

The 2026 ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

Enrichment through English



CALL FOR ENTRIES

The South African National English Olympiad
is a joint venture of
the Grahamstown Foundation and
the South African Council for English Education.



CALL FOR ENTRIES

Entries are invited for the 51st South African National English Olympiad, to be held on Tuesday, 3 March 2026.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

The English Olympiad aims to enrich young people's minds through the study of English, while at the same time encouraging learners to explore the English language and its literature beyond the scope of the normal school curriculum. In so doing, the English Olympiad encourages learners –

- to take responsibility for their own learning through a process of self-preparation;
- to become empowered through the rigours of academic writing;
- to think critically and creatively;
- to see the relevance of what they study – both to themselves and to the world around them;
- to question their assumptions, and to explore alternative ways of thinking and of experiencing the world in which they live;
- to express those experiences in critically and creatively written responses to the English Olympiad examination questions; and
- to substantiate their opinions with relevant references to the texts prescribed for the Olympiad.

THE SYLLABUS FOR 2026

The 2026 English Olympiad will be based on an anthology of literary and other works entitled *We Have a Choice – Victim or Victor*, compiled by the Chief Examiner, Hillary Lewis-Soma. A comprehensive study guide will be available on line.

THE DATE & TIME OF THE EXAMINATIONS

There will be two examinations – one for candidates entering the English Home Language (HL) competition, and another for English First Additional Language (FAL) candidates.

Both examinations will be written simultaneously at all participating schools on **3 March 2026**.

On 3 March the examination session may commence **at any time between 11:00 and 14:00**, at the discretion of each school, provided candidates are allowed three hours to write. All schools are asked to ensure that the date and the time of the examination are included in their 2026 school calendars.

(Note: The date of the examination is determined by the time needed to assess the scripts, moderate the marking and process the results, so that the top achievers may be invited to the midyear National Schools' Festival. For this reason, we regret that requests for alternative dates cannot be considered.)

THE FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

Candidates are required to prepare for a **three-hour, open-book examination**.

Candidates are expected to use the Olympiad anthology during the examination, but **copies of the study guide may NOT be taken into the examination venue**. Candidates should be advised that, although the Olympiad involves an open-book examination, they should prepare thoroughly and make sure that they are well acquainted with the prescribed texts.

The examination will require answers to the following:

- one question from Section A – a discursive essay (60 marks)
- one question from Section B – a creative response (40 marks)

Candidates may be enrolled for either the **Home Language (HL)** or the **First Additional Language (FAL)** examination, but candidates wishing to register for the FAL examination may do so **only if they are studying English FAL at their school**. When submitting entries, teachers must clearly indicate whether their candidates intend to write the HL paper or the FAL paper.

(Note: If there is no indication that a candidate is entering the FAL examination, it will be assumed that the candidate will be writing the HL examination.)

HOW TO ENTER

To enter the 2026 English Olympiad, a school must complete the official [Entry Form](#) available on the English Olympiad [website](#). Proof of payment may be submitted with the Entry Form or emailed to the Olympiad Officer before the closing date.

Please note that the 2026 competition is open to ALL learners (English HL and FAL) who will be in **Grades 9 to 12 in 2026** – i.e. learners who are in Grades 8 to 11 in 2025.

Entries are only accepted via schools. No individual or private entries are accepted.

The CLOSING DATE for entries will be 15 October 2025.

(We regret that late entries cannot be accepted.)

ENTRY FEE: R120 per Candidate (incl VAT)

The entry fee covers printed anthologies, examination materials, assessments and certificates.

Please note that the 2026 Study Guide will be published on line.

Candidates are encouraged to make use of the on-line study guide, but schools may print copies for candidates who have difficulty in accessing or using on-line resources. The Olympiad Office will arrange printed copies for schools with limited printing resources, if these are requested on the entry form.

Each school will receive one free anthology and a printed study guide for use by the supervising teacher.

(Additional study materials for teachers are available at R20 per set.)

DELIVERY/COURIER FEE: R180 per School (incl VAT)

This covers delivery of anthologies, examination documents and certificates to South African schools.

(Schools located outside South Africa are required to pay full courier costs.)

Please remember to include the delivery/courier fee when submitting your school's entries.

We regret that study materials cannot be sent to schools that have not paid this fee.

ENTERING CANDIDATES FOR THE OLYMPIAD

1. Please enter your candidates as early as possible.
2. Please use the on-line entry form that is available [here](#) or on the [English Olympiad website](#). Alternatively, please contact the Olympiad Officer to request a conventional paper-based form.
3. Schools may make use of the **sign-up sheet** on our website to assist with gathering candidates' names and details. Please note that this is not an official form that schools should submit.
4. Please complete **all** sections of the entry form to ensure that your entries are processed correctly. A school may save the progress of their on-line entry form and return to it later before submitting their final version. If assistance is required please contact the Olympiad Officer.
5. Each school may only submit the on-line entry form **ONCE**. Should a school wish to add entries after submitting their form, please contact the Olympiad Office for the Additional Entries Form.
6. On your entry form please **indicate the name of the PostNet branch to be used for counter-to-counter delivery** of your candidates' anthologies (in November 2025), exam question papers and answer books (in February 2026), and certificates (in July 2026).

Please note that the organisers of the English Olympiad cannot accept responsibility for packages that are mislaid or delayed in transit.

DETAILED ASSESSMENTS

Candidates may apply for detailed written comments on their individual scripts. Applications for detailed assessments must be made on the Entry Form. **The fee for each detailed assessment is R190. This is in addition to the entry fee.** A maximum of two detailed assessments per school is permitted.

Note: Detailed assessments will be sent to candidates via their schools after the Olympiad results have been released at the end of June 2026. (Answer scripts are not returned to schools or to candidates.)

ENGLISH OLYMPIAD ENTRY FEE BURSARIES

The Eastern Cape Branch of SACEE offers a limited number of bursaries to learners who cannot afford the full English Olympiad entry fee. To apply, a candidate should write and sign a short letter of application explaining why they wish to write the English Olympiad and how they plan to prepare for the examination. The candidate must also confirm that they are fully committed to writing the examination on 3 March 2026.

A letter from the School Principal, endorsing the candidate's bursary application and verifying that the applicant is normally not required to pay school fees, must be included with each bursary application.

Bursary applications should be received by the Olympiad Officer by latest **30 September 2025** so that the school may be notified of the outcome before the deadline for entries. Bursaries will be awarded to qualifying applicants on a first come, first served basis. Decisions may be based on the commitment that the school has previously demonstrated in ensuring that candidates write the examination.

Successful bursary applicants will pay **a reduced fee of R60 per entry**. Schools applying for bursaries should not send payment until the outcome of their bursary applications have been confirmed.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

ALL CANDIDATES

All candidates who complete the English Olympiad examination sufficiently to warrant classification will receive certificates indicating the outcomes of their examination assessments.

Results will be announced at the end of June 2026, after which certificates will be sent to schools.

Top 20 Home Language (HL) Candidates

The top twenty candidates in the Home Language examination will receive cash prizes sponsored by the Grahamstown Foundation and the South African Council for English Education (SACEE).

The top five candidates in the English Home Language Olympiad will receive prizes of R25 000, R20 000, R15 000, R10 000 and R5 000 respectively.

Top 10 First Additional Language (FAL) Candidates

The top ten candidates in the First Additional Language examination will also receive cash prizes.

The top FAL candidate will receive a prize of R7 500.

National Schools' Festival Tour Prizes

The **top ten Home Language** and **top three First Additional Language** candidates will be offered free admission to the **2026 National Schools' Festival** in Grahamstown/Makhanda.

Free accommodation and meals will also be provided.

These prize winners will receive their certificates and cash prizes on stage during the English Olympiad Prize Giving that is held during the Schools' Festival.

Rhodes University English Olympiad Scholarships

The **Top 42 Home Language** candidates and the **Top 8 First Additional Language** candidates will be offered **free tuition scholarships for their first-year of any undergraduate programme of study at Rhodes University** after the successful completion of their matriculation examinations, subject to their meeting the University's normal entry requirements.

Publication

After the midyear prize giving, the names of the Top 100 HL and Top 20 FAL candidates will be published on the English Olympiad website and the SACEE website.

CONTACT DETAILS

The Olympiad Officer

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For more information, please refer to <https://olympiad.nationalartsfestival.co.za/>