

The BalintANZ Medical Student Reflective Essay Competition 2025

<https://balintanz.org/writing-prize/>

Submissions are now welcome until 31 July, 2025

The Balint Society of Australia and New Zealand (BalintANZ) has been running a biannual essay competition for medical students since 2015, the goal being to encourage reflection on the student-patient relationship and challenges in becoming a doctor. There are substantial prizes available, including subsidised attendance at a Balint Group workshop, where doctors and other health professionals share stories about their clinical work.

These reflective essays need to focus on your own experiences of learning within your medical studies, usually focusing on significant interactions with one or more patients (i.e. the student-patient relationship). The essay needs to include critical reflection on the implications of this learning with respect to becoming a doctor.

Each essay should include:

- **Description:** A detailed presentation of a personal experience of learning such as a significant student-patient interaction or an ongoing clinical relationship.
- **Analysis:** Review or reflection on how you experienced the interaction or situation, either as part of the medical team or individually. Analysis should include your thoughts and feelings, your perception of the situation, the challenges faced and how you responded.
- **Implications or ‘critical reflection’:** The impact of this experience on your approach to clinical practice, your emerging ideas about becoming a doctor and/or consideration of ways in which medical training might enhance the capacity of students to engage thoughtfully and compassionately in patient care.

This essay competition also affords an opportunity to express your impressions and thoughts about the complex process of becoming a doctor, based on your own interactions with patients, colleagues and other staff.

Submission

Please submit essays to Tracy, the BalintANZ secretary: admin@balintanz.org All essays will then be anonymised to person and university, then sent to the competition organisers. Each essay is then read by several reviewers, the process taking 2 months (August, September). Winners will be advised in October.

Prizes

- The A\$500 Lawrence Gilbert Memorial Prizes will be awarded to the two top essays.
- Winners or runners-up may be offered subsidised attendance at a Balint workshop in Australia or NZ.

Helpful tips

1. Essays must be in English, between 1000 and 2000 words.
2. Please include a short and accurate title that reflects the theme or content of the essay.

3. Please use 12-point font, 1.5 spacing, Word documents only, not PDF or Pages.
4. Essays usually focus on the student-patient relationship. You may include personal and professional challenges or rewards or your emerging ideas about professional identity.
5. Ethical analysis should not be the main focus.
6. Explain all abbreviations or acronyms.
7. Be mindful of patient confidentiality; ensure patients or staff cannot be identified and use pseudonyms rather than real initials.
8. Essays must be written solely for this competition.
9. Previously submitted course work must be carefully reworked to de-identify the university and the city.
10. Published work for medical theses or diplomas should not be submitted.
11. Previous essays are available for perusal on this website.

Students entering the competition will also automatically receive the regular BalintANZ newsletters about the activities of the Society. There is an unsubscribe option at the bottom of each email if you wish to opt off at any time.

Competition organisers

Associate Professor Hamish Wilson, University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ; and Alexa Gilbert-Obrart from Sydney, Australia and London, UK. Please be in touch with us if you have questions.

Contacts

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Here is a link to the BalintANZ website and previous essays: <https://balintanz.org/writing-prize/>



BOMS reminder

Online Balint Groups for Medical Students ('BOMS') are still open this year. Groups are open to all medical students in Australia and New Zealand, and usually run weekly for 6 weeks. See <https://balintanz.org/about/join-a-balint-group/balint-groups-online-for-medical-students/> for more information or contact Meredith Waugh: mwaugh4221@gmail.com.