

# IMESS DISSERTATION

Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator

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Please note that IMESS students are not required to use a particular set of methods (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or comparative) in their dissertation.

<b>Student:</b>	Chuanli Xun
<b>Dissertation title:</b>	The Transformation of Russian Industrial Structure

	70+	69-65	64-60	59-55	54-50	<50
	A	B	C	D	E	F
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Knowledge of problems involved, e.g. historical and social context, specialist literature on the topic. Evidence of capacity to gather information through a wide and appropriate range of reading, and to digest and process knowledge.</i>						45
<b>Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b> <i>Demonstrates a clear grasp of concepts. Application of appropriate methodology and understanding; willingness to apply an independent approach or interpretation recognition of alternative interpretations; Use of precise terminology and avoidance of ambiguity; avoidance of excessive generalisations or gross oversimplifications.</i>						45
<b>Structure &amp; Argument</b> <i>Demonstrates ability to structure work with clarity, relevance and coherence. Ability to argue a case; clear evidence of analysis and logical thought; recognition of an argument's limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>						42
<b>Presentation &amp; Documentation</b> <i>Accurate and consistently presented footnotes and bibliographic references; accuracy of grammar and spelling; correct and clear presentation of charts/graphs/tables or other data. Appropriate and correct referencing throughout. Correct and contextually correct handling of quotations.</i>						40
<b>Methodology</b> <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>						30

<b>ECTS Mark:</b>	40	<b>Charles Mark:</b>	F	<b>Marker:</b>	Vilém Semerák, Ph.D.
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>			No	<b>Signed:</b>	Vilém Semerák
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				<b>Date:</b>	September 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2022

## MARKING GUIDELINES

**A (UCL mark 70+) = A (Charles mark 91-100 - excellent):** Note: marks of over 80 are given rarely and only for truly exceptional pieces of work.

Distinctively sophisticated and focused analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.

**B (UCL mark 69-65) = B (Charles mark 81-90 – very good)**

**C (UCL mark 64-60) = C (Charles mark 71-80 – good):** A high level of analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Good understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research. 65 or over equates to a B grade.

**D (UCL mark 59-55) = D (Charles mark 61-70 – satisfactory)**

**E (UCL mark 54-50) = E (Charles mark 51-60 – sufficient):**

Demonstration of a critical use of sources and ability to engage in systematic inquiry. An ability to engage in sustained research work, demonstrating methodological awareness. 55 or over equates to a D grade.

**F (UCL mark less than 50) = F (Charles mark 0-50 - insufficient):**

Demonstrates failure to use sources and an inadequate ability to engage in systematic inquiry. Inadequate evidence of ability to engage in sustained research work and poor understanding of appropriate research techniques.

## Please provide substantive and detailed feedback!

### Comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (at least 300 words):

The thesis by Chuanli Xun is one of the longest theses that I have had a chance to evaluate for the IMESS program. At the same time, it is unfortunately also the thesis plagued by some of the most worrisome issues that I have ever seen in theses submitted by IMESS students.

#### Main problems of the thesis:

- While the text includes an extensive (over 30 pages long) section titled “literature review”, the literature review is clearly insufficient both in terms of quality as well as in terms of coverage. As far as quality is concerned, the literature review resembles a relatively shallow and incomplete write-up which seems to be based on the author’s ideas and recollections of texts that the author had studied. Most importantly, it is very short on citations and references – in fact, there are long sections of text (even several pages long) which include important claims but which are not supported by any reference to other papers or official documents whatsoever. It is often not clear whether claims made in the “literature review” are based on the author’s opinion or some uncited text.
- The author does pay sufficient attention to several key issues that are usually assumed to be rather important for the development of the Russian economy. The problems caused by extraction sectors are only mentioned briefly in the main text (and the term Dutch disease only appears once in the text – in the final conclusion!). Not too surprisingly, quite a few possibly highly relevant papers on such topics are missing from the literature review. Similarly, troublesome demographic development and especially brain drain are not mentioned, in spite of their direct relevance for the topic. I would have expected also a discussion of some possibly relevant concepts previously researched e.g. by D. Rodrik, such as the role of manufacturing as an escalator sector (this would actually be directly relevant for section 2.5, esp. p. 36) or the possibility of “premature deindustrialization”. The role of rather specific political institutions (and corruption/cronyism) briefly appears in the text, but a deeper analysis is missing too. Possibly relevant (as they can explain failures of public policies), rather well-known and easy-to-read contributions on such topics e.g. by Anders Aslund are not mentioned.
- Even though the thesis focuses on the analysis of the development of the structure of the Russian economy, the author struggles with providing a consistent definition and description of the sectors. The author seems to put an equivalence sign between agriculture and the primary sector and in quite a few cases remains rather vague on whether the extraction of natural resources is included in data for what she/he calls “agriculture”. I would have expected a much more careful use of terminology, especially for a thesis on this particular topic and for the analysis of an economy in which natural resources play such a significant role.
- The author also struggles with the definition and delimitation of industrial policy. On the one hand, the definition which is provided on p. 21 (but not supported by any reference) is relatively standard, other sections of the text indicate that the author understands industrial policy very broadly and considers e.g. privatization or trade liberalization parts of industrial policy. This is quite interesting and to some extent ironic – some policy-makers in the history of CEE countries rejected industrial policy (but embraced privatization and trade liberalization at the same time). The author definitely should have invested some additional time into explaining the delimitation of industrial policy (and supporting the claims with references).
- The author included an introduction to a methodology that promises a kind of index decomposition and analysis of structural changes (section 3.4, p. 48-52). It is a mystery why this methodology is discussed in the thesis – the author never really uses it nor seems to have had all the data that would have been required for this analysis. Instead, the author performed a relatively basic descriptive analysis (charts, min, max, standard deviation, simple correlations) of time series with labour market statistics and data on the structure of employment and value-added in Russian economy. The author never really uses more detailed data (remaining at the level of the three highly aggregated sectors is really too crude). Unfortunately, the author did not attempt to choose any other data (and methods) from the rich portfolio of available options – it might have been interesting (and not too difficult) e.g. to include analysis based on input-output tables (e.g. the detailed time series of OECD multiregional IO tables which include Russia) or discussion of data related to the concept of economic complexity.
- Last but not least, the thesis would have tremendously benefited from additional proofreading; there are many grammar and language issues in the submitted versions of the thesis. Similarly, proper editing might have reduced the length and improved the quality of the thesis substantially.

Additional (and minor) issues:

- Interestingly enough, the author wasted space on the discussion of issues which were not relevant for the type of data and methods used for the thesis (section 3.7 – Research ethical considerations, p. 55).
- When the author mentions sanctions, the role of sanctions imposed by Russia is not discussed. This is quite interesting because e.g. Russian media were trying to assure the Russian public that Russian post-2014 (counter)-sanctions on imports of food products from the EU, the USA, Canada, Australia and Norway would help develop e.g. domestic food industry. Such claims would make the sanctions directly relevant to this thesis.
- Equations: There seems to be a typo in question 4 (p. 50). The author also used a rather unusual style of the numbering of equations (p.48-51).
- A text by Baumol is mentioned in the thesis (Baumol (1967) on p. 32), but it is not in the list of references. On the other hand, a text by Herrendorf et al (2014) is there twice.
- Section 2.5.1 includes three charts which were probably taken over from Atakian (2013). However, there is no caption is an explicit indication of the source. Also, the quality of the inserted chart is low (they are blurred possibly due to low resolution). But most importantly, the author's interpretation of the charts gets dangerously close to mixing correlation and causation (p. 35-38).

In my opinion, the thesis would not be defensible at my home institution (IES FSV UK) in its current form. Definitely not as a Master's thesis and even its chances as a Bachelor's thesis would not be too good. This conclusion is not based on the absence of any sufficiently advanced quantitative analysis (I do realize that IMESS is a rather interdisciplinary program), but on the combination of poor methodology, weak literature review, numerous imprecisions and even contradictory statements in the text, as well as significant gaps in argumentations and omissions in the description of the development of Russian economy and policies. Some of these issues are quite surprising to me because the author analyses a country whose economic features have been widely discussed in media in recent months.

**Specific questions you would like addressing at the oral defence (at least 2 questions):**

If other referee reports reach different conclusions and the defence takes place, then I propose the following questions:

1. Please clarify how you treated the extraction sector. Was it included in your "agriculture" or "manufacturing industry" aggregate data?
2. Have you come across any information about the regional dimension of Russian industrial policy? Is it being used also as an instrument that should help reduce the significant imbalances in the regional development of the Russian economy?
3. Have you found any research that analyzed the likely presence of "Dutch disease" in Russia? Have there been any policies or policy proposals that explicitly attempted to reduce the negative implications of the resource curse?
4. Can you explain the following claim (which you made on p. 88): "An increase in the share of total employment results in a decrease in value-added, a percentage of GDP and dollars value, by sector".
5. Is the term "baby boomers" relevant for the Soviet/Russian economy (as the author implies on p. 57)? Why yes/no?
6. Explain the following claims made on p. 68: "Correlation analysis affirms that labour movement in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors is direct and similar. It means that workers do not move between the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The workers demanded by the two sectors are different and do not affect the Russian economy." Are your data (and methods) really sufficient for such a strong conclusion?