

Annex 1 – Template Dissertation Report EPS



Joint Dissertation Review

Name of the student:	Suzanne Groenewoud
Title of the thesis:	Alliance with the Dragon? Greece and Portugal's re-orientation towards China after the sovereign debt crisis
Reviewer:	Dr Matthew Broad, Leiden University

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

This thesis centred on a highly relevant topic, namely, the internal drivers of relations between EU countries and China. The literature review did a commendable job of mapping out the scholarly terrain and the broader importance of the subject. I'm not convinced section 2.3 was really needed in a thesis of this type. And it would have been useful to read how 'crises' more generally compel EU states to act or behave in certain ways. But the chapter nevertheless did a good if sometimes curt job of positioning itself and delineating the need for further exploration of the topic. The research question itself was very well crafted.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The rationale for concentrating on southern Europe more generally was robust. But pp. 21-22 ought to have explored in more depth how representative the Portuguese and Greek cases are and what was expected from them: why these were puzzling cases, rather than simply appropriate cases, was missing. I also wasn't sure how far the theoretical framework went in informing us theoretically: this was probably better off building a comparative table upon which to analyse more rigorously the cases side-by-side. Still, much thought had clearly been put into the design, and the hypotheses ended up being both sensible and well contextualised.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

Chapter 5 made for an intriguing read. Although this made extensive use of mostly secondary material, this was handled with great skill and the absence of more robust primary data is of course explained by the conditions under which the thesis was written. There was admittedly a risk of too many possible explanatory variables being touched upon – as the paragraph on p. 36 indicated, everything from 'constitutional principles' to history and economics might be expected to have played a role. That aside, the candidate did well to take us in some detail through the broad contours of the argument in the ascribed word limit, and the conclusion did manage to establish the primary reasons for variation in EU states' renewed interest in China – effectively and convincingly answering the question in the process.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

This was a well written thesis bar a few oddities of expression. The bibliography was very neat and consistent, and the overall structure of the thesis was sound.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

This intriguing and well-timed piece of research asked an excellent question, and through sensible hypotheses and an impressive engagement with a range of (secondary) material more than answered it. More on the utility of the cases and sharper theoretical framing would have pushed this grade still further.

Grade (A-F)	8.5 (B)
Date	Signature
23/06/AAAA	