

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

<b>Student Matriculation No.</b>	<b>Glasgow</b> 708992 <b>DCU</b> 19108389 <b>Charles</b> 22145429
<b>Dissertation Title</b>	EU and UK space security policies through the lens of historical institutionalism

### INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

<b>Reviewer 1 Initial Grade</b> <i>Select from drop down list</i>	<b>Reviewer 2 Initial Grade</b> <i>Select from drop down list</i>	<b>Late Submission Penalty</b> <i>no penalty</i>
<b>Word Count Penalty</b> (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)		
<b>Word Count:</b> 21254 <b>Suggested Penalty:</b> 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:** B3 [15]      **After Penalty:** Select from drop down list

### DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>A. Structure and Development of Answer</b>	
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>	Very Good
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Good
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Good
<b>B. Use of Source Material</b>	
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>	Very Good
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Excellent
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Very Good
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Excellent
<b>C. Academic Style</b>	
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>	Excellent
• <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

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- *Appropriate word count*

Yes

### ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

#### **Reviewer 1**

The dissertation explores the relationship between the UK and EU in the field of space policy. I will work through the main ILOs in relation to the study.

- **Devise a realistic programme of research on a topic reflecting the main themes of the programme;**

You have identified Space security which is a topic that fits with the programme. It is timely and picks up on a wide range of issues that are impacting contemporary European security. Brexit and the rapid changing technology of the sector are key drivers in the ensuing discussion about UK/EU space relations. The dissertation does recognise its limitations but the approach that has been taken is appropriate and meets the needs of the programme. Although the focus of the dissertation more broadly is on space security, I would urge some caution though in describing it as space defense which in the opening section of the dissertation seems to be what is alluded to as the main focus. At the very least confirming that defense referred to the broad spectrum of protecting/securing/defending space and space-based infrastructure would have been helpful as this is what the dissertation ultimately explores. The student sets out a clear rationale for the topic which is persuasive. The dissertation outlines three objectives which are broad in scope covering both theory and empiricism, though these potentially could have been reduced slightly further still.

- **Collect, select and critically analyse relevant background literature and arguments of a range of scholars;**

The literature review is predominately a theory chapter and broader empirical based literature doesn't really emerge in detail until later in the dissertation, although there is a short section here. I understand the logic of this in terms of the limitations placed on the student regarding the creation of new original data through primary means. The short empirical section of the literature review (2.1) is interesting and shows that there are debates about the role and place of the UK in European space security, but there was scope to build on this and draw out the themes more effectively and show how they inform your research objectives. The theory literature is comprehensively addressed in the chapter, and this elevates the importance of theory for the dissertation overall so it is key that this can be identified throughout the broader thesis, and I'm not sure it is done in the most effective way in later chapters.

- **Understand and select the appropriate methodology for dealing with information sources and data;**

The methodology is clearly set out although I am not entirely sure if the section on interpretivism/philosophy really adds much to the discussion here. I find it somewhat distracting. The section that details the methods including narrative and thematic analysis is well explained but there it could also be argued that the student has adopted a methodological approach that is overly complex for the needs of the study.

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- **Apply these methods to gather and interrogate data in an open-minded, rigorous and undogmatic manner;**

Although the methods are well explained in the methods chapter their application is not as clear as it maybe could have been and we do not adequately see them being applied. We certainly are given a narrative but it comes across as more descriptive than analytical and draws heavily on literature that could also have informed the earlier literature review thus making that section of the dissertation more comprehensive.

- **Be able to critically evaluate competing theories and apply relevant theoretical frameworks to guide the study**

The selection of historical institutionalism is interesting because this is a theoretical approach that most people would probably not have chosen, yet it does do what you say regarding helping to explain the past events, but rightly you also acknowledge it doesn't help with making projections about the future. You do acknowledge a range of other competing theories and explain your ultimate choice of HI in a clear manner. This is very good. Chapter 5 does attempt to address these theories in the context of the study and this is done in a manner that meets the needs of the dissertation learning objective.

- **Organise the data collected and analyse the findings in a competent manner that allows for a fluid and logical argument to be presented;**

The student has attempted to organise the dissertation in a manner that allows the argument to progress, but there may have been too much going on and this made it challenging at times to keep track of the central purpose of the dissertation. I note that one of the three objectives was to investigate how Brexit affected the EU-UK partnership in terms of Space defence. I'm not sure that in the context of the final dissertation that this works as well as it could have, and it is one of the shortest sections of the dissertation, so it may have helped to have left this out of the final study as it doesn't really offer scope for an in depth analysis.

- **Be reflexive and self-critical about findings and the limitations of analysis.**

The student has attempted to address the limitations of the theory and the wider study in the context of doing research during the pandemic in a fair and balanced manner.

- **Work independently, organising and maintaining own programme of study to meet academic deadlines so as to produce work containing a substantial element of originality.**

The dissertation research was obviously limited in terms of producing new original data through interviews etc, but this doesn't need to limit the dissertation with regard to including some degree of originality. I think that the historical institutionalism approach offers this, but there are questions over how it has been executed.

Overall, it is clear that a large amount of work has gone into this study. There is a good original idea in terms of questioning the EU/UK relationship on space, but we might question the successfulness of the study to really give us a deeper understanding. It

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wasn't really clear if this was about theory or the empirical case-study. On reflection when reading the final dissertation, it may have benefitted from downplaying the theory slightly and making more of the critical analysis of the scholarly literature on space. Overall, I feel that this is still a very good piece of work, that shows an understanding of the space history, cites relevant literature, and explains theory well, but which also doesn't maybe apply the examples to the theory in the best manner. Essentially, the information presented is not really integrated into the discussion in the most successful manner.

For the oral defence I would suggest asking the student to elaborate on what they think the central contribution of the dissertation is to the literature it is part of.

### ***Reviewer 2***

The dissertation attempts to analyze the historical evolution of space policy between the UK and EU. First, there is a slight conceptual tension. The dissertation mentions space defense policy. This seems to be not entirely fortunate, considering that civilian aspects are featured quite frequently in the dissertation as well as in the policy itself. Undeniably, the topic is relevant and tackled from an interesting angle, however, there are certain shortcomings which cannot be overlooked. First, from the methodological point of view, the research design is overloaded, combining several approaches. Second, the methods are introduced in a solid way, however, their application is largely missing from the empirical part. And third, there are several statements about the philosophy of (social) science foundations of the discussed methods which are, however, inappropriate because they do not communicate and inform in any way the empirical analysis. The analysis itself once again does not utilize the methodological framework built rather unfortunately on the most general, and thus empirically remote, claims about social scientific epistemology. The theoretical approach, even if relevant for analyzing the phenomenon, is left without operationalization, while the performed empirical analysis stays at a descriptive level. Lacking a proper conceptual guidance, deeper insights concerning the policy were not realized. Overall, considering the post-Brexit developments, some findings remain intriguing as the original research goal, even if the theoretical and methodological problems prevent the dissertation from realizing its full potential.