



2025/26 Extended Essay Guidance

The Extended Essay for your Paper 4 option course must be written in accordance with Extended Essay Guidelines. The **deadline** for submitting your essay is **4PM, Tuesday 26th May, 2026 (ST Week 4)**.

Guidelines for the Extended Essay

The extended essay constitutes 50% of the overall mark for EC option courses and is a requirement for all MSc Economics students. Students from other degrees registered for an EC option course must submit an extended essay except where the course guide offers an exam-only pathway for their degree programme.

The extended essay is intended to provide an opportunity for independent, self-directed work, as well as offering the possibility to students of studying a topic in which they have a particular academic interest, or which is relevant to their preferred career pathway. Students are advised to treat the essay as such. Examiners are fully aware that there is relatively little supervision for the extended essay and mark the essays accordingly.

Please ensure you read all the details in this guidance document carefully. Your lecturers, the MSc Tutors and the Programmes Manager will not respond to queries clearly answered in this document.

Essay Types

There are two essay formats: **Structured Research Assignment** and **Independent Research Essay**. In the former, the convenors set research questions to be answered by students. In the latter, students choose their topic of enquiry independently. Convenors should clarify at the beginning of the academic year which essay format will be chosen as a default for the course. In the Structured Research Assignment format, **at least one topic per term will have to be assigned to give students choice between these**. Furthermore, even in courses where there is a Structured Research Assignment, students are permitted to opt for an Independent Research essay, subject to the consent of the convenor.

Supervision

Students should not expect close supervision in preparing their extended essay. However, students should receive guidance on topic selection and essay structure.

Students on the Independent Research format must meet with their supervisor for **two or three (at the student's request) 20-minutes individual meetings, ideally in the Winter Term**. Meetings are to be arranged between the student and the supervisor. The topic of the extended essay must be approved by the supervisor before the end of the Autumn Term. In discussing the topic, the supervisor may direct students on the appropriate style of investigation. We advocate an empirical paper, firmly grounded in economic theory, requiring formulation of an empirical specification and well-defined testable hypotheses, which are derived from the relevant theoretical literature. But any topic agreed upon by the student and supervisor, including a theoretical topic, will be acceptable and has the potential to earn high marks. Students are required to submit a concrete research proposal, which supervisors must read in full prior to the first meeting. For these students, the deadline for submitting your proposal is **4PM, Friday 12th December, 2025 (end of AT)**. It is important to reflect carefully on

the feasibility of your proposal given the time available to write the essay and the weight of the essay in overall assessment. You will submit this via the [MSc portal](#) on Moodle.

Students on the Structured Research Assignment format will start by attending **one collective supervision meeting** where lecturers and teaching fellows will explain what is expected from the extended essay in terms of scope, motivation, relevant literature, data sources, and proposed methodologies. After this, **in the Winter Term** students must attend **either three 20-minutes individual meetings, or two additional 1-hour collective meetings**. Individual meetings, if any, are to be arranged between the student and the lecturers and will serve to gain individual feedback on progress and to ask questions about the research assignment. For these students, the deadline for selecting one of the assignments will be at **4PM, Friday 30th January, 2026 (end of WT Week 2)**. You will submit this via the [MSc portal](#) on Moodle.

Regardless of the essay format you follow, you are permitted to ask questions about essay implementation in class teacher office hours and at the essay surgeries, which will run from the end of AT until the beginning of ST. Lengthy individual meetings with class teachers to discuss your essay are not permitted, since this may give some students undue advantage and essay supervision is outside the scope of class teacher responsibilities.

Assessment Criteria and Changing Essay Format

The extended essay is marked by two internal examiners and in some cases an external examiner. Essay marks are treated with the same confidentiality as examination marks. **Regardless of the format, the marking of essays rewards innovation, analytical skills, and displayed research potential. However, careful and comprehensive surveys (with some analytical content) of relevant economic questions are also deemed acceptable for a passing mark.**

Advisors are also permitted to suggest a specific topic to students on the Independent Research mode. If so, **students should be classified as being in the Structured Research Assignment mode for marking purposes.**

Preparation of the Extended Essay

The extended essay is a component of formal summative assessment for the option course, and students are required to work on their own in its preparation and writing. Students' attention is drawn to the School's regulations on plagiarism in the LSE Calendar: [Assessment Offences and Plagiarism](#) and [Policy on Editorial Assistance](#) (this is especially important if you are going to use a proof-reading service for your essay).

It would be very unusual for students to engage in data collection (through interviews, surveys etc), or to collect or work with personal data or identifiable information for the purposes of the extended essay. If you are considering any data collection or working with personal/identifiable data, then you **must obtain approval of your ethics review beforehand** by following the guidance on the [LSE Research Ethics Submission System](#). Please discuss this carefully with your supervisor and alert the MSc Programmes team of your intention.

Please note: Students are not permitted to resubmit in part or whole work previously submitted for the completion of another degree, at any level or institution. Should you wish to expand upon work you have previously submitted, you must discuss this with your supervisor and ensure that you appropriately cite and reference your own work in the essay.

The essay formatting criteria are:

- Maximum 6,000 words (as a guideline this is 14-21 double spaced pages).

- Double spaced, typed, minimum 12 font size. Pages are to be numbered.
- Abstract, footnotes, references and appendices do not count toward the word count, provided such additions are brief and do not contain information that rightly belongs in the body of the essay.
- Equations are included in the word count and counted as the page equivalent (i.e., as the number of words that would occupy the same amount of space in text).
- Examiners are advised to penalise excessively long essays (those whose length exceeds by 10% the allowed word count) by adjusting the marks by $6000/x$, where x is the word count.
- **Do not use your 9-digit LSE ID number or name in the essay. Only use your 5-digit candidate number.**

Time Management

The writing of the extended essay will involve, on average, two weeks of full-time, intensive work during the Spring break (Friday 3rd April – Monday 4th May 2026). While it is important to produce high-quality work, students are reminded that the extended essay carries a weight of 12.5% in their MSc overall. Thus, students are encouraged to manage their time and topic appropriately. Due to feedback from former students, the deadline for the essay submission has been pushed back (from week 2 of Spring Term to week 4) for maximum flexibility. This means the essay deadline is close to, or even at the same time as, the summative ST examinations. Again, students are expected to manage their time appropriately, since examinations or the extended essay deadline cannot be cited as a reason for poor performance in either assessment.

Extended Essay Submission

- **One PDF copy** to be **uploaded on the [MSc portal](#) on Moodle by 4pm on Tuesday 26th May, 2026 (ST Week 4)**. Please check whether you have access to this Moodle page. Let the MSc Programmes team (econ.msc@lse.ac.uk) know if you do not. **The file name should be the course code followed by the candidate number, i.e., "EC421_12345.pdf". Do not include your name or 9-digit LSE ID number in the file name.**
- **No matter which software you use to compile the essay, you must convert the file into PDF format before submitting.**

Cover Page

On the cover page remember to specify the Essay format, namely: **Structured Research Assignment** or **Independent Research**. The cover page is available on the [MSc portal](#).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Full authorised use of Generative AI is permitted in the MSc Extended Essay. In all submissions in which you use Generative AI, you must follow School guidance on how to [cite its usage](#) (both in-text citations and bibliography entries). Failing to cite the use of Generative AI is a form of academic misconduct. Moreover, you are required to declare within the Academic Integrity Declaration Form which, if any, Generative AI tools you have used and for which aspects of the essay.

While Generative AI can be a powerful tool, students should be aware that AI-generated content can contain errors, including hallucinated citations, or be incomplete or biased in different ways. It is your responsibility to corroborate the accuracy of AI-generated content that informs your Extended Essay. Moreover, students can expect little credit to be awarded to essays that are heavily based on AI-generated content and show limited independent critical thinking.

Academic Integrity Declaration

You are required to submit a completed Academic Integrity Declaration form to Moodle at the same time as your Extended Essay. This includes a declaration regarding the use of Generative AI. The declaration form is available on the [MSc portal](#).

Referencing

Accurate and complete referencing of your sources, including any use of Generative AI, is very important. Failing to properly reference is plagiarism, a form of academic misconduct.

Students are welcome to use any accepted method of referencing in the Extended Essay, provided the referencing style is consistent throughout the essay. The two most common referencing systems used at LSE is APA 6th and Harvard style. Our referencing specialists suggest the following guides for these:

APA: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>

Harvard: [http://libweb\(anglia.ac.uk\)/referencing/harvard.htm](http://libweb(anglia.ac.uk)/referencing/harvard.htm)

These are extremely comprehensive and quite easy to follow. [LSE LIFE](#) offers several courses on referencing – please keep this service in mind as you prepare your essay.

Top Tip: you can easily get the correct citation for a source by clicking on “Cite” underneath the listing on Google Scholar.

School guidance on how to reference the use of Generative AI (both in-text citations and bibliography entries) can be found here:

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/library-resources-guide/citing-and-referencing#AI>

Plagiarism

The LSE takes the offense of plagiarism very seriously. Please take care to read the regulations involving plagiarism, which you can link to through the Academic Integrity Declaration form. Please note that submitting your own work, previously submitted for another assessment **does** constitute [plagiarism](#). Failing to reference content generated using AI is also plagiarism.

Your extended essay will be submitted into Turnitin, a text-matching tool, which generates a similarity report expressed as a percentage. A degree of similarity can be expected by chance, but plagiarism can also drive up the similarity report. Academic judgement is the first indicator of academic misconduct and a high or low percentage similarity score (%) can be equally investigated on this basis. Therefore, the Department of Economics does not adopt a similarity score (%) threshold.

Turnitin similarity reports can serve as a useful tool for developing academic writing skills. As per the LSE Economics Departmental Turnitin Statement and Student Agreement, you will be able to submit a draft of your extended essay and access the Turnitin similarity report as a means of improving your academic writing and avoiding plagiarism. You are also advised to access the LSE LIFE resource [Understanding your Turnitin report and using it to improve your writing](#).

Late Submissions

Late submissions will be penalised as per [School policy](#). If a student fails to submit the essay by the set deadline the following penalty will apply: *Five percentage marks will be deducted per day (this includes weekends, bank holidays and School closure days), or part, thereafter late*. For example, an essay that is submitted 1 day and 4 hours late, will receive a penalty of ten percentage marks.

If you submit late due to exceptional circumstances, then you can follow the School [Exceptional Circumstances](#) process to request the late penalty to be removed. You are reminded that supporting evidence is required to be submitted as part of the exceptional circumstances process.

Extensions

Extensions of the deadline can be granted only with formal permission of the Chair of the Examination Sub-Board (MSc Economics – Dr Mohan Bijapur; MSc EME – Prof. Vassilis Hajivassiliou). Such permission will be granted only where there is a strong reason backed by supporting evidence (for example, a medical certificate or Inclusion Plan). Failure to meet a formally agreed extended deadline will incur penalties as above.

If you think you need an extension of the deadline, please contact the MSc Programmes team (econ.msc@lse.ac.uk) as soon as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Are tables and figures included in the word count?

A: No, tables and figures are not included in the word count.

Q: Is there a lower limit on the number of words of the extended essay?

A: No, there is no lower limit. Though if far below the limit, you may not be explaining in sufficient depth.

Q: Equations are included in the word count and counted as page equivalent (i.e., as the number of words that would occupy the same amount of space in text). Am I the one who should count this? How do I decide how many words would have fit in that space?

A: Treat a full line's worth of equations as a full line of words. So, if you have a third of a line occupying one equation, treat that as having taken up one third of a line in words. If with your font size a line, on average, has about 12 words (for example), then your equation has taken up enough space for about 4 words. You will need to provide your final word count on the essay cover sheet.

Q: Can colour be used in graphs?

A: Yes.

Q: Are there any restrictions on the amount/size of tables/graphs?

A: No, there are no restrictions on the number/size of tables & graphs. You can include as many, and of whatever size, as you require to demonstrate your argument.

Q: In the guidelines for the extended essay, it is indicated that there is a maximum of 6,000 words. Between parentheses it is written 14 to 21 pages. Is the number of pages binding? Number of pages can depend on the font, margins, and on the size of graphs.

A: Both matter and are somewhat independent of each other. The word count must be adhered to. The page limit is to ensure that an appropriate number of graphs and tables are included, and their size and placement is sensible. For example, devoting a full page to one table or one figure may be too much. If you have 6 tables and figures together, it should be possible to fit them into 2 or 3 pages, rather than 6.

Q: Is there any size limit for the file to be uploaded?

A: The maximum upload limit in Moodle is 100MB.

Q: What if I have further questions that are not addressed in this document?

A: Reach out to econ.msc@lse.ac.uk for any practical questions, and to your option course lecturers for any academic questions.