VISUALISE YOUR THESIS

by Simon Moss

Introduction

In 2018, the University of Melbourne launched the visualize your thesis competition—a competition in which research candidates need to outline their research in a video that lasts one minute. In 2019, CDU commenced this competition. Each year, the winner receives a $1000 research grant and can compete in the National Competition. The runners up and viewer’s choice receives a $500 research grant.

## Benefits of this competition

So, why should you enter this competition? What benefits could you reap? The following table outlines some of the benefits of this competition to contestants.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Benefit | Clarification |
| **Jobs.** The video could be used to secure jobs in the future | * To select job applicants, universities and other organizations often want candidates to present a video or other material to demonstrate their skills |
| **Collaborators.** Researchers who watch the video might want to collaborate with you later | * Collaborations with researchers at other colleges, universities, or nations can significantly boost your research career |
| **Assistance**. Other stakeholders may be more willing to assist you | * You can use the videos to persuade other stakeholders to help you. * For example, if they understand your research better, managers of organizations may be more willing to share their data or other resources with you |
| **Profile**. You could use this video to enhance your profile | * You might include a link to this video in a social media page or some other webpage |
| **Rewards**. The video could attract more tangible rewards | * Besides winning prizes, individuals who complete these videos might also receive micro-credentials or digital badges in the near future. * These micro-credentials can help you secure future jobs or opportunities. |
| **Value of your degree.** Every video helps CDU promote the university better | * If CDU is promoted effectively, your degree is more likely to be valued highly in the future |

## Time you need to dedicate to this competition

So, how long do you need to dedicate to this task? How many hours, days, or weeks will the design and development of this video consume? This section answers these questions.

**Skills to acquire**

To construct the videos, you may first need to develop a few skills. The following table outlines some of the skills you should perhaps acquire together with an estimate of the number of hours you should dedicate to each skill.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Skill to acquire | Rough duration to acquire skill |
| The capacity to reduce your research to one simple message | 1 to 2 hours |
| The capacity to write concisely and precisely | 5 to 20 hours |
| The capacity to develop slides—including text, photos, transitions, and animations in Powerpoint or similar software | 4 to 12 hours |
| The capacity to integrate other files, such as audio, into Powerpoint or similar software | 1 to 2 hours |

Most of these skills, such as the capacity to write concisely and precisely, will significantly facilitate your thesis. Therefore, you will not perceive the time you need to devote to these skills as wasteful.

**Construction of this video**

Once you have developed these skills, you should be able to construct these videos reasonably efficiently. The following table presents the main activities you need to complete to enter the competition, coupled with a rough estimate of the duration you might need to achieve these tasks.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Task to complete | Rough duration to complete task |
| Develop a provisional narrative or story | 1 to 2 hours |
| Watch the entries of previous contestants | 1 to 2 hours |
| Decide which features you would like to include in your video | 1 to 2 hours |
| Develop a draft script | 1 to 2 hours |
| Design visual displays to illustrate your research | 1 to 2 hours |
| Develop these visual displays | 2 to 4 hours |
| Develop the initial slides | 1 to 3 hours |
| Convert the script to written words, spoken words, or both | 30 to 60 minutes |
| Enhance the slides | 1 to 8 hours |
| Convert the slides to a video | 1 hour |
| Attend the competition | 1 hour |

Taken together, to develop the requisite skills and to construct the video, you might need to dedicate between 20 and 60 hours to this task—or 0.5 to 2 weeks. Nevertheless, because unforeseen challenges often transpire, you should commence this task at least one month before you need to submit this video.

## An overview on how to construct the video

The previous section delineated the main tasks that contestants tend to complete to construct the videos. The following table offers some insights into how to complete these activities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Task to complete | Insights on how to complete these tasks |
| Develop a provisional narrative or story | * Clarify the key problem or issue your research could solve * Your research, for example, could be designed to address the limited health services in remote regions or to resolve some conflict between two political ideologies or academic theories * Specify the key methods, perspectives, or theories that you will apply to solve or explore this problem. That is, attempt to show why you, but not previous researchers, could resolve this issue. * Record the main outcomes, benefits, or implications that your research could unearth * Attempt to integrate this information into a provisional narrative or rough story * Do not feel you need to follow this advice precisely: Each project and video is unique |
| Watch the entries of previous contestants | * To uncover previous entries, you could Google the name of a university and “Visualise your thesis” * For example, click [this link](http://tinyurl.com/yxwmzuq5) to access the videos that research candidates at Melbourne University created * Similarly, click [this link](http://tinyurl.com/yykfpunj) to access the videos that research candidates at Charles Darwin University created   Watch about 10 to 20 videos—especially videos on topics that are similar to your interests   * After you watch each video, record 1 to 5 features you like or dislike * Some of these features might revolve around the script, such as phrases you might like to include or an arrangement you might like—such as beginning and ending with a similar phrase * Other features might revolve around audio or visual effects, such as a collage of photos or particular animations |
| Decide which features you would like to include in your video | * Identify between 2 and 10 features you like—including features of the script, audio effects, or visual effects that you could utilize in your video |
| Develop a draft script | * Your script should comprise between 100 and 200 words * To write this script, convert your initial narrative into a concise draft * To clarify the problem your research is designed to solve, perhaps begin with a case study—some video footage or photos that demonstrate a person, community, or animal in need for example. * To improve the wording, visit the section called “How to write effectively” on the CDU website. Read the documents on how to write concisely and precisely |
| Design visual displays to illustrate your research | * Identify features of your research—such as a method—that you can demonstrate more effectively in photos, videos, or drawings than in words * For example, you might be able to show the equipment or software you could use * Likewise, you might present a flowchart or animation to explain a theory or procedure * Plan which photos or videos you might include, or sketch a possible drawing |
| Develop these visual displays | * Develop these photos, videos, or drawings * Usually, your smart phone and Powerpoint should be sufficient to develop these photos, videos, or drawings. * Nevertheless, if you want to utilize more advanced software, visit the section called “Induction” on the CDU website. Read the document on computer software   To unearth photos that are Licenced under Creative Commons and thus publicly available at no cost   * visit snappygoat.com or unsplash.com   To unearth videos excerpts that you can include in your presentation   * visit www.pexel.com/videos |
| Develop the initial slides | * The majority of candidates will develop most of the video in Powerpoint, although you can use other software * Attempt to divide the script you have drafted—and the visual displays you have designed—into 5 to 10 sections * Design and develop one slide to represent each section * Each slide might comprise words, photos, drawings, and videos * The first slide is a title page that follows a standard format. When you enter this competition, you will receive access to this format |
| Convert the script to written words, spoken words, or both | Spoken scripts   * Most people can speak 125 words in a minute * Therefore, if the script comprises 125 or fewer words, you could record yourself reading this script. * You could then include this audio in the slides.   Written scripts   * If the script comprises more than 125 words, you should include written text, instead of spoken words, in the slides * For example, each slide might comprise 5 to 20 words   Combinations   * Some videos present both spoken words and written words at the same time * Or, if the script comprises more than 125 words, you could construct and then record a condensed version of this script * So, the slides will present written text of more than 125 words at the same time as a shortened spoken version. |
| Enhance the slides | * You could include various animations and effects—either from Powerpoint or from other software, such as Powtoons * Include a final page that lists your references, source of materials, and acknowledgments * Most research candidates will also insert background musical tracks. You can download free musical tracks from the internet.   Sites in which you can download free music include   * [www.hooksounds.com](http://www.hooksounds.com)   To insert a musical track or some other audio file into Powerpoint   * choose “Insert” and then locate an option called “Audio” or something similar * in a tab called “Playback” or something similar, instruct the computer to “Play across slides” and start “Automatically” * in the tab called “Slide show”, choose “Rehearse timings”. This option enables you to specify the precise time in which you would like to transition between slides. |
| Convert the slides to a video | To convert Powerpoint slides to videos in Windows,   * In Powerpoint, choose File and then Export * Choose “Create a video”—and follow the instructions   On Macs   * In Powerpoint, press File and then Export * Choose MP4 as the File Format and then press the Export button |
| Attend the competition |  |

## How to construct pleasing visual effects

**Visual effects in Powerpoint**

To construct pleasing visual effects in Powerpoint, open [this file](https://www.cdu1prdweb1.cdu.edu.au/files/2020-07/Effects%20in%20Powerpoint.pptx). This file will gradually expand over time and includes many slides that you could modify, and then include, in your video. You merely need to copy or paste relevant objects, click these objects, and then modify accordingly. In addition, consider these guidelines

* ensure the font size is large, such as greater than 40 or 50

**Templates**

Rather than develop your own patterns and dynamics, you could use existing templates as well. Many websites offer these templates. One helpful website is <https://slidemodel.com/> in which three individuals, at $200 US a year, can utilise as many templates as they like.

## How to construct an end page

To demonstrate integrity and to preclude legal complications, you must acknowledge your sources and support appropriately. Most videos end with a slide that specifies

* the reference list—that is, the articles or books that were cited in the slides, if any
* the source of audio and visual materials
* the individuals or organizations that helped you construct this video.

Here is a typical example.

|  |
| --- |
| **References**  Smith, A. (2015). Health in rural regions. Journal of Health, 3, 1-10.  **Media citations**  Slide 2. Image “Head” by Simon Moss from the Noun Project, no date, Licenced under Creative  Commons, CC BY, accessed 10 Oct 2019, <https://thenounproject.com/term/head/103521>  Slide 4. Image “Brain” by Service Medical Art, Licenced under Creative Commons, CC BY,  accessed 10 Oct 2019, https://smart.servier.com/smart\_image/brain4  Photo by David Davids on Unsplash, accessed on 10 Oct 2019,  http:/unsplash.com/photos/532hd6234f  Music. Artist: SONGWRITER Title: Wistful, no date, Licenced under Use and Mention license,  accessed 20 Oct 2019, <https://www.hooksounds.com/royalty-free->  music/wistful/1943403  Animations and all other graphics created with wideo.com, licensed under paid subscription  **Acknowledgements**  I would like to thank   * my supervisors, Dr Adam Adams and Dr Betty White * Carl Franks for use and supply of the video footage * members of the health lab for their feedback and advice |

The precise format of these references and citations is flexible. But, as the previous examples demonstrated, whenever you specify the source of a diagram, image, photo, or video that you did not construct yourself, you should

* indicate whether the citation refers to an image, photograph, video, or another format
* specify the creator if this information is available
* clarify the publisher or provider if this information is available
* specify the Licence, such as Creative Commons, CC BY.
* indicate the date in which you accessed or downloaded this image, photo, or video
* specify the website from which you accessed or downloaded this image, photo, or video