place should religion have in modern schools?
4. To what extent should richer countries be responsible for supporting the countries around them?
5. Theatre is one of the oldest art forms in human history: what has the most important development in theatre been and why? (For example, you could explore aspects of theatre design, production, costume or performance).

Sciences

1. In 2025 AI output is dependent on existing information and images: could a computer ever truly be truly creative, or is creativity only a human trait?
2. Is the gut microbiome better understood as an organ, a system, or an ecosystem?
3. To what extent can we control the weather?
4. What poses a bigger challenge, exploring space or the deep ocean?
5. Is it possible to reverse or slow down the chemical processes that cause aging in the human body?

Essay guidelines

1. The competition is divided into two categories: arts/humanities and sciences. There will be prizes available for the winner and four Highly Commended entries in each category.

2. Each participant can only submit one essay. This should be submitted as a **pdf**.

3. Entries must be written in English and in a formal manner. Choose a sensible font and use it consistently.

4. Entries should have a minimum of 800 words and a maximum of 1,500. The bibliography, footnotes and any references to sources within the essay will not be included.

5. Please do not include your name on your entry pdf as we will anonymise the entries for marking purposes.

6. Sources: There is no minimum for the number of sources cited but we strongly recommend that you cite to at least five. All sources should be acknowledged where used within the essay *and* in a bibliography/reference list at the end of the essay. (**See also Rules 11: Plagiarism and 12: Use of AI**)

7. The deadline for submission is **5pm GMT** on **Friday 9th January 2026.**

8. Independent schools and international schools may submit a maximum of four entries overall. This **does not** need to be limited to 'two entries per category.' State schools are allowed unlimited entries.

9. As one of the main aims of the competition is to promote independent study and research, the body of the essay should not be on a topic studied in school but rather a genuine interest of the participant, researched outside of school.

10. Submissions should be the sole work of the applicant – friends, family and teachers are not permitted to help with the writing of the essay.

11. Plagiarism is expressly forbidden. If any plagiarism is detected in the submission, then the participant will be immediately disqualified from the competition.

12. The use of AI to write all or part of the response is forbidden. (See Rule 11: Plagiarism). If AI is used to simplify online resources, the participant should acknowledge this in their bibliography by giving the URL of the AI and the questions which were asked. **All information within the essay should be rewritten in the participant's own words.**

Submitting your Entry

Students should upload their essays via the online form at Year 9 - Aristotelian Award - Perse Research or use the QR code on the poster.

The deadline for submission is **5pm GMT on Friday 9th January 2026**. Unfortunately, we may not be able to accept submissions after this time.

We hope to post on our website and social media a copy of the best submissions and a photo of those students. Therefore, when you submit your entry, you will be asked whether you give permission for your submission to be posted on the school's website/social media, and for a photo of you to be used.

Points of contact

Please email researchessay@perse.co.uk with any questions or queries regarding this competition.

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