

Three Minute Thesis (3MT™) Handbook for Co-ordinators



UQ Graduate School

www.uq.edu.au/grad-school/three-minute-thesis3MT@gradschool.uq.edu.au

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Introduction

Three Minute Thesis (3MT™) is a research communication competition developed by The University of Queensland in 2008.

It provides a unique opportunity to profile and celebrate the innovative research conducted by postgraduate students from around the world, and provides you with the opportunity to enhance your communication skills.

In 2011, 43 universities participated in the Trans-Tasman 3MT and students from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Hong Kong took part in their own regional events.

We hope you enjoy participating in the 2013 3MT competition and we look forward to learning more about your research.



Professor Tim Brown,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Research)



Mr Mark Clisby, Director
Research Services



Professor Annette Street,
Director RED Unit
Research, Education &
Development

Event Overview

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 trivialising 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.

In 2012, Tim Paris from The University of Western Sydney was the winner. As the winning competitor's university has the opportunity to host the event the following year, The University of Western Sydney will welcome participants for the Trans-Tasman 3MT in 2013.

Why we do it

At La Trobe University, 3MT is part of an effort to provide students with an opportunity to develop their oral presentational skills.

Skills training for RHD Students

The exercise develops academic, presentation and research communication skills, while developing research students' ability to effectively explain their research in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.

Building research culture in Schools and Institutes

3MT provides a valuable opportunity for RHD students to come together, get to know one another and talk about their research. It also provides a supportive environment for Schools and Institutes to provide presentation skills training.



"3MT helps students present their research to a general audience. The 2012 participants were uplifted by the process; almost as much as the judges who were delighted to experience the quality of postgraduate research and presentation skills at La Trobe".

Professor John McKenzie,
Deputy Chancellor
La Trobe University

Building external relations for the University

Each 3MT winner will go on to represent their university at the Trans-Tasman 3MT and 3MT finalists benefit from invitations to a variety of networking events.

Prizes

The winners of the La Trobe 3MT will be awarded with the following prizes:

First Prize:	\$5000 research travel grant
Runner-up:	\$2000 research travel grant

The winner of the competition will go on to represent La Trobe at the Trans-Tasman 3MT where the winners will be awarded with the following prizes:

First Prize:	\$5000 research travel grant
Runner-up:	\$2000 research travel grant
People's Choice:	\$1000 research travel grant.

Key Dates

Date	Item
13 July	All School semi-finals to be completed by this date
August	Faculty Heats
19 September	La Trobe Final
September	Deadline for notification of entrants
18 October	Trans-Tasman 3MT Competition - The University of Western Sydney

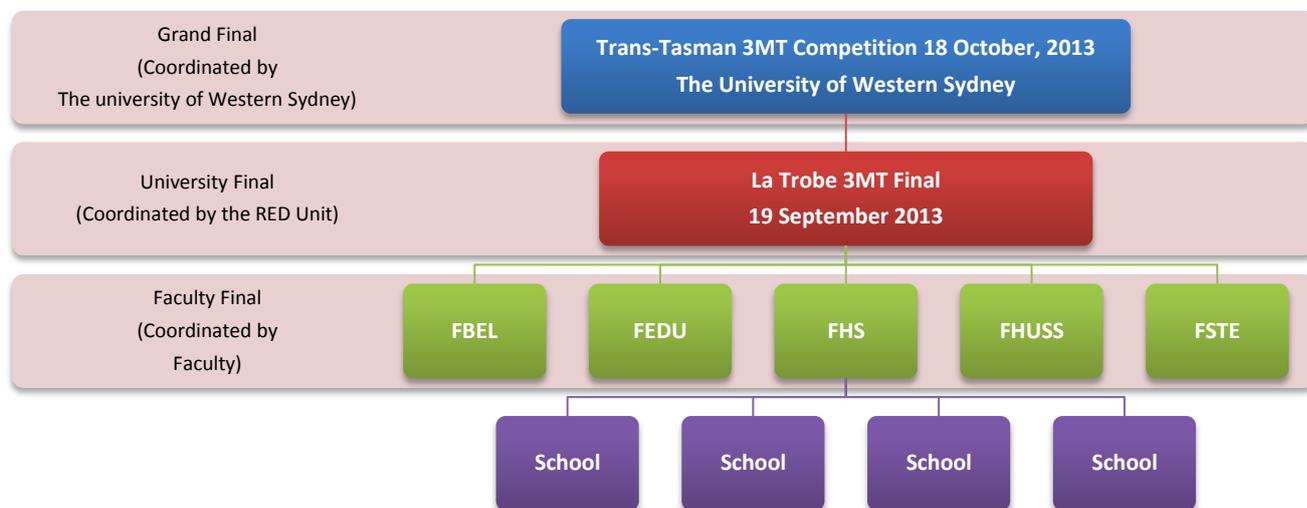
Institutional requirements

Please note that participating universities agree:

- to provide travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for the competitor representing the institution;
- that participating universities from outside Australia and New Zealand, agree to participate as an 'Invited Special Guest';
- that the university of the competitor who wins the competition will host the 2013 Trans-Tasman 3MT; and
- that if a competitor of an 'Invited Special Guest' wins the competition, the winning university will host and organise the following years 3MT competition in a venue provided by The University of Queensland.

Progression

The following chart outlines the progression of students throughout the competition and highlights key contacts for each event.



NOTE: The evidence from last year's event indicated that it is better for participants to have had several presentations. It is for this reason that we encourage School/Department heats, then Faculty heats. This prepares the participants for the University Final and subsequently for the Trans-Tasman final.

The winner of each heat or final is expected to represent their Faculty/La Trobe at the next stage of the competition. If the winner is for some reason unable to attend the final, the runner-up will proceed to the next round of the competition.

Media

What if your thesis topic starts to get noticed? How would you deal with the media if they approached you to talk about your work?

La Trobe University Media and Communications Unit is an award-winning, professional group which offers a 2 hour practical media training session to all 3MT participants for free.

During the session you will learn:

- Why dealing with the media is important, and how it can help your career
- The different types of media and how to approach them
- How to get your ideas into the media
- How to deal with tricky or difficult questions

Practical media training will help you with how best to communicate, one of the most important functions in the contemporary workplace.

Information on these sessions can be obtained from the RED Unit

Red.Research.Services@latrobe.edu.au

Competition rules and guidelines



“If you want to succeed in research, teaching or business, effective communication is a crucial skill that can no longer be ignored. The 3MT competition is the perfect training ground for students to learn skills that will stay with them for a lifetime”

Mark Pearce - Director
Media and Communications Unit – La Trobe University

Eligibility

Anyone who is active in a PhD* or MPhil* program (including thesis under submission) will be eligible to participate in 3MT. Graduates are not eligible.

Competitors who are eligible on the date of their first presentation in their local competition shall remain so for the Trans-Tasman 3MT irrespective of subsequent changes to their status (e.g. those who subsequently graduate before the date of the Trans-Tasman 3MT event).

** Note: degree must be at least two thirds research (definition drawn from Grant Guidelines 2006 for Higher Education Support Act (HESA) 2003)*

Judging Criteria

At every level of the competition each competitor will be judged on the three judging criteria listed below. Please note that each criterion is equally weighted and has an emphasis on audience.

1. **Comprehension:** did the presentation help the audience understand the research?
 - *Did the presenter clearly outline the nature and aims of research?*
 - *Do you know what is significant about this research?*
 - *Did the presentation follow a logical sequence?*
2. **Engagement:** did the oration make the audience want to know more?
 - *Was the presenter careful not to trivialise or dumb down their research?*
 - *Did the presenter convey enthusiasm for their work?*
 - *Did the presenter capture and maintain their audience's attention?*
 - *Would I like to know more about the speaker's research?*
3. **Communication style:** was the thesis topic and its significance communicated in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience?
 - *Did the speaker use sufficient eye contact and vocal range, maintain a steady pace, and a confident stance? Did the speaker avoid scientific jargon, explain terminology that needed to be used, and provide adequate background information to illustrate points?*
 - *Did the presenter spend the right amount of time on each element of their presentation – or did they elaborate for too long or were rushed?*
 - *Did the PowerPoint slide enhance, rather than detract from, their presentation – was it clear, legible, and concise?*

Rules

The following rules have been developed for the competition:

- A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted (no slide transitions, animations or 'movement' of any description, 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 (eg. 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 movement or speech.
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.



“It provided a good means for me to synthesise and focus my research presentations as well as meeting others in the same situation. I enjoyed the process and meeting the other researchers”

Colin Hoad - La Trobe University
Outdoor and Environmental Education
Faculty of Education Runner Up 2012

Selecting your Judging Panel

To provide every entrant with a similar experience, the Graduate School recommends considering the following when composing your judging panel.

- Try to include between three to five judges on your panel.
- Try to balance your judging panel by age, gender, academic/professional positions, and discipline. It is good to have judges from another faculty as this is what will happen in the finals.
- Consider including a marketing staff member (for example, a representative from your marketing team).
- While judges should declare any conflict of interest, they should still vote on each 3MT presenter's oration, even if the presenter is from their discipline.

Three minute countdown timer

The Graduate School has developed a three minute countdown timer, which is helpful for some students when presenting. This can simply be displayed on a laptop in the front row facing the student. It is available by contacting Carol Burnett – c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au

Please note that this countdown timer is not compulsory and we recommend asking each student if they would like to use it or not.

- If a student does not want to see a countdown, the laptop can face the time keeper.
- If a student does want to see the countdown timer, simply angle the laptop slightly on the front row so both the student and the timekeeper are using the same clock.

We recommend adopting the countdown timer due to its effectiveness in previous years. It will also assist in familiarising students with the format should they go on to compete in the La Trobe 3MT Final and Trans-Tasman 3MT.

Students may also like a visual cue (such as raising a visible yellow card in the air) to illustrate a 20 second warning, and ringing a bell at the final three minute mark.

“I think the 3MT competition has many benefits for the entrant amongst them being; the opportunity to clarify in lay terms, the purpose and benefits of their research, the opportunity to expose their research to their fellow students and staff in ways that it may be more generally accessible and, the opportunity to share their research with the community at large. It was evident from the judges’ point of view that the clarity of the presentation reflected the selection process at Faculty level. That is the presentation became clearer and more focussed after a number of presentations.

David Finlay. Professor Emeritus
Chair University Human Ethics Committee
La Trobe University



Faculty Guidelines

Information will be sent to all faculties and postgraduate students.

In order to facilitate this program, Faculties need to follow the steps below:

- 1. Encouragement:**
 - Actively encourage postgraduate students to participate
 - Disseminate the information pack regarding the Three Minute Thesis
- 2. Select:**
 - A person from each School or department to organise the 3MT heats in their area.
 - Advise Carol Burnett - c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au of the names of school/department liaison person
- 3. Organize:**
 - A panel of judges (5)
 - Venue for presentations
 - AV – PowerPoint availability
 - Advise competitors about the deadline date for applications (This will depend on when you commence.
 - Advise competitors the date, venue and names of the judging panel for their presentations
 - Invite participants for the audience
- 4. Reporting:**
 - Provide the Contact List with all competitors from each School/Department to Carol Burnett – c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au
 - Send the list of finalists to Carol Burnett – c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au



“Entering the 3MT competition was a valuable experience as it helped me gain more confidence with public speaking. It also presented the challenge of being creative with my scientific research, by describing it in an interesting and engaging manner instead of just presenting facts and figures.”

Nicole Butler
La Trobe University Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering
Runner-up, 2012

Event Management Resources

The UQ Graduate School has developed a number of helpful resources for your School and Faculty competitions.

The resources pack is available for download from the RED Unit website, but can also be obtained by emailing Carol Burnett – c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au

Run Sheet	For use by the 3MT Event Coordinator at the event.	See Appendix 1
Contact List	For use by the 3MT Event Coordinator prior to the event.	See Appendix 2
Judging sheets	To be provided to Judges to assist them in assigning a score to each competitor's oration.	See Appendix 3
PowerPoint Presentation	For use at the Final – enter the competitors' slides prior to event.	c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au
Countdown timer	Can be used to time each student's presentation.	c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au
3MT logo	Please ensure 3MT logo is accompanied with corresponding text.	c.burnett@latrobe.edu.au

Frequently Asked Questions

UQ has developed the following FAQs to assist participating universities organise their 3MT competition

Can I use the 3MT logo and develop my own artwork?

A copy of the event logo is available in the 3MT resources pack that can be downloaded from the 3MT website. Please note that The University of Queensland has trademarked the 3MT logo. As such, the trademark symbol (™) must accompany the 3MT abbreviation and logo at all times.

What are the logo guidelines?

- The event logo is to be used prominently and consistently on all 3MT communications.
- The colour logo is to be used whenever possible.
- Black is the preferred colour for reproduction of the mono logo.
- The clear space is an integral part of the 3MT logo, and other graphic elements should not fall within this area. The clear space is based on the height of the clock.

Do I have to send The University of Queensland copies of our artwork for prior approval?

No, however please refer to our logo guidelines and include the trademark symbol.

Can I approach sponsors to support my local 3MT?

Yes, we recommend that you approach your contacts to support your event.

Do I have to provide prizes of a certain value at my local 3MT?

No, there is no set minimum or maximum prize value for each 3MT. La Trobe provides prizes to the value of: \$5,000 (Winner) and \$2,000 (Runner-up) all in the form of research travel and study grants.

How can I ensure my 3MT is not biased toward a certain discipline?

It is important to ensure that your judging panel is balanced by discipline, and briefed about the values and judging criteria of 3MT. We also recommend that speakers, speech notes, and prizes reflect the diversity of research wherever possible.

Are there any reasons students will be hesitant to participate?

Every research candidate has different reasons for participating or for not getting involved. A common theme among students is a fear of public speaking, perceived English language barriers or a lack of time. As 3MT is designed primarily as a skills training activity to encourage students to develop their public speaking skills, La Trobe encourages students to compete to widen their skills base.

Who will fund our winner's attendance at the Trans-Tasman 3MT?

It is the responsibility of competing universities to provide travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for the competitor representing the institution.

Does the winning university have to host the subsequent competition?

The university of the winning entrant will have the right to host the subsequent Trans-Tasman 3MT. Should the winning university be unable to host the competition they should contact The University of Queensland within one month of winning the hosting rights.

The University of Queensland has developed the following FAQs to assist students wishing to participate in the 3MT.

What proportion of my RHD has to have a research component for me to be eligible to compete?
Two-thirds of your degree must be research.

I was a student at the time of my competition at my School; however, I will graduate before the Trans-Tasman 3MT. Am I eligible to enter?

If you are eligible at the time of your local School/Institute competition, you will remain eligible, regardless of your program status, for the Trans-Tasman 3MT.

I have participated in 3MT before. Can I participate more than once?

As long as you didn't win your Faculty Final, you are welcome to enter 3MT again.

Can I present my oration via Skype?

While this decision rests with each School/Faculty/University, we would discourage remote presentations. As an important aspect of the competition is audience engagement, anyone who would choose to present via conferencing facilities would be at a disadvantage compared to other competitors.

The winner of the Faculty/University Final will be expected to attend the La Trobe Final and the Trans-Tasman 3MT in person.

Can I present my oration as a poem, rap or song?

No. While we appreciate everyone has a different presentation style, the purpose of the activity is to "engage the audience without reducing research to entertainment value alone". 3MT is primarily about developing a student's oration skills. It is important that the competition is not seen as trivialising research or science.

Can I use a laser pointer?

Yes. A laser pointer is not considered a prop. However, the emphasis is on the oration.

Does my slide have to be in PowerPoint?

No, however it is our preferred format as all slides will be collated into a single PowerPoint presentation for competition.

How many transitions or animations can I have in my slide?

None. The slide must be static and not change in any way during the presentation. Your slide must be displayed for the duration of your presentation.

Do I have to use a slide?

No. The slide is optional as the emphasis is on the oration.

What happens if my presentation is longer than 3 minutes?

In the Trans-Tasman 3MT Final, a 20 second warning will be provided to competitors (a coloured board held up by timekeeper) and a bell will sound at the three minute limit. If a presenter continues to speak after the bell they will be automatically disqualified.

Is there a dress code?

There is no stipulated dress requirement such as 'smart casual'. Some have worn suits with ties, others t-shirts and jeans. Please wear whatever is comfortable for you. NO COSTUMES (including hats, masks, Dame Edna specs, etc.).

Will I be able to see a countdown-timer at my final?

As each competition is organised by each School/Faculty/Institute, we would recommend that you contact your event coordinator for further information.

Can I win more than one category?

Yes, it is possible to win a place (First, Runner-Up, etc.) and win the People's Choice award.

What happens if I cannot attend the Final?

The winner of each heat or final is expected to represent their School/Institute/Faculty/University at the next stage of the competition. If the winner is unable to attend the final, the runner-up will proceed to the next round of the competition

Appendix 1 – Run Sheet



Three Minute Thesis Competition

<Insert School/Faculty/ Institute name> Final

Time: <Insert>

Venue: <Insert>

Key contact: <Insert name, mobile phone number>

Run Sheet

Time	Item	Notes
	Set up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • microphones • computer/projector • & other AV equipment as required (e.g. laser pointer, countdown timer) • Promotional materials (e.g. University pull-up banners) 	30 minutes
	Briefings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seat and brief judging panel • seat and brief finalists • brief MC 	10 minutes for each group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide judging panel with judging sheets • Provide finalists with run order • Provide MC with run order, briefing document
	Venue opens to audience, all staff to be in position: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ushers at room entrance • MC • Timer 	15 minutes prior to event start <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ushers to distribute people's choice ballots. • Timer to be provided with countdown timer, paddle (20 second warning) and bell (times up!)
	Introduction: MC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describes the Three Minute Thesis concept • introduces the judging panel • describes the rules and judging criteria 	5 minutes

	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 1 - 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 2- 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 3- 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 4- 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 5- 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 6- 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	1 minute intro by MC; Finalist 7- 3MT presentation; applause	4 minutes
	<p>Guests break for afternoon tea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judging panel deliberates/scores tallied, move to catering area for announcement of winners • Ushers tally people's choice ballots • MC to be provided with winner and runner-up 	15 minutes
	Introduction: MC	2 minutes
	<p>Winners announced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runner-up announced • Winner announced 	Prizes presented by special guest, judge, or MC
	Thanks by MC, event close	
	Photo shoot with competitors	
	<p>Event pack down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • microphones • computer/projector • other AV equipment • promotional materials 	

NOTE: Please note that this run sheet is provided as a guide only. All 3MT Event Coordinators are welcome to modify the order of proceedings.

Appendix 2 – Contact List



Three Minute Thesis Competition



Contact List

	Title	First Name	Last Name	School	Faculty	3MT Presentation Title	Thesis Title	Slide Rcvd	Email	Mobile
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										

Appendix 3 – Judging Sheet



Three Minute Thesis Competition

Individual Judging Sheet



Finalist	Name	School/Faculty	Thesis Title	Communication style Was the thesis topic and its significance communicated in language appropriate to an intelligent but non-specialist audience? Score / 10	Comprehension Did the presentation help the audience understand the research? Score / 10	Engagement Did the oration make the audience want to know more? Score / 10
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						