

R.A. Butler Prize, 2026

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Questions

Answer **one** of the following. You are encouraged to use a diverse selection of contemporary, historical or literary examples in making your arguments, and not to restrict yourself to material taken from school courses. Essays should be no longer than 3,000 words, including any footnotes.

1. Does the rise of political strongmen across democracies reflect a failure of liberalism, or a failure of liberal politicians?
2. What are the principal qualities needed by effective political leaders in the contemporary world?
3. Is the era of 'rule-based' politics over?
4. Can self-determination be achieved without statehood?
5. Is the international community morally and practically equipped to respond to large-scale population displacements arising out of climate change?
6. Is the prosecuting of leaders for war crimes flawed because only less powerful figures can be brought to trial?
7. Has social media now made it impossible to distinguish between genuine popular movements and manufactured political outrage?
8. Why do states try to regulate human bodies?
9. Why do democratic governments commonly scapegoat minority groups?
10. If the era of globalization is over, what are the political consequences?

Eligibility and submission

Rules of eligibility are on:

<https://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/essay-prizes/politics/>

The essay should be submitted via a form on this site.

The deadline for submission is 12 noon (BST) on Friday 31st July 2026.