

ARSO Continental Essay Competition 2026/2027

Advancing Intra-African Trade through Conformity Assessment and Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)

ARSO Essay Competition 2026/2027

South African tertiary students are invited to participate in the **14th ARSO Essay Competition**, by submitting their essays by **31 March 2027.**

African Organisation for Standardisation

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) is a member of African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO). ARSO is an intergovernmental body, established by the African Union (AU) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in 1977 with a principal mandate to harmonize African Standards and conformity assessment procedure in order to reduce Technical Barriers to Trade and therefore promote Intra African and International Trade as well as enhance industrialisation of Africa. Part of the ARSO mandate is to ensure the well-being and safety of the African community. As an African organisation, ARSO's vision and mission are aligned with any efforts made to eradicate poverty, educate the youth, and foster a culture among the youth.

The theme for the 2026/2027 competition:

"Advancing Intra-African Trade through Conformity Assessment and Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) Unlocking the Full Potential of the Cotton-to-Clothing Value Chain under the AfCFTA".

To participate in the competition, students must submit their essays to the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS). The SABS will assess and award the top 5 national winners. The top five winning essays will be forwarded to

ARSO as entries in the continental competition.

All essays must be well-written, demonstrate creativity and innovation, as well as understanding of the theme for assessment as guided in the subsequent continental concept note. In addition to the continental requirement, the SABS further requires that essays must be properly formatted and structured, justified and correctly referenced in the Havard style.

Essay entry requirements:

- This competition is open to all South African students currently registered at any institution of higher learning in South Africa, as recognized by the National Department of Education and Council of Higher Education.
- Interested foreign students at South African institutions of higher learning are encouraged to submit their essays to the countries of their origin.
- Essays should be between 1000 and 1200 words, excluding references, cover page, and appendices. The essays should be 1.5 line spacing and presented in Century Gothic, size 12 and APA reference style.
- Essays must be written in English.
- All essay entries, including a duly completed stamped registration form (attached) and a copy of Identity Document or passport, must be submitted to: ESSAYCOMPETITION@sabs.co.za by Monday, 31 March 2027.
- Participants are only allowed to submit one essay.
- Participants must be 35 years old or younger. Information and rules of participation in the competition are included in the concept note. Scan the QR Code

Plagiarism Note:

Essays must be original and unpublished work. Please note that AI Generated Essays upon review on the AI Checker will be inadmissible and will be automatically disqualified if the score is more than 20% as per the AI Plagiarism Checker Software.
**Participants should sign the Disclaimer Notice as they register for the Essay.

Competition Prizes:

National (Coordinated by the SABS)

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Bursary to the value **R 120 000.00**	Bursary to the value of **R 100 000.00**	Bursary to the value of **R 80 000.00**	Cash prize of **R 20 000.00**	Cash prize of **R 15 000.00**

Continental (Coordinated by the ARSO Central Secretariat)

1st	2nd	3rd
USD 1000	**USD 800**	**USD 500**

The 1st Position Winner at the Continental Level will win a fully sponsored trip to the next ARSO General Assembly taking place in Accra (Ghana) in July 2027.

Privacy notice (POPIA)

In compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), the SABS is committed to safeguarding your personal information (Identity Document). By participating in this essay competition, you agree that your submission be used strictly for the competition. Your details will be handled confidentially and will not be shared with third parties without your consent.

Should you not be contacted within two months of the closing date, consider your essay unsuccessful.