



Gowling WLG Student ESG Essay Competition 2026

To what extent are ESG standards and regulations becoming more fragmented and how should lawyers support their clients in responding to this shift?

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) issues are a focus for many of our clients, whether they operate in the public, private, or third sectors.

Each of our clients puts a different lens on ESG issues, and their motivations for seeking to improve their ESG performance are often complex and constantly evolving. Whether driven by the climate and biodiversity crisis; global political events; or local social movements, each client has a different ESG 'fingerprint', unique to them.

This is the fifth year of the student ESG Essay Competition. Previous questions have explored global supply chains, the role of lawyers in tackling biodiversity loss and the balance between additional legislation and new technology in climate change mitigation and adaptation. This year, we turn to the growing complexity of the regulatory environment, asking you to consider how clients and their lawyers should navigate an increasingly fragmented ESG landscape.

We expect that the strongest essays will engage with one or more of the different sectors that we focus on (find out more here - <https://gowlingwlg.com/en/sectors/global>) and the issues that our clients, and those like them, face in those sectors. We don't expect you to address every potential ESG issue, so please focus on the aspects that interest you the most. Whilst we are interested to read your ideas about the role of lawyers working in private practice law firms, do think about the roles that in-house lawyers play also.

What can you win?

The essay that captures our imagination the most will win a week's paid internship (with accommodation if required) in our London office, working with our team of expert lawyers on a variety of ESG issues.

During your week's internship, you'll meet clients, undertake research, draft advice, and work closely with us to find out what it's like advising clients on emerging legislation and ESG best practices. You'll gain a great understanding of what life as a lawyer at Gowling WLG is like.

We will also host an Open Day for our top-placed entrants. We'll invite you to our London office where you will get to meet some of our lawyers who advise on ESG matters; and you'll meet some of our trainee solicitors and hear from our Early Talent team. We will also invite every applicant to a virtual open event to hear more about the firm and share some application tips.

Who can apply?

You can apply if you are studying at University; or if you're a graduate. It doesn't matter if you have a law, or non-law background. Unfortunately, we cannot cover the costs of international travel to attend the internship or Open Day and you must have the right to work in the UK.

Essays should be no more than 750 words (excluding references - please note that we have no preference for referencing style) and the deadline for entries is 6pm on Friday 18th September 2026.

Please submit your entries to:
ESGEssay@uk.gowlingwlg.com

We would like to receive your essays in .pdf format and when submitting your entry, please include your name, where you're studying (or studied) and details of the subject. Rest assured that our judges will not have access to that information when reading your essay.

If you have any questions about the competition, please contact:

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Gowling WLG (UK) LLP is a member of Gowling WLG, an international law firm which consists of independent and autonomous entities providing services around the world. Our structure is explained in more detail at gowlingwlg.com/legal

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