

SECINTEL Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2277807	Charles 90086024
Dissertation Title	Analysis of Russia's implementation of soft power in Estonia	

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Glasgow Marker D2 [10]	Charles Marker E [Sufficient]	Charles Additional Info Lower Grade
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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

D2 [10] E [Sufficient]

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>	Satisfactory
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Poor
• <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>	Satisfactory
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Poor
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Satisfactory
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Good
C. Academic Style	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	Very Good
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Very Good
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	Excellent
• <i>Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?</i>	Yes
• <i>Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)</i>	Not Required
• <i>Appropriate word count</i>	Yes

SECINTEL Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Glasgow Marker

This was a well written dissertation that was able to provide a detailed account of various events and developments in Estonia related to various aspects of Russian soft power, widely defined. While there was a wealth of information here, I did, however, feel disappointed with the end product.

Firstly, it was not entirely clear what you were hoping to achieve with this dissertation. There were not specific research questions aside from your desire to explore Russia's soft power influence in Estonia. This struck me as particularly broad in scope and lacking analytical or theoretical focus. This resulted in a thesis that lacked sharpness throughout.

For one thing, there was little that was new here. It instead seemed like you were simply outlining the major areas that Russia apparently involves itself in with regards to Estonia. These were all well-trodden issues that have been covered comprehensively in other literatures (including the ones you cite). For a Masters dissertation, I would expect something new but I could not find anything here.

The sections were therefore dry and difficult to read. They were overly descriptive and my mind kept wandering as there was no focus to the separate sections. It was difficult to know what you were trying to achieve by explaining the nature of Estonia's education system, for example.

In the methods section you say that you are examining Russian documents. However, there was no systematic attempt to analyse the documents. Instead, you simply selected a few quotes from them and a few quotes from leading officials. A more focused approach could have been to examine critically how Russia approaches the question of soft power. Additionally, it was a shame that you did not consult the wider literature on non-western soft power. There are a number of articles on this topic, including those that focus on Russia.

This perhaps was a result of the weak theoretical bases of the research. Soft power was introduced fleetingly and you provide a few definitions. For a Masters thesis I would expect some deeper engagement with the theoretical debates. Soft power is a heavily contested concept and you needed to have engaged with these debates more meaningfully. Instead, you simply adopt a wide definition of soft power that is almost anything that is not direct military force. I am not sure this definition was helpful as it allowed you to then choose a range of topics and descriptively set them out.

If the aim of the dissertation was to examine the effectiveness of Russian soft power, there is little here to provide an answer to this question. You seem to assume, a priori, that Russia lacks influence (e.g. p. 18). However, you sometimes seem to hint that Russia is able to influence its 'compatriots'. I was confused therefore. I also felt that you did not provide any convincing evidence for either influence or lack of influence.

The dissertation was also peppered with other issues that were not persuasive. For example, you dismiss the Historical Memory Foundation as Russian propaganda. However, there was no convincing evidence to back this up. On what grounds is it a propaganda tool?

SECINTEL Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Overall then, this was a frustrating dissertation to read. Some work had gone into compiling the descriptive facts. You had also consulted some of the general literature on Russian soft power. However, much of this came from think tanks and neglected the more academic literature. For example, key texts were missed (Feklyunina's article on soft power, Kiseleva) that engage more fully with the academic debates. You also did not explain other key ideas such as the Russian World, to which a large literature has been devoted. In sum, it was unclear to me what this dissertation achieved.

Charles Marker

I do not have much to add to what the previous reviewer already said. The thesis has clearly seen improvement if we compare it to the earlier version. However, it still lacks a clearly formulated research question and a systematic conceptual discussion - which is disappointing, considering the fact that there is no lack of literature and the debate on soft power takes several interesting turns. Unlike the previous reviewer, I am not sure if innovation is a necessary prerequisite for a master thesis, but I agree completely that it should be better focused.

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

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



SECINTEL Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

D2-D3	Sufficient lower (2)	55 – 51	E - Sufficient
E1-H		50 – 0	F - Fail

SECINTEL Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

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.