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FESTINA LENTE ESSAY AWARD

Candidate Guide and Marking Criteria 2024



This Candidate Guide and Marking Criteria is intended to support your work in submitting an essay for the Festina Lente Essay Award.

Deadline: 12pm (midday) Monday 25th March 2024

Please read this document in full before completing the cover sheet and submitting your essay. Speak to the specific Festina Lente Essay Award contact person in your school before submitting.

There is a fee of £60.00 to receive the official award, grading, written feedback and a uniquely numbered certificate.

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All information is accurate at the time of publishing. For more information do send an email to our official Festina Lente Essay Award address or see our website. We also upload videos to YouTube, via our channel.

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1. WHAT IS THE FESTINALENTE ESSAY AWARD?

The Festina Lente Essay Award is a service designed and delivered by the Oxford-based educational services company, called Relaxed Snail. "Festina Lente" is the Latin translation of their motto "speed up slowly", which reflects Relaxed Snail's ethos of superlative long-term preparation for higher education study. They procure the services of graduates from the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge and other Russell Group universities to facilitate the running of their programmes and awards. Relaxed Snail supports UK home and international students in British boarding schools and is an official Supporting Member of BAISIS (British Association of Independent Schools with International Students).



The Festina Lente Essay Award

is an opportunity for you to stretch your academic abilities and showcase your passion by producing a 1,500-word university-style essay.

Competitions and awards such as these are a brilliant way to explore a subject outside the confines of your classroom. Moreover, the experience of writing an essay for an external competition and award outside of school offers you the chance to demonstrate to universities that you have the skills and motivation to think independently and participate in high-level writing.

We cannot promise that the research, planning and execution which underpins the writing of this essay will be easy (and nor would we want to!). However, what we can promise is that producing an essay to the criteria we have established will enrich your knowledge about your preferred subject and help to separate yourself from the competition when applying to competitive universities. We also hope the experience will improve your writing skills and give you a sneak peek of university-level learning.



The Festina Lente Essay Award is open to students from all subject interests who are in Years 12 (or equivalent). By "subject" we recommend that you choose a degree area that you hope to pursue at university – e.g. Medicine, Engineering, Economics, Law, Psychology, etc. – and choose a question that is relevant within the field. After writing your essay, as your questions will be linked to your future university applications, this will be a great experience to reflect on in your personal statement, UCAS reference and potential university interview.

This guide is designed to give you the information you need to successfully submit your essay and achieve the Festina Lente Essay Award. The award is provided to candidates who score a Grade C or above.

2. EXAMPLES OF ESSAY QUESTIONS AND HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN

After you have identified your subject interests then you can isolate specific topics in order to create an essay question. As well as being original, we want your essays to be evaluative. Therefore, we would recommend that you adapt one of the following phrases to be part of your question:



As you are already interested in specific topics and subject areas, the inspiration for choosing an essay question is essentially all around you. Therefore, the Festina Lente Essay Award is open to all subjects and university course interests. Consider what you have read and which events/theories/opinions/factors allow for a lot of debate within the field of your interest. The key to creating your own essay question is to ensure that it is not too broad but yet focused enough to allow you to develop an argument. This is a delicate balance to master but at the same time do not hesitate to explore and be inventive. Take risks.

Creating your own evaluative essay question is not as daunting as it may seem as you can find a multitude of possible questions from what you have experienced or are already reading. For example, let's say that your interest is in Business or Economics and you happen to be reading James Suzman's book, published in 2020, called "Work: A history of how we spend our time". The book starts by discussing the fourth industrial revolution of

In addition to creating your own question, there is also the option for you to choose one of our pre-made questions designed for the Festina Lente Essay Award (see pages 6 - 11)

new technology and how that may change the job market. Immediately, there you have the stimuli to produce a question. For instance, maybe you could ask "To what extent will the fourth industrial revolution be more transformative than its predecessors?" or possibly you may want to "Compare and contrast the strengths and limitations of the fourth industrial revolution". As you can see, there are a lot of possibilities and this is just inspired by the first page of a 412-page book!

In addition to having an evaluative opening to your essay question, it is also important to make use of key terminology (e.g. “fourth industrial revolution”) and other relevant dates or theories in order to make your question clear, detailed and specific. In addition to giving you the chance to create your own question, we have also listed some subject-specific examples below, divided by subject areas, which you can lift directly or modify.



ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Are the study of human remains ethical? Compare and contrast the data we have from human remains with other forms of material culture from the archaeological record.
2. What is the “Out of Africa” hypothesis and to what extent can we be certain that this is an accurate depiction of modern humans’ evolutionary origin?
3. Is the ethnographic analysis of a culture a true representation of their reality? Discuss.



ARCHITECTURE

1. Identify several problems that architects have to overcome and compare and contrast the best ways to tackle such problems. (Problems can be broad, e.g. materials, geographical limitations, or software).
2. “Architects are simply engineers”. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
3. Should or should not vernacular architecture be classified as purely functional?



ASTRONOMY AND PLANETARY SCIENCE

1. In the 1970s it was theorised that the Earth’s core formed as the planet came together. To what extent does our contemporary view of the science confirm this?
2. As indicated by Wilcoski et al.’s (2022) paper, published in the Planetary Science Journal, how plausible is the claim that ice on the Moon may have come from ancient volcanos?
3. The James Webb Space Telescope is a hugely ambitious project, costing \$10 billion. Will the answers it uncovers rewrite our understanding of the cosmos?



BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

1. Ray Dalio, author of “Principles: Life and work” (2017), believes that installing an “idea meritocracy” is the best way to facilitate decision-making in business. Discuss.
2. As articulated in Simon Sinek’s 2014 book, should leaders eat last?
3. What is the biggest issue facing business in the digital era?



CHEMISTRY AND BIOCHEMISTRY

1. What have we learned from chemical experimentations and to what extent have they influenced the world in which we live?
2. Identify some of the chemical changes found in human bodies related to the process of aging and critically evaluate the surrounding research.
3. Compare and contrast evidence for the lipid raft hypothesis.



CLASSICS

1. Are the Iliad and the Odyssey the product of multiple or a single author? Discuss.
2. Athenian democracy prioritised people's welfare more than current democracies. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Elaborate.
3. Clytemnestra and Electra are two of the main female characters in Greek tragedy. Compare and contrast the two.



COMPUTER SCIENCE

1. Bitcoin consumes 13TWh per year. Around the power consumption of Egypt. Explain the environmental impacts of cryptocurrency mining if Bitcoin alone consumes 0.29% of the world's annual energy production and 0.59% of its electricity output. As cryptocurrency and the blockchain expand, what problems might we face in the longer term?
2. Machine Learning in Medicine has revolutionised developments in pharmaceutical and biotechnology manufacturing. How was machine learning employed in developing an understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic and what can you predict about the ways that artificial Intelligence can be used by people addressing viral variants?
3. Web 3.0 changes everything making people able to interact directly with each other without institutions. What are the promises of Decentralized Autonomous Organisation and will it only work as a positive development for a very few people?



DENTISTRY

1. Outline and critique the benefits of stem cell research and its application to dentistry.
2. To what extent can second-hand tobacco smoke be a risk factor for cavities in children?
3. What do we know about phantom bite syndrome (PBS)? Evaluate the current treatment available.



EARTH SCIENCES (GEOLOGY) AND GEOGRAPHY

1. "An emerging critique of the technology sector is that it promotes inequalities rather than mitigates them." (Jennifer Clark, 2020). With the use of examples, to what extent do you agree?
2. Explain the process of fracking and explore the contention that it offers the most viable solution for energy security in the future.
3. Alfred Wegener is sometimes hailed by scholars as the father of Geology. With the integration of examples and geological science within your answer, to what extent do you feel this is the case, and how far are Wegener's ideas still influencing the disciplinary field today?



EDUCATION

1. To what extent does Education utilise research from developmental psychology and to what extent is this useful?
2. Is home-schooling better, worse, or the same as traditional schooling?
3. The COVID-19 pandemic ignited the use of virtual learning. Do you think that technology, such as online teaching, is the way forward?



ENGINEERING

1. To what extent does Madhavan's (2015) book, "Think like an Engineer: Inside the minds that are changing our lives" provide readers with a holistic interpretation of how broad the field of engineering truly is?
2. Critically evaluate the benefits which engineering can bring to medical technology.
3. With the use of case studies, debate whether ethical hacking is ethical.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1. Critically evaluate the role in which both semantics and pragmatics aid our understanding of things.
2. Had Ernest Hemingway not experienced armed conflict would he be the same author?
3. To what extent does contemporary literature accurately portray the reality of coming of age?



FINE ART AND DESIGN

1. What impacts will the arrival of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) have on artists, galleries, auction houses and collectors? Do you think that NFTs are the future of fine art?
2. Explain the nature and developments of fine artists in photography. What do the latest trends in fine art photography tell us about the future of photography as an art form?
3. British Vogue magazine has always presented exciting developments in innovative couture and high fashion. To what extent has current Vogue Editor Edward Enninful's vision of a British aesthetic opened the door to a greater appreciation of the value of diversity?



HISTORY

1. To what extent can the study of the past help us understand the challenges of the future?
2. Which leader was the most significant in human history? Compare and contrast the available evidence.
3. Are primary sources more useful than secondary sources?



LAW

1. What separates the English legal system compared to others and to what extent is this the fairest system in existence?
2. As seen in the recent pandemic of COVID-19, many employees have been able to work from home. Should the ability to work from home, or flexible working requests, be a 'day one' right for all employees?
3. The UK voted to leave the European Union on 23rd June 2016. To what extent has Brexit helped or hindered foreign investment? Include information about how Brexit has impacted the legal sector.



MEDICINE AND BIOSCIENCES

1. To what extent is vaccination the key in fighting viral infections in humans?
2. Embryonic stem cell research remains an ethical dilemma. Compare and contrast arguments in favour and against.
3. Are genetically modified foods helpful or harmful to our society?



MODERN LANGUAGES

1. Modern Foreign Languages is an overhang of a gone age. We live in a modern society where a hundred or more languages and cultures can be accessed by the population of the average schoolchild and their peers. How would you modernise MFL to make it more useful and relevant?
2. Currently 56% of Germans can speak English well enough to have a conversation. It's rare to meet recent German high school graduates without fluent English skills. Examine why German language education is doing better than UK MFL and what advantages we would get from a linguistically fluent multi-lingual workforce.
3. Spanish can make a case for being a language of the future. It has excellent academics in all disciplines on four continents. What major advantages could fluency in the Spanish language and culture create for a well-prepared graduate?



MUSIC

1. Has music composition built upon or departed from the work of previous composers and in what ways is this significant?
2. Is there any relationship between music composition and art of the same period (classical, impressionism, modern, etc.)?
3. Music theory and composition has been compared to mathematics and languages, are these fair or useful comparisons? Why or why not?



ORIENTAL STUDIES

1. In understanding civilisations which are different from those of the West, one can look through the lens of a range of inquiries. These can include, for example, modern social studies, history, archaeology, linguistics and literature, religion and philosophy. In your opinion, to best understand a civilisation, which single lens is the most useful?
2. There is some evidence to suggest that Chinese flutes have Indian provenance. Critically evaluate arguments for and against.
3. Research has indicated that parts of the West and East can be categorised as 'individualist' and 'collectivist' cultures. Compare and contrast the evidence for this.



PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

1. "The greatest happiness for the greatest number". Discuss the underlying principles of this idea and whether you think this is the best way to govern a society.
2. How does first-past-the-post voting work and should there be electoral reform?
3. Does increasing tax allow for more government spend?



PHYSICS AND MATHEMATICS

1. Archimedes got pretty close to developing differentiation and integration nearly 2,000 years before Newton and Leibnitz. Had he managed it, what impact could that have had on the history of mankind?
2. Mathematics are used in physics, but at the same time, physics often leads to new developments in mathematics. Discuss.
3. Magnetism is one of the most fascinating forces of nature. Currently, what are its main technological applications? What do you think its applications and limitations may be in the near future?



PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

1. To what extent does Milgram's research suggest that humans are obedient to authority due to situational factors?
2. Is the study of non-human animals ethical in psychological research and to what extent can we apply such findings to humans?
3. "Psychology is not a science". Compare and contrast arguments for and against.



THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

1. If religious experiences are different for different people does this support or refute the existence of religious claims?
2. To what extent has William Paley's (1802) watchmaker analogy been countered by modern science?
3. How have different religions dealt with the problem of evil? Theologically critique three examples.



VETERINARY SCIENCES

1. What is the link between euthanasia and lameness in horses? To what extent is euthanasia the best course of action?
2. If an owner denies vaccination to their pet should the pet still be treated for associated illnesses?
3. Out of four key contributions of Veterinary Science (animal welfare; species conservation; biomedical research; the role of pets in society), in your opinion, which contribution is the most impactful?



3. WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN A SUCCESSFUL ESSAY

It is important that your writing is clear, detailed and original. Moreover, we are looking for an organised essay structure which has an easily identifiable beginning, middle and end (introduction, main body and conclusion). Often the ‘hamburger analogy’ comes to mind – where the two pieces of the bread bun hold the juicy centre together! In other words, there needs to be a consistent thread/line of argument holding the essay together. A useful technique to help achieve this is to outline what you’ll be discussing (as well as what your opinions are) in the introduction and then return to these points throughout the main body and round off in your conclusion.

We are also wanting to ensure that you have correctly referenced your sources – books, articles, websites, videos (and even personal communication!) as well as all other forms of information which is not your own needs to be identified. You can do this through having an in-text citation, for example “Suzman (2020)” and then having a full bibliography/ references section at the end of the essay (e.g. “Suzman, J. (2020). *Work: A history of how we spend our time*. UK: Bloomsbury Circus.”). There are different forms of recognised referencing styles. For the Festina Lente Essay Award, we accept either the Harvard system or APA (American Psychological Association). These are two commonly used systems at university.

We are judging these essays in the same way as would be done at university and referencing is an important feature of university-style writing. If you do not credit the specific author of the information and therefore make this look like your own ideas – whether intentionally or by accident – this is known as plagiarism and is taken extremely seriously. All essays at university, at the time of submission, are passed through anti-plagiarism software to identify whether material has been copied and paste or edited with similarity to material found online and in books. We also use anti-plagiarism software when marking essays for the Festina Lente Essay Award.

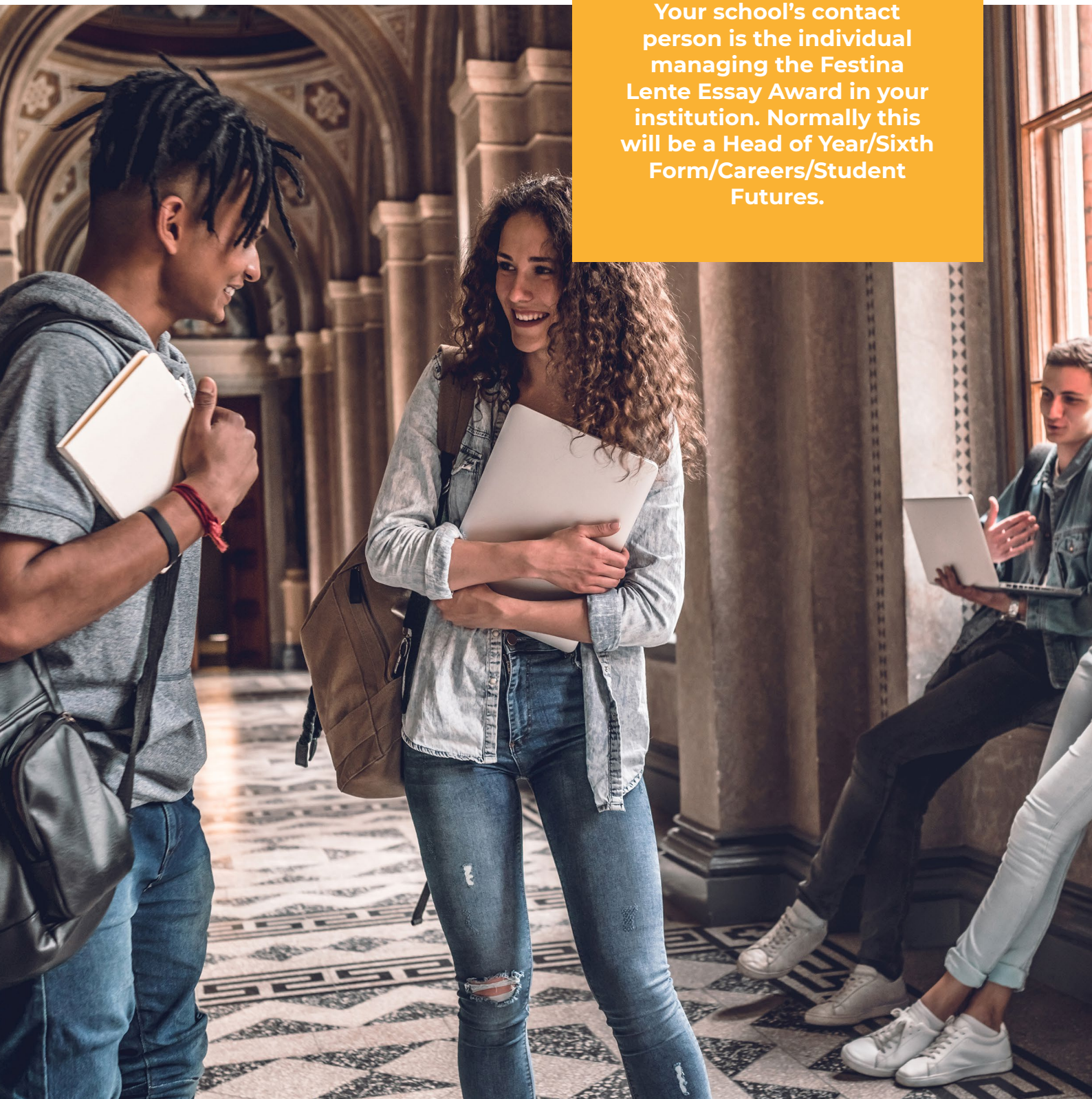
See the Standardised Marking Criteria (on page 16) for more specific information about how your essay will be graded. Table 1, below, also has some useful guidance for what you should and should not be doing to construct a successful essay.

What you should do for your essay	What you should not do for your essay
Have a clear structure (start, middle and end)	Have a confusing and muddled essay structure
Use a recognised referencing style (Harvard or APA for the Festina Lente Essay Award)	Do not correctly reference and leave open the chances of committing plagiarism
Outline multiple viewpoints and be able to construct an evaluative overtone (support your arguments)	Only identify one viewpoint or have a very unbalanced and unnuanced argument
Produce an original essay which contains your own synthesis of research, unique arguments and style	Be unoriginal (replicating common viewpoints and writing style) and lack a thorough incorporation of research
Correctly identifying and using subject-specific key terminology	Not using relevant subject-specific key terminology
Sticking to the specified wordcount (see the Standardised Marking Criteria)	Not being able to write within a wordcount

Table 1: What candidates should and should not do when producing successful essays.

There are plenty of high-quality resources available to help you reference and perfect your essay writing skills. Examples of book series we recommend include the Palgrave/Macmillan Study Guides and also the Bloomsbury Study Skills books. They have titles such as “How to Write Better Essays (5th edition)” by Bryan Greetham (2022) and “Cite them right: The essential referencing guide (12th edition)” by Richard Pears and Graham Shields (2022). The company who designed and manages the Festina Lente Essay Award, called Relaxed Snail, have also produced their own book titled “A graphic guide to producing the Festina Lente and other essays” by Christopher Ward (2024). Relaxed Snail also visit schools and provides essay writing workshops. If any of this support is of interest, please ask your school’s contact person.

Your school's contact person is the individual managing the Festina Lente Essay Award in your institution. Normally this will be a Head of Year/Sixth Form/Careers/Student Futures.



4. HINTS AND TIPS FROM OUR EXAMINERS

Essays are examined by our highly qualified team. All our Examiners have obtained both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from a range of prestigious universities. To be an Examiner you either have to be educated to doctorate level, be a current doctoral student at Oxbridge, or have substantial experience in a competitive career.

A few of our Examiners have provided some useful hints and tips based on their experiences of essay writing at university. Please see below! Note that you should also read the Standardised Marking Criteria and Grade Boundaries on [page 16](#) for specific information about how your essay will be graded.



Dr Clodomiro (Miro) Cafolla

Miro completed his medical studies in Italy (at the Tor Vergata University of Rome), before then undertaking a four-year integrated master's degree in Physics, at Durham University, followed by a fully-funded Physics PhD also at Durham.

"Independently from the specific topic, writing a good essay is often very similar to telling a good story or producing a good movie. You want your readers (or audience) to keep on eagerly reading (or listening to) your essay (story). Thus, your introduction needs to be catchy and immediately grab the reader's attention. This can be done defining the main topic you will be discussing, and then its relevance – just answer the question: why do we care? For physics or engineering, it could be relevant for its technologically applications; for history and archaeology, it may revolutionise our understanding of a past civilisation. The next step is to illustrate any open questions or crucial problems related to the main topic. It is when, in a story, your main characters happen to experience some issues. You will then go to the core of your essay presenting your main points and how these may help answer any unsolved problems. This is when, in a movie, the main characters fight against their enemies. Finally, conclude summoning up the key points, but without exactly repeating the same words – in a movie, there is usually no need to show one scene more than once! Make sure to stick to the main topic without going off on a tangent, however interesting this may be- if you watch a horror movie, you expect to see the main characters fighting against the monster, rather than worrying about getting a better job and overcoming financial issues.

Of course, there are some important differences between writing an academic essay and directing a movie- bear in mind that you are writing for an academic audience! First, in an essay, you need to support any claims with adequate reasoning and references. Furthermore, the style of your essay will significantly impact the perception of your ideas. An informal and sloppy style may make things less factual, and may generate confusion when using non-specific terms. Here are a few tips on what to avoid:

- **Using verb contractions. E.g. they're should be they are**
- **Repeating the same word within the same sentence, and using convoluted expressions.**

Rather than: "Among all the forces in nature, gravity is one of the forces, Go for Gravity is one of the four forces of nature."

Dr Dan Casey

Dan read Geography, at the University of Cambridge. He then went on to complete a master's in Environmental Change and International Development, followed by a PhD, both at the University of Sheffield.



“Originality is key and for the highest marks examiners love to see this. This can be achieved in several ways. For instance, one of the most straightforward manners in which to do this includes discussing some of the latest publications in your essay (the more recent the better) or relating some of your ideas to the real world and current affairs. This shows the examiner that you're well read, able to comment on things at the forefront of your field, and going beyond the prescribed syllabus. A more sophisticated element of originality also comes within your conclusion. A lot of people often see a conclusion as simply a summary of what they've read. However, it is far more than that, and some would often say one of the most important aspects of an essay, so it shouldn't be neglected. At the end of a conclusion it's often a good idea in a sentence or two to mention something unique, which you think is important for the field but you haven't had the opportunity to discuss. Think about how you may take your essay further - maybe you've only focused on one case-study example, but to be thorough it would be good to do a comparative study with another, or perhaps you've only considered the short-term ideas related to a question and not been able to consider the long-term, possibly a new recent event has happened which you feel is important but there's not enough research to give you the authority to talk about it. Mentioning something like this shows the examiner you are thinking beyond the confines of your question and understand things in a holistic manner. Best of luck!”

Dr Laura Gonzalez

Laura read Biotechnology at the University Pablo de Olavide, Seville. She then completed her DPhil, specialising in Interdisciplinary Bioscience, at the University of Oxford.



“The first things to consider to produce a high-quality dissertation or essay are to plan the content, ideas and structure that the essay will follow. For timed works, it is worth protecting around 20 per cent of the time to ensure that the structure and the order of ideas are adequate and logic ones. A good tip is to scribble the resultant structure and logical order on a piece of paper (e.g. supporting diagram or cheat sheet), which will be the skeleton of your dissertation, and have it as a reference to start writing the actual piece. By doing this, you'll secure the natural flow and connection of the different parts of your essay and you'll minimise mistakes that could arise from forgetting pieces you wanted to include in the dissertation or realising in the middle of it that the ideas don't fit well together. Furthermore, a high-quality work needs to include clear ideas and writing, backed by evidence and solid references. Each used reference must have been read, assessed and understood by you, as well as, appropriately acknowledged and cited. As the Festina Lente Essay Award is a piece of coursework rather than a timed essay, you have even more opportunities to engage with the literature before you start writing. It is important to use very professional and adequate language without making the text complex to follow and understand. Avoid overusing phrasal verbs or using slang words and a non-mature vocabulary, as this gives an unprofessional impression. Finally, you must look after not exceeding the established word number limit (1,500 words \pm 10% for this Award).”



Dr Nicola Jones

Nicola read Psychology, at Lancaster University, before then completing a master's in International Disaster Management (MA) and a PhD in Humanitarianism and Conflict (both at the University of Manchester)

“Keep your audience in mind. First, consider who you are speaking to in your essay; who are you trying to convince? What broader literature are you contributing to, e.g., psychology, anthropology, economics, etc.? Knowing this will help you identify relevant literature, situate your essay within wider debates, and build a persuasive argument. Secondly, be upfront about what your argument is and why it is important. An essay that effectively sets out its position from the beginning is more engaging. The reader should always be clear about where the essay is going and should not have to “work out” what your key messages are, or wait until the last paragraph to find out. Think of your essay as having a single theme running through it, and build your discussions around this theme to avoid tangents. This is especially important when you are working within a word limit – make the words count! Thirdly, critically engage with the literature. That is, don't simply provide a summary of other research. You should analyse and show how this research is relevant to your argument. Does it confirm or contradict other literature? How does it relate to your key points? What are its strengths and where are there gaps? Fourth, make sure you reference your work correctly. Finally, proofread your work. It's not always easy to spot your own mistakes so it's a good idea to ask a friend to read it, or you can have your computer read it back to you, which makes it a lot easier to identify spelling and grammar errors.”



Dr Elizabeth Mackintosh

Elizabeth read Theology and Philosophy (BA), followed by a master's in Theology (MA) and a PhD in Philosophy (all studied at Durham University)

“A crucial part of academic writing is writing with ‘intent.’ Academics who mark undergraduate work regularly say that they know from the very first paragraph whether or not an essay will be successful. This is, in part, because they will be able to see from the outset if a thesis position, or line of argument, is present and how the student intends to support such a position. Whilst ‘emergent’ papers (essays which get to the position in the end having reviewed material) can be effective, they are far less impressive than those that are clear about what and how they are going to argue within an essay. This is not to say a student should say ‘in this essay I will do X followed by Y’, but rather they will *show* not tell the examiner their position. I would challenge position W in light of criticism X, and instead would align with the likes of Y who argue for Z. Of course the other reason academics can often tell whether an essay will be successful early on is because technical and subject-specific terms and positions are precisely and effectively used and the writing is clear. A sign of good academic writing is when a student can say things clearly, and there is no need to plough through flowery jargon.”

5. STANDARDISED MARKING CRITERIA AND GRADE BOUNDARIES

The deadline to submit your essay is **12pm on Monday 25th March 2024** (see the “How to submit your essay” section on page 18). All essays need to be within the wordcount of **1,500 words (+/- 10%)**. This means that the maximum number of words that you could write is 1,650 and the lowest is 1,350. Titles, tables, figures and end bibliography/references sections are not included in the wordcount. For essays which go over or under the wordcount, there will be an automatic deduction of four points.

Essays are scored out of 20 points. There are five criteria that examiners are assessing. These criteria are: (1) structure; (2) referencing; (3) evaluative skills; (4) originality; (5) use of key terminology. Table 3, below, further describes what the Examiners are looking for in each of the five criteria. Each criterion is given 1-4 points (therefore, making a possible maximum of 20 points in total). The 1-4 point scale ranges from “Poor” (1 point); “Satisfactory” (2 points); “Good” (3 points); “Excellent” (4 points). Table 2, below, shows the grade boundaries (i.e. how many points are required for each grade). To pass and officially receive the Festina Lente Essay Award, you need to score a Grade C or above. Essays that score lower than a C (a minimum of 10 points in total) will not be awarded.

Note that you also need to correctly reference by citing your sources. For the referencing style, the Festina Lente Essay Award accepts either the **Harvard style** or **APA** (American Psychological Association). For more information on how to reference we recommend that you read **“A graphic guide to producing the Festina Lente and other essays” by Christopher Ward (2024)** or other well-known academic writing help guides. In addition, there are plenty of useful resources online and Relaxed Snail does offer in-school workshops to also assist academic writing and Festina Lente Essay Award preparation.

Grade	No. of points awarded
A*	17-20
A	14-16
B	11-13
C	10-12

Table 2: Grade boundaries (how many points are awarded per grade).

Main aspects of marking to remember:

- You need to submit by the deadline (12pm on Monday 25th March 2024)
- There is a wordcount of 1,500 words (+/- 10%)
- There is a four-point reduction (penalty) for essays which fall outside of the wordcount
- You can use Harvard or APA referencing
- Keep in mind the five criteria that the Examiners are looking for
- The highest score possible is 20/20 points
- Each criterion is scored between 1-4 points (“Poor”; “Satisfactory”; “Good”; “Excellent”)
- You need a Grade C or above in order to receive the Festina Lente Essay Award



Criteria	Description
Structure	Here we are looking for a clear layout – a start, middle and end. Have a well-considered introduction, main body and conclusion. It is important to guide the reader: let them know what you will be covering and so to some extent they will be expecting and be able to follow what will be about to come. Make use of paragraphs. You could also consider adding tables, figures and indented quotations. Remember to also have a bibliography/references section at the end. You can have a separate title page or simply have the title at the top of the page and then start with the introduction immediately underneath.
Referencing	There needs to be the use of both in-text citations and then a full bibliography/references section at the end. It is important to avoid any possibility for plagiarism – correctly identify where each piece of information originated. There are plenty of resources which can help you with this (examples include academic writing and referencing help books/guides and Relaxed Snail school workshops). There is also a good book series which has been adapted to a website too, which can be found on www.citethemrightonline.com
Evaluative skills	Being able to describe key theories and other forms of relevant information is an important skill in itself. Your essay should definitely do this. However, doing this alone is not being critical. To engage with the essay question you need to grapple with multiple viewpoints and assertions to weigh up and then support your own nuanced view. Incorporate a range of sources, show multiple sides of an argument and interrogate these to the extent where you've shown the reader that you have understood the points and are able to think independently by then critically answering the essay question at hand. You may want to separate different viewpoints into paragraphs. Exercising evaluative skills is a high-level ability and one which is extremely important when at university.
Originality	If you ate the exact same meal every day, considering the vast number of options in the world, you may be slightly board. It is the same with essays – the questions and topics may be similar (or even the same) but each essay must be unique. Achieve this by engaging the reader with your own writing style and syntheses of the academic literature. Use the sources to help bring out your own opinions and assessment of the data. Moreover, you may want to include a table or figure in your work to provide some further stimuli for your reader. Examiners want to learn from what you have researched and – without losing the academic tone of the essay – be entertained! Consider also using other writing techniques to hook the reader, such as rhetorical questions.
Use of key terminology	All subject areas have their own relevant key terminology. To show an understanding of your subject area it is important to incorporate some of this terminology. Remember that it is also important to be able to guide your reader. Therefore, if a specific term or theory is complex, break this down and define what is meant. If you are using a definition (either a direct quotation or paraphrasing) do not forget to reference!

Table 3: The five criteria used to mark the Festina Lente Essay Award.

6. HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY

Writing an essay for this Award is designed to be an exciting and rewarding experience. Students may differ in how much time they devote to the planning and writing process. This could be something you'd like to do over your school's winter holidays/Christmas period or during a half term. Either way, whilst you will dedicate time to the physical writing, make sure to factor in enough time to plan (and read).

New for 2023-24 submissions, you now also have the option to pay your £60.00 fee directly on our website. You will then be emailed with payment confirmation as well as your UCN.

In order to assist your planning and provide information on how to submit your essay for the Festina Lente Essay Award, see our **10-step process below**.

1. Read this guide ('Candidate Guide and Marking Criteria 2024') in full.
2. Think about your career and university aspirations. Select an essay question from this guide or create your own.
3. At this stage do inform your school's contact person that you will be submitting an essay for the Festina Lente Essay Award. They will then give you a unique candidate number (UCN), a cover sheet (which will be submitted alongside your essay) and also liaise with you to confirm payment. Information about fees can be found on [page 19](#).
4. Start to plan and research for your question. Seek extra guidance if useful (e.g. your school teacher, essay writing help books and requesting a Relaxed Snail workshop for your school).
5. Remind yourself of the marking criteria as you begin to write and finish your essay (we would recommend that you go through multiple drafts before finalising).
6. Ensure that your essay has no identifiable information (i.e. does not include your name or school). Ensure that your unique candidate number (UCN) is included at the top of your essay and is also on your cover sheet.
7. Submit your essay and cover sheet (as a separate document) by emailing these two documents back to your school's contact person on or before the deadline of 12pm (midday) Monday 25th March 2024. Essays and the cover sheet can be submitted either as a Word document or PDF.
8. Your school's contact person will then provide us with your essay and cover sheet. Payment will also go through your school (discuss with your contact person).
9. We will provide your feedback and certificate (if awarded with a Grade C or above) to your school electronically, who will then provide this to you. Feedback will be provided on Monday 22nd July 2024.
10. Review your feedback and consider how you can incorporate the Festina Lente Essay Award into your university application (e.g. personal statement, UCAS reference and interview).

7. FEES

Submitting your essay for the Festina Lente Essay Award will cost a total of £60.00. Each candidate will then receive:

- Comprehensive written feedback from our Examiners (a section on 'what went well' and a section on 'even better if'). There will also be information about how you performed against all five assessment criteria.
- The feedback document will also include the total score out of 20 and the grade achieved.
- Those who gain a Grade C or above will also receive a signed certificate with their full name, score and unique candidate number (UCN)

There is the chance for your school to purchase an electronic copy of our e-book "A graphic guide to producing the Festina Lente and other essays" by Christopher Ward (2024).

Relaxed Snail also runs essay writing workshops in preparation for the Festina Lente Essay Award. Our total fee for submitting an essay and receiving feedback/the certificate is £60.00.

Also consider any other costs, if, for example, you were purchasing your own books and academic papers. Do check with your school to see whether they already have school-wide subscriptions to peer-reviewed journals and online libraries. This will help reduce the cost or even eliminate for any wider reading.



8. TERMS AND CONDITIONS



- You must read this guide ('Candidate Guide and Marking Criteria 2024') before submitting your essay.
- Payment will be accepted/organised by your school.
- The full fee to submit your essay, receive marking and feedback and obtain the award of a certificate (with a Grade C or above) is £60.00.
- Essays must also be submitted alongside a cover sheet. We cannot accept essays without this. Documents can be either in Word or PDF. We do not accept other formats.
- Essays are marked anonymously (Examiners will only know your UCN).
- Our Examiners do receive thorough training and have access to support and detailed marking criteria. Moreover, essays also go through a secondary marking process to check fairness across the board. Therefore, we cannot fulfil any requests for remark.
- As there is a wide period of time to submit your essay (between the start of your academic year and the deadline of 12pm on Monday 25th March 2024), we cannot provide extensions and do not have a process to consider extenuating circumstances.
- We do use anti-plagiarism software. Essays which have clear signs of plagiarism cannot be marked and fees are non-refundable. Your school will inevitably be notified and provided with any evidence of plagiarism found (if they request this).
- We do not recommend this, however, we do allow candidates to submit more than one essay if they so choose. Submission costs will still be £60.00 per essay and you will receive individualised feedback for each essay.
- Once submitting your essay, you consent for us to keep this example of work and possibly use sections/the entirety for the purposes of Examiner training and/or to publish as a learning resource for other students at any time. We also plan to publish an anthology of the 2024 essays and by submitting you also consent for your essay to possibly be published. We will not use any identifying information. (Essays for the anthology will only be selected if they pass with a Grade C or above).
- Whilst any student who receives a Grade C or above will officially obtain the Festina Lente Essay Award, we will also be selecting three finalists (first, second and third place). Those who are finalists will hear from us via their school. We will also, if you later consent, include a section about you and your essay and publish this through a number of platforms. Prizes will also be provided for all finalists.
- We will never normally contact you directly. Communication will go through your school. We will, however, respond to emails and also reach out to specific students if requested/consented by schools.
- The date for students to receive feedback, following their essay submission, is Monday 22nd July 2024. Whilst we will try to ensure that all essays and certifications are sent to schools by this date, there may be some delays due to the significant number of submissions we may receive.
- Under the Data Protection (Charges and Information) Regulations 2018, Relax Snail Ltd. pays an annual data protection fee to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

9. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Why do I have a unique candidate number (UCN)?

A UCN allows us to track your essay and link your documentation without providing your name or school to the Examiner. This number can also be used to subsequently verify feedback sheets and certificates. To use such methods for anonymisation, such as a UCN, is common practice within university.

What kind of feedback will I receive for my essay?

All essays will be marked and the feedback sheet will contain a score out of 20; letter grade; a breakdown of performance amongst our five assessment criteria; showing whether a penalty was applied for wordcount; a paragraph detailing what went well in the essay; another paragraph on ways the essay could be improved.

Will I receive a certificate?

All candidates will receive a feedback sheet. Not all will receive a certificate automatically (only those who pass by obtaining a Grade C or above will receive a certificate). Having a certificate shows that you have successfully completed and therefore been given the Award.

How can I use the Festina Lente Essay Award in my university application?

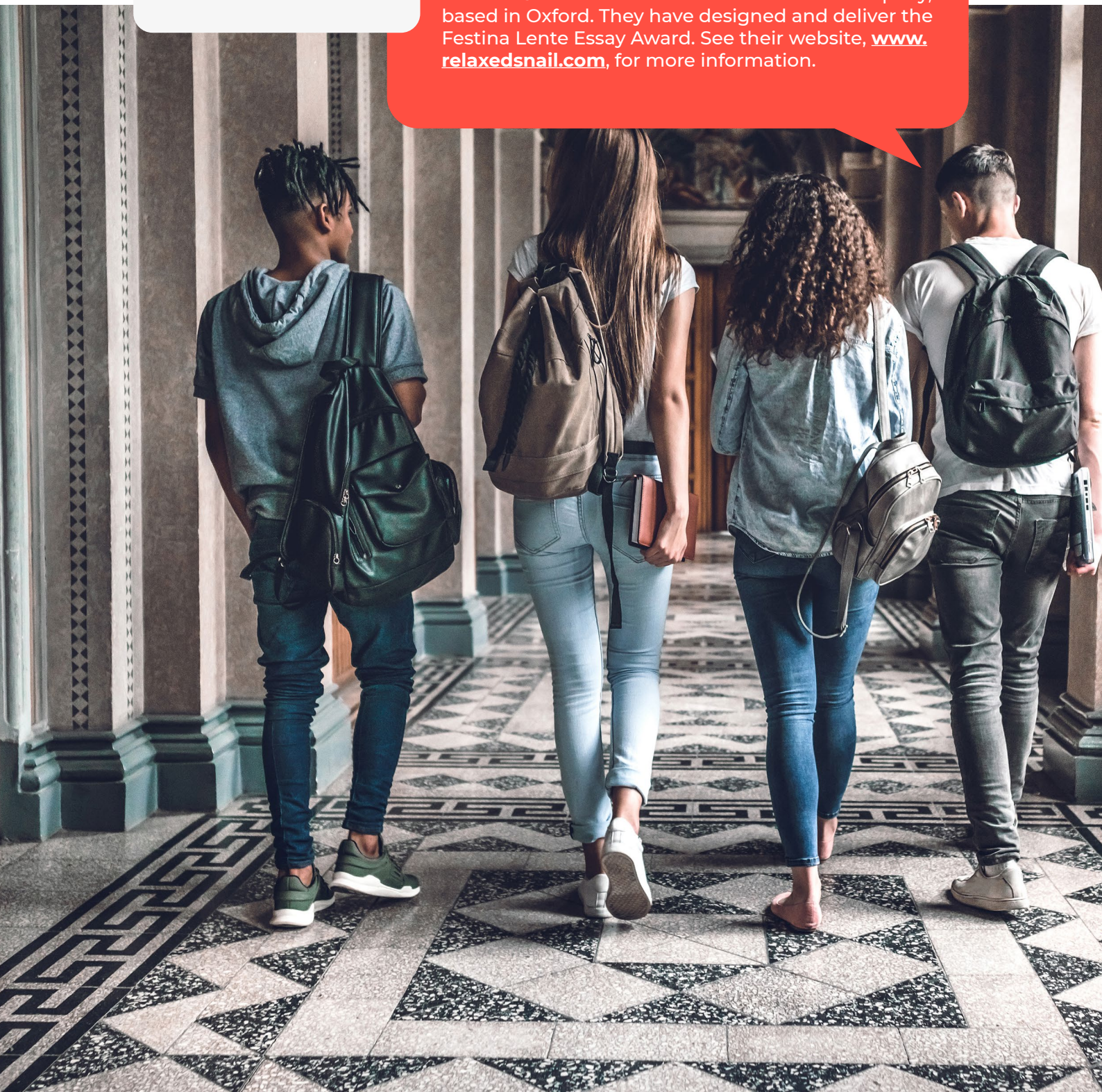
In your personal statement. Detailing what question you tackled highlights academic passion and curiosity – perhaps the most important way to showcase your suitability for higher education. Talk about what you learned, what you enjoyed and the kind of material you sourced. Being able to synthesise and critically evaluate academic literature, such as books and peer-reviewed journal articles, is a high-level skill. Make your application unique and memorable, separating yourself from the competition, by amplifying the originality of your thinking and ability to write a university-style essay. You can also use the Award as material for possible interviews and the UCAS reference.

Are there any Festina Lente Essay Award finalists?

Yes. All candidates who pass, by obtaining a Grade C or above, have officially been awarded. However, in addition, we will also be selecting the top three essays (first, second and third). The top three are finalists.

Who is Relaxed Snail?

Relaxed Snail Ltd. is an education services company, based in Oxford. They have designed and deliver the Festina Lente Essay Award. See their website, www.relaxedsnail.com, for more information.



10. MORE EDUCATIONAL LEARNING PACKAGES



The Festina Lente Essay Award is designed and delivered by the educational service company, Relaxed Snail Ltd. “Festina Lente” is the Latin translation of their motto “speed up slowly”, which reflects Relaxed Snail’s ethos of superlative long-term preparation for higher education study. There are two aims for Relaxed Snail’s services: (1) enhance competitiveness for university applications and (2) help students develop their skills now so that they continue to succeed once they arrive at university. The Festina Lente Essay Award, for example, is a product of this two-pronged aim – an experience to talk about in the personal statement and also an opportunity to experience university-level writing. Relaxed Snail call their services “educational learning packages”.

In preparation for the Festina Lente Essay Award, they also offer:

- Videos released on YouTube
- A premium service involving 1:1 student consultations to support essay planning
- In-school workshops to support essay writing
- Access to the publication by Christopher Ward (2024), titled “A graphic guide to producing the Festina Lente and other essays”

Other educational learning packages:

- **Immersive internships (work experience) for a range of competitive subject areas**
 - Examples include Medicine, Psychology, Veterinary Science, Law, Computer Science, Engineering, Finance, Politics, Architecture and Archaeology
- **Exclusive access to academic conferences and guest lectures**
- **University Subject Masterclasses**
 - Involves 1:1 one-week access to a tutor from your field of interest (e.g. Medicine or Archaeology) with a series of lectures, relevant projects and university application strategy advice



For more information speak with your school’s contact person or visit our website, on www.relaxedsnail.com.



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