

Competitor Guide: Distance Students

Full-time distance students or students in online programs are eligible to participate in the 2026 3-Minute Thesis Competition. Instructions for participation and video recordings are listed below.

Deadlines: *Deadlines are firm.*

Abstract, Slide, & Video Due: Friday, September 18th by 5:00 p.m. CST

Competition Disclaimer:

Official 3-Minute Thesis Competition rules outlined by the University of the Queensland exclude master's students from participating in the 3-Minute Thesis Competition. As a partner institution, we are required to abide by all rules set forth by The University of the Queensland. The official rules can be found [here](#) for reference. Texas Tech is committed to allowing all graduate students to participate in our university's research competitions. In an effort to abide by official competition rules and accommodate master's students, the Texas Tech competition will have a Master's division and a Ph.D. division for this competition.

Both master's and Ph.D. participants will compete on Tuesday, September 29th. The master's and Ph.D. students with the highest scores from the preliminary round will advance to the final on Friday, September 30th. In the final, we will have a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, place winner in the Master's division and a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, place winner in the Ph.D. division. **The winner from the Ph.D. division is the only winner who is eligible to advance to the regional competition as outlined by official competition rules.**

Registration Information:

1. Complete a registration form [here](#).
2. Submit an abstract describing your research on the registration form linked above. Abstracts **cannot** exceed 250 words.
3. Submit your static slide on the registration page linked above. Please save your slide as a PDF, ppt, or PPTX. The maximum file size for your slide is 1 MB.
4. Email video file to studentlife.gradschool@ttu.edu. Additional instructions below.

Virtual Submission Rules:

- Presentations are limited to 3 minutes, and competitors exceeding 3 minutes are disqualified.
- Presentations are considered to have commenced when a presenter starts their presentation through speech (timing does not include the 3MT title slide and commences from when the competitor starts speaking).
- Videos **must** meet the following criteria:
 - Filmed on the horizontal.
 - Filmed on a plain background;
 - Filmed from a static position;
 - Filmed from one camera angle;
- A single static slide is permitted in the presentation (absolutely no slide transitions, pointer, cursor, laser, animation, or 'movement' of any description).
- The 3-minute audio must be continuous – no sound edits or breaks.
- No additional props are permitted within the recording (e.g., costumes, musical instruments, laboratory equipment, and animated backgrounds).
- Presentations are to be spoken word (e.g., no poems, raps, or songs).
- No additional electronic media are permitted within the video recording (e.g., sound and video files).
- The slide must be visible throughout the entire presentation.
- The viewer must be able to see the presenter and the slide simultaneously in the video recording.
- The decision of the adjudicating panel is final.

Preliminary Event Overview: Tuesday, September 29th

Final details for the event will be sent to all competitors by Friday, September 25th. Distance students will **not** be joining the competition live via Zoom or any other platform. Distance students will provide a pre-recorded video that will be played for the judges at the competition. Your TTU email address will be provided to the judges if they have any questions about the presentation.

- Video presentations will be scored exactly like the live presentations on campus.
- An introduction slide will be displayed before each video presentation begins. The slide will include your name, academic information, and the title of your presentation.
- A full-screen image of your video will appear on the screen and will be played for the judges.
- Once your video presentation is complete, judges will have 3 minutes to score your video presentation
- If you are advancing to the final, you will be notified by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 29th via email from our staff.

Final Event Overview: Wednesday, September 30th

- The final heat will begin at 12:00 p.m.
- The format for the final heat will be the same as the preliminary round; however, all presentations will take place LIVE in the Red Raider Ballroom.
- There will be a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner for the Masters division, and a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner for the Ph.D. division. The 1st place winner of the Ph.D. division will advance to the regional competition. Only the winner of the Ph.D. division will advance to the regional competition.
- Guests will have the opportunity to select a competitor for the People's Choice Award during the final heat. Only competitors in the final are eligible for the People's Choice Award.

Tips & Suggestions:

- Practice, practice, practice! Practicing helps you gauge the timing of your presentation, so you don't exceed the time limit on the day of the competition.
- Record yourself. Watching yourself is incredibly beneficial as it helps you identify issues with your vocal range, rhythm, and body language.
- Do not read or script your presentation. In-person competitors cannot have notes or scripts, and distance students are held to the same standard for this competition.
- Avoid jargon and academic language. Remember, your research must be clear to a non-specialist audience. Imagine that you are explaining your research to a close friend or fellow student from another field.
- Explain concepts important to your research.
- Highlight the outcomes of your research and the desired outcome.
- Convey your excitement and enthusiasm for your subject.
- Write an opener to catch the attention of the audience, highlight your different points, and have a summary to restate the importance of your work.
- Try to leave the audience with an understanding of what you are doing, why it is important, and what you hope to achieve.
- Do not use your 3-minute presentation time to introduce yourself or thank faculty, mentors, etc. From the moment you start speaking until you stop speaking, the timer will continue to run, and that will count towards your overall 3-minute time limit.
- We highly recommend ending your presentation with a brief "thank you" to stop the timer.

FAQ:

- **How and where do I send my pre-recorded video?**
Please email your video to studentlife.gradschool@ttu.edu.

- **Which format is required for my video?**
You can send your video as an MP4 file or as a OneDrive link to the email address listed above.
- **What program do I use to record my video?**
Competitors are welcome to use any video recording software they prefer. Please ensure that your video includes your 3MT slide in the background and a video of you speaking in the frame. An example can be found in the “additional notes” section below.
- **I made an error on my video/slide. Can I update it before the competition?**
All competitors (including distance participants) are required to submit a video/slide by Friday, September 18th. However, if you made an error, we will accept edits until Wednesday, September 23rd. After Wednesday, September 23rd, we will not accept edits. This includes the day of the competition. Email revisions to studentlife.gradschool@ttu.edu.
- **Can I use a laser pointer during my presentation?**
No. Movement of any kind on the screen will constitute a disqualification.
- **What should I wear in the video?**
We highly recommend business professional attire.
- **Can you send me a Zoom link to join my competition room/heat?**
Official 3MT rules specify that virtual participants **MUST** submit a pre-recorded video for the competition. This prevents technical and audio issues on the day of the competition. For this reason, we cannot provide distance students with a Zoom link to join virtually.
- **If I make it to the final, how will I know?**
If a student wins their preliminary heat and advances to the final, our staff will email the student and will play their pre-recorded video during the final heat.
- **My presentation was only 1-2 seconds over 3 minutes...why was I disqualified?**
Official rules indicate that students cannot exceed 3 minutes. If you exceed 3 minutes under any circumstances, you will be disqualified and will not advance to the final. Please do not use your 3-minute time limit to introduce yourself or thank faculty, mentors, etc. From the moment you start speaking until you stop speaking, the timer will run and count toward your overall 3-minute time limit.
- **Why are you so strict with the 3-minute time limit rule? Can you give me a chance?**
The 3-Minute Thesis Competition is an international competition. Because the official organization cannot host the competition at all participating universities around the globe, as a host site, we are mandated to follow the rules set forth by the organization. If we do not follow the official rules of the organization, we could lose the opportunity to host this competition in the future. Additionally, adhering to the rules helps students prepare for the regional, national, and international competition, should they advance.
- **How many winners will there be in the final?**
There will be a first, second, and third-place winner in each division. Only the first-place winner from the Ph.D. division will advance to the regional competition. Additionally, there will be one People’s Choice Award in the final. Only competitors in the final are eligible for the People’s Choice Award.
- **What happens if I win?**
The winner of the Texas Tech competition will advance to the regional competition held February 17th-19th, 2027, at the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools in Arlington, Virginia.



- **I would like a copy of my rubrics from the competition. How do I get them?**

Graduate Student Life will provide competitors with a digital copy of their rubrics if requested via email by the competitor. To request a digital copy of your rubrics, please email studentlife.gradschool@ttu.edu. Please note that your rubric will not be available immediately following the competition. We will begin sending scanned copies the week of October 5th.

Additional Notes:

- Competitors **will not** be judged on video/recording quality or editing capabilities. Judging will focus on the presentation, ability to communicate research to a non-specialist audience, and 3MT PowerPoint slide.
- You are welcome to use any video recording program or application for this presentation. Please be sure that the slide and presenter are visible in the frame. See example below.
- Videos can be sent as an MP4 file or as a OneDrive link to studentlife.gradschool@ttu.edu. All videos are due by 5:00 p.m. CST on Friday, September 18th.

The slide and presenter MUST be visible throughout the entire presentation.

