

IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator (jiri.vykoukal@post.cz)

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

Student:	Alexander Fuss
Dissertation title:	The Construction of Russian State Identity in International Relations through Discourses on Terrorism 2000-2008

	70+	69-65	60-61	59-55	54-50	<50
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Knowledge <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>	x					
Analysis & Interpretation <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>	x					
Structure & Argument <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>	x					
Presentation & Documentation <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>		x				
Methodology <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>	x					

ECTS Mark:	A/75	Charles Mark:	A/93	Marker:	Karel Svoboda
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>			No	Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	11/9/2024

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 study analyses construction of meaning of terrorism in Putin's Russia in 2000-2008 based on speeches of Russian diplomats in UN. From the very beginning, I may say that this is a very good paper, well written with a sound methodology of discursive analysis and theoretical background in discourse theories. Almost none of my remarks is somehow substantial and most of them ask questions going beyond the scope of the thesis.

In the Russian case, the author investigates the image of the Russian state from weak state under Yeltsin towards a strong state fighting terrorism under Putin. It is therefore logical the author uses diplomat's speeches. I have some remarks to the time frame – although setting the period at 2000-2008 is traditional and justified, I would suggest expanding it to the earlier years in further research – it may reveal (dis)continuities between late Yeltsin and early Putin times.

Furthermore, the author does not claim that the paper explains everything, but clearly sets the boundaries. Research focus on time, space and subject is very clearly defined and explained. Concentrating on diplomatic speeches may sound like a weakness – they aim at their fellow diplomats and even though they are public, their outreach is rather limited. I highly appreciate that the author is aware of this problem and discusses it (page 29) and convincingly turns it into his advantage. This is just one of the proofs that the whole thesis is well-thought off.

My biggest remark goes to the structure of its paragraphs. In the introduction, one paragraph ranges from the page 3-5 and covers the main argument, thesis' structure, the main methodological approach etc. This concentration of the essential information about the thesis makes it extremely hard to read. I would also challenge the claim about a turning point in Russian foreign policy only after Putin came to power – already Kozyrev muted the cooperation with the West and under Primakov the turn became obvious (even factual, the famous "Primakov Loop" when he learned about NATO bombing Yugoslavia). Furthermore, a minor remark – constant use of "focussing" instead of "focusing". At some points, referencing could be improved (page 43 missing links to General debate speeches). The chapter headings could be also better formatted (at least somehow, not as the rest of the text).

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

- 1) You concentrate on Vladimir Putin's era. However, some traces of Russia's great power ambitions (and counterterrorism) can be seen even before. Did the Russian diplomats relate somehow to the previous periods?
- 2) Although even this is out of the scope of your research, diplomatic speeches are still addressing specific audience – diplomats and policy makers (despite the fact they are public). Do you see any differences between these speeches, speeches of Russian representatives aimed at foreign public and at domestic public?