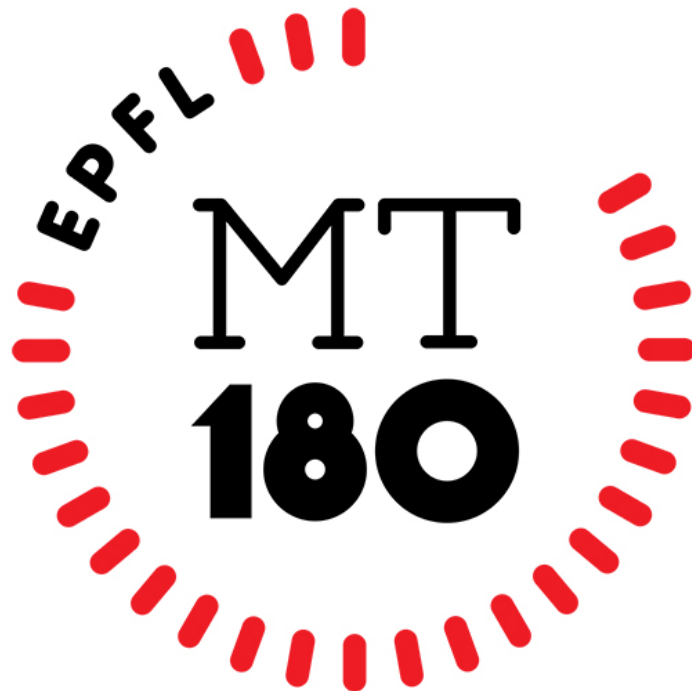


MY THESIS IN 180 SECONDS



Applicant Specifications

2026-2027 Edition

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I. Competition Overview

1. What is it?

My Thesis in 180 Seconds (Ma thèse en 180 secondes - **MT180**) is a competition that gives **doctoral students** the opportunity to present their research topic in simple terms to a lay audience, and to a jury who will grade them. **In three minutes** each doctoral student must deliver a clear, concise, and yet compelling explanation of his or her research project.

Each candidate will participate in one of the public selection event that will take place in January 2027. The EPFL final, which will include 12 to 14 candidates presenting either in French or in English, will take place on **18 March 2027 at the Rolex Learning Centre**. One to three finalists may go on to compete in the Swiss final of MT180, where only French is accepted¹.

2. Background

MT180 is inspired by the competition *Three Minute Thesis* (3MT^{MD}), which was first held in 2008 at the University of Queensland, Australia. Imported to Canada, the concept was adapted into French for Quebec by the Francophone association for knowledge (ACFAS). MT180 is now organized in several French-speaking countries such as France, Morocco, Belgium and Switzerland. Participating universities in Switzerland include EPFL, UNIFR, UNIGE, UNIL, UNINE, UZH (<https://mt180.ch>).

3. Why should you participate?

MT180 provides a unique opportunity **to hone your communication skills** while **showcasing your research in a public space**. Since the presentations are filmed and uploaded online, you can share your passion with the widest possible audience! Videos of EPFL finalists from previous editions are available on the YouTube channel <https://go.epfl.ch/MT180-YouTube>.

4. Prizes

Prizes will be awarded to the top three participants as determined by a panel of judges from the fields of sciences, economy and/or media. A special «audience award», chosen by the public, will also be given.

5. ECTS Credits

An ECTS credit recognized by the EPFL Doctoral School is awarded to candidates **fulfilling the following two conditions:**

1. Participation in one of the training course either in English or in French (c.f. III.1).
2. Participation in the selection process and obtain a score of 4/6 or higher (c.f. II.3).

¹ EPFL is not accredited to participate to 3MT competition, the English equivalent of the French MT180 Competition. EPFL candidates are however allowed to present in English or in French at EPFL Selections and EPFL MT180 Final Competition.

II. Rules, Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for participation you must meet the following requirements:

- To be currently or previously enrolled **in a doctoral program with a thesis (PhD) at EPFL** during current academic year **(2026-2027)** or have earned your doctorate during this academic year.
- Present a clearly defined doctoral research project.
- Be able to express yourself fluently either in English or in French.
- Inform your thesis director of your participation in the competition and manage intellectual property issues.
- Not to have won a jury or public prize in a previous edition of the EPFL final MT180.
- To be available for the competition that will take place in the Forum RLC on **Thursday March 18, 2027.**

2. Rules and Regulations

2.1 Technical Constraints

Please do read the technical constraints below carefully. In the interest of fairness, they apply equally to all participants without exception. It is up to the organizer of the event to implement them.

Timing

- You have 180 seconds to present your doctoral research topic.
- A timer will count down the time from 180 seconds to 0. It **must be positioned in front of you and be visible.**
- The timer used for the EPFL competition is available on the Internet page: <https://mt180.epfl.ch/phd-students/>.
- A person who will keep time, without being disruptive, will be positioned at a visible location. When you are ready to begin your presentation, you will notify the timekeeper with an agreed-upon signal. A beep will sound when the countdown begins (3-2-1). You may then begin your presentation (at 180).
- A loud gong will sound when the 180 seconds are out (not a single tolerance second will be allowed). At that point, you may choose to continue your presentation and thereby disqualify yourself from the competition, or not to finish your presentation and remain eligible for the competition.

Handling Interruptions

- Under no circumstances will the stopwatch be reset to zero (even if your memory goes blank, if you notice that you've made a mistake or if you feel you weren't ready), except in the event of a major technical problem.
- Should a major technical problem occur (for example: a microphone doesn't work, a slide doesn't show up, the stopwatch doesn't start, the sound doesn't work), a member of the organization (under the authority of the President of the Jury) must stop the competition, and you will be allowed to begin your presentation again once the technical problem has been resolved.
- Competitors are not allowed to interrupt their presentations themselves.

2.2 Oral Presentation

- Your presentation must be **in English or French**.
- You are allowed to interact with the audience, by asking questions, if you wish.
- No other accessories than sheet notes will be allowed: no laser pointer, no clothing accessories used specifically for the presentation, etc.
- You will use the equipment offered by the organizing team such as microphone (tie, headset) and comply with their instructions.

2.3 Visual Support

- You may use a slide for your presentation. Although not compulsory, it is **strongly recommended**.
- You are only allowed to use **a single, non-animated slide** to illustrate your points. It will be projected on a large screen behind the stage.
- The texts on your slide must be in English or in French. You may add a popularized title of your thesis if you wish.
- The slide must use the format **16/9 (1920x1080 pixels), PowerPoint (.ppt or .pptx) or image (.jpeg or .png; recommended resolution: 300 dpi)**.
- You must ensure that the images you are using are royalty-free or that the owners of the images have granted rights of use for this contest.
- No audio or video support shall be allowed.
- An introductory slide, made by the organizers, will precede yours. It will display your first name, last name, thesis director(s), as well as the full non-popularized title of your thesis. This non-popularized title will also be announced by the competition host before each performance.

3. Evaluation Criteria

The jury members will use the following criteria to evaluate the presentations:

Speaker's Talent and Engagement (out of 6)

- Oratory skills (rhetoric and eloquence): clear and confident voice, rhythm, fluidity of gestures, on-stage presence;
- Conveys passion for his/her research: enthusiasm, human character, tells about her/his experience, successes, failures, sense of humour;
- Arouses the curiosity of the audience, captures and maintains the audience's attention;
- Expresses personal interest or links with current events or the needs of society.

Popularisation (out of 6)

- Explanation of concepts or ideas avoiding scientific jargon, language and terminology accessible to a non-specialist audience;
- Relevancy and added value of metaphors, title and examples used to illustrate their points;
- Quality and added value of the PowerPoint slide, if used.

Presentation Structure (out of 6)

- Clear explanation of the purpose of the thesis and the research conducted;
- Judicious sequence of ideas facilitating understanding of the subject;
- Balance between the different parts (introduction, development, conclusion) of the presentation.

Favorite (out of 2)

- Particularly exceptional point in the presentation left to the free discretion of each jury member. This may include highlighting the originality of the presentation.

III. Additional Support for Candidates

1. Training and Preparation

MT180 is a summary and outreach exercise that requires **excellent preparation** of speech and presence as well as in visual presentation using PowerPoint.

To help you be better prepared, EPFL is offering you a one-day training course given by a specialist in public speaking.

The training sessions will take place on **27, 28, 29 and 30 October 2026**, in French and in English.

Places are limited to 8 participants per day. **Candidates who receive confirmation of registration for the course are required to attend it.**

2. Filming

Presentations will be filmed **during the selections** and during the **final**. The videos taken during the selections are accessible to the candidates and to the members of the jury. The videos of the final are public.

By participating in the MT180 competition, you accept to release your rights to your image in relation to the dissemination of these videos on the Internet (see point **I.3**) and their promotion on social media.

3. Jury

The jury for the final is made up of representatives from the scientific community and broader science world, the business world and the media.

Each selected judge must notify the members of the panel of any conflicts of interest, but may still evaluate all the presentations.

4. Organisation and Contact

My Thesis in 180 Seconds is organised at EPFL by the Science Outreach Department with support from the Doctoral School and KeepLearning, and in collaboration with Mediacom.

Website: <https://mt180.epfl.ch>

Contacts: Science Outreach Department

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