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POSTGRADUATE SCHOOLTHREE  
MINUTE  
THESIS

Winner Martin Bekker with Pertunia Mashile (left) and Keafon Jumbam (right), who came second and third.



Charl Devenish

# UJ take top spots at 3MT

Two postgraduate students from the University of Johannesburg (UJ) made it a one-two finish at the national Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition in October, taking first and second place.

Martin Bekker, from UJ's Centre for Sociological Research, was declared the overall winner for his presentation titled 'Everything I thought about protest was wrong', and was awarded R16 000 in prize money. The video of his presentation was then submitted for the international Universitas 21 3MT competition, which was ultimately won by a student from the University of Queensland.

"For my PhD I was interested to see why people protest," Martin says in his presentation. "I looked at the largest dataset of its kind in the world, which happens to be from the South African Police Service attending every crowd incident, and I used machine learning processes to read 150 000 records."

His findings about the level of violence at protests and the key contributing factors can be viewed in the video, available at <https://universitas21.com/get-involved/student-competitions/three-minute-thesis-competition>.

Pertunia Mashile, from UJ's Department of Chemical Sciences, was awarded R13 000 as her second place prize, but also won the People's Choice Award for her presentation titled 'Can what is useful be harmful?' Pertunia is studying emerging pollutants such as cosmetic and pharmaceutical compounds in river-, waste-

and tap-water for her PhD, with a focus on developing analytical techniques. At the National Research Foundation (NRF) Awards ceremony in September, she was the recipient of one of two 'research excellence by next generation researchers' awards for outstanding academic performance by final-year doctoral students.

Third place and the R10 000 prize went to Keafon Jumbam, a zoology student from the University of the Free State (UFS), which hosted the 3MT national competition. Keafon's PhD research is on the social, ecological and personality factors influencing bat-eared fox foraging behaviour.

There were eight participants in the event, comprising both the winners and runner-ups from heats held at UJ, UFS and University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), as well as the winners from the Central University of Technology (CUT) and Durban University of Technology (DUT) heats. The three judges were from UFS, CUT and Wits.

- The 3MT concept originates from the University of Queensland in Australia, where the first competition was held in 2008. Participants must explain their PhD research in three minutes, in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience, and may use only one static PowerPoint slide, with no other resources or props. Today, 3MT competitions are held in more than 600 universities and institutions in 65 countries around the world.