


IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator
(cc Allan Sikk a.sikk@ucl.ac.uk and Alexa Stewart alexa.stewart@ucl.ac.uk)

Please note that IMESS students are not required to use a particular set of methods (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, or comparative) in their dissertation.

Student:	Paolo Ferrando					
Dissertation title:	Islam and the Russian State: A Poststructuralist Approach to Analysing Identity and Policy Discourse					
		Excellent			Satisfactory	Poor
Knowledge <i>Knowledge of problems involved, e.g. historical and social context, specialist literature on the topic. Evidence of capacity to gather information through a wide and appropriate range of reading, and to digest and process knowledge.</i>		x				
Analysis & Interpretation <i>Demonstrates a clear grasp of concepts. Application of appropriate methodology and understanding; willingness to apply an independent approach or interpretation recognition of alternative interpretations; Use of precise terminology and avoidance of ambiguity; avoidance of excessive generalisations or gross oversimplifications.</i>		x				
Structure & Argument <i>Demonstrates ability to structure work with clarity, relevance and coherence. Ability to argue a case; clear evidence of analysis and logical thought; recognition of an arguments limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>		x				
Presentation & Documentation <i>Accurate and consistently presented footnotes and bibliographic references; accuracy of grammar and spelling; correct and clear presentation of charts/graphs/tables or other data. Appropriate and correct referencing throughout. Correct and contextually correct handling of quotations.</i>		x				

ECTS Mark:	A	Charles Mark:	1	Marker:	Jan Sir
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	6/16/13

MARKING GUIDELINES

A (UCL mark 70+): Note: marks of over 80 are given rarely and only for truly exceptional pieces of work.

Distinctively sophisticated and focused analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.

A = výborně = 1

B/C (UCL mark 60-69):

A high level of analysis, critical use of sources and insightful interpretation. Good understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research. 65 or over equates to a B grade.

B/C = velmi dobře = 2

D/E (UCL mark 50-59):

Demonstration of a critical use of sources and ability to engage in systematic inquiry. An ability to engage in sustained research work, demonstrating methodological awareness. 55 or over equates to a D grade.

D/E = dobře = 3

F (UCL mark less than 50):

Demonstrates failure to use sources and an inadequate ability to engage in systematic inquiry. Inadequate evidence of ability to engage in sustained research work and poor understanding of appropriate research techniques.

F = neprospěl = 4

CONTINUES OVERLEAF

**PLEASE PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE AND
DETAILED FEEDBACK!**

Constructive comments, explaining strengths and weaknesses (at least 300 words):

The thesis is a study of the state-Islam relations in Putin's Russia. It aims to examine the key identity discourses on Russian Islam used by the Kremlin and three major Muslim organizations, namely the Russian Council of Mufties, the Central Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Russia, and the Coordination Center of Muslims in the North Caucasus. It draws on Poststructuralist Discourse Theory as theoretical framework.

Generally speaking, the thesis is an original piece of work that builds upon a good amount of literature and sources including - which is highly commendable - those of local origin. It shows both a robust theoretical underpinning and a sound knowledge of the subject matter, e.g. contemporary Russia; moreover, it is truly well written. Hence, my main criticism pertaining to the thesis points not to the manner the work is written, but rather to the limits and weaknesses of the chosen theoretical school as such, namely its heavy, if not excessive, reliance on analyzing and interpretation of texts including official statements and speeches, an approach which - while useful when exploring the processes of identity building - largely fails to grasp other various and no less important strategies of power employed by the key actors in question. For this reason, for the thesis defense I would suggest to shift the discussion away from discourse theories and their application on today's Russia and have the author speak of practical policies of the Kremlin and its sponsored religious organizations towards Islam.

Specific questions you would like addressing at the oral defence (at least 3 questions):

Please comment on the cadre policies of Putin's government towards Muslim organizations in Russia. For instance, how do you assess the penetration of Muslim clergy by FSB and other security services?

To my knowledge, two of the three Muslim organizations in question are largely Tatar. In your view, how does Moscow's policy towards these organization fit into reshaping the center-periphery relations under Putin and his overall centralization efforts vis-a-vis potentially troubled regions like Tatarstan?

Please discuss the role of external powers in the revival of Islam (both "official" and "unofficial") in Russia after 1991.