



## 2026 National Economics Challenge <sup>SM</sup> Rules and Eligibility

***The Rules and Eligibility, and General Structure (team division, team composition and student eligibility) apply to all students participating at both the state and national level of the competition. The Competition Structure applies to teams advancing to the national competition. For specifics about the state competition format, please contact your local challenge state coordinator.***

### A. **GENERAL STRUCTURE**

#### 1. **Team Divisions**

- a. There will be two (2) divisions: **David Ricardo** and **Adam Smith**.
- b. The David Ricardo Division includes teams of students currently or previously enrolled in one general economics course (or less), or courses which include introductory economic concepts (social studies, business, personal finance, etc.). The course must be taught by a secondary teacher. Students who have never taken an economics course are eligible to compete. Students may only participate in the David Ricardo Division one time.
- c. The Adam Smith Division includes teams of students, currently or previously enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP Microeconomics, AP Macroeconomics, or both), International Baccalaureate (pre-IB and IB), two courses, or any other advanced courses in economics (including courses taught by a secondary teacher where students earn college credit). The course must be taught by a secondary teacher. Students may participate in the Adam Smith Division multiple times. Reach out to your state coordinator for fore information regarding team participation in each Division.
- d. Any team consisting of one or more students enrolled in a course listed in A.1.c. must compete in the Adam Smith Division.
- e. Teams shall only compete against other teams in their own division.

#### 2. **Team Composition**

- a. Teams shall be comprised of three (3) or four (4) members. It is encouraged to compete in teams of four members.

- b. All members of a team must be from the same public school, private school, community organization/club, or afterschool program. Therefore, students from different schools are eligible to be on the same team if they are all part of one of the groups mentioned in this section (A.2.c). Homeschool-based high school students may join teams of any of the groups mentioned in this section (A.2.c) in the Adam Smith division or may start a team with other home-based high school students in their county, their school district, or within a twenty-mile radius of each other.
- c. A team that qualifies for the National Semi-Finals may reconstitute the members of its team prior to the competition. However, if a team must reconstitute members of a team, it must retain at least two original team members. All team members of the reconstituted team must meet the team composition conditions in A.2., and students must meet the general student eligibility conditions in A.3., as well as the eligibility conditions for the division in which the team qualified (see A.1.). Team reconstitution is permitted between National Semi-Finals and National Finals only in extraneous circumstances. Teams will be permitted to reconstitute one to two of their members with approval from CEE. Approved reasons to reconstitute include but are not limited to: family emergency, illness, graduation, internship conflicts. Team reconstitutions between National Semi-Finals and National Finals, if approved, must follow the same guidelines of reconstitution between state and semi-finals; namely that the team must retain a minimum of two original team members and that all team members must meet the division criteria in section A.1, the team composition conditions in section A.2, and the general student eligibility conditions in section A.3. The new team member(s) competing in the National Finals team must have also competed in their state competition at a minimum in the first-round competition.
- d. All teams must have a coach who is an associate (e.g. employee or volunteer) of the team's school, school district, organization, or program, and who is fit to accompany students, should the team advance to the National Finals.

### **3. Student Eligibility**

- a. Students must be enrolled for credit in a qualifying public high school, private high school, or home-based high school course (see A.1.b and A.1.c.) at some time during the current academic year.
- b. Students who have or are currently taking economics courses for college credit are eligible to compete in the Adam Smith division.
- c. Students who have taken more than one course in economics at any time must compete in the Adam Smith Division.

- d. No student is permitted to compete in the David Ricardo Division more than once.
- e. Any returning student who has already participated in the National Economics Challenge<sup>SM</sup> (at the state-level or higher) must compete in the Adam Smith Division in subsequent years, regardless of previous or current coursework.
- f. Home-schooled students must compete in the Adam Smith Division. We recommend reaching out to your state coordinator for further information.

#### 4. **Rules Committee**

- a. There shall be a rules committee comprised of at least five (5) representatives from the Council for Economic Education (CEE) and affiliated council or center representative(s) appointed by CEE.
- b. The rules committee shall only be responsible for rules compliance at the National level of the competition.
- c. Questions and grievances shall be sent to the chair of the rules committee. All decisions of the rules committee are final.
- d. Once a winner is announced, there are no appeals, and the judge's determination is final

### B. **CONTEST FORMAT AT THE STATE LEVEL**

- 1. State Competitions take place during the school calendar year.
- 2. Each state participating in the National Economics Challenge<sup>SM</sup> will identify a state champion team for each Division, which will represent the state at the first round of the competition at the National Semi-Finals.
- 3. To register for your state competition visit: <https://econchallenge.unl.edu/>

### C. **CONTEST FORMAT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

The winning team from each state moves on to the **Online National Semi-Finals** to compete for their spot in the **National Finals**.

- The top team from each state will advance to the Online National Semi-Finals (April 20-24, 2026).
- The top teams from the Online Semi-Finals will advance to compete in the **National Finals** located in Atlanta, Georgia from May 27-29th, 2026.
  - The Council for Economic Education will only be responsible for covering the cost of lodging and group meals for the National Finals teams (team members and one team coach). The Council for Economic Education will not cover the cost of travel.

- 1. **National Semi-Finals** consist of:

- a. Each state participating in the National Economics Challenge<sup>SM</sup> will identify a state champion from each Division, which will represent the state at the **Online National Semi-Finals**.
- b. Teams' Teacher/Coach, Principal or Administrators at state champion schools and/or organizations should work with state coordinators to identify a test room, date, a proctor, and to affirm in writing that test conditions were conducive to ensuring fair results. In the case that school is not in-person, a teacher or coach may serve as the proctor and coordinate proctoring through a video conference.
- c. The **Online National Semi-Finals** will be a series of online test questions held within the testing window of April 20–24, 2026, and is structured as follows:
  - i. Students will have a total of 45 minutes to answer 45 questions. All questions will consist of four-option, multiple-choice questions in each round. Each Division shall have its own set of tests for these rounds.
  - ii. The content covered includes Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, and International Economics.
  - iii. Each team member answers questions individually, not collaboratively; Scoring is based on the following system: +10 points for each correct response, 0 points for each incorrect response, and 0 points for no response. The team score is the sum of the top three individual scores.
  - iv. Use of Support Materials - The use of books, notes, calculators or other support materials including but not limited to searching the internet is not allowed during the competition.
  - v. In the event of a tie, placement will be determined using the following tiebreakers, applied in order.
 

**First tiebreaker:** Total team score, calculated using the scores of all four team members. Teams with fewer than four members automatically forfeit this tiebreaker, as no fourth score is available.

**Second tiebreaker:** The team with the highest individual total score among its members will be ranked higher. If both teams' highest individual scores are equal, the next-highest individual scores will be compared, continuing as necessary.

**Final tiebreaker:** If the tie remains unresolved, placement will be determined by the team with the lowest combined completion time for this round.
  - vi. The top scoring teams in each Division are invited to the 2026 National Finals, located in Atlanta, GA. Please note that only one team from the Wildcard Competition Pool can qualify for the

National Finals in each division. State coordinators interested in facilitating the National Economics Competition in their state should contact Hannah Eckstein at [HEckstein@councilforeconed.org](mailto:HEckstein@councilforeconed.org).

- vii. Teams advancing to the National Finals will be announced no later than April 28th, 2026, and must confirm their commitment to participate at National Finals, by an online registration form on May 1st, 2026 by 11:59 pm ET. If a team is unable to participate, a runner-up team will be invited.
2. **National Finals:** The top 16 teams (8 from Adam Smith and 8 from David Ricardo) will advance to the **National Finals** to participate in a **Critical Thinking Round**. The top 8 teams (4 from Adam Smith and 4 from David Ricardo) will then participate in a Quiz Bowl to determine the National Champion in both Divisions.
  - a. At the in-person National Finals, teams compete for the national championship in their division as well as cash prizes for each team member, plus one teacher-coach: 1st place: **\$1,000** | 2nd place: **\$500** | 3rd place: **\$250** | 4th place: **\$200**.
  - b. The National Economics Challenge Finals will be held from May 27th – 29th, 2026 in Atlanta, Georgia. CEE will cover the hotel and food costs for all teams. Teams will be responsible for their own travel expenses to the National Finals in Atlanta, GA including incidentals.
3. The top-scoring teams will advance to the in-person National Finals, taking place from May 27th to 29th, 2026, in Atlanta, GA.
  - a. The Council for Economic Education **will cover the cost of lodging and group meals for the National Finals teams, which includes the team members and one coach.**
  - b. **Up to three rooms will be reserved per team:** one (1) room for the coach and one (1) room for a single gender team; or one (1) room for the coach and two (2) rooms for a mixed gender team. **Any additional rooms will be arranged and covered by the team or the team's school.**
  - c. **Please note that teams are responsible for arranging and covering their own transportation to the National Finals.**
  - d. All teams will begin the National Finals "Critical Thinking Round" with a score of zero. In the Critical Thinking Round, members compete as a team to develop an analysis for a current economic problem. Teams will have 25 minutes to prepare a presentation analyzing the economic issue. Teams have 12 minutes to present their solutions to a panel of judges, and 8 minutes to answer questions from the judges. The judges will assign each team a score and ranking based on the following: completeness of response; economic analysis and insight; background knowledge; presentation; responses to judge's questions. The score from

the Critical Thinking Round will be used to determine the top four teams that advance to the Quiz Bowl Round from each division.

- e. Use of Support Materials. The use of books, notes, calculators, or other support materials including, but not limited to, the internet is not allowed during the competition. The internet can be used only to create a shared presentation for the Critical Thinking Round.
  - i. Students are prohibited from using the internet or any AI-enabled, smart, or connected devices for research during the competition, including, but not limited to, smartwatches, smart glasses or lenses, voice assistants, and other wearable or network-enabled technologies.
  - ii. No other programs or applications may be open on student computers, including messaging apps such as iMessage, WhatsApp, WeChat, or any social media platform.
  - iii. All presentations must begin with a blank PowerPoint or Google Slides deck.
  - iv. Slides must not contain any notes or speaker's notes.
  - v. The use of additional devices, including cell phones, tablets, or other hardware, is strictly prohibited.
  - vi. Any violation of these rules, including cheating, will result in immediate disqualification.

4. **National Finals Quiz Bowl** is an oral quiz bowl covering all topics in economics.

- a. All teams will begin the Finals Quiz Bowl with a score of zero; 20 questions will be read. In the case of a tie for first place, up to three additional questions will be read, and only in the case of a continued tie will the score from the Critical thinking Round be used as a final tie breaker. Teams that advance to Finals Quiz Bowl in each Division will be provided with a copy of the rules and structure of this final round prior to arrival. Once a winner is announced, there are no appeals, and the judge's determination is final.
- b. In the Quiz Bowl Round teams compete to be awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place-National Champion, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place in their Division, David Ricardo or Adam Smith.
- c. The Quiz Bowl Round is an oral quiz bowl covering all topics in economics with a total of 20 questions. The rules for these rounds are different from Quiz Bowls of previous years. Teams will not buzz in. Throughout the Quiz Bowl:
  - i. Teams will need to determine one member to serve as the spokesperson.

- ii. To respond, the team spokesperson will be responsible for having: a whiteboard and a black marker on which to write their answers.
- iii. After the judge reads a question, each team will have **20 seconds** to confer, and the team spokesperson will write down their answer on their white board.
- iv. Once the team's answer is complete, the team spokesperson will place their white board face-down on their table. Once their whiteboard is face-down on the table, that is the final answer, and the team spokesperson may not pick up the whiteboard again.
- v. Once all teams have indicated they are done, or the **20 second** time limit has expired, a judge will prompt each spokesperson to hold up their answer, so it is visible until they are called upon. The team spokesperson should continue holding up their whiteboard until their answers are confirmed. One at a time, each spokesperson will say the answer out loud. The verbal answer must match the written answer. If they do not, the written answer will be the one judged. After all teams have displayed and stated their answers, the judges will announce which (if any) answers are correct.
- vi. If any team has not finished before the 20 second limit, the timekeeper will announce that 20 seconds have passed. At that time, teams must put their marker down and hold their whiteboard up so it is visible, otherwise that team will forfeit that question.
- vii. A scorekeeper will announce scores so that the Quiz Bowl teams can clearly hear them.
- viii. In the event of a tie after 20 questions, up to three (3) additional questions will be read.
  - 1. If, after a tiebreaker question, only one team has answered correctly, that team will be declared National Champion.
  - 2. If more than one team answers the question correctly, only those teams that answered correctly will be given another tiebreaker question, with the same rules applying at the completion of that question.
  - 3. If there continues to be a tie score after the three tie-breaker quiz bowl questions have been read, then the team's score in the Critical Thinking Round will break the tie.
  - 4. In the case of a tie for second or third place, no additional questions will be asked, and the score in the Critical Thinking round will be the final tie breaker.
- d. A student may contest an answer only **BEFORE** the emcee has moved on to the next question. "Moving on to the next question" is defined as beginning to say the first word in the next question. If a student contests,

the judges may listen to the team's reasoning and consider it. Once the emcee has moved on to the next question, no more appeals regarding that previous question will be accepted. Once a winner is announced, there are no appeals to any rulings, and the judge's determination is final. NO EXCEPTIONS.

- e. Use of Support Materials. The use of books, notes, calculators or other support materials including but not limited to the internet and AI is not allowed during the competition.
  - f. The National Champion teams will advance to an International Quiz Bowl Round which will be held virtually with International Students from China.
5. **International Quiz Bowl Round:** The National Champions participate in an oral Quiz Bowl with International Students.
- a. The International Exhibition Round will be in person.
  - b. All teams will begin the Finals with a score of zero; 20 questions will be read. In the case of a tie for first place, up to three additional questions will be read, and a continued tie will result in both teams crowned champions. Teams that advance to finals will be provided with a copy of the rules and structure of this round prior to participation. There are no appeals, and the judge's determination is final.
  - c. A full set of rules will be provided to participants.

**For resources to help your students prepare for the National Economics Challenge, please visit our website:** <https://www.councilforeconed.org/programs/for-students/national-economic-challenge>

**For more information on the National Economics Challenge contact:**

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