

Research Project Topic for Grade 11 - Programme of Assessment (2026)

- This research project (600 words) must be done by all learners in Term 2.

OR

- The research topic may be submitted for the 2026/2027 Western Cape essay-writing bursary competition, which is presented by the Western Cape Provincial Treasury in collaboration with the Western Cape Education Department and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Promising learners (with a maximum of two per school) may be entered. The essay on the research topic may only be submitted in English.

Scenario and background information

In his keynote address at the Youth Day Commemoration in Potchefstroom on 16 June 2025, Deputy President, Paul Mashatile, labelled South Africa's crippling youth unemployment a moral emergency.

"This is more than just an economic issue. It is a moral emergency. It affects our whole society and demands urgent action from all sectors – government, business and communities at large," Mashatile said.

Employment and Labour Minister, Nomakhosazana Meth, expressed concern over persistently high youth unemployment rates, with 38,4% among those aged 25 to 34 years and 58,5% among those aged 15 to 24 years.

Online accessed on 16 February 2026 in *Daily Maverick*, 16 June 2025, and the *South African Government News Agency*

Writing the essay

Critically analyse the article above by completing the following tasks:

Outline the current youth unemployment situation in South Africa by referring to the latest available statistics.

Explain the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy, with reference to productivity, skills development, social welfare, and long-term economic growth.

Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, including education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation, and digital-skills development strategies. **Explain how these factors influence employment outcomes for young people.**

Make realistic recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities, and the private sector on how to address youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and supporting sustainable economic development.

For subject educators

Educators should guide learners to use the following Economic information when writing their essays:

Grade 10

Term 2	Topic 2	Public sector intervention
Term 3	Topic 2	Population and labour force
Term 4	Topic 1	Unemployment
	Topic 2	Economic redress

Grade 11

Term 1	Topic 1	Factors of production: labour
	Topic 3	Circular flow and quantitative elements: economic goods and services
	Topic 4	Economic structure of South Africa
Term 2	Topic 1	Dynamics of markets: relationship between markets
	Topic 2	Dynamics of markets: effects of costs and revenue
Term 3	Topic 1	Economic growth: wealth creation process and patterns of distribution, economic growth
	Topic 2	Economic growth and development: measuring levels of development
Term 4	Topic 1	Globalisation: impact on labour markets

The following should be taken into account

- It is essential that the essay is well researched and well structured.
- The essay should be between 2 200–2 500 words and conform to the required or suggested layout.
- Reference can be made to the Western Cape Education Department Economics curriculum website and Provincial Treasury for guidelines on writing a good essay (essay writing tips).

In addition, participating learners should be provided with the marking guideline (marking rubric) at the start of the essay. This marking guideline will be used for the adjudication of essays and oral presentations. It also provides detailed criteria and performance levels that need to be adhered to.

2026/2027 Western Cape Government essay-writing competition for Grade 11 learners

LEARNER ESSAY AND ORAL PRESENTATION

The below marking rubric is used to assess the learner's final product. It is assessed on the following:

- the research process;
- technical aspects (the framework);
- the content; and
- verbal communication (oral presentation).

Scores in the marking rubric are converted to numerical values to award marks for the project.

ESSAY

RATING SCALE CRITERIA ↓	1 = Not achieved 0–20%	2 = Partially achieved 21–39%	3 = Achieved 40–59%	4 = Achieved at a very good level 60–79%	5 = Outstanding/excellent achievement 80–100%	Mark awarded (%)
Technical aspects (framework) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Title page ▫ Table of contents ▫ Introduction ▫ Contents ▫ Recommendations ▫ Conclusions ▫ Sources ▫ Min 2 200, max 2 500 words 	Has not met the technical requirements at all. Written presentation lacking in many aspects. Lacking detail evident in most aspects.	Partially meets some of the technical requirements. Not all criteria are met – not enough detail evident in some aspects of the essay.	Meets the technical requirements. Neat appearance of project with adequate attention to detail in most aspects evident.	Project is attractive and meets all requirements very well. Very good attention to detail regarding all aspects is evident.	Exceeds all the technical requirements and has submitted an outstanding piece of work with supporting graphics (charts, pictures, photographs, diagrams and tables).	Mark [] /100

Research process There is clear evidence that a thorough background study was done and that existing aspects which address the topic have been examined, using appropriate methods to conduct research (e.g. conducting interviews/recording own observations and taking photos/researching a variety of literature on the topic, etc.).	Displays little or no skill in data collection. Very little (only one or two) or no evidence of resources consulted.	Displays some skill in data collection. Some evidence of only a few resources consulted.	Shows knowledge of and displays skill in data collection. Acceptable evidence of a range of resources consulted.	Shows very good knowledge of and displays skill in data collection. Good evidence of very good range of resources consulted.	Shows outstanding knowledge of and displays excellent skill in data collection. Excellent evidence of extremely wide range of resources consulted.	Mark [] /100
	Displays little or no skill in recording and organising data, e.g. tables and graphs.	Displays some skill in recording and organising data, e.g. tables and graphs.	Shows knowledge of and displays skill in recording and organising data, e.g. tables and graphs.	Shows very good knowledge of and displays skill in recording and organising data, e.g. tables and graphs.	Shows outstanding knowledge of and displays excellent skill in recording and organising data, e.g. tables and graphs.	Mark [] /100
Content: Introduction	Introduction not relevant to topic at all – no interest roused.	Introduction has some relevance to topic – very little interest is roused on what is to follow.	Introduction relevant and sufficient to introduce essay in most aspects – some interested roused.	Very good introduction, sufficient both in length and coverage of all aspects to be addressed – rouses interest in what is to follow.	Introduction provides all parameters of research topic in an exciting way – reader is inquisitive and interested in what is to follow.	Mark [] /100
Content: Body Outline the current youth unemployment situation in South Africa by referring to the latest available statistics.	Shows no or limited understanding of the current youth unemployment situation in South Africa and did not refer to the latest available statistics.	Has some idea of the current youth unemployment situation in South Africa and latest available statistics. Not convinced that the scenario was fully understood and satisfactorily analysed.	Shows a good understanding of the topic. The current youth unemployment situation in South Africa and latest available statistics were well examined and discussed in some detail.	Shows a very good understanding of the topic. The current youth unemployment situation in South Africa and latest available statistics were well understood and critically examined.	Shows an excellent understanding of the topic. The current youth unemployment situation in South Africa and latest available statistics were well evaluated, excellently understood and critically examined.	Mark [] x 1 [] /100

<p>Content: Body Explain the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy, with reference to productivity, skills development, social welfare, and long-term economic growth.</p>	<p>Shows no or limited understanding of the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy.</p>	<p>Has some idea of the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy. Not convinced that the scenario was fully understood and satisfactorily explained.</p>	<p>Shows a good understanding of the topic. The economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy were well examined and discussed in some detail.</p>	<p>Shows a very good understanding of the topic. The economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy were well examined and discussed in good detail.</p>	<p>Shows an excellent understanding of the topic. The economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy were excellently understood and very well explained.</p>	<p>Mark [] x 2 [] /200</p>
<p>Content: Body Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, including education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation, and digital-skills development strategies, and explain how these factors influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>Shows no or limited understanding of the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>Has a <u>minimal idea</u> of this aspect. Not convinced that the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, and how these influence employment outcomes for young people are properly outlined and well understood. Essentially, the discussion in this regard is limited.</p>	<p>Shows a <u>good understanding</u> of this aspect. Evidently, the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, and how these influence employment outcomes for young people are fairly well explored and fairly discussed in some detail.</p>	<p>Shows a <u>very good understanding</u> of this aspect. Evidently, the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, and how these influence employment outcomes for young people are well explored and well discussed in good detail.</p>	<p>Shows an <u>excellent understanding</u> of this aspect. Clear evidence that the impact and effectiveness of South Africa's government interventions, labour-market policies, private-sector initiatives, and the broader policy environment, and how these influence employment outcomes for young people are excellently understood and excellently outlined. Discussions are very convincing.</p>	<p>Mark [] x 3 [] /300</p>

<p>Make realistic recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and promoting sustainable economic development.</p>	<p><u>Not able to</u> make realistic recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and promoting sustainable economic development.</p>	<p>Very <u>limited</u> realistic recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and promoting sustainable economic development.</p>	<p><u>Acceptable</u> realistic suggestions and recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and promoting sustainable economic development.</p>	<p><u>Very good</u> realistic suggestions and recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and promoting sustainable economic development.</p>	<p><u>Excellent</u> realistic suggestions and recommendations for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, with a focus on improving employability, enabling job creation, and promoting sustainable economic development.</p>	<p>Mark [] x 2 [] /200</p>
<p>Final conclusion</p>	<p><u>Conclusion is academically and economically weak</u> – not related to research done or content. <u>No valid conclusions</u> on how the South African economy is impacted by youth unemployment.</p>	<p><u>Conclusion is not satisfactory</u> – it <u>does not</u> portray sound research done. Limited conclusions on how the South African economy is impacted by youth unemployment.</p>	<p><u>Good conclusion</u>, however, it <u>does not</u> encapsulate good research, findings and recommendations done on this topic and how the South African economy is impacted by youth unemployment.</p>	<p><u>Very good conclusion</u> – encapsulates very <u>effective</u> scientific research, findings and recommendations done on this topic and how the South African economy is impacted by youth unemployment.</p>	<p><u>Impressive conclusion</u> – encapsulates <u>valid</u> and <u>relevant</u> research, findings, and recommendations presented on the topic and how the South African economy is impacted by youth unemployment.</p>	<p>Mark [] x 2 [] /200</p>
<p>References/sources</p>	<p><u>Extremely few sources</u> listed in an unacceptable, disorganised way.</p>	<p><u>Only a few sources</u> listed with quite a number of errors in referencing protocol.</p>	<p><u>Acceptable list of sources</u> listed with a number of errors in referencing protocol.</p>	<p><u>Very good list of sources</u> listed in correct format with only very few errors in referencing protocol.</p>	<p><u>Impressive list of sources</u> listed perfectly in correct format in accordance with accepted referencing protocol.</p>	<p>Mark [] /100</p>
<p>TOTAL (Important: Out of 1 500 and divided by 15)</p>						<p>Mark [] /100</p>

ORAL PRESENTATION (compulsory for learners participating in the 2026/2027 Western Cape Government essay-writing bursary competition)

RATING SCALE CRITERIA ↓	1 = Not achieved 0–20%	2 = Partially achieved 21–39%	3 = Achieved 40–59%	4 = Achieved at a very good level 60–79%	5 = Outstanding/Excellent achievement 80–100%	Mark awarded (%)
<p>Oral presentation Self-confidence and intellectual sparkle</p> <p>Contact with audience</p>	<p>Total lack of self-confidence. Learner often hesitates – loses train of thought.</p> <p>Does not manage to capture the audience's interest at all.</p>	<p>Learner lacks self-confidence.</p> <p>Does not manage to capture the audience's interest in presentation.</p>	<p>Fairly confident presentation</p> <p>Just manages to capture the audience's interest in presentation.</p>	<p>Enthusiastic, confident presentation</p> <p>Obtains good level of contact with audience – raises very good audience interest in presentation.</p>	<p>Radiates self-confidence, enthusiasm and academic sparkle.</p> <p>Holds audience in palm of their hand.</p>	/100
Understanding and knowledge of topic	Demonstrates almost total lack of insight into the topic.	Demonstrates a lack of insight into the topic.	Illustrates some insight into the topic.	Illustrates good insight into the topic.	Illustrates excellent insight in and perspective on the topic.	
<p>Content: Body</p> <p>Understanding the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy</p>	<p>Shows <u>no or limited</u> understanding of the topic.</p> <p>No articulation of the South African economic situation (with particular reference to core economic indicators) with regard to the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy</p>	<p>Has <u>some idea</u> of the topic.</p> <p>A fairly limited articulation of the South African economic situation (with particular reference to core economic indicators) with regard to the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy</p>	<p>Shows a <u>relatively good</u> understanding of the topic.</p> <p>Shows a good articulation of the South African economic situation (with particular reference to core economic indicators) with regard to the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy.</p>	<p>Shows a very <u>good</u> <u>understanding</u> of the topic.</p> <p>Evidence of a very good articulation of the South African economic situation (with particular reference to core economic indicators) with regard to the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy</p>	<p>Shows an <u>excellent</u> <u>understanding</u> of the topic.</p> <p>Provides an excellent picture of the South African economic situation (with particular reference to core economic indicators) with regard to the economic implications of youth unemployment for the South African economy.</p>	/100

<p>Content: Body</p> <p>Provide a brief background to the current government interventions, market-labour policies and private-sector initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment by unpacking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the interventions, policies and initiatives, • where they originate from, and • why they are of economic importance (if at all). 	<p>Shows <u>no or limited</u> understanding of this aspect.</p>	<p>Has a <u>minimal idea</u> of this aspect. Not convinced that the current government interventions, market-labour policies and private-sector initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment and the impact of them on economic development are well understood and properly outlined. Essentially, the discussion in this regard is limited.</p>	<p>Shows a <u>good understanding</u> of this aspect. Evidently, the current government interventions, market-labour policies and private-sector initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment are fairly explored and its implications on economic development are fairly discussed in some detail.</p>	<p>Shows a <u>very good understanding</u> of this aspect. Evidently, the current government interventions, market-labour policies and private-sector initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment are well explored and their implications on economic development are well discussed in some detail.</p>	<p>Shows an <u>excellent understanding</u> of this aspect. The current government interventions, market-labour policies and private-sector initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment and their implications on economic development are excellently understood and excellently outlined. Discussions are very convincing.</p>	<p>/100</p>
<p>Content: Body</p> <p>Compare and contrast various perspectives articulated by renowned economists about the effectiveness of South Africa's policy environment, education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation and digital-skills strategies and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p><u>Not able to compare and contrast various perspectives</u> of economists on the effectiveness of South Africa's policy environment, education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation and digital-skills strategies and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>Very <u>limited comparison and contrasting of various perspectives</u> by economists on the effectiveness of South Africa's policy environment, education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation and digital-skills strategies and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>An acceptable <u>comparison and contrasting of various perspectives</u> by economists on the effectiveness of South Africa's policy environment, education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation and digital-skills strategies and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>A very good way of <u>comparing and contrasting various perspectives</u> by economists on the effectiveness of South Africa's policy environment, education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation and digital-skills strategies and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>An <u>excellent</u> way of <u>comparing and contrasting various perspectives</u> by economists on the effectiveness of South Africa's policy environment, education-to-work transitions, labour-market regulation and digital-skills strategies and how these influence employment outcomes for young people.</p>	<p>/100</p>

<p>Content: Body</p> <p>Assuming you were an economist, give economic advice (make recommendations) on the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment.</p>	<p><u>Not able to make practical and economically sound recommendations</u> and suggestions for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment. Conclusion not related to research done or content in question.</p>	<p><u>Very little critical thinking displayed</u> – an inability to make practical and sound economic recommendations and suggestions for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, suggesting impractical, unsound and unjustified strategies.</p>	<p><u>Good critical thinking displayed</u> – an ability to make <u>practical and sound economic recommendations and suggestions</u> for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, suggesting practical, sound and justified strategies which are meant to ensure that economic development is not further compromised.</p>	<p><u>Very good critical thinking displayed</u> – an ability to make <u>practical and sound economic recommendations and suggestions</u> for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, suggesting practical, sound and justified strategies which are meant to ensure that economic development is not further compromised.</p>	<p><u>Excellent critical thinking displayed</u> – a creative ability to make excellent practical and sound economic recommendations <u>as well as suggestions</u> for the South African government, schools, communities and the private sector on addressing youth unemployment, putting forward practical, economically sound and justified strategies which are meant to ensure that economic development is not further compromised.</p>	<p>/100</p>
<p>Final conclusion</p>	<p>No final conclusion or completely unjustified conclusion made</p>	<p>Final conclusion not completely justified and with deficiencies</p>	<p>Generally sound final conclusion</p>	<p>Very sound final conclusion</p>	<p>Creative, convincing conclusion</p>	<p>/100</p>

Ability to formulate and express rational arguments, use of Economics- and Mathematics-related terminology	<p>Total lack of ability to formulate and express rational arguments – audience not convinced by presentation.</p> <p>Use of Economics terminology very poor</p> <p>Very poor demonstration of Mathematics-related terminology and data analysis, e.g. tables graphs, statistics</p>	<p>Lacking ability to formulate and express rational arguments – audience not convinced by presentation.</p> <p>Use of Economics terminology lacking</p> <p>Lacking demonstration of Mathematics-related terminology and data analysis, e.g. tables graphs, statistics</p>	<p>Demonstrates some ability to formulate and express rational arguments – audience not totally convinced by presentation.</p> <p>Fair use of Economics terminology</p> <p>Fair demonstration of Mathematics-related terminology and data analysis, e.g. tables graphs, statistics</p>	<p>Demonstrates good ability to formulate and express rational arguments – audience convinced by presentation.</p> <p>Good use of Economics terminology</p> <p>Good demonstration of Mathematics-related terminology and data analysis, e.g. tables graphs, statistics</p>	<p>Demonstrates excellent ability to formulate and express rational arguments – audience totally convinced by presentation.</p> <p>Excellent use of Economics terminology</p> <p>Excellent demonstration of Mathematics-related terminology and data analysis, e.g. tables graphs, statistics</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">/100</p>
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Use of media	Unfamiliar with use of media	Quite a number of obvious errors in use of media	Standard presentation	Very good presentation	Original, creative presentation – excellently portrayed	/100
	Presentation riddled with errors	Some errors	No obvious errors in use of media	Confident in use of media	Utmost care is evident in meticulous presentation.	
	Very little care taken	More care could have been taken.	Adequate care in preparation of presentation has been taken.	Presentation has been prepared very well.		
Ability to understand questions and formulate and express rational responses to questions	Responses to questions completely lacking understanding of aspects enquired into – almost all questions not answered satisfactorily/ unable to answer most questions.	Responses to questions indicate a lacking understanding of aspects enquired into – most questions not answered satisfactorily/ unable to answer some questions.	Responses to questions indicate a good understanding of aspects enquired into – some questions not answered satisfactorily/ hesitant on some questions.	Responses to questions indicate very good understanding of aspects enquired into. All questions answered well	Responses to questions indicate excellent understanding of aspects enquired into. All questions excellently answered	/100 X 2 = /200
TOTAL (Important: Out of 1 000 and divided by 20)						/50

FINAL SCORE

Essay	/100	
Oral presentation	/50	
Total	/150	
Converted to /100 (divide mark by 1,5)	/100	

Declaration: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

Please include an addendum to the AUTHENTICITY DECLARATION below entitled "AI feedback" as part of your research project.

I, hereby declare that the information provided below is true and that I have completed the answers honestly.

Research and information (choose one option and explain your choice)

- I did all my research using books, articles, and other traditional sources.
- I used AI search tools to help me find useful information.
- I used AI summaries but still made my own conclusions.
- I checked AI-generated information about sources and added my own understanding.
- I used AI-generated information only.

Content development (choose one option and explain your choice)

- I wrote everything myself without using AI.
- I only used AI to check spelling or improve my language.
- I used AI to create some paragraphs but added my own ideas and explanations.
- I asked AI to help generate content but then rewrote and edited it to make it my own.
- I asked AI to write the entire project.

Editing and refinement (choose one option and explain your choice)

- I edited and improved my work on my own.
- I looked at AI suggestions and chose what to change.
- I checked AI's rewrite suggestions but only used the ones I agreed with.
- I used AI to help with editing but made sure my own voice and style were clear.

Reflection on learning (answer all questions)

- Did using AI help you think more creatively, or did you prefer relying on your own ideas?
- Which AI tools did you use?
- Did you use AI in an ethical way (for example, avoiding plagiarism, checking for bias, not relying on AI too much)?

AUTHENTICITY DECLARATION

NAME OF SCHOOL	
NAME OF LEARNER	
GRADE	

LEARNER STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this is my own original work and that all sources have been acknowledged.	
 _____	 _____
SIGNATURE OF LEARNER	DATE

STATEMENT BY EDUCATOR

As far as I could ascertain, the above learner statement is true, and I accept that the work entered is the learner's own.	
 _____	 _____
SIGNATURE OF EDUCATOR	DATE