

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

<b>Student Matriculation No.</b>	<b>Glasgow</b> 2486652 <b>DCU</b> <b>Charles</b> 64053643
<b>Dissertation Title</b>	Securitising biology: Biological threats and state preparedness in the wake of a pandemic

### INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

<b>Reviewer 1 Initial Grade</b> Select from drop down list	<b>Reviewer 2 Initial Grade</b> Select from drop down list	<b>Late Submission Penalty</b> no penalty
<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> 21,923 <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:** A4 [19]      **After Penalty:** A4 [19]

### 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>	Excellent
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Excellent
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Excellent
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Excellent
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Excellent
<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>	Excellent
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Excellent
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Excellent
• <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>	Excellent
• <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**

A good dissertation usually rests on two basic components: an interesting topic linked to a relevant theoretical or conceptual framework. The author of the dissertation under review has succeeded in both aspects. Hardly anything can be more up-to-date nowadays than the global epidemic of Covid-19 which has undeniably become the main fixture of not only politics but life in general over the past year and half. Looking at the topic through the theoretical prism of securitization makes perfect sense, given how many extraordinary discursive processes (as well as successive policy, administrative and physical measures) have occurred throughout the period.

Moreover, the author went beyond merely explaining how the pandemic stimulated securitization processes. She also asks an almost heretic question, at least in the context of critical security studies: isn't it, in some situations, better to securitize than not to securitize? In the key part of the dissertation, the author dissects Trump's administration's approach to Covid-19, utilizing an inventive concept of anti-securitization. She demonstrates that besides de-securitization, as an effort to return a topic from the heightened discursive level to normalcy, there is a different situation when a discursive actor actively suppresses efforts to assign a security value to a problem, in order to block its establishment as a threat. Linking this situation with previous securitization of a natural biological threat (Ebola) by president Obama and of a man-made biological threat (anthrax) by G. W. Bush, the author cleverly challenges the conventional opposition to securitization as a tool of exempting topics and issues from standard political treatment. In essence, the dissertation seems to conclude that in times of an obvious crisis, not securitizing is actually exceptional (and, as the analysis suggests, unwise).

The dissertation is based on a wide and highly relevant collection of sources which the author puts to excellent use, fully adhering to the academic standards thereof. The text is nicely structured and the argumentation flows logically. The author is clear in her statement of the dissertation's goals and makes sure to reach them and assess them at the end thereof. The result is a lively, expertly researched and crafted analysis of a most relevant topic from a sound theoretical perspective, using a well justified case – in short, an excellent dissertation.

#### **Reviewer 2**

The dissertation addresses the securitisation of biology in the context of the COVID19 pandemic. 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;**

The dissertation provides a very interesting and indeed illuminating discussion on biothreats and how states respond. I would caution against overplaying the what if question but it is fair to ask how states prepare for such security threats. The topic is therefore highly pertinent and reflects the programme's remit and learning objectives. The use of the US as a case study was well established as is the research question.

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

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The student has identified a research gap in terms of the relationship between how states respond to natural health crisis (viral or biological pandemic) and man-made health attacks (biological warfare). Understanding why states respond to these in different ways is an interesting question and I can see why viewing this through the lens of securitization would be appealing. The student provides a quality discussion of the scholarly work on securitization more generally and securitization of health more specifically. There is an excellent critical discussion of health securitization drawing on key authors such as Elbe, Maclean, McInnes et al)

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

The case study of the USA was very well done and I appreciate the examples used, though you could also have equally chosen HIV under Clinton; but the two examples are justified. The methodology chapter is very well put together with a clear research design and outline of the methods and engagement with methods literature. This shows a degree of understanding and competency in the researcher.

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

There is no doubt that the student has engaged with the research in a rigorous manner. This is followed through in the main dissertation with an excellent level of engagement with the source material. This allows for a complex and critical reading of the case study to be presented.

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

The study adopts securitization as the primary theoretical approach. This is entirely acceptable and is done in a comprehensive and considered manner. The study presents a critical reading of the theory throughout from the engagement with scholarly work, to how it is applied in the analysis.

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

The dissertation is very well structured and flows in a way that makes reading very enjoyable. The use of anti-securitization as a means to explain Trump's actions to downplay the seriousness of the situation or deflect the sense of blame elsewhere – i.e. China (thus firmly locating the crisis in a foreign policy domain) but with broader social consequences was really interesting and probably opens up lots of scope for even further research and analysis.

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

There are obvious limitations which have been identified with the study, such as the extent of the policy making and implementation process in the USA as something that is not solely the place of the executive and president to lead on health policy. The impact of selected data sources etc was also identified. The student shows a suitable level of understanding and awareness of the challenges and biases.

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

There is no doubt that the student has shown capability to organise their work and time. This dissertation does not feel rushed and reads as a thoughtful and carefully considered piece of work. There is a lot of literature on securitization and the student has managed to find an approach that gives a sense of originality and uniqueness.



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