IMESS dissertation						
Name:	CORNELIUS AMPONSAH					
Dissertation title:	THE DETERMINANTS OF PRIVATE SAVINGS IN THE EU: THE CASE OF THE GROUP OF 8 THE EIGHT NEW ENTRANT COUNTRIES					
Scale: 5 - excellent, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - poor, 1 – very poor						
	5	4	3	2	1	
ARGUMENT:						
Clearly defined research question		X				No clearly defined research question
Answers research question				X		Does not answer research question
Well structured		X				Badly structured
Shows theoretical awareness			X			Shows no theoretical awareness
Conceptual clarity			X			Conceptual confusion
Empirically appropriate & robust				X		Full of empirical errors
Logical and coherent			X			Illogical and incoherent
Analytical			X			Descriptive
Critical			X			Uncritical
Shows independent thought			X			Does not show independent thought
SOURCES & USAGE:						
Evidence of reading/research		X				No evidence of reading/research
Effective use of sources/data				X		Ineffective use of sources/data
WRITING STYLE:						
Clear			X			Obscure
Good punctuation			X			Poor punctuation
Grammatically correct			X			Grammatically incorrect
PRESENTATION:						
Appropriate length		X				Too long/short
Good referencing		X				Poor/inconsistent referencing
Good spelling		X				Poor spelling
Good bibliography		X				Poor bibliography

Comments:

This is a revised version of the MA dissertation, which was first submitted one year ago. The text has been streamlined and is now easier to read. Some of the specific comments provided to the earlier version have been addressed. The text still included a literature review that is relatively broad and well done. Nevertheless, the empirical chapter four, and its links to the conclusions and policy recommendations in chapter five are still a weakness of the dissertations. I am a little bit disappointed that that the author has not done more in the previous year to improve this part of the text. In particular:

- There are some apparent breaks and other irregularities in the data presented in Figure 3 on page 62. Since this is the key variable which is analysed in the dissertation, this would deserve some comment in the text and an explicit treatment in the empirical analysis. One may also want to check it in alternative data sources to see that there is no big problem with the key data source.

- The chart on page 89 suggests that a source of the data problem may be the data on public sector saving, which seem strange and out of line with the reality. My suggestion, which I made already a year ago, would be to estimate the equations for the total national savings directly obtainable from the main database.

- The size of the estimated coefficients – even of the significant ones – is strikingly small. This could be a result of a scaling problem. When comparing Figure 3 with the figures in Appendix I, one can indeed see that the saving ratio of e.g. 20 % of GDP enters the database as 0.2, while the interest rate of the same magnitude enter as 20. If this was also the case for the data used in the estimation, this would reduce the estimated size of the coefficient by two digits. This is not a problem per se, but one needs to be careful when interpreting the results.

- The results of the empirical estimates should be discussed in much more depth concerning their robustness (e.g. similarity or dissimilarity of the estimates using alternative estimation techniques), comparison to the previous literature etc.

- The link of the empirical results to the policy recommendations is quite weak. Most of the explanatory variables are found statistically insignificant, incorrectly signed, or changing signs between alternative estimates (for the dependency ratio). In such a situation, any robust policy conclusions seem almost impossible. The statement on page 73, i.e. that "Generally, private saving is seen as responding strongly to improvements in key macroeconomic indicators like GDP growth, terms of trade and inflation stabilisation.", is not supported by the empirical estimates.

Specific Questions for oral defence:

What is the reason for the apparent breaks in the data presented in Figure 3? Did you deal with these breaks explicitly in your empirical analysis?

How do you assess the robustness of your empirical results? Why do you thing that e.g. the dependency ration has a negative sign in Table 2 and a positive sign in Table 3?

Are you sure that you interpret the size of the estimated coefficients correctly? If yes, why are they so small?

How do you interpret the positive relationship between inflation and savings rate in two of your estimates in Table 2?

What is the link between you policy recommendations and your estimation results?

Deducted for late submission:	Deducted for faulty referencing:	**Mark***: E
Charles marker:	Signed: Doc /Mgr. Holub, PhD.	Date: 14 June 2010

***Mark: A = 70+; B = 65-69; C = 60-64; D = 55-59; E = 50-54; F = fail, less than 50, see Scheme of award –please, fill in this way: Charles/IMESS (e.g. Výborně/A)**