

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:	58	Marker:	Egbert Klautke
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	Egbert Klautke
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	18 May 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*):

This dissertation tries to make a contribution to the ever-popular debate on 'collective memory', and presents a comparative study of 'narratives in national memories of the Communist era' in Poland and the Czech Republic. The author suggests a mixed methodology which combines quantitative with qualitative research. He has conducted a small survey among young Poles and Czechs, and used fiction and films to outline different ways of remembering the past in both countries. A large part of the dissertation (c. 50%) deals with questions of theory and methodology, the 'empirical' parts are surprisingly short. The conclusion is even shorter: a lot of effort has led to very few positive results, it seems.

The author fails to define his topic in a precise way: despite the long section on theory and methodology, the topic 'differences in national memory in Poland and the Czech Republic' is too unspecific for a clear and systematic empirical study. Hence the difficulties of the author to find an appropriate 'method' for his study; his solution is to use a mixture of very different methods. This hybrid approach, in turn, prevents the author from studying at least one aspect of his potentially vast topic in depth, and from yielding any meaningful results. Too little reflection has gone into the nature of comparative studies: why these two countries? Why a comparison of nation states? The 'quantitative' part of the main is not convincing either; too little information is given on the questionnaire, the selection of respondents etc. It seems that the survey is not representative, so cannot answer questions of 'national memory'. Too often, the author dwells on national myths and clichés, even though he acknowledges the 'constructed' nature of these and stresses the importance of 'believing' in these myths.

While the formal structure and presentation of the dissertation are satisfactory; however there are too many grammatical and syntactic mistakes and errors. The relative length of the individual chapters, however, is out of balance; too little room is given to the main part and the conclusion, while the introduction and 'theoretical' parts are too long.

The results are disappointing, but not in a surprising way. The author does not move beyond common clichés and stereotypes (Švejk!); has not used the opportunity to assess 'memory studies' critically; has not focused on clearly defined case studies; has made too many superficial statements and comments that do not belong in an academic text. It might have been more interesting, for instance, to look for similarities, not differences, in the way Poles and Czechs remember their history under communism. It might have been worthwhile, to focus either on youths in contemporary Poland/Czech Republic or on the debates of intellectuals or on historical representations in film; it is hard to see how these three approaches can be combined, within the space of a Masters' dissertation.

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

How do you define 'collective memory'?

What is the difference between 'national identity' and 'national character'?

How have the methods of your dissertation helped to reach specific results?