

# 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.

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

	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>		X				
<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>		X				
<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 limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>		X				
<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>		X				
<b>Methodology</b> <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>			X			

<b>ECTS Mark:</b>	B	<b>UCL Mark:</b>	65	<b>Marker:</b>	Irina Petrova
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				<b>Signed:</b>	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				<b>Date:</b>	16.09.2024

## MARKING GUIDELINES

**A (UCL mark 70+):** 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 65-69):**

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.

**C (UCL mark 60-61):**

Some evidence of critical analysis, knowledgeable interpretation. Wide range of sources used to develop a logic and coherent argument. Good understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen

field of research, the extent of independent research could have improved.

**D (UCL mark 59-55):**

Employ relevant sources and show ability to engage in systematic inquiry. Little critical analysis of the material. It demonstrate methodological awareness but the standard and rigor of the analysis can improve.

**E (UCL mark 54-50):**

Mostly descriptive argument. Employ relevant but limited sources. The structure, logic and overall quality of the argument needs improvement.

**F (UCL mark less than 50):**

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.

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

**Knowledge**

The dissertation demonstrates generally good level of knowledge of both the theoretical/methodological issues and the empirical material on the Russian discourse presented in the United Nations on terrorism. However, broader knowledge of Russian identity and broader narrative on terrorism is less visible in the dissertation. It would be useful to embed the findings of the empirical analysis more in these broader insights, especially in the conclusion of the dissertation. Knowledge of the relevant academic literature is good; several key authors on the topic are referred to.

**Analysis and interpretation**

The particular strength of the dissertation is its rigorous approach in terms of research design. The dissertation formulates the research objective (although it would be useful to formulate it as a research question and put it a bit more prominently in the introduction). The theoretical and methodological sections are well written and demonstrate good understanding of the theory of constructivism and discourse theory/method.

Another important strength of the dissertation is that it uses primary sources for the analysis, which demonstrates analytic skills and ability to conduct independent analysis based on primary sources. The dissertation presents a close and critical reading of the primary sources.

However, the dissertation suffers a typical problem of this kind of research, that is, it tends to be slightly too descriptive. The analysis could be pushed further to provide in-depth insights in two particular ways. First, what are the specific power structures and hierarchies that the Russia discourse build? Answering this question would add additional depth to the analysis and would be more in line with the original CDA methodology. Second, embedding the findings more in the existing literature on the Russian identity would be beneficial as it would allow to connect it to the bigger issue.

The dissertation also argues that it uses process tracing, which is in fact a serious research method focusing on identifying causality – and the dissertation is clearly not doing it. I therefore would suggest removing the mentioning of process tracing.

**Structure and argument**

The dissertation has a clear and coherent structure. The argument is well-presented in the introduction and is developed with the support of empirical analysis. The argument would benefit from better clarity in the conclusion.

**Presentation and documentation**

The dissertation is very well presented and documented. It contains an annex of primary documents and bibliography list.

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

- What do the findings of your dissertation tell us about broader power structures and hierarchies constituted by the Russian discourse?
- What are the limitations of constructivism for studying the topic 'Construction of Russian State Identity in International Relations through Discourses on Terrorism 2000-2008'? Which theoretical frameworks could be useful to address these limitations?



