

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

<b>Student Matriculation No.</b>	<b>Glasgow 2574393Q DCU Charles Trento</b>
<b>Dissertation Title</b>	A Comparison of OnlineNewsMedia Framing of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine Conflict in Ukraine, Russia, the U.S. & China

### INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

<b>Reviewer 1 Initial Grade</b>	<b>Reviewer 2 Initial Grade</b>	<b>Late Submission Penalty</b> Select from drop down list
<b>Word Count Penalty</b> (1-15% over/under = 1gr point; 15-20% over/under = 2 gr points; 20-25% over/under = 3 gr points; more than 25% over/under = 0 fail)		
<b>Word Count:</b> <b>Suggested Penalty:</b> Select from drop down list		

### JOINT GRADING (subject to agreement of the external examiner and approval at Joint Exam Board)

**Final Agreed Mark.** (Following correspondence reviewers should list the agreed final internal grade taking before and after any penalties to be applied).

**Before Penalty:** B3 [15]      **After Penalty:** Select from drop down list

### DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

Assessment Criteria	Rating
<b>A. Structure and Development of Answer</b>	
This refers to your organisational skills and ability to construct an argument in a coherent and original manner	
• <i>Originality of topic</i>	Excellent
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Excellent
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Very Good
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Very Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Excellent
<b>B. Use of Source Material</b>	
This refers to your skills to select and use relevant information and data in a correct manner	
• <i>Evidence of reading and review of published literature</i>	Excellent
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Very Good
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Very Good
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Excellent
<b>C. Academic Style</b>	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	Excellent
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Very Good

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

• Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)	Very Good
• Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?	Yes
• Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)	Not required
• Appropriate word count	Yes

### ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

#### Reviewer 1

This is an original, timely and well-researched dissertation. Its aim was to analyse different framings of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the main online news media in Russia, Ukraine, China and the US. The choice of a methodological approach – quantitative content analysis – is well justified. The application of the method demonstrated the author's familiarity with software necessary for conducting big-data research, including the sentiment analysis, AI-supported content analysis and the extraction of data from websites. The dissertation showed that the author understood the differentiation of media landscapes in the analysed countries, including their socio-political context.

The biggest weakness of the dissertation is the lack of disclosure which websites (three for each country) were ultimately chosen as the source of data. This does not allow for the assessment of the choice of websites. Even more importantly, the dissertation's main confirmed hypothesis assumed that the main news websites tend to mirror their states' approach to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Not knowing which news media websites were chosen, it is impossible to assess the validity of research findings. As a result, while the author presented the criteria for the choice of the websites, they did not present the websites themselves.

#### Reviewer 2

The dissertation addresses a very interesting and topical subject.

There are some occasional lapses in grammar/presentation and the dissertation can be unnecessarily wordy and/or stylistically awkward.

The large section, constituting almost a third of the dissertation, devoted to "Post-Soviet Russo-Ukrainian relations" is largely superfluous given that this research is about media-framing and the results of the media study, not providing a descriptive history of Russian-Ukrainian relations during the last three decades.

Regarding the literature review, it is stated that "there was limited academic literature on the conflict, resulting in some of the literature review in Chapter 3 being based largely on news reports". However, there was no obligation to focus the literature review on the current conflict. A literature review should employ seminal or significant academic works and news reports are not appropriate.

On a couple of occasions pre-2022 sources are used to explain events that have happened since the 24 February invasion. For example, we are told that "the conflict between Russia and Ukraine resulting from the invasion presents a myriad of geostrategic challenges including inter alia humanitarian crises, threats to food and energy, disinformation and information warfare" The source is "Wither, 2016". Similarly, we are told that "the Russian news media has largely reflected the numerous and occasionally conflicting justifications for the Russian invasion of Ukraine including to prevent the threat of NATO's eastward expansion, the "De-Nazification" of the Ukrainian government and even retaking Ukrainian territory which is historically Russia's by right". The source for this is "Mateo, 2018".

The dissertation's findings depend completely on confidence in the software, but it is not adequately explained why such confidence is justified. No cogent reason is provided for why we should have

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

confidence in the software doing the sentiment analysis or opinion mining for us. There is also the additional complication that most articles have had to go through Google translation software, which further magnifies the potential for inaccuracies. Significantly, we don't get any information regarding the news websites from which the 24,422 stories were obtained. We are told the number (12) and states (Ukraine, Russia, the U.S., and China) but not the actual websites themselves.

The decision to narrow the polarity to simply "positive", "negative" and "neutral" must mean losing some nuance and accuracy. The examples of what constitutes a positive, negative, or neutral headline (leaving aside the content of the story) highlight some of the problems associated with accurately rendering sentiment by using AI.

In terms of sentiments identified by the software there is virtually no difference in "positive polarity" between Ukraine, Russia, and the USA. We are told that 37.69% of Russian website articles on the war expressed "negative sentiments" But what does "negative" mean in this context? Negative about the war? About Ukrainians? About Zelensky? NATO? US? Military losses?

It is stated that "many of the Ukrainian online media headlines about Russian troops referred to them in disparaging terms such as "occupiers" (0.65%), "invaders" (0.43%) and "enemy" (0.30%). On the other hand, a notable proportion of the Russian online news headlines labelled the Ukrainians as "Nazis" (0.29%) and "nationalists" (0.15%). I'm not sure these small fractions of 1% could be described as a "notable proportion"

The author concedes in passing that "the accuracy of the research findings are heavily dependent on the accuracy of the Sentiment Analysis and Topic Extraction AI-based models used" before adding "evaluating the accuracy of the Sentiment Analysis and Topic Extraction models employed in this study requires significant technical assessments beyond the scope of this research project". But what is the value of the findings if we can't have confidence in the accuracy of the data?

Close to the end of the dissertation it is further conceded that "these identified limitations ultimately affected the quality and accuracy of this project's findings and any future research related to this topic should endeavour to address these challenges in order to improve the quality and validity of its findings". However, the limitations of the data amassed for this dissertation are not for others to overcome.