

ROYAL KINGSTON UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE
(RKUSI)

THE JAMES HOWDEN MACBRIEN PRIZE

Call for Papers

Approved by the RKUSI Executive — [September 2026]

1. Name and Status

1.1 This competition, known as “The James Howden MacBrien Prize” (the “Prize”), is administered by the Royal Kingston United Services Institute (“RKUSI”) under the authority of the RKUSI Executive.

1.2 This call for papers sets out the dedication, aim, eligibility, rules, judging arrangements and administration of the Prize, and supersedes any previous arrangements for an RKUSI essay competition.

2. Dedication and Background

2.1 The Prize is named in honour of Major-General Sir James Howden MacBrien, KCB, CMG, DSO and Bar, CStJ (1878–1938), a distinguished Canadian soldier and public servant. MacBrien commanded the 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade in the First World War, served as Chief of the General Staff of the Canadian Militia from 1920 to 1927 — at the time the youngest officer to hold that post — and later served as the eighth Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from 1931 until his death in office in 1938.

2.2 MacBrien’s career, spanning command in the field, the highest levels of defence staff work, and national policing leadership, exemplifies the breadth of service that RKUSI seeks to encourage in the next generation of Canadian defence and security thinkers. The Prize is established as a lasting tribute to that example.

2.3 RKUSI is one of the United Services Institutes of Canada, patterned on the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), London, and thus call for papers draws on the structure and judging principles long established by RUSI’s own Trench Gascoigne Essay Prize, adapted to RKUSI’s mandate and to the wider Eastern Ontario military and academic community it serves.

3. Aim

3.1 The Prize exists to:

- encourage original, well-argued writing on Canadian and international defence and security issues;
- foster engagement between the academic and military communities of Eastern Ontario, in keeping with RKUSI’s mandate; and
- recognize and reward excellence in analytical writing among graduate students enrolled in programs exploring Canadian defence and security issues

4. Eligibility

4.1 Entry is restricted to students currently enrolled in a graduate degree, diploma, or certificate programme at one of the following Eastern Ontario universities:

- the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC), Kingston, Ontario;
- Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario;
- Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario;
- Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario; and
- the University of Ottawa / Université d'Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario.

4.2 Eligible entrants include students enrolled in graduate, or continuing studies programmes at the institutions listed at paragraph 4.1, whether attending in person or by distance learning.

4.3 Members of allied or partner armed forces, civilian employees of the Department of National Defence, and members of the public are not eligible to enter the competition. RKUSI may, at its discretion, recognise outstanding submissions from ineligible persons by way of a separate commendation, without Prize entitlements.

4.4 Entrants need not be members of RKUSI.

5. Subject Matter

5.1 Essays may address any topic relating to Canadian or international defence and security, including but not limited to: strategic studies, military history, defence policy, operations and tactics, civil-military relations, technology and future warfare, Arctic and continental security, alliance management, veterans' affairs, and the human dimensions of service.

5.2 RKUSI may, in any given year, publish a specific theme or suggested topics to guide entrants; where it does so, essays addressing other relevant defence and security subjects remain eligible unless the call for submissions explicitly states that entries must address the stated theme.

6. Essay Requirements

Essays submitted to the competition must meet the following requirements:

- Essays must not exceed 4,000 words in length, excluding footnotes and bibliography. Shorter essays will not be penalized for brevity.
- Essays must be original, unpublished work, and not under consideration by any other essay competition or publication at the time of submission.
- Essays must be accompanied by a short summary indicating the degree to and manner in which AI was employed in the research and drafting of the essay. Failure to provide this summary constitutes grounds for disqualifying an essay.
- Essays must be submitted in PDF Format in English or French, typewritten, double-spaced, and formatted in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style.
- The author's name and institutional affiliation must not appear anywhere within the body of the essay. Identifying details are to be submitted separately on a cover sheet, so that judging may proceed anonymously.
- Each entrant may submit only one essay per competition year.

7. Submission Procedure

- Entries shall be submitted by the deadline published in this call for submissions, by email to [contact name / role] at [email address], or via the RKUSI contact page at rkusi.org.
- Each submission must include, separately from the essay itself; the entrant's full name, institution, and contact details.
- Late or incomplete entries, or entries that do not meet the requirements of Section 6, may be declined at the discretion of RKUSI.

8. Judging

8.1 Entries shall be judged by a panel appointed by the RKUSI Executive (the "Judging Panel"), which may include serving or retired senior officers, academics, and other persons with relevant expertise. The Judging Panel shall comprise no fewer than three members and its composition shall be published following the announcement of results.

8.2 Essays will be assessed anonymously, on the basis of:

- originality of argument and insight;
- logical structure and strength of analysis;
- relevance to Canadian or international defence and security;
- quality of supporting evidence and research; and
- clarity, style, and conciseness of writing.

8.3 The Judging Panel may, at its discretion, decline to award a prize in any given year if no entry is judged to meet the required standard, and may recommend a Highly Commended or Commended designation for entries of particular merit.

8.4 The decision of the Judging Panel is final.

9. Prizes and Presentation

9.1 A prize of \$3,000 shall be awarded to the winning entrant.

9.2 The prize will normally be presented at an RKUSI event, such as the Annual General Meeting or a designated dinner or lecture, and the winning essays may be published, in whole or in part, on the RKUSI website or in RKUSI publications, including *The Torch*.

9.3 As a condition of entry, entrants grant RKUSI a non-exclusive licence to publish or reproduce the winning and commended essays for RKUSI's institutional and educational purposes, with full attribution to the author.

10. Key Dates

The following indicative schedule applies unless otherwise stated in the annual call for submissions:

Milestone	Date
Call for submissions opens	30 September 2026
Submission deadline	23:59 June 30 2027 Eastern Daylight Time
Judging period	July 1 – 31 August 2027
Winners announced / presented	[Date or event, e.g. RKUSI Annual General Meeting]

11. Academic Integrity

- Essays found to involve plagiarism, fabrication, or other breaches of academic or professional integrity will be disqualified, and the matter may be referred to the entrant's institution.
- RKUSI reserves the right to withhold a prize, or to disqualify an entry, where these conditions have not been met.

12. Enquiries

Enquiries regarding the James Howden MacBrien Prize should be directed to

Lieutenant Colonel(Ret) MG McKeown through mg.mw.mckeown@gmail.com or

Lieutenant Colonel(Ret) JA Macdonald through macdonald.ja@gmail.com

or via the RKUSI contact page at <https://rkusi.org/youth-support>.

Royal Kingston United Services Institute — Unitas et Fidelitas — rkusi.org