

IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator
(cc Allan Sikk a.sikk@ucl.ac.uk and Louise Wassell l.wassell@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:	Graham BUSH
Dissertation title:	Differences Between National Memory of Communism in Poland and the Czech Republic

	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:	D	UCL Mark:	55	Marker:	Ondrej MATEJKA (IMS FSV UK)
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	June 10, 2014

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.

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.

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.

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.

CONTINUES OVERLEAF
PLEASE PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE AND
DETAILED FEEDBACK!

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

Mr Bush's thesis is certainly not a typical academic work that is the expected as the result of an independent research project at the master level: it looks rather like a long essay combining meditations on extracts of basic chapters of national histories (sometimes based on articles from sources like The Economist, the BBC, Time), commentaries on some of well-known pieces of art from Polish and Czech cultural traditions (the representativity of which and precise relevance for the topic are though not always adequately explained), and occasional author's lyric intermezzos (p. 23 – "we are all the product of our tears, if there is too little then the ground is not fertile, too much and the best of us is washed away"). The lack of academic solidity inevitably leads to oversimplifications and essentializations based on uncritical acceptance of certain national(ist) myths and stereotypes (p. 35 "The Polish perspective is extremely active, there are values and they must be fought for, while the Czech supposes that the truthfulness and justness of the cause will lead to its eventual victory without the need for direct action"; p. 51: "If there is any defining figure in Czech culture, it is Josef Švejk.") and to the use of very problematic categories such as "the Polish national psyche" (p. 40).

It is then unsurprising that Mr. Bush completely surrenders to concepts that could and should have been critically analysed (such as "identity" or "nationalism" – the author very significantly state p. 14 "nationalism is not ideal, it simply is"). The text abounds with similar problematic assumptions in relation to these not enough reflectively used categories: p.22 "the collective has chosen the key ideas and items to remember" or p. 23 "nation creates its society", p. 28 "cultural works can be said to be a product of the mood of people in the country", p. 55 "cultural ideas have been consolidated into the national memory", p. 6 "identity builds upon itself and adapts". With such an attitude, it is only logical that the author does not offer enough space for a precise analysis of actors who construct these identities, nations, memories.

It is connected to the fact that Mr. Bush obviously did not read some of the essentials in the field of commemorative practices: at least in the Czech case it is rather risky to get involved in a research project on the memory of Czech communism without having studied works by Françoise Mayer, Muriel Blaive, Michal Kopeček. But even in other parts (namely passages on nations(alism) and religion) the bibliographical base is too thin.

The problematic character of Mr. Bush's approach towards research practice is manifested also in the "opinion poll" part of his thesis. In order to get in touch with "popular opinion" the author "created a survey which was handed out to young Czechs and Poles" (p. 28). Without a precise presentation of the composition of the sample, such a "survey" has practically no value in the academic field.

From the formal point of view (which is, nevertheless, closely connected to the above mentioned content issues) the author does not differentiate between sources and literature in his bibliography. Furthermore, there is no consistency in the style of the presentation of footnotes.

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

The author should try to explain three basic points:

- Why did not he use the available fundamental literature on the subject (namely the work by Françoise Mayer)?
- How does he understand the notion of "methodology"? What is methodological about categories like "past events", "cultural output" and "popular opinion" (p. 28)?
- How did he construct his sample for the "opinion poll" that he conducted?