

5 Minute Research Pitch (5RP)

Invitation to participate and Guidelines for the 2016 competition

The 5 Minute Research Pitch (5RP) is an opportunity for early and mid-career researchers to showcase their research to a national audience and win funding to further their research in the future.

In 2015, the participating Universities were:

- Australian Catholic University;
- Edith Cowan University;
- Federation University;
- Southern Cross University;
- Central Queensland University;
- University of Southern Queensland; and
- Victoria University.

Purpose

Increasingly researchers are required to communicate their work to a wider audience through social and mass media. This demands special communication skills to make the work accessible and interesting to a non-specialist audience without over-simplifying or trivialising the message. It is also important to communicate research to those who may be putting the findings into practical application. Such skills are also relevant to our teaching practice because what makes our research interesting to the public can also make the subjects we teach more interesting to our students. The 5RP is therefore a competition that incorporates both research and teaching ability, to see which early or mid-career academics can display the best overall academic skills package on the day.

Opportunity

Challenge yourself! Take yourself out of your comfort zone and make life more interesting by having a go at turning your work into a fun and rewarding competition. In the process you have the opportunity to develop your presentation skills and showcase your research to a national audience. And to make it really interesting, you can be in the running to win additional research funding to help fund your future research efforts.

Competition Rules:

The competition is similar in concept to the 3 Minute Thesis competition run nationally for PhD students. Researchers will be required to deliver a five minute presentation of their current or recently completed research with the aid of three PowerPoint slides.

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Lismore

PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480 Australia
T. +61 2 6620 3000 · F. +61 2 6620 3700

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Coffs Harbour

Hogbin Drive, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450 Australia
T. +61 2 6659 3777 · F. +61 2 6659 3051

Gold Coast

Locked Mail Bag 4, Coolangatta QLD 4225 Australia
T. +61 7 5589 3000 · F. +61 7 5589 3700

1. Eligibility

The competition is open to Level A, B and C academics from participating universities, provided they have an employment contract (continuing or fixed-term) current at the time of the national finals. Past overall winners are not eligible, but divisional winners, place-getters and other finalists may re-enter.

The competition is designed to showcase new and emerging research projects; research presented must be current, meaning either in the process of being completed or published in 2015 or 2016. The presenter's supervisors are required to confirm on the application form that the presenter is either solely responsible for the research, or an active member of the relevant research team ie, they are named on a funding agreement (internal or external grant) associated with the work, have authored or co-authored a paper resulting from the work in 2015-6, or have had sufficient intellectual input to a current project to justify future first (or equivalent) authorship on the work. The 5RP is designed to showcase your work as an individual on the project, not that of other team members, or the team as a whole.

Research higher degree students are not eligible to compete. However, if you are employed as an academic staff member and concurrently undertaking a research degree, you are eligible on the basis of your employment as a staff member. It is also appropriate to present research conducted as a PhD student within the above timeframe, if currently employed as an academic staff member.

Each participating University shall provide a maximum of one competitor in each of the two divisions to the national finals. These will be the winners of institutional finals conducted by each university. Each university may set its own processes for internal selection heats (e.g. they may require departmental or faculty heats/trials to select competitors for an institutional final, or they may allow unlimited entries into a single institutional event). Second-place getters in the institutional finals will be named as a reserve for the national finals should the winner be unavailable.

2. Competition Rules

Presentations are limited to five minutes. Any presenter exceeding five minutes will be disqualified.

Three PowerPoint slides only are permitted. These may include photos, diagrams or other graphic material.

Non-static media (videos, sound-clips) are permitted to a maximum of 30 seconds, but must be a part of a slide (not in addition to) and will be included in the five minute presentation time. It is preferable that any spoken narration of video imagery is presented live by the speaker and not pre-recorded as part of the embedded video. Note that the national finals will be run using a PC running the latest version of PowerPoint for Windows. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that special features of a presentation, such as embedded video/audio content, will function as planned, we cannot guarantee that they will and it is advisable to have an alternative plan – just in case. Hyperlinks to external content are not permitted if they open as a separate window to the slide.

Slides may be presented as a series of elements that are gradually added to create a final slide composition (presentations may include PowerPoint animations for each element and transitions between slides). However, new elements (including video clips) must not obscure more than approximately 25% of any earlier element. As a guide it is appropriate to overlay annotations, arrows, circles etc. onto a graph or photo, or to inset a smaller diagram over a larger one, or to change the size of an existing element (e.g. to show how a bar on a chart increases after application of a treatment). The majority of every element should still be visible in the final view of the slide.

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Slide backgrounds should be generic and not contain a critical element of the final slide ie, it would be against the spirit of the rules to speak to a photo as a background that was then covered by subsequent elements of the slides.

The judging panel's recommendations are final and negotiations will not be entered in to once the winners are announced.

3. Internal Heats and Nomination Process

To participate in the national finals it is a requirement that each university first runs an internal Institutional final. The winner from each of the discipline groupings listed below from each institution will then participate in the national finals, to be held at the Southern Cross University Gold Coast Campus in November 2016.

The winner of the individual groupings in each Institutional Final will receive \$1,000 from their own university, to be credited to their university research account. Individual institutions may also choose to offer prizes for place-getters and/or an audience-choice award.

SCU will provide an expression of interest form to the SRP contact person at participating institutions to be completed by each competitor. It requires a description of the topic of the presentation, the discipline grouping being contested, and confirmation of eligibility from the nominee's head of department, school or faculty. The form will also require a commitment of availability for the national finals.

4. Discipline Groupings

The first place winner of each of the groupings in the institutional finals will proceed to the national finals. Second place getters will be named as reserves. The groupings are as follows:

Group One – Sciences and Health

- Biological Sciences and Biotechnology;
- Health and Medical Sciences;
- Engineering, Mathematics and Informatics; and
- Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences.

Group Two – Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

- Humanities and Creative Arts;
- Education, Social and Behavioural Sciences;
- Law; and
- Business, Commerce and Economics.

Some fields of research may fit into either division e.g. Archaeology is often positioned in the social sciences if the subject is interpreting social structures or function of past communities, but could equally sit in the sciences where the subject is the technological approach to extracting data from artifacts. The decision as to which division to contest is therefore up to the competitor, but inappropriateness of the content to the chosen division would influence a competitor's score in some judging criteria, so choose carefully and tailor the material for the target audience.

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5. Judging Panel

Each institution will be responsible for forming the judging panel for their internal heats and Institutional Finals. Judges should include at least one expert from each of the above groupings and an expert in public communications/media.

SCU will be responsible for assembling a judging panel for the finals ensuring balanced representation of expertise in the two categories and in public communication or media. Each participating university will be invited to propose a judge for the national finals, who would normally be the PVC/DVC (Research) or nominee.

6. Judging Criteria

Participants at all phases of the competition will be judged on:

- *Description of the nature of the problem being addressed and the need for the research, and the research pitch*; this should be explicit and not left to the audience to decipher. The value of the research should go beyond the discipline – how might it be relevant to the broader community or even the audience members?
- *Description of the research process*; this is about the question(s) being addressed, the thought process that is being followed, the type of information being collected and what is being (or has been) done with it.
- *The ability to communicate research to a non-specialist audience*; can the work be easily understood and the logic of the above points be followed by a non-specialist. Avoid acronyms and jargon, (some clearly defined terms may be appropriate). Avoid complex data presentation – the main results should be obvious.
- *Final summary and clear concluding statement, making full use of the time available*; the presentation should make full use of the 5 minutes – finishing too early will be penalised (presenters should aim to finish between the 4.5-5.0 minute marks). Presenters who have clearly truncated their talk to save going over time will be penalised over a talk that has finished on time with a clear concluding statement. Going over the 5 minutes will result in disqualification.
- *Creativity of presentation and engagement with the audience*; body movement, tone, speed, clarity and modulation of voice, eye contact, not reading from notes, reference to the slides (how well do the slides emphasise the main points of the talk?), visual impact of the slides, does the talk elicit an emotional response from the audience (this may include surprise, humour or empathy with the researchers or their subjects). The judges will be looking for something a bit different or unique in terms of content, delivery and audio-visual impact.

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7. The National Finals

The university of the overall winner of the national final will be the host university for the next year's competition. Accordingly, the 2016 5RP national finals will be hosted by Southern Cross University Gold Coast Campus in November 2016 (final date to be confirmed). Further details, PowerPoint files and application forms of all institutional finalists will be forwarded to the host institution prior to the final event.

Each discipline grouping will be awarded a first, second and third place winner based on the judging panel's choice. One overall winner will be selected from the winners of the two discipline groupings. The prize money (to be provided by each winner's university) is as follows:

Discipline Winner: \$1,500

Second place: \$750

Third place: \$500

Overall winner: \$3,000

Audience choice award: A non-monetary prize to be provided by an event sponsor.

The research fund prizes are awarded for research purposes. Prizes will be paid by the winner's own institution and will be awarded to the winners' research account – the prizes will not be available as a cash prize.

8. SCU Contact

If you have any questions regarding the 2016 5 Minute Research Pitch, please contact:

Dr Nicole Rice
Executive Officer, Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research),
Southern Cross University
PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480
T: 02 6620 3809 | M: 0418113633 | E: nicole.rice@scu.edu.au |

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