

The Lex: lead Group

Lawyers for Economic Advancement and Development

Lex:lead Annual Essay Competition 2026

Up to 15 awards of US\$500 apiece

Announcement

Lex:lead is happy to again offer an essay competition for students in eligible developing countries. Up to 15 one-time awards of US\$500 will be awarded in February 2027 to winning essays submitted by **31 December 2026** answering: **How can artificial intelligence (AI) be regulated to reduce poverty and support economic development?**

Eligibility

Applicants should register by **31 October 2026** online at www.lex-lead.net. Those meeting the eligibility criteria will be assigned a registration number (**Identification Number**) which they are to use with no other identifying information in their 5-page essay submitted by **31 December 2026**.

Eligible Countries: Asia: (1) Afghanistan; (2) Bangladesh; (3) Cambodia; (4) Kiribati; (5) Laos; (6) Myanmar (Burma); (7) Nepal; (8) Papua New Guinea; (9) Solomon Islands; (10) Timor-Leste; (11) Tuvalu; (12) Yemen; Americas: (13) Haiti; Africa: (14) Angola; (15) Benin; (16) Burkina Faso; (17) Burundi; (18) Central African Republic; (19) Chad; (20) Comoros; (21) DR Congo; (22) Djibouti; (23) Eritrea; (24) Ethiopia; (25) Gambia; (26) Ghana; (27) Guinea; (28) Guinea Bissau; (29) Lesotho; (30) Liberia; (31) Madagascar; (32) Malawi; (33) Mali; (34) Mauritania; (35) Mozambique; (36) Niger; (37) Rwanda; (38) Senegal; (39) Sierra Leone; (40) Somalia; (41) South Sudan; (42) Sudan; (43) Tanzania; (44) Togo; (45) Uganda; (46) Zambia; (47) Zimbabwe. **Eligibility:** *Finalists* will need to show **citizenship** and **current enrolment** at an accredited educational institution in one of these countries with at least one law class to be confirmed for an award. *Registrants need only self-certify.*

Essays: Essays must be in English, typed and attached as a PDF for a total of not more than five (5) pages. All work submitted must be the applicant's own, original work with clear attribution where other sources are consulted; *use of AI is not permitted even if sourced*. Submissions must be made using the Identification Number assigned at registration and contain no information that could lead to independent identification of the applicant. Essays must be submitted using the email address provided at registration by the candidate to contact@lex-lead.org by **31 December 2026**. Further details given over page.

Award

Essays submitted by the deadline will be independently assessed by judges from a panel of experts (see website) and awards announced in **February 2027**. Note that award cheques are generally made to the applicant's educational institution for use toward the student's tuition and/or books less any applicable bank conversion fees and/or taxes. The winning essays may be published.

Good luck!

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Instructions: When registered, complete your answer with the Identification Number we provide on the top of each page and return the essay to us by email **1-31** and not later than **31 December 2026**. Recall that the Identification Number you are assigned is to be the **only** means of identifying you in your essay (**do not** include your name or information about yourself in the essay).

Essays must be typed in English for a total of not more than five (5) pages including footnotes, sent as a PDF file. Page size must be standard (8"x11" or A4) using this page as a guide. Font size may not be smaller than 10 point and applicants are advised to use a font such as Times New Roman that is recognised by a large number of software programs.

All work submitted must be your own, original work. You may answer the question in any way you wish but we are looking for *insight* and *ideas* that *solve the problem posed*; not a review of academic literature on the subject. If you consult any other source in developing your argument you must make sure that quotes or other citations (including paraphrased or interview materials) are clearly identified or your essay may be disqualified. **In other words, if the idea is not your own you must cite where you found it, e.g., with book title, author, and page number or interview subject and date, in sufficient detail for the citation to be found and verified.** Use of AI is not permitted even where sourced.

Please include the following statement **in your email** when you submit your essay:

Certification:

I, Candidate No. 26/□□□□□□□□
attest that the attached essay is my own original work and that it is in no part arising from any consultation except where full and appropriate attribution is clearly given.

[Include your full name and the date you send the essay]

Process: Essays received by the deadline are assigned to teams of judges from the panel (at least two) who each independently evaluate approximately 10 of the essays (up to about 100 pages) and return scores to us that are averaged using the mathematical mean to determine finalists. For example, if one judge gives an essay 85/100 and a second judge gives it 75/100, the overall score will be $85+75\div2$ or 80/100 (80%).

Judges are given guidelines that suggest that (1) an **excellent** essay (well-articulated with a clear understanding of the problem posed and offering an insightful solution) may be awarded between 90-100 out of 100 points; (2) a **good** essay with some of the elements but lacking others be given between 80-89/100 points; (3) an **average** essay that competently addresses the issue but has significant weaknesses, e.g., in the solution posed, be awarded between 70-79/100; and (4) weaker essays that inadequately address the question be awarded fewer points (e.g., between 60-69/100 for essays of **limited** merit; between 50-59/100 for essays that are significantly **flawed** with basic issues analysing the problem posed; and below 50/100 for essays that are **fundamentally deficient** in providing a sufficient response). Notwithstanding the guidelines given, the judges' assessments are dispositive even if they do not follow these criteria and finalists determined on the basis of the judges' views.

Although the judges' assessments are a critical part of the process, note that an overriding consideration is our **Compliance Committee** review which also considers the essays received without information about the candidate and disqualifies essays that are not the student's 'own, original work.' Where, for example, a significant part of an essay is taken from another source, and/or if material is not clearly and accurately attributed, the Compliance Committee may recommend it for disqualification and the student so notified. The essay may also be disqualified if the student includes his/her name or other

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Finalists are determined on the basis of the highest average scores allocated (depending on how many awards the group has available that year) where the essay is not disqualified, and the student contacted that they are being considered for an award. **Awards** are then made where the finalist and his/her educational institution pass the necessary clearances and upon conclusion of a **Questionnaire and Undertaking** with the educational institution for their due administration of the funds awarded. Where

Lex:lead retains the intellectual property rights to the essays received and reserves the right not to make awards in the event of fraud, applicant failure to meet competition criteria, or if the quality of essays submitted is not of the desired standard. Lex:lead may also choose not to make more than 25% of any year's awards to any one country.

(Please submit your essay in this format on up to five standard pages each bearing your Identification Number.)

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