

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

<b>Student Matriculation No.</b>	<b>Glasgow 2596767 DCU</b> <b>Charles 81327917 Trento 225152</b>
<b>Dissertation Title</b>	Increasing fiscal integration in the EU and its potential effects on Austrian economic security

### INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

<b>Reviewer 1 Initial Grade</b> A3 [20]	<b>Reviewer 2 Initial Grade</b> A3 [20]	<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> 21990 <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:** A3 [20]      **After Penalty:** A3 [20]

### DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

Assessment Criteria	Rating
<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>	Very Good
• <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>	Very Good
<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

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

• <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>	Yes
• <i>Appropriate word count</i>	Yes

### ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

#### Reviewer 1

Overall, this is an excellent dissertation which clearly reflects the themes in the IMSISS programme in addressing the nature and relevance of 'economic security' in Austrian policy making on EU fiscal integration. The 3 objectives were highly original as a means to evaluate the motivation behind Austria's policy making in this sphere, but also to probe and develop the economic security literature: "(1) Understand the meaning of the term 'economic security' within Austrian policy circles;(2) Discern whether economic (in)security is a feasible motivational factor in Austria's behaviour towards fiscal integration in the European Union, or whether another factor is more important; (3) Grasp whether Austrian policy circles do, in fact, consider further fiscal integration, especially debt mutualisation, to be a threat to Austrian economic security?"

Ideally, perhaps, the title could have better reflected the substance of the dissertation and the research aims though: so rather than 'effects on economic security' would this have been better framed as whether it is perceived or interpreted as a matter of economic security?

Original analysis of German language parliamentary debates and policy papers demonstrated in-depth research to address the research questions effectively.

The literature review was fascinating, synthesising a broad range of sources and the review of the economic security literature and different states' perceptions of economic security was very effective. The review of the EU integration theory was usefully applied and the notion of the neofunctionalist 'path dependence' explanation usefully applied in the empirical discussion which followed.

The methodology of elite interviews and textual analysis of parliamentary debates was very well-aimed at addressing the research questions and the interview questions were very carefully framed to identify participants' understanding of economic security and the role this plays in Austria's stance towards EU fiscal integration policy.

I would perhaps have liked to see more discussion of the data from parliamentarians and securitisation of the issue in those circles as a 'vote-winner' (as hinted at on page 8) to address the divergence between right-wing politicians who frame the issue as a matter of economic security and those in elite policy-making circles (such as those interviewed) with the knowledge to see that the threat is negligible in real-terms and so do not securitise these issues. Are we to conclude that any securitisation of the issue has been purely political? This would seem credible but perhaps could have been more clearly identified and discussed?

The discussion of limitations was thorough, and although only 4 interviews were secured these were expert elite interviews and therefore very well-aimed to address the research questions effectively. The conclusion was very thoughtful and convincing and thoroughly well-evidenced and proposed credible and concrete avenues for future research.

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

### **Reviewer 2**

The dissertation aims at shedding some light on a controversial topic, that is whether the Austrian opposition to several recent EU/EA fiscal/financial initiatives can be motivated by the fear that increasing fiscal integration might affect Austrian economic security.

This topic conflates several complex issues and concepts.

First, fiscal integration may be interpreted on a spectrum that goes from giving the EU some fiscal capacity, to establishing a transfers union among States, to providing financial assistance to countries in trouble, to mutualizing the outstanding debt of all EU countries. The student fully recognizes this complexity and addresses it well in the third part of the work, even though the distinction between annual transfers, one-off grants, new EU common debt and mutualization of outstanding sovereign debts is not very precise.

Second, economic security can be interpreted in several ways. The expression includes concepts such as the free exercise of national sovereignty, welfare enhancement, the protection of domestic interests, the defence from external threats, and the like. The student is aware also of this and uses great care in discussing each possible interpretation.

Third, the politicization of the debate around these topics in Austria adds a further layer of complexity because it becomes hard to distinguish genuine concerns from political discourse. As the student and the interviewees state, "a quite feasible explanation for Austrian behaviour in EU fiscal negotiations is simple politics".

Hence, I very much appreciate that the student a) starts the interviews and the content analysis with an attempt at clarifying the interpretation of economic security and b) discusses what risks different forms of fiscal integration may entail for each (Austrian) understanding of what economic security is.

From the methodological viewpoint the research question is addressed properly. Due to the very limited number of interviewees (as it often happens in time-constrained Master-level research endeavours), the student carries out a content analysis of the Stenographisches Protokoll. The two pieces of investigation are well connected one with each other, and the student skilfully draws information from both sources.

The main methodological issue I spot is in a potential framing effect. There is no mention in the questions of the risks to economic security that could come from the collapse of the euro area. This way of framing the issue of fiscal integration could induce the interviewees to think that the political alternatives to more integration are risky whereas the status quo is riskless. In fact, the status quo might not even be feasible for the great risks it entails. This has to do both with the circumstances (i.e., the pandemics) and with the profligate behaviour of certain countries in the past, but it also owes to the flawed design of the EA fiscal framework. Luckily, the respondents appear to be well aware of the actual nature of the alternatives on the table and this ensures that the discussion is correctly set even though the questions risks being a bit misleading. Moreover, the student interprets very well the interviewees' interpretation of the risks to security coming from the status quo and the "reforms".

The dissertation is well structured, even though I would have preferred numbered sections, and is certainly very well written.