THREE MINUTE THESIS (3MT) COMPETITION

University of Hong Kong
Student Briefing Session
• Background
  • What is 3MT?
  • UQ competition
  • 2010 Australian & New Zealand competition

• Why universities are holding this competition?
  • Students – valuable skills development
  • Schools & Faculties – building and enhancing research culture
  • University – external relations
Skills training and professional development for research students

- 3MT is not a stand alone activity
- It is a lot of fun but it is not a circus
- It is about development of skills and not about trivialisation of research
Why get involved?

Strong communication skills = careers in research

• Research costs money

• Research funders have to be convinced

• Funding is always competitive

• Collaboration is at the heart of research

• If you can’t communicate what you are doing, how can you explain what is it worth?
Comments from previous participants

“It scared me to death...and it was really hard but it helped me define my research and my focus. I realised afterwards how often I was avoiding talking about my research. Now I have a few different versions for a given situation and I just roll them off.”

Dr Karen Hughes, 2009 UQ finalist

“3MT was a great experience; it allowed me focus on the key messages in my project which helped my PhD thesis writing. 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 what my PhD is about in 3 minutes. The public speaking skills I gained are also important for my future career development.”

Ms Tina Wu, 2010 UQ winner & People’s choice
“Calcium channels as therapeutic targets for cancer”

Ms Tina Wu
School of Pharmacy

2010 UQ 3MT winner and people’s choice
Judging Criteria

• Communication style: was the thesis topic and its significance communicated in language appropriate to an intelligent but non-specialist audience?

• Comprehension: did the presentation help the audience understand the research?

• Engagement: did the oration make the audience want to know more?
Rules

• Each presentation is limited to 3 minutes maximum. Participants exceeding 3 minutes will be disqualified.

• The presentation should be delivered in English.

• A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted (no slide transitions, animations or movement of any description are permitted).

• No additional electronic media (e.g. sound or video files) are permitted.

• No props (e.g. costumes, instruments) are permitted.

• Data presented in the Competition should be considered as information likely to enter the public domain

• The decision of the judging panel is final.
Preparing your 3MT presentation

• Focus on what is unique about your research project

• Don't try to explain everything – remember that you only have 3 minutes so focus on the important points
  
  • Why you are conducting this research?
  
  • What do you hope to find?
  
  • What will the significance or impact of your research will be?

• Less is more

• Think about an aspect of your research that could ‘hook’ an audience
Preparing your 3MT presentation

• Use language that is listener-friendly and scenarios that people can easily relate too

• Pretend that you are describing your work to your parents or your best friend who isn’t a researcher but is educated and interested

• Add a little humour to keep the presentation be entertaining and interesting

• Use voice tone and hand gestures to transmit information

• Practice - a lot!
Preparing your 3MT PowerPoint slide

• Less is more

• You don’t have to use any text on your slides

• People respond well to visual cues – is there an image that could assist you with explaining your research project?

• Personal touches can be effective

• Think about how your slide might be able to assist with the format and delivery of your presentation
What is my PhD about...?

...It’s about using computers to solve complex puzzles to sequence DNA.

...It’s titled: Challenges for the \textit{de novo} assembly of next generation sequence data.

...It’s pretty interesting.
THREE MINUTE THESIS (3MT)

David MacDonald – 2009 Runner-up
Will Harrison
2010 Runner-up
2011 Competitions

- Australia – over 30 universities across the country
- New Zealand – Victoria University of Wellington, The University of Waikato, University of Otago, Massey University, University of Otago
- Fiji - The University of the South Pacific
- Hong Kong – University of Hong Kong
- Canada – University of British Columbia
- USA – New York University
- Vietnam
Good luck and have fun!

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