2019 Johns Hopkins University Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Student Handbook

Created by The University of Queensland

Modified for Johns Hopkins University

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Event Overview

What is it?
The Three Minute Thesis competition celebrates the exciting academic work conducted by doctoral students. Developed by The University of Queensland (UQ), the exercise cultivates students’ academic, presentation, and professional communication skills. The competition supports their capacity to effectively explain their dissertation in three minutes, in a language appropriate to an intelligent, but non-expert audience.

History
The first 3MT competition was held at UQ in 2008. Since then, the popularity of the competition has increased and 3MT competitions are now held in over 600 universities across more than 65 countries worldwide.

The Johns Hopkins Medicine Professional Development and Career Office hosted the first JHU 3MT competition in 2016 in the School of Medicine. The competition opened to the entire JHU community in 2017 and the event continues to grow every year. In 2018, doctoral students from the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Engineering, and Arts & Sciences competed in the Final Competition. Hopkins finalists have gone on to win the top prizes at the Maryland State 3MT Competition for the past 3 years. Videos of JHU finalists from the past years can be found on our website: [https://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/3mt/](https://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/3mt/).

Why participate?
During your doctoral studies, there is a strong focus on the production of your thesis. The ability to communicate the importance of your 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 findings to a non-specialist audience
- crystalize your thoughts about your thesis
- increase your profile within the JHU community and wider professional communities
- network with other JHU students, faculty, and leadership

Key Dates, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3MT workshops and critique sessions</td>
<td>March (official dates TBD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registration closes</td>
<td>March 26, 5PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>JHU 3MT Preliminary Heats</td>
<td>April 1, 3, &amp; 4</td>
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<td>JHU 3MT Final Competition</td>
<td>April 17</td>
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<td>Maryland State Competition</td>
<td>May (official date TBD)</td>
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Prizes
Students who qualify for the JHU 3MT Final Competition are eligible for the following cash prizes:

- 1st Place: $1000
- 2nd Place: $500
- 3rd Place: $250
- People’s Choice: $250
- Alumni Choice Award: $250 (sponsored by the JHU Alumni Association)

Remaining finalists will receive $100
All finalists: professional recording of your talk, to be published online.
Competition Guidelines

Eligibility
All currently enrolled Johns Hopkins University doctoral students are eligible to compete. We welcome students from every JHU school and discipline. Students must present a talk on their dissertation work. Past competitors may compete again.

All competitors must register by March 26th in order to participate in the preliminary heats. Students who are remotely based may participate in the preliminary heats virtually. The top ten finishers from the preliminary heats must compete in-person in the final competition held on April 17th in Baltimore.

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

Judging Criteria
At every level of the competition each competitor will be assessed on the judging criteria listed below.

Comprehension and 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, 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?

Engagement and Communication
- Did the oration make the audience want to know more?
- Was the presenter careful not to trivialize or generalize their topic?
- Did the presenter convey enthusiasm for their topic?
- 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

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 practicing your presentation.

The PDCO offers in-person 3MT workshops, critique sessions, and one-on-one coaching on both the East Baltimore and Homewood campuses in the weeks leading up to the competition. We highly encourage competitors to attend these sessions. In the past, students that attend workshops were more likely to make it to the final competition and win.

3MT Content

3MT is an oral presentation, but it can be helpful to write out your talk beforehand to make sure your talk is clear, concise, and free of jargon. Memorization of your talk is not required as palm cards and/or speech notes are acceptable; however, this option may detract from the delivery of the 3MT and is not recommended.

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

- Avoid jargon and academic language
- Explain concepts and people important to your topic - 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 dissertation to a close friend or fellow student from another field
- Do not dumb down or devalue your work, what you are doing is exciting and you should convey enthusiasm for your subject.

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 dissertation 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.

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.

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.

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 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
- 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.

Suspects, Science and CSI Slide: Matthew Thompson, 2011

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

Ocker or Oriental? Asian Australians and the Denial of National Identity Slide: Michael Thai, 2013

**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.

The Fourth Man 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?

Brain Waves that Predict the Future Slide: Tim Paris, 2012
3MT Presentation

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.

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.

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.

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.

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: https://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/3mt/

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).

Contact Information

The Johns Hopkins University Three Minute Thesis Competition is organized by the JHM Professional Development and Career Office (PDCO).
For questions about the JHU 3MT competition, please contact Kate Bradford at 410-955-9877 or kate.bradford@jhu.edu.