Three Minute Thesis Competition Proposal
USF Department of Physics

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Introduction to 3MT

The 3MT competition is a research communication competition developed by the University of Queensland, Australia. The exercise celebrates the exciting research conducted by graduate students and develops academic, presentation, and research communication skills and supports the development of students' capacities to effectively explain their research in language appropriate to an intelligent but non-specialized audience.

In this competition, graduate students will have three minutes to present a compelling oration on their dissertation/current research and its significance. 3MT is not an exercise in trivializing or 'dumbing-down' research, but forces students to consolidate their ideas and crystalize their research discoveries.

History of 3MT

The first 3MT was held at the University of Queensland in 2008 with 160 students competing. Enthusiasm for the 3MT concept grew and its widespread implementation by universities has led to the development of an international competition. As a result, 3MT competitions are now held in over 600 universities across more than 59 countries worldwide.

Strong support for 3MT exists in North America with over 100 institutions, including USF, participating in the annual regional and national competitions. The global reach of the competition can be seen by the extent of participation with universities in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Zambia, and Vietnam also hosting local 3MT events.

In Spring 2015, University of South Florida hosted the first 3MT event at the university. Since then, winners have emerged from different programs within the College of Arts and Sciences, with some even proceeding to represent USF at the regional 3MT competition the following spring. However, in the 7 years since inception, no student from the Applied Physics program has emerged winner at university level.

Why Participate

- **Skills development for research students.**
  - Participating in 3MT develops academic, presentation and research communication skills, while developing research candidates' ability to effectively explain their research in language appropriate to a non-specialized audience.
- **Building intra-departmental research culture.**

- ○ 3MT provides a valuable opportunity for graduate students to come together in person, get to know one another, and talk about their research. It also provides a supportive environment and presentation skills training.

- **Building external relations for the department/program.**
  - ○ 3MT winners may go on to represent the department at university, state, national, and international 3MT competitions which provides an excellent networking and professional development opportunity. Previous 3MT finalists at USF have benefited from invitations to a variety of other networking events following their participation in the competition.

- **Preparation for Graduate Research Day event hosted by the PGSC in the fall.**
  - ○ The 3MT competition is a practice event for students to get used to speaking in front of large audiences and a judge panel about their research in preparation for the Gradute Research Day event hosted by PGSC and the physics department in the fall.

Competition Elgibility

Currently enrolled graduate students (masters or PhD track) in the Applied Physics program at the University of South Florida will be eligible to participate in the 3MT.

Competition Rules

- A single static PowerPoint slide is permitted (no slide transitions, animations, or 'movement' of any description).
- 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).
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.

3MT Presentation Timer

Three Minute Thesis has developed a countdown timer which is helpful for some students when presenting. This will simply be displayed on a screen facing the student. If a student does not want to see a countdown, the timer can face the timekeeper, but the students are still bound by the time.

Judging Criteria

Each competitor will be assessed on the judging criteria listed below. Each criterion is equally weighted and has an emphasis on audience.

- **Comprehension and Content**: Did the presentation help the audience understand the research? Was the thesis topic and its significance communicated in language appropriate for an intelligent but non-specialized audience? This criterion is further outlined below:
  - Presentation provided clear background and significance to the research question.
  - Presentation clearly described the research strategy/design and the results/findings of the research.
  - Presentation clearly described the conclusions, outcomes, and impact of the research.
  - The presentation followed a clear and logical sequence.
  - The thesis topic, key results and research significance, and outcomes were communicated in language appropriate to a non-specialized audience.
  - The speaker avoided scientific jargon, explained terminology, and provided adequate background information to illustrate points.
  - The presenter spent adequate time on each element of their presentation – or the presenter elaborated for too long on one aspect.

- **Engagement and Communication**: Did the oration make the audience want to know more? This criterion is further outlined below:
  - The oration made the audience want to know more.
  - The oration was delivered clearly, and the language was appropriate for a non-specialized audience.
  - The presenter was careful not to trivialize or generalize their research.
  - The PowerPoint slide was well-defined and enhanced the presentation.
  - The presenter conveyed enthusiasm for their research and captured and maintained the audience's attention.
  - The speaker had sufficient stage presence, eye contact and vocal range; maintained a steady pace, and have a confident stance?

Scoring

- **First Place and Runner-Up Awards**
  - Adjudicating panel determines the First Place, Runner-up, and Second Runner-up winners.
  - Judges give competitors scores for two categories (detailed above). Scores are

tallied for each competitor.
  ○ Competitors with the top two scores are named First Place and Runner-up.

● **People's Choice Awards**
  ○ An important aspect of the competition is the People's Choice prize. Following all presentations, the audience is asked to vote on who they thought gave the most convincing 3MT presentation (based on their understanding of the criteria outline above).
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  ○ Each member of the audience gets one vote by using an Outlook survey form. A QR code will be printed for easy access.
  ○ The competitor with the most audience votes is the People's Choice winner.
  ○ The People's Choice winner cannot also win First Place or Runner-Up prize.

Judging Panel

To provide every entrant with a similar experience, we will be taking the following into consideration when composing the judging panel.

● The panel will include seven judges: two undergraduate/REU students, two senior graduate student, one non-academic staff, one post-doc, and one faculty member.
● The panel will be balanced based on demographic segmentation, academic/professional levels and/or positions, and studied discipline.
● Judges must declare any conflict of interest with presenters while ranking.
● Judges must provide each presenter written feedback. Forms will be provided.

Competition Awards

Prizes are an important incentive for candidates entering the competition. Prizes vary at the discretion of each institution. The PGSC wishes to seek sponsorship from the department to fund the competition prizes. Below are the proposed prize categories and amounts.

● Winner — $250 Cash Prize
● Runner-up — $150 Cash Prize
● People's Choice (selected by the audience) — $100 Cash Prize

Registration Process & Information

- Applicants submit the following via an online registration portal/form at least two weeks prior to the competition.
  - Name
  - Year in program
  - A single static PowerPoint slide
  - Short summary of presentation (< 100 words)
  - Major area of research
  - Affiliated research lab/principal investigator (major advisor).
- Applicants receive notification of acceptance one week after registration deadline.
- Applicant presentation order is randomly drawn/assigned.

Dates & Deadlines
- **Applications open:** Wednesday, June 15, 2022.
- **Applications close:** Wednesday, July 10, 2022.
- **Decision made:** Friday, July 17, 2022.
- **Main Event:** Thursday, July 28, 2022 - 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Contact Information

For more information concerning the competition, please contact:
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