

Inaugural Undergraduate Essay Writing Competition (2020-2021)

The Writing Centre wants to showcase and celebrate undergraduate student writing. Make sure you get your essay in on time.

The winners and finalists will be honoured at a celebration hosted by the Writing Centre and the Centre for Teaching & Learning. Winners will be asked to read from or discuss their essay.

The overall winner of this competition will receive an iPad, while the two runners-up will each receive a €100 One4All voucher.

Essay theme

The essay theme is “student success”. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching in Higher Education begin their definition of student success as follows: “Higher education can open up a myriad of doors for students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Through it, students can simultaneously deepen their learning and broaden their horizons. They can grow as citizens and flourish as individuals. They can uncover talents and abilities that they never knew they possessed and build the foundations for lifelong personal and professional development.” (See <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/our-priorities/student-success/defining-student-success/> for the full definition). What does “student success” really mean? How should we recognise or measure “student success”? How can students drive their own success?

Write a 750-1000-word essay on this theme. See the *Criteria for Judging Essays* for further guidance.

Eligibility

Entry is open to registered Maynooth University undergraduate students only.

Submissions must be original and unpublished.

The number of submissions per student is limited to **one** essay.

Please note to be fair to all students the Writing Centre cannot support students in completing their competition essay.

Submission instructions

Please **email** your submission to writingcentre@mu.ie Your submission should be forwarded to arrive no later than **Midnight Monday 13th April 2021**.

Please ensure that you use the reference '**Essay Contest 2021**' as the subject line of your email.

In the Body of the email, please include your full name, student number, year of study, discipline, and the title of your essay.

Please attach the provided Cover Sheet to your essay (see below).

Entries are read anonymously. Therefore, **DO NOT** include your name anywhere on or in the essay itself.

Please **DO NOT** PDF your document so it is possible to circulate an anonymised and coded version of your essay to the reviewers i.e. without the cover sheet

Late submissions will not be considered.

Adjudicating process

Once submitted your essay will go through an initial round of judging. A Committee comprised of Writing Centre staff will shortlist finalists to move on to the final round.

The finalists are then judged by a Committee comprised of representatives from the Writing Centre, the Centre for Teaching & Learning, representatives from Faculty, and the Student Union.

Please note the judges will be mindful of the academic integrity of the text.

The Committee's decision is final, no correspondence shall be entered into regarding individual competition entries. Only the winners will be notified.

Winners and those that receive honourable mentions will be asked to make their work available on our Webpage as sample essays for future competitions.

Questions?

Email Dr Adeline Cooney at writingcentre@mu.ie with any questions you may have about the contest.

We look forward to reading your essays.

Good luck!!

Criteria for judging essays

2020-2021

1. The writer approaches the theme from a unique perspective

- The writer addresses the theme.
- The writer outlines some relevant issues and takes a stance on the issues outlined.
- The writer's position might be unique, perhaps risky, but...
- ...the writer makes a compelling case for that position, using valid and reliable evidence to support the position taken.

2. Well organised argument

- There is a logical progression of ideas (argumentative/conceptual framework) that supports the position taken.
- There is a clear and consistent focus on the issues raised by the theme/questions.
- There is an absence of irrelevant or extraneous material and repetition.

3. Appeals are compelling

- Appeals are made to an educated general audience.
- Appeals are made to readers' sense of reason, but appeals to other senses are also entertained, such as the readers' sense of what is just, outrageous or immoral. (However, the writer should not assume that the readership is of one mind about what is moral or just or reasonable.)

4. The position taken and the claims made are well-supported

- The writer demonstrates a capacity to consistently relate relevant material (studies, books, interviews, etc.) to the argumentative framework.

5. The writer is respectful of alternative positions

- The defence accounts for alternate views but provides a compelling rebuttal in support of the writer's own position.

6. Grammatically and mechanically sound

- The written style (grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence construction) does not inhibit the reader's understanding of the argument or its claims, the support offered to justify the claims or any other warrants or grounds that justify the claims and the conclusions.

7. First place is distinguished from the runners up by:

- The degree to which a persuasive original argument has been developed.
- The depth and sophistication of the argument's framework.
- The level of familiarity with/understanding of relevant issues and implications.

These criteria are used by kind permission of the Regional Writing Centre, University of Limerick.

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Cover Sheet

Name:

Student ID:

Email:

Year of study:

Discipline:

Essay Title:

I confirm that this essay is my own work, is original, has not been submitted elsewhere or published previously, and that all sources have been acknowledged appropriately.

Please be aware that submitted essays may be checked with plagiarism-detection software

Signature:

Date: