



UNIVERSITY *of* York



Running a Three Minute Thesis™ Competition

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What is 3 Minute Thesis TM?

“Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) is a research communication competition developed by The University of Queensland (UQ). Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students have three minutes to present a compelling oration on their thesis and its significance.”

- Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Handbook for Participating Universities

Why Run 3MT®?

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.”

- Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Handbook for Participating Universities

The Bigger Picture

The Impact Agenda & Policy Context:

- Increased expectation for researchers to consider the influence/ impact of their research.
- Requirement for a 'pathways to impact' statement in research council grant applications.
- HEFCE have introduced a 20% weighting on impact in the Research Excellence Framework exercise calling for evidence that the funded research has made an impact.
- Skills development / mobility / global research.

York Internal Finalist Feedback

“I found the 3 Minute Thesis competition challenging but also tremendously rewarding because it helped me to demonstrate what my research is about and what the potential impacts for society are. In addition, it was good to meet lots of people afterwards who were really excited about my work and wanted to know more, which in itself is rewarding.

- Frank Soboczenski, University of York Internal Winner and UK National Winner 2013

“[3MT was] an opportunity to improve my oratory skills in plain English. The idea of developing an ability to communicate a science story briefly and meaningfully [appealed] and the prizes helped too! It's vitally important that we make our research accessible - there's little point just sitting in universities talking to each other. We have got to make sure our research has an impact on the world”

- Bob Phillips, University of York Internal Winner 2014

National Semi-Finalists Feedback

I entered 3MT to have a 3 minute video promoting my research... my school use it for promotion of research and I can use it to show everyone what I do. My supervisor uses it too. Thanks to these 3 minutes, my hidden-in-the-lab research became accessible to people around the world.

– Dominika Bijos, University of Bristol

A platform to describe my research to a new audience in an enjoyable, relaxed environment: I can't express how much fun I have had and how wonderful it has been to meet new people and become familiar with their exciting research. I also feel I have developed a new skill set in public engagement activity and I hope to expand on these skills by continuing to teach science to many public audiences throughout my future academic career

– Alison May, King's College London

Research Developer Feedback

“[3MT is a] useful exercise, especially for PhD students in the latter stages of their research, to take some time out of poring over the nitty gritty detail of their work and get back to the core, back to why they are doing it in the first place and the impact they hope it will have, which renews their energy.”

– Holly Prescott, University of Birmingham

“[3MT is] an incentive for our postgraduate researchers to develop and practice their communication/public engagement skills, an opportunity to raise the profile of postgraduate research both within the University and externally, and a good networking opportunity.”

– Helen Frisby, University of the West of England

History of 3MT® at York

- 2012 First York Internal Competition: 'Relaying your Research' – no national competition.
- 2013 Second York Internal Competition – 'ad hoc' national final at University of Leeds.
- York finalist won and following talks with Vitae got involved in organising a National Final 2014 at the Vitae Researcher Development International conference – call for expressions of interest.
- Overwhelming response – 33 institutions interested in holding a 2014 internal final.
- Decision take to hold a semi-final at York to select six finalists to take part in the National Final 2014.

Running a 3MT®

<http://threeminutethesis.org/>

- Handbook
- Materials pack
- Advice
- Information
- Watch 3MT competitions from around the world!

Example Timeline

- Begin project planning early in autumn term.
- Start promotion of competition internally and externally by end of autumn term.
- Receipt of applications by beginning of spring term.
- Shortlisting early in spring term.
- Shortlisted applicants informed by middle of spring term.
- Audition for shortlisted applications by end of spring term.
- Successful applicants informed by beginning of summer term
- Training session early summer term
- Final event by end of summer term

3MT® Project planning

- External Marketing
- Internal Marketing
- Logistics

External Marketing

- Hold in a public building or in your University?
- Stand alone event or attach to a larger impact event?
- Promotion via web, radio, social media, press office.
- Invite Public and Schools – do this early in timeline.
- “People’s Choice” element?

Internal Marketing

- High level commitment
- Participation from range of disciplines
- Expectations of participants vs. resources available
- Training
- Exhibitions at the event

Logistics

- Don't underestimate the admin support required in preparing and on the day!
- Catering and Equipment
- Written permissions
- Judges and speakers
- Sponsorship (prizes)
- Briefings and communication
- Evaluation and after-care

Questions / discussion