

## **THREE MINUTE THESIS (3MT) BACKGROUND**

The Three Minute Thesis (3MT), first developed by the University of Queensland and now carried out in universities around Australia and New Zealand, is a competition wherein postgraduate students present their research projects to a non-specialist audience in just three minutes. Some of the more prominent universities who organise 3MTs annually apart from the University of Queensland, include, the University of Melbourne, the University of Western Sydney, the University of New South Wales, Victoria University, and the University of Auckland.

In Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), together with University of Malaya (UPM), is one of the first to introduce 3MT as part of its effort to encourage a vibrant community of research students. We hope to open the competition to other universities in Malaysia once it has been established as part of UPM's research culture. This will enhance UPM's reputation as one of Malaysia's best research universities.

Given the strict timeframe, 3MT will compel students to primarily focus on their problem statements, and subsequently, the ways in which their research projects represent concrete solutions to these problems. Specifically, students will have to present their research topics, the research methodology and/or results, as well as the impact and contribution of their research. All of the above will take place in a context that is not only public, but also educational, fun and competitive.

The competition tests students' abilities to communicate the contents of their research to a public audience comprising people outside the students' respective fields of study. Both the lay audience and the strict timeframe will enable students to reinforce their ideas, and to avoid either overly complex terminology or over simplification. To determine a winner, the competition judging panel will decide which among the presentations communicated their ideas intelligently and engagingly to the non-specialist audience.

Besides, the 3MT competition will also enable students to raise not only their public profiles, but also that of the university they represent, given the existing media interest in the competition overseas. It will ensure that their research projects, especially those that are funded, are relevant and beneficial to the nation and society. In addition, students who are seeking to raise their academic profile for their future careers will also be able to meet and network with a large number of fellow students, academicians and researchers, both in and outside their fields of study.

## COMPETITION GUIDELINES

### Eligibility

- Only students currently enrolled in a **PhD programmes (study status – active/continue)** at Universiti Putra Malaysia are allowed to participate. Also, eligibility only applies to **semester three (3) students onwards**.
- Students who have **graduated (study status – completed)** from their programmes before the competition date will not be allowed to participate.
- The 3MT competition will be open to both Malaysian and international students.

### Prizes

- Prizes will be determined by the university.
- The judges' decision is final and no appeals will be accepted after the winners are announced.
- The top two finalists from each faculty will compete at the university heats for places in the final competition.

### Rules

- Participants are required to communicate their thesis topic and its significance (and other points deemed absolutely relevant) in their presentation, with the aid of a single slide within the allotted timeframe.
- The presentation must represent the thesis on which the student is working at the time of the competition.
- The presentation must also represent the student's original work; presentations that are plagiarised will be automatically disqualified.
- Given the strict time limit, students are advised to exclude an introductory address at the beginning of their presentation, as well as any detailed and lengthy elaboration of the background of their study.
- Participants will only be allowed to use only **one presentation slide** as a visual aid.
- The slide shall not contain any transition (animated or otherwise).
- No additional electronic media (i.e., audio or visual files) is permitted.
- No props (i.e., costumes or objects) is permitted.
- Participants are only allowed **three minutes** for their presentation.
- Participants who exceed the **three minute** time frame will be automatically disqualified.
- Group presentations, involving more than one participant, are ineligible for entry into the competition

## **Judging criteria**

### **1. Comprehension & Content**

- Did the presentation provide an understanding of the background and significance to the research question being addressed while explaining terminology and avoiding jargon?
- Did the presentation clearly describe the impact and/or results of the research, including conclusions and outcomes?
- Did the presentation follow a clear and logical sequence?
- Was the thesis topic, research significance, results/impact and outcomes communicated in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience?
- 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?

### **2. Engagement**

- Did the oration make the audience want to know more?
- Was the presenter careful not to trivialise or generalise 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?

## 3MT PREPARATION

### 3MT Writing

#### 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;
- Highlight the outcomes of your research, and the impact it will have 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. 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.

#### 3. 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, why it is important and what you hope to achieve.

#### 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 humour, however be careful not to dumb down your presentation.

#### 5. Revise

Proof your 3MT presentation by reading it aloud, to yourself and to an audience of friends and family. This allows you to not only check your style, but it will allow you to receive critical feedback. Ask your audience if your presentation clearly highlights what your research is and why it is important.

## **3MT PRESENTATION**

### **1. Practice, practice, practice**

Feeling nervous before you present is natural, and 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.
- Practise 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. Analyse how they engage with their audience.

### **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).

## REFERENCE

- <https://threeminutethesis.ug.edu.au/>
- <https://threeminutethesis.ug.edu.au/files/1676/3mt-handbook-ug-HDR-students.pdf>