



# Three Minute Thesis (3MT™)

## Student Handbook

## Event Overview

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### What is it?

*Three Minute Thesis (3MT) is a research communication competition developed by The University of Queensland. Research higher degree (PhD and MPhil) students have three minutes to present a compelling oration on their thesis topic and its significance. 3MT is not an exercise in trivializing or ‘dumbing-down’ research, but challenges students to consolidate their ideas and research discoveries so they can be presented concisely to a non-specialist audience.*

### History

*The first 3MT was held at The University of Queensland in 2008 with 160 RHD students competing. Enthusiasm for the 3MT concept grew and its adoption by numerous universities led to the development of an international competition.*

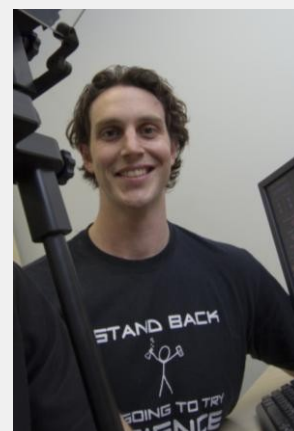
*The inaugural Trans-Tasman 3MT was held at UQ in 2010 with 33 universities participating. In 2011, 43 universities were represented at the Trans-Tasman 3MT that was hosted by The University of Western Australia, and for the first-time students from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Hong Kong took part in their own regional events.*

*In 2011 UQ’s Matthew Thomson was awarded First Prize at the Trans-Tasman competition. As the university of the competitor who wins the competition has the opportunity to host the event the following year, UQ will welcome participants to its St Lucia campus for the Trans-Tasman 3MT in 2012.*

### Why participate?

*During your Research Higher Degree there is a strong focus on the production of your thesis. The ability to communicate the importance of your research project and articulate your findings is very valuable. Three Minute Thesis provides you with the opportunity to:*

- *communicate your ideas effectively to the wider community;*
- *describe your research findings to a non-specialist audience;*
- *crystalise your thoughts about your thesis;*
- *increase your profile within the UQ research community, staff and wider Brisbane community; and*
- *network with other RHD students.*



*“The main reason I took part in the Three Minute Thesis competition was to tell a wide audience about my research. The fact is that not everyone reads scientific publications, and I feel that as a researcher I have a responsibility to the general public to communicate with them what I do, and what I discover.”*

*Will Harrison  
School of Psychology  
UQ 3MT Runner-up,  
2010*

## Preparing your 3MT presentation

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*Even the world's best public speakers prepare before important presentations. To assist you with your preparations, please find a few suggestions below that will help you in writing your presentation, creating your slide and while practicing your verbal presentation.*

### Writing your 3MT

#### 1. Write for your audience

*One of the judging criteria looks for evidence that you can explain your research to a non-specialist audience. To do this you may like to:*

- ▮ *avoid jargon and academic language;*
- ▮ *explain concepts and people important to your research - you may know all about Professor Smith's theories but your audience may not;*
- ▮ *imagine that you are explaining your research to a close friend or fellow student from another field; and*
- ▮ *do not dumb down or devalue your research, what you are doing is exciting and you should convey enthusiasm for your subject.*

#### 2. Have a clear outcome in mind

*Know what you want your audience to take away from your presentation. Ideally, you would like the audience to leave with an understanding of what you're doing and why you're doing it.*

#### 3. Tell a story

*You may like to present your 3MT like a story, with a beginning, middle and an end. It's not easy to condense your research into three minutes, so you may find it easier to break your presentation down into smaller sections. Try writing an opener to catch their attention, then highlight your different points, and finally have a summary to restate the importance of your work.*

#### 4. What not to do

- ▮ *Do not write your presentation like an academic paper. Try to use shorter words, shorter sentences and shorter paragraphs.*
- ▮ *You can use humor, however be careful not to dumb down your presentation.*

#### 5. Revise

*You may like to proof your 3MT presentation by reading it aloud, firstly to yourself and then to an audience of friends and family. This allows you to not only check your grammar and writing style, but it will allow you to receive critical feedback. Don't be afraid to ask your audience if your presentation clearly highlights what your research is and why it is important.*



*"It forced me to think about the big picture, truly define what I do, and how to explain this to others, simply and succinctly."*

Vicki Metzis  
Institute of Molecular  
Biosciences (IMB)

## Creating your 3MT slide

Before you start work on your slide, you should take the following rules into account:

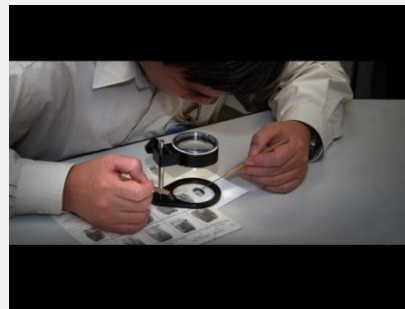
- a single static PowerPoint slide is permitted;
- no slide transitions, animations or 'movement' of any description are permitted;
- your slide is to be presented from the beginning of your oration; and
- no additional electronic media (e.g. sound and video files) are permitted.

An engaging visual presentation can make or break any oration, so you want your slide to be legible, clear and concise. You may like to consider some of the following suggestions.

### LESS IS MORE

*Text and complicated graphics can distract your audience – you don't want them to read your slide rather than listen to your 3MT.*

*Slide: Matthew Thompson, 2011*



### PERSONAL TOUCHES CAN BE EFFECTIVE

*Personal touches can allow your audience to understand the impact of your research.*

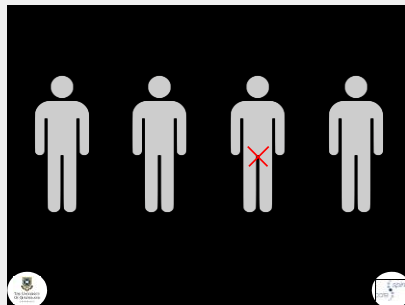
*Slide: Vicki Metzis, 2010*



### CREATIVITY DRIVES INTEREST

*You do not have to have a slide, so do not rely on your slide to convey your message – it should simply complement your spoken oration.*

*Slide: Ryan Stafford, 2011*



### WORK YOUR MESSAGE

*Think about how your slide might be able to assist with the format and delivery of your presentation – is there a metaphor that helps explain your research?*

*Slide: Dr Michael Imelfort, 2008*



## Practicing your 3MT presentation

We hope you find the following tips useful as you prepare your 3MT oration.

### 1. Practice, practice, practice

*Feeling nervous before you present is natural, and sometimes a little nervousness can even be beneficial to your overall speech. Nonetheless, it is important to practice so you can present with confidence and clarity.*

### 2. Vocal range

- *Speak clearly and use variety in your voice (fast/slow, loud/soft).*
- *Do not rush - find your rhythm.*
- *Remember to pause at key points as it gives the audience time to think about what you are saying.*

### 3. Body language

- *Stand straight and confidently.*
- *Hold your head up and make eye contact.*
- *Never turn your back to the audience.*
- *Practice how you will use your hands and move around the stage. It is okay to move around energetically if that is your personality, however it is also appropriate for a 3MT presentation to be delivered from a single spot on stage.*
- *Do not make the common mistakes of rolling back and forth on your heels, pacing for no reason or playing with your hair as these habits are distracting for the audience.*

### 4. Record yourself

*Record and listen to your presentation to hear where you pause, speak too quickly or get it just right. Then work on your weaknesses and exploit your strengths.*

### 5. Look to the stars!

- *Watch your role models such as academics, politicians and journalists, and break down their strengths and weaknesses. Analyze how they engage with their audience.*
- *Visit the [3MT website](#) to view presentations by previous 3MT finalists.*

### 6. Dress

- *While there is no dress code, if you are unsure of how to dress you may like to dress for a job interview or an important meeting.*
- *Do not wear a costume of any kind as this is against the rules (as are any props).*

### 7. Practice using a microphone

- *While each School/Institute or Faculty competition may vary, at the UQ Final you will have the choice of a lectern microphone or lapel microphone. If you haven't used a microphone before, instruction will be provided.*



*"3MT was a good opportunity for me to improve my public speaking skills ... It also feels great to know that others are interested in my research work. Now I can tell my family and friends or anyone who is interested in my work what my PhD is about in 3 minutes."*

*Tina Wu  
School of Pharmacy  
UQ 3MT Winner &  
People's Choice, 2010*



# Rules and Judging Criteria



Official rules as per the 3MT website <http://threeminutethesis.org/rules-judging-criteria>

## Rules

- A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted. No slide transitions, animations or 'movement' of any description are allowed. The slide is to be presented from the beginning of the oration.
- No additional electronic media (e.g. sound and video files) are permitted.
- No additional props (e.g. costumes, musical instruments, laboratory equipment) are permitted.
- Presentations are limited to 3 minutes maximum and competitors exceeding 3 minutes are disqualified.
- Presentations are to be spoken word (e.g. no poems, raps or songs).
- Presentations are to commence from the stage.
- Presentations are considered to have commenced when a presenter starts their presentation through either movement or speech.
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.

## Judging Criteria

### Comprehension & Content

- Did the presentation provide an understanding of the background to the research question being addressed and its significance?
- Did the presentation clearly describe the key results of the research including conclusions and outcomes?
- Did the presentation follow a clear and logical sequence?
- Was the thesis topic, key results and research significance and outcomes communicated in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience?
- Did the speaker avoid scientific jargon, explain terminology and provide adequate background information to illustrate points?
- Did the presenter spend adequate time on each element of their presentation - or did they elaborate for too long on one aspect or was the presentation rushed?

### Engagement & Communication

- Did the oration make the audience want to know more?
- Was the presenter careful not to trivialize or generalize their research?
- Did the presenter convey enthusiasm for their research?
- Did the presenter capture and maintain their audience's attention?
- Did the speaker have sufficient stage presence, eye contact and vocal range; maintain a steady pace, and have a confident stance?
- Did the PowerPoint slide enhance the presentation - was it clear, legible, and concise?

JUDGE NAME:



FINALIST	NAME / SCHOOL / INSTITUTE	3MT TITLE	NOTES	<b>Comprehension &amp; Content</b> <i>did the presentation help the audience understand the research &amp; was the thesis topic and its significance communicated in language appropriate to an intelligent but non-specialist audience?</i> <b>Score / 10</b>	<b>Engagement &amp; Communication</b> <i>did the oration make the audience want to know more?</i> <b>Score / 10</b>	SCORE TALLY
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

## **Additional Resources:**

The Graduate College is pleased that the Speaking Center, part of the U Iowa Department of Rhetoric, is a campus partner for our 3MT competition. The Speaking Center is available to help with all your public speaking needs. Learn more at their website:

<http://clas.uiowa.edu/rhetoric/speaking-center>

The official 3MT site, <http://threeminutethesis.org/> Useful FAQs and rules from the source. Be mindful that some of the rules specific to their competition will not be the same at U Iowa.

From Dr. Inger Mewburn, aka The Thesis Whisperer (<http://thesiswhisperer.com/>, on Twitter @thesiswhisperer). A presentation “How to Win the Three Minute Thesis.”

Available as a Google doc [here](#). And as a Prezi [here](#).

Also, a more general article on presenting your work in 3 minutes can be found here”

<http://thesiswhisperer.com/2010/07/01/how-to-sell-your-thesis-in-3-minutes-or-less/>

By Simon Clews, Director of the Writing Center at the University of Melbourne. A very (very...) detailed guide on preparing a 3MT presentation.

[https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/materials/gps\\_3MT.pdf](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/materials/gps_3MT.pdf)

A succinct guide to preparing a 3MT presentation by Danielle Fischer at UC San Diego:

10 Hints for Improving Presentations for the Three Minute Thesis Competition

<http://grad.ucsd.edu/files/student-affairs/grad-slam/3MinThesisHints.pdf>

From Simon Fraser University, links to their competition and a couple good videos with tips for good presentations. (Note: some other resources on this page are exclusively for FSU students.)

<http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/events/three-minute-thesis/3MT-tips.html>

Many 3MT presentations are available on youtube.com. A simple search for 3MT will turn up plenty: [http://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=3mt](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=3mt)