

2026 Essay Prize for Foundation Doctors



Guidance and Regulations

1. Eligibility

1.1 The competition is open to all those **currently** in a UK Foundation Programme (F1, F2) at the time of submission, as well as those who have completed the UK Foundation Programme but have not yet achieved an OST1 post.

1.2 Entries are invited on the essay:

"Ocular manifestations of systemic disease in clinical practice"

2. Essay submission

2.1 Candidates must nominate themselves for entry by submitting a short essay on the specified topic to the judging panel. Essays will be marked against the published criteria and the 3 essays with the highest average marks will be awarded 1st, 2nd and 3rd place.

2.2 Essays must be made to the following email address: education@rcophth.ac.uk.

2.3 Only essays that are submitted via email, in Word format to the published email address will be accepted.

2.3.1 Submissions made in PDF format will not be accepted.

2.3.2 Submission over the word count will not be accepted.

2.4 Essays must be up to **1500 words**.

2.5.1 The word limit does not include the published title/questions of reference.

2.5.2 References should be presented as footnotes and endnotes; references presented in alternative formats may be considered to be part of the limit.

2.5 It would be preferred if essays were presented in Calibri 12.

3. Judges and judging criteria

3.1 There will be a panel of judges, to be nominated by the Education Committee.

3.2 At all stages the panel will be looking for both clinical and general knowledge of ophthalmology and original critical thinking.

3.3 Plagiarism and/or use of AI will result in disqualification.

3.4 At all stages, candidates should ensure that they consider the principles of equality and diversity in both their writing and presentation.

3.4.1 The panel will be looking for evidence of thorough understanding of the subject area.

3.5 The panel will mark essays against the following criteria:

Style of writing

Punctuation, spelling and grammar

Content/understanding

Originality

3.6 It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure submission has been received by the College by **9.00am on Tuesday 1 September 2026**. The Education and Training Department will email to confirm receipt of applications within 5 working days of submission.

3.7 The judges' decision is final. The College will not enter into discussion regarding decisions taken.

4. The Prize

4.1 The winners of 2nd and 3rd place will be presented with certificates, and the 1st prize will have free entry into the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Annual Congress May 2026 to present work as a poster and will be invited to attend the 2026 Admission Ceremony.

4.2 The winners would be expected to provide the full text of their essay for publication on the College website.

4.3 No prize will be awarded if a sufficient standard is not reached.

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