

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2485940 DCU 19108648 Charles 50435565
Dissertation Title	Understanding the Current Threat of Bioterrorism: A study of Violent Non-State Actors' Online Instruction Manuals

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade Select from drop down list	Reviewer 2 Initial Grade Select from drop down list	Late Submission Penalty no penalty
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: 23525 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: Select from drop down list	After Penalty: A3 [20]

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>	Excellent
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Excellent
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Very Good
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Very Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Very Good
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>	Excellent
• <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>	Very Good
C. Academic Style	
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>	No
• <i>Appropriate word count</i>	Yes

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ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

This is an excellent thesis that identifies a significant problem and tackles it through a rigorous approach, a clear argument and some first-class research work. The candidate reveals an impressive command of the literature and of the main theoretical approaches regulating the scholarly debate on the role played by non-state actors in bioterrorism. The engagement with the primary sources is particularly impressive, as it was the meticulous work of identification of CBRN manuals selected as the empirical support for the argument presented here. This thesis was an outstanding achievement: well done!

Reviewer 2

The dissertation seeks to explore the competency demonstrated by violent non-state actors in relation to bioterrorism, through a qualitative study of groups' online instructional manuals. In doing so, the dissertation explores a clearly defined research question that the author convincingly shows represents a key (and promising) gap in the literature. The dissertation is clearly and logically structured, and well-written with a clear statement of the research question, findings and implications from the outset.

The study is well-situated in the literature, in particular in identifying a gap in existing research, clearly situating the current study in relation to past scholarship (e.g. in evaluating manuals either not previously studied, or produced since the last investigation of the same was carried out) and highlighting the salience of the study for potential future security threats. The author demonstrates particular skill in synthesising a wide-ranging body of research, distilling key commonalities (and divergences) and going beyond summarising material to present a convincing critical evaluation that highlights current debates, gaps, weaknesses and puzzles.

The study presents a generally detailed overview of research design and methodology. Some further attention to case selection - and particularly, the comparative advantages and drawbacks of a cross-ideological selection across two discrete types of groups - would have been a welcome addition. Methodologically, the author is attentive to issues of source selection and bias, though given the sensitive nature of the content being studied and the fora in which it was searched, a more comprehensive discussions of ethical issues was warranted. The statement provided (a single paragraph) is brief and impressionistic, omitting a discussion of several key points (secure data storage protocols, adherence to relevant legal frameworks and other points) that would have demonstrated a clearer grasp of these important considerations. The empirical sections display an impressive command of a range of evidence and are richly detailed. However, in places, the discussion tends towards lengthier descriptive passages that summarise, rather than analytically examine, the content in question. In addition, the added analytical value of cross-ideological analysis is not, in my view, fully realised: a more detailed discussion of the implications of the findings within and across the ideological spectrum would have been helpful. Instead, the comparative focus appears to shift to a temporal comparison of older and newer materials, which presents interesting insights, but could have been discussed more centrally in the research design if this was to be a primary focus.

Overall, this is a high-quality dissertation, on a theoretically and empirically important topic, that demonstrates an impressive command of the current state of the field, and the potential for further scholarship.