

SECINTEL Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2281621	Charles 39941571
Dissertation Title	The Visegrad Group: an analysis of intelligence cooperation and its challenges	

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Glasgow Marker <i>Office Use</i>	Charles Marker <i>Office Use</i>	Charles Additional Info <i>Please advise ranking</i>
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JOINT GRADING (subject to agreement of the external examiner and approval at Joint Exam Board)

Final Agreed Mark. Markers should make reference to the Joint Charles University-University of Glasgow Grade Conversion Table

C2 [13] D [Satisfactory]

DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

Assessment Criteria	Rating
A. Structure and Development of Answer	
This refers to your organisational skills and ability to construct an argument in a coherent and original manner	
• <i>Originality of topic</i>	Very Good
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Satisfactory
B. Use of Source Material	
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>	Good
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Satisfactory
C. Academic Style	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	Good
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Very Good
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?</i>	Yes
• <i>Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)</i>	-Select from list-
• <i>Appropriate word count</i>	Yes

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ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Glasgow Marker

The dissertation examined the role of intelligence cooperation in the Visegrad 4 and demonstrated some very good engagement with the literature and presented primary empirical data from interviews and policy reports. In places the analysis was quite good. But the broad scope of the research eclipsed the original contribution and the conclusions appeared speculative.

Greater effort could have been made to explain why the 4 factors (limited economic cooperation; lack of trust in the form of divergent policy interests; different military capabilities; different threat perceptions) were in particular relevant to the V4 case. Also, the means of evaluating these explanatory factors in this particular research context were unclear which gave the impression that the conclusions presented were not very well supported by the empirical evidence. More importantly, it was not clear how and whether these factors actually affect the quality of the cooperation: if the existing literature attests particularly strong cooperation in the V4 then does this mean that these factors prove marginal in their explanatory value? A more fine-grained approach to unpacking these and their influence would have been valuable. I felt that the evidence from interviews might have been better deployed in understanding the significance of these.

There was detailed commentary on the limitations and difficulties encountered in this sensitive research which were thoughtful and the written style was quite clear. Although ethics approval was not included in the printed copy of the dissertation, I can confirm that this was secured from the ethics committee in September 2017.

Charles Marker

Studying intelligence is an important yet challenging task. Secrecy, which is inseparably connected with the world of intelligence, makes data collection difficult if not impossible. Most documents are secret, and practitioners are reluctant to talk to outsiders. Despite these obvious limitations, this dissertation has tried to take the ambitious road of studying intelligence cooperation. When encountering the limits of data availability, the author decided to circumvent the problem. Circumventing might be the best research strategy, but I am afraid it does not work well here and that the dissertation suffers from several problems.

First, an initial research objective is a good one, but it is soon modified into a much weaker one. The dissertation aims to show, “which factors challenge intelligence cooperation among the Visegrad countries at the group level” (p.). Soon, however, the dissertation retreats from an attempt to identify what factors challenge intelligence cooperation into an attempt to describe several factors which might possibly challenge the cooperation. Furthermore, the dissertation presents rather little about the current state of intelligence cooperation among V4 countries. The state of intelligence cooperation among V4 would be much needed in this dissertation. It is entirely possible, in fact empirically rather probable, that the current intelligence cooperation among V4 countries is adequate to the needs. The reader is then left wondering, why anyone should study what challenges intelligence cooperation among V4.

Second, it is unclear why are some factors which might hinder cooperation studied, whereas most are left unexplored. The dissertation rightly draws on intelligence studies literature, which has identified factors like different organizational cultures, divergent foreign policy interests, different regulations in intelligence handling, different ways of analyzing intelligence, competition

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among services, or low intelligence capabilities. But then, “due to time constraints and limits on the availability of information” (p.2), it analyzes economic cooperation, different interests, different military capabilities, and different threat perception. This is problematic. It is unclear why only four factors have been selected for analysis. Moreover, for some factors, it would be needed to specify, why and how they influence intelligence sharing. I am not convinced that being someone’s sixth largest trading partner has any significant role in the decision whether to share information with him or not.

Third, the empirical parts of the dissertation are rather superficial. An informed reader cannot avoid feeling that the author’s familiarity with the region is rather shallow. To illustrate, the dissertation claims that V4 countries are “located between Europe and Russia” and “work as buffer zone”. Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, however, have no borders with Russia. In fact, Budapest, Bratislava, and Prague are a thousand kilometers far from Russia’s westmost parts. Even Poland only borders Russia’s Kaliningrad exclave. On page 19 the dissertation claims that “the Czech Republic and Slovakia have usually shown strong pro-Russian sentiments and have often opposed increases in defense spending”. The Czech Republic has, however, increased the defense expenditures at roughly 7 percent per year since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, which is relatively more than region's spending champion Poland did.

Fourth, structure and writing style would also benefit from some smaller changes. The literature review is extensive but covers only a limited number of sources. Even though the content of these sources is discussed extensively, the discussion could be better related to the dissertation’s objectives. Description of intelligence systems of V4 countries come in the middle of the dissertation, but it would be better situated early in the text. Citations always refer to the entire source and not to a page range, which is wrong and prevents the reader from verifying the information. Last the dissertation often repeats itself, sometimes even using the same sentences multiple times (c.f. first paragraphs at p.1 and p.12).

I understand that the studying intelligence is important yet challenging and some imperfections vis-à-vis data collection is unavoidable. The dissertations imperfections should be evaluated in this light. However, not all shortcomings above are necessitated by the difficult data collection, and even those which are could have been better addressed.

Charles University > University of Glasgow Grade Conversion

CU General Grade	Grade Specification for Conversion	Percentage	UoG equivalent
A - excellent	Excellent upper (1)	100 – 96	22 (A1) Excellent
	Excellent lower (2)	95 - 91	19 (A4) Excellent
B – very good	Very good upper (1)	90 - 86	17 (B1) Very Good
	Very good lower (2)	85 – 81	16 (B2) Very Good
C - good	Good upper (1)	80 – 76	15 (B3) Very Good
	Good lower (2)	75 – 71	14 (C1) Good
D - satisfactory	Satisfactory upper (1)	70 – 66	13 (C2) Good
	Satisfactory lower (2)	65 – 61	12 (C3) Good
E - sufficient	Sufficient upper (1)	60 - 56	11 (D1) Satisfactory
	Sufficient lower (2)	55 – 51	9 (D3) Satisfactory
F - fail		50 – 0	8 (E1) Weak

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University of Glasgow > Charles University Grade Conversion

UofG General Grade	Grade Specification for Conversion	Percentage	CU equivalent
A1-A3	Excellent upper (1)	100 – 96	A - Excellent
A4-A5	Excellent lower (2)	95 - 91	A - Excellent
B1	Very good upper (1)	90 - 86	B – Very Good
B2	Very good lower (2)	85 – 81	B – Very Good
B3	Good upper (1)	80 – 76	C - Good
C1	Good lower (2)	75 – 71	C - Good
C2	Satisfactory upper (1)	70 – 66	D - Satisfactory
C3	Satisfactory lower (2)	65 – 61	D - Satisfactory
D1	Sufficient upper (1)	60 - 56	E - Sufficient
D2-D3	Sufficient lower (2)	55 – 51	E - Sufficient
E1-H		50 – 0	F - Fail

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Notes for Markers: When grading the SECINTEL Dissertation markers are asked to reflect upon the aims and learning outcomes for the dissertation. Each dissertation should also adopt a clear security focus reflecting the relevant programme pathway

Aims: The course aims to provide students with independent research opportunities. It will include engagement with research methods training leading up to a period of independent research and the production of a substantial dissertation that builds upon themes and issues covered within the MSc International Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies. Students will be encouraged to develop their own ideas and demonstrate their capacity for original thought and independent research. The dissertation element aims to enable students to identify and research particular issues or problems, linked to security, intelligence and strategy, at a deeper level than is possible within assessed essays and to develop a critical analysis of the existing body of academic work relating to their topic of choice. Students taking this course will be prepared for further research, study or professional careers through the development of their skills in data collection and analysis, use of original and secondary sources and the conducting and writing up of a detailed research project.

Intended Learning outcomes: By the end of the dissertation, students will be able to:

- > Devise a realistic programme of research on a topic reflecting the main themes of the programme;
- > Collect, select and critically analyse relevant background literature and arguments of a range of scholars;
- > Understand and select the appropriate methodology for dealing with information sources and data;
- > Apply these methods to gather and interrogate data in an open-minded, rigorous and undogmatic manner;
- > Be able to critically evaluate competing theories and apply relevant theoretical frameworks to guide the study
- > Organise the data collected and analyse the findings in a competent manner that allows for a fluid and logical argument to be presented;
- > Be reflexive and self-critical about findings and the limitations of analysis;
- > Work independently, organising and maintaining own programme of study to meet academic deadlines so as to produce work containing a substantial element of originality.

Word Count:

Dissertations should be 20,000 words in length for students undertaking work-placement as part of the independent study portfolio and 22,000 words in length for standard dissertation students. Word counts exclude the title page, abstract, contents, bibliography and appendices). There is a 10% leeway for words above the upper limit, but no leeway for dissertation that fall under the word requirement. All dissertations must display an accurate word-count including the citations, footnotes/endnotes and chapter/section titles. One point (on the Glasgow 22-point scale) will be deducted for each 750 words under the minimum or over the 10% upper limit.

Language:

The dissertation **must** be written in British English. A Czech Language cover page / abstract may be included

Late Submission Penalty:

Dissertations that do not have an extension or are submitted after an extension deadline are subject to a penalty of 2 secondary bands per day (this includes weekends and holidays) on the Glasgow grading Scale.

Plagiarism:

Dissertations which suffer from excessive (e.g. serious and/or deliberate) plagiarism will be subject to a grade of 0/Fail and be referred to the appropriate authorities at both universities. Dissertations that contain some elements of plagiarism, but which are deemed not to be excessive (e.g. minor instances that are not considered deliberate) based on consultation of both internal markers, should be graded accordingly and will be subject to scrutiny from the external examiner and could still result in a mark of 0 as well as referral to appropriate authorities for disciplinary action.

Consultation prior to final grading:

First marking by both institutions should be completed blind with no prior consultation. Once both markers have graded the dissertation and provided written comments, they should consult on the grading and come to a joint final grade, taking into consideration any late submission or excessive word count penalty. It is the responsibility of the Glasgow marker to oversee this. Where markers cannot come to a joint agreement then the dissertation should be referred to the Programme Convenors at Glasgow and Charles (Dr. Eamonn Butler & Dr Vít Střítecký). The external examiner will be used to moderate any dissertation in this position and the comments referred back to the internal markers for confirmation.