



3MT®
Three Minute Thesis Competition

Handbook for Participating Universities

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Canadian Association
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Overview

The Three Minute Thesis (3MT[®]) is an internationally recognized competition for thesis-based graduate students in which participants present their scholarly and creative activity and its wider impact in 3 minutes or less. The challenge is to present complex research in an accessible and compelling way with the assistance of only one static slide.

Created in 2008 by Dr Alan Lawson at the University of Queensland, Australia, the 3MT[®] competition celebrates exciting and innovative graduate student research while promoting communication, public speaking, and storytelling skills. The competition offers an exciting and thought-provoking opportunity for graduate students, pushing them to consolidate their ideas and crystalize their research discoveries. Presenting in a 3MT[®] competition increases the capacity of graduate students to effectively explain their scholarly and creative activity in a clear and concise manner, and in a language appropriate to a general audience. The competitions are open to the public and advertised within the community, which enables students to showcase their work across disciplines within the university and to the broader public.

The competition has become a popular research communication initiative in Canada and across the world. Today, more than 600 universities and institutions in 65 countries host annual 3MT[®] competitions, including some that are conducted entirely online. The first 3MT[®] competition to be held in Canada took place at the University of British Columbia in 2011, and in 2014 the first national 3MT[®] competition was held. Today, there are dozens of Canadian universities and research institutes that host annual competitions, with winners moving on to one of three regional competitions (Western, Ontario, Eastern) before competing in the nation-wide competition, Canada's 3MT[®]. The latter event takes place in an online setting and is hosted by the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS).



Eligibility Criteria for Local and Regional Competitions:

- Full-time Master's or Ph.D. students registered in thesis-based programs and in good standing are eligible to participate.
- Graduate students in course-based programs, visiting students, exchange students, and students on leave are **not** eligible to participate.
- Graduate students at any stage of their program are eligible to participate.
- Graduate students who have convocated **are not** eligible to participate. Graduate students who have already defended their thesis but have not yet convocated **are** eligible to participate.
- Presentations must be based on the primary research the graduate student has conducted in their graduate program.
- Graduate students should conduct their presentation in English.
- Graduate students must present in person, agree to be photographed and digitally recorded, and allow any recordings to be made public.

Notes:

- French-language students are encouraged to participate in [MT180 \(Ma thèse en 180 secondes\)](#), a similar competition hosted by [ACEAS](#).



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Staging and Performance Rules

- A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted.
- PowerPoint slide should be created using an aspect ratio of 16:9
- 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) is permitted
- No additional props are permitted (e.g. costumes, musical instruments, laboratory equipment)
- Presentations are limited to three minutes maximum; competitors exceeding three minutes are disqualified
- Presentations are to be delivered in regular prose (e.g. no poems, slam poetry, raps, songs, or spoken word presentations)
- Presentations must commence from and remain on the stage
- Presentations are considered to have commenced when a presenter initiates either movement or speech
- The decision of the judging panel is final



Judging Criteria

The following categories should be used as guidelines for judging the presentations of each competitor. The weighting of each category is to be determined by the host university.

Communication

- Did the presenter use non-verbal communication (i.e. eye contact, voice modulation, body language) effectively?
- Did the presenter use language and terminology that was clear, jargon-free, and understandable to a general audience?
- Did the presentation follow a logical sequence?
- Did the presenter spend adequate time on each element of their presentation? Did they elaborate for too long on one aspect, or did the presentation feel rushed?

Comprehension

- Did the talk help you to understand the scholarly research being undertaken?
- Did the presenter clearly outline the nature and purpose of their research?
- Did the presenter clearly indicate the fascinating or compelling aspects of their research?



- Did the presentation provide an understanding of the background and significance to the research question being addressed?
- Did the presentation clearly describe the impact and/or results of the research, including conclusions and outcomes?

Engagement

- Was the talk engaging?
- Did the presenter capture and maintain the audience's attention?
- Did the presenter convey enthusiasm for their work?
- Was the presenter careful not to trivialise or generalise their research?
- Did the talk inspire you to want to know more?
- Did the PowerPoint slide enhance the presentation - was it clear, legible, and concise?





Prize Guidelines

The following prize structure and cash values should be used as guidelines only.

First Place: \$1,000

Second Place: \$500

Third Place: \$250

Fourth Place (for Western and Ontario Regions): \$100

Fifth Place (for Ontario Region): \$100

People's Choice (Optional): ~\$100 or equivalent gift

Competition Advancement

- The top five (5) finalists as ranked by the judges from the Ontario Region will advance to the National 3MT® competition.
- The top four (4) finalists as ranked by the judges from the Western Region will advance to the National 3MT® competition.
- The top three (3) finalists as ranked by the judges from the Eastern Region will advance to the National 3MT® competition.
- Winners of the People's Choice award shall not advance to the National 3MT® competition, unless they have been selected by the judges as a finalist.

National 3MT® Competition Prize Structure

First Place: \$1,500, and trip to CAGS Annual Conference

Second Place: \$1000

People's Choice: \$500





Confidentiality and Intellectual Property Considerations

It is highly recommended that each university provide all contestants with an official release form prior to their presentation.

Students must understand that the presentation of their research in a 3MT setting will be publicly accessible and in the public domain.

The presentation of the research, will not affect any pre-existing rights following the competition except as stated below:

- Due to the nature of the competition, judges, reviewers, staff or the audience will not be asked to sign non-disclosure statements
- If your research is being/has been conducted under contract with an outside sponsor, please discuss the related contractual terms of confidentiality and intellectual property with your supervisor before participating in this competition
- All public sessions of the competition, including but not limited to oral presentations, are open to the public at large; any and all of these public sessions may be broadcast to interested persons through media which may include the internet
- Any data or information discussed or presented in public sessions should be considered in the public domain
- If your research includes confidential or culturally sensitive material, we advise that you discuss your competition entry with your supervisor





General Guidelines for Hosting a 3MT Competition

Choosing a Venue

In order to maintain consistency and fairness, CAGS recommends that host institutions select a spacious venue appropriate to a live-audience performance. Ideal venues will include an elevated stage or platform for competitors, a seating area for the audience, and a head table for the judging panel.

Selection of Judging Panel

The selection of judges is a decision made by each university and is dependent upon a variety of factors. In the past, judges have been faculty members, university administrators, alumni, and notable members of the local community.

It is highly recommended that judges with a communications or media background be selected by host institutions.

To provide every entrant with a similar experience, consider the following when composing your judging panel:

- Include between three to five judges on your panel
- Balance your judging panel by age, gender, professional position, and academic discipline
- Judges must declare any conflicts of interest before the competition begins





Tie-Breaker Judge

If the scores submitted by the judges result in a tie, then an additional judge will come into play. The tie-breaker judge scores in the same manner as the other judges, and their scores will only be used in the event of a tie.

3 Minute Timer

Each 3MT competitor is given exactly 3 minutes to present their research. In order to maintain consistency and accuracy between all competitors, an official countdown clock should be used. The type of countdown clock used is a decision made by each university. In any case, the clock should be:

- Accurate
- Controlled by a dedicated member of the 3MT competition staff
- Made visible to each competitor during their presentation

Introducing Presenters

In order to maintain consistency and fairness, each 3MT competitor should be introduced by the Master of Ceremonies in the following manner:

- Name
- Title of Presentation
- Home Department/Faculty



- Home University (for regional competitions)

Live Streaming and Photography

Most host universities choose to live stream their regional 3MT competitions. This allows students and faculty from local universities to watch their peers take part in regional competitions in real time.

CAGS highly recommends that host institutions live stream regional competitions, and that they promote the stream through their social media platforms. It is also recommended that a professional photographer be assigned to the competition in order to produce high quality images for the promotion of future competitions.

Voting/Polling for People's Choice Award

There are several ways to organize the voting/polling for the People's Choice Award. This is a decision made by each university and is dependent upon a variety of factors. For more information about how to build a voting/polling tool, please contact CAGS.

Special Activities

Most host institutions offer competitors a variety of special activities before and after their regional 3MT competitions. CAGS recommends that host institutions hold a welcome reception of some sort (lunch, dinner, or wine and cheese reception), as well as provide competitors with a gift bag or participation prize.



Event Management Resources

The University of Queensland has developed resources to assist universities who wish to hold 3MT competitions. These can be downloaded directly from the [University of Queensland 3MT website](#).

Additional Resources and Information

- [CAGS/Canadian Association for Graduate Studies \(National 3MT Competition\)](#)
- [University of Queensland 3MT](#)
- [Ontario Region – 3MT \(Queen’s University\)](#)
- [Western Region – 3MT \(WCDGS\)](#)



Appendix A: National 3MT Competition Rules and Regulations

Eligibility

- The top finalists from each regional 3MT competition are expected to compete in the national finals (Canada's 3MT)
- The top finalists for each region consist of:
 - Eastern Region (3 finalists): First; Second; Third
 - Ontario Region (5 finalists): First; Second; Third; Fourth; Fifth
 - Western Region (4 finalists): First; Second; Third; Fourth
- Finalists must have been registered in an active Master's or Ph.D. program, including thesis under submission, at a CAGS member institution (institution must be eligible for Tri-Council funding)
- Competitors who are eligible on the date of their first presentation in their local competition shall remain so for Canada's 3MT competition, irrespective of subsequent changes to their status (e.g. those who subsequently graduate before the date of the National finals)
- Those who are undertaking a professional/named/higher doctorate are not eligible
- Winners of Canada's 3MT competition must agree to be available for publicity and media interviews in the period following the announcement
- The first and Second place winners of Canada's 3MT competition will be determined by a panel of three non-specialist judges; the decision of the judges is final
- Canada's 3MT People's Choice Award will be open for public voting on the CAGS website





Appendix B: Technical Specifications for Recording Regional Videos

- Entrants are required to submit to CAGS a video file of their presentation recorded at the regional competition.
- The video should include a five-second title slide that features:
 - The name of the competitor
 - The title of the presentation
 - The name of the sponsoring university
 - The 3MT logo
- Most modern video cameras will take a quality recording. CAGS recommends the following specifications:
 - Standard Definition (SD):
 - 4:3 Aspect Ratio
 - 640 x 480 px
 - 2,000 – 5,000 kbit/s
 - Standard Definition (SD):
 - 16:9 Aspect Ratio
 - 640 x 360 px
 - 2,000 – 5,000 kbit/s
 - High Definition (HD):
 - 16:9 Aspect Ratio
 - 1280 x 720 px
 - 5,000 – 10,000 kbit/s





- Codec: for best results, CAGS recommends using AAC-LC (Advanced Audio Codec-Low Complexity), with a data rate of 320 kbit/s.
- Encode the audio at a constant rate of 320 kbit/s, with a sample rate of 48 kHz.
- All videos must be accompanied by a transcript saved in a .docx format.
- If you require assistance in preparing or sending your presentation videos, please contact CAGS.
- When you are ready to upload/send your video to CAGS, please contact Sean Hart (SeanTHart@Rogers.com).

