

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2486511 DCU 19109792 Charles 64314260
Dissertation Title	“Smartening” European borders: are we automating discrimination?

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: 20974 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: B1 [17] After Penalty: B1 [17]

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>	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>	Very Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	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>	Good
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Very Good
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Excellent
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>	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

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ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

This dissertation undoubtedly focuses on a new and important topic of inquiry: the potential for 'automating discrimination' through the introduction of AI and other 'smart' technologies to border enforcement and migration control contexts. The introduction sets the scene and communicates the relevance of the topic very well, whetting the reader's appetite for what is to follow. The research design also promises to bring a theoretical discussion together with empirical insight and a critical analysis of legal and other documentation to produce a set of findings grounded in existing and planned practices. There is also scope for evaluating the planned mechanisms for their restraint where necessary to protect against discrimination.

Unfortunately however, the research design, though ambitious and, I think, appropriate, is not as clearly explained or as obviously followed through in the empirical chapters as it could have been. The issue of clarity and precision begins from the research questions themselves which are somewhat convoluted, with each of the two stated questions implying at least 2 or 3 subquestions. These are followed by five aims, which build well and incrementally from each other, but which I am not convinced are really achieved consistently through the dissertation, nor systematically revisited by the end. The research design promises a combination of document analysis and problem-based doctrinal methodology. In relation to the document analysis it is not entirely clear how the student planned to separate primary and secondary sources or what difference she sees between these. Problem-based doctrinal methodology on the other hand is not ever fully explained, either conceptually, or in terms of the method of its application to this particular study. This is a shame as I think it was probably an original and important approach.

The study draws on an impressive range of literature and the student does well, on the whole, to handle this and to maintain focus. However, it is not always as clear as it could be and in places the arguments become a little circular, and/or read as assertions with insufficient evidence. A clearer explanation of how different approaches to and understandings of securitisation and migration feed into and support an unpacking of the discriminatory risks surrounding AI would have been useful. The current discussion of the Copenhagen and Paris schools was a little inconclusive.

This might also have strengthened some of the argument in the second empirical chapter. Here the student demonstrated an impressive knowledge of EU programmes, pilot initiatives and legislative frameworks, but the analysis surrounding them needed something to hold it all together. For me a deeper discussion of the securitisation of migration, the 'speech acts' and policy/practical measures which both produce and flow from this and their influence on the cognitive underpinnings and practical applications of AI interventions could have been that glue.

Overall this is a very good dissertation, based around an original and significant inquiry. It is generally well written, although areas could have done with a more careful proof read as there are a number of incomplete sentences and issues with grammar or misplaced words. The scope is ambitious and the student shows a good grasp of both theoretical and empirical material.

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Reviewer 2

The dissertation seeks to explore the potential for discriminatory risks in EU border enforcement technology. In doing so, the dissertation explores a topic of clear theoretical and empirical relevance. The rationale for the study focus is clear and evocatively communicated with contemporary, real-world examples; and the dissertation is generally clearly and logically structured. However, the specific research questions the study seeks to address would have benefited from a clearer, more succinct framing: at present, the research seeks to address two discrete questions, both of which contain multiple clauses and considerations within them. A simpler statement of a potentially narrower research focus might have better framed the study to follow.

The study is generally well-situated in the literature, and demonstrates particular care in clearly, concisely and comprehensively defining key conceptual terms that are central to the analysis to follow. In some sections of the literature review, however, the study tends towards lengthier descriptive passages, that primarily summarise - rather than synthesise and critically evaluate - existing research. As a result, although they are mentioned, key points of convergence and divergence, and key gaps, debates, puzzles and weaknesses in current scholarship, are not distilled as clearly as they might be.

The empirical sections display an impressive knowledge of a range of technologies and cases. Concerning the first chapter, while I appreciate the value of a descriptive passage clearly outlining the risks of discrimination that are to be found in the relevant technologies, the relationship between this section (and its typology of risk) and the subsequent sections is somewhat unclear. The dissertation may have benefited from using this typology as an organising framework (or set of assessment criteria) for the sub-sections that followed, or otherwise having integrated these considerations more centrally, in order to draw a clearer analytical line from the descriptive section to the analysis of particular cases. Relatedly, even accepting the fact that this section of the research draws primarily on secondary sources (primarily existing studies), a clearer distillation of the added value of the present study would have been welcome: in other words, in what ways does the author's analysis depart from, build on, challenge or fill gaps left by the works cited? The latter point is addressed more effectively in the second chapter, but as with the first, a clearer relationship to key concepts, typologies and frameworks from earlier in the dissertation might have been helpful here to scaffold the author's argument.

Overall, this is a very good-quality dissertation, on a theoretically and empirically important topic, that demonstrates a rich command of relevant technologies, case material and legal resources, suggesting the potential for further scholarship.