IMSISS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	**Glasgow** 2486499 **DCU** 19108656 **Charles** 23098904
Dissertation Title	The role of cyber operations in Iran's policy toward the United States: A qualitative perspective

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade	*Reviewer 2 Initial Grade*	*Late Submission Penalty*
Select from drop down list	*Select from drop down list*	*Select from drop down list*

Word Count Penalty *(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)*

Word Count: 24056 **Suggested Penalty:** no penalty

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: A2 [21]   **After Penalty:** Select from drop down list

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

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• *Appropriate word count*	Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

What is the role and utility of cyber operations in adversarial relations? Examining the case of Iran's relations to the USA, this dissertation presents a persuasive argument that cyber operations of low severity function as additive signalling to political moves without the risk of unwanted escalation. The value of this argument rests on the combination of a competent and comprehensive literature review, effective methodology, relevant empirical data, rigorous analysis and critical evaluation of its findings. Moreover, the research is presented in clear language and following all the formal requirements of academic writing. This dissertation has no apparent weakness. The author is well aware of the limitations that a single case study has. Nonetheless, these limitations are mitigated by skilfully anchoring the empirical findings into the existing literature. After all, a critical evaluation of the results and discussion with the literature in the concluding chapter is probably the strongest part of the dissertation.

For discussion, can your argument accommodate the view of Iran as a pluralist actor (e.g. the Revolutionary Guards being independent of the Government etc.)? After all, cyberspace is commonly viewed as a stage for various actors more or less associated with states (e.g. patriotic hackers).

Reviewer 2

This is an extremely well executed piece of research, investigating the role of cyber operations in the policy sphere, taking the case of the Islamic Repubilc of Iran's towards the US.

The dissertation offers an in-depth discussion of the existing literature and clearly shows a gap that the dissertation addresses: looking at cyber operations as a non-coercive political tool that states can use to signal discontent to the adversary with low risks of escalation. Of particular appreciation is the merging of the literature addressing cyber warfare, war stratgy and policy, with mention also made to the phycological aspect of cyber operations.

The methodology is appropriate to the study, and its limitations are clearly outlined.

The empirical chapter presents the data with accuracy and convincingly shows a change in the pattern of Iran's use of cyber operations towards the US in response to the US behavior, and in relation to the traditional military domain.

The discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature is the strongest part of this dissertation, along with the theoretical framework. It clearly shows the students' understanding of relevant literature and debates, as well as the current gaps in research and the limitation of the very same dissertation.

Overal, the student has shown excellent abilities as a researcher and also to contribute to a still young but evolving field of study ofgrowing international interest.