

John Locke Essay Competition Preparation

2027 Preparation Programme - Critical Thinking, Research and Argument

Develop an independent answer to a demanding question, test it against strong objections and write a persuasive academic essay.

20 weeks, 20 sessions, 90 minutes per session. Four stages of five weeks each.

Rolling start for foundations. Align prompt-specific research with the official question release, registration window and submission deadline.

2027 planning edition. The official page currently gives 2026 rules. Confirm the new questions and requirements before final topic selection.

Stage and Progression	Wk	Session Topic	Core Content	Student Deliverable / Feedback
Stage 1 Critical Thinking & Essay Foundations 5 weeks / 5 sessions Learn to interpret questions, evaluate arguments and write precise analytical paragraphs. Deliverable: Diagnostic, argument exercises and a practice essay	1	Competition Orientation & Diagnosis	Assess writing, select a subject pathway and check eligibility, registration and referee needs.	300-word diagnostic and individual preparation plan
	2	Reading the Question Precisely	Define contested terms, identify the burden of proof and separate factual from value claims.	Two question analyses and a definitions sheet
	3	Logic, Assumptions & Inference	Test premises and conclusions; identify hidden assumptions, weak analogies and invalid inferences.	Argument map and two repaired analytical paragraphs
	4	Learning from Strong Essays	Study published entries for direct answers, intellectual independence and effective objections.	Two model-essay analyses and a quality checklist
	5	Practice Essay & Foundation Review	Write a short response to a past question and evaluate clarity, evidence and reasoning.	600-word practice essay and Stage 1 progress report
Stage 2 Question Selection & Research Design 5 weeks / 5 sessions Choose an official question and build a defensible position through focused reading. Deliverable: Question brief, research dossier and detailed outline	6	Official Question Selection	Compare current questions for interest, scope and research access; use past prompts until release.	Question comparison and provisional or confirmed selection
	7	Reading for Competing Positions	Use scholarly sources to compare the most credible answers rather than collect supporting quotes.	Annotated reading dossier and positions matrix
	8	Developing an Independent Thesis	State a qualified answer and distinguish its reasoning from familiar responses.	Working thesis and claim-evidence map
	9	The Strongest Objection	Present an opposing view fairly; test counterexamples, assumptions and boundary cases.	Objection-response matrix and revised thesis
	10	Research Proposal & Outline	Defend the chosen question, research base and structure; allocate the word budget.	500-word question brief, detailed outline and Stage 2 report
Stage 3 Argument Development & First Draft 5 weeks / 5 sessions Develop the case, address the strongest objection and assemble a complete essay. Deliverable: Complete first draft and first review report	11	Drafting the Core Argument	Write the main analytical sections and connect each inference to evidence or reasoning.	First half of the essay with traceable references
	12	Drafting Objections & Replies	Integrate the strongest challenge and explain why the central answer survives or changes.	Counterargument section and remaining body draft
	13	Opening and Concluding Directly	Frame the precise problem; conclude with an answer, implications and appropriate limits.	Introduction, conclusion and linked section transitions
	14	Assembling the Complete Draft	Check the full argument, source use, paragraph purpose and word allocation.	Complete first draft and student self-assessment
	15	Full Review I: Argument and Structure	Discuss tutor feedback on logic, relevance and the strongest objection; prioritise rewrites.	Written review, revision plan and Stage 3 progress report
Stage 4 Intellectual Refinement & Submission 5 weeks / 5 sessions Test originality, improve precision and prepare an independently authored final entry. Deliverable: Final essay, revision portfolio and submission pack	16	Targeted Research & Rewriting	Resolve the most important evidential or conceptual gap and reconstruct weak sections.	Rewritten sections and updated source dossier
	17	Full Review II: Originality and Depth	Test whether the essay adds a defensible insight and fairly handles alternative positions.	Second written review, revised draft and response log
	18	Precision, Style & Word Economy	Remove repetition, sharpen definitions and refine sentences within the confirmed limit.	Student-edited manuscript and word-count record
	19	Full Review III: Sources and Rules	Audit quotations and claims; check anonymity, PDF naming, references and authorship records.	Third written review and checked final candidate
	20	Defending and Finalising the Essay	Explain the reasoning aloud; complete final corrections and registration/referee checks.	Final essay, submission checklist and Stage 4 progress report

What Students Complete and Receive

One final competition essay. Student-authored Word master and submission PDF answering one official question. The 2026 planning baseline is a maximum of 2,000 counted words; the confirmed 2027 rules govern the final entry.

One research and argument dossier. A 500-word question brief, detailed outline, annotated source notes, claim-evidence map and objection-response matrix.

One practice and reading portfolio. A diagnostic, a 600-word practice essay and six annotated reading analyses completed across the programme, including published competition essays and subject reading.

Three full reviews and four progress reports. Written tutor feedback on the first draft and two later versions, student responses to feedback, and a parent progress report at each stage. Students make all edits themselves.

One submission-readiness package. Prompt and eligibility checks, registration confirmation checklist, referee plan, reference audit, word count, correctly named anonymous PDF and an oral explanation practice record.

For students with strong English reading and writing who enjoy abstract questions, debate and independent reading. Select one subject pathway with a suitably qualified tutor.

Allow 5-7 hours of independent study each week, rising to 7-9 hours during full-draft revision. The courses prepare competitive entries; awards are decided independently by the competition organisers.

Entry check: align with official question release and registration. Tutors advise; students write and edit all text. Check the academic referee requirement.

Official reference: <https://www.johnlockeinstitute.com/essay-competition>