

IMESS DISSERTATION



Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator
(cc Julia Korosteleva j.korosteleva@ucl.ac.uk and Marta Kotwas m.kotwas@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:	Navraj Gata-Aura
Dissertation title:	The Czech Republic and the UK, a Eurosceptic comparison

	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:	E	UCL Mark:		Marker:	Mgr. Jan Váška, Ph.D. (Charles)
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	6 June 2017

MARKING GUIDELINES

A (UCL mark 70+): Note: marks of over 80 are given rarely and only for truly exceptional pieces of work. **(Charles mark = 1)**

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. **(Charles mark = 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. **(Charles mark = 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.

CONTINUES OVERLEAF

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

This thesis does meet the basic criteria to qualify as a master thesis, though rather barely at times. The matrix-style comparative research design as such is certainly promising: it opens up the possibility to document the extent to which key elements of Eurosceptic discourses, relating to issues of democracy/sovereignty but also economy, tend to be situational, country- and time-specific, or whether they appear to form part of clusters of meanings which transcend their spatial and temporal contexts. It is a pity the outcome does not quite live up to this expectation.

The thesis has been negatively affected by a twin shortage: A lack of time prevented the author to adequately develop not only the two chapters discussing contemporary Eurosceptic discourses in the UK and in the Czech Republic (the Czech case for example only considers two parties from the array of options, and in general the asymmetry of scope of the four chapters is gross), but also the final comparative analysis. A lack of academic rigour then means not only rather weak link between the conceptual and the empirical parts of the thesis, but also a conspicuous lack of demonstration of methodological awareness and constant straying away from the research question as presented on p. 6 (economy- and democracy-related arguments in Eurosceptic discourses).

The author's language barrier turns out to be a significant obstacle when elaborating the Czech part of the thesis, too, as it dramatically reduced the number of documents he could engage with directly. Interestingly, this (forced) reliance on literature is characteristic of some parts of the "British" half of the thesis, too - e.g. with one exception, there are no primary sources quoted in the crucial chapter on the 1975 referendum campaign!

In general, the balance between descriptive and analytical levels of the thesis is strongly tilted towards the descriptive, whereas the text remains rather thin on original analysis. The nominal conclusion of the thesis is then somewhat disappointing, and its limited scope did not allow the author to work out a full-fledged comparative analysis. Instead, it resembles a mere summary (which, in turn, is entirely missing). There are no separate analyses/interim conclusions at the end of individual chapters either.

One of the main weaknesses, in my opinion, is the lack of methodological awareness, or at least of its convincing demonstration. The author should have been much more explicit in explaining the strategy he employed when selecting primary sources for analysis (if he appears to discount political speeches as relevant sources why then allow for Vaclav Klaus's articles?) and how exactly he worked with these resources. In the same vein, seeing that the author sticks to the party-based Euroscepticism approach, I missed a clear explanation of the criteria for choosing the set of political parties to be included in the analysis.

The opening chapter of the body of the thesis which conceptualises the notion of Euroscepticism is adequate in itself, however an important question remains: how does it exactly inform the subsequent discussion, apart from refining the definitions of hard vs soft Euroscepticism? Apart from this elaboration of the definition of Euroscepticism there is no literature review/state of art overview. This is a pretty serious omission since in standard academic work it is this discussion that justifies the selection of the particular research topic, and informs the research question or hypothesis.

The volume of primary and secondary sources upon which the thesis is built is just about sufficient. As for references, I would have preferred the author to give specific pages wherever possible (these are missing even from direct quotations such as in footnote 84!)

There are some factual errors, too. There were for example no parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic in 1997 (p. 15); also the interpretation of David Cameron's decision to hold a referendum is incomplete without emphasizing the imperative need to manage growing internal party divisions. On the other side, it was certainly not necessary to document the fluctuation of British public opinion vis-à-vis the EC in early 1970s by providing four analogical tables.

Finally, the text would profit from thorough proof-reading. Also, some sort of visual summarization of the main findings (e.g. overview of the key economy- and democracy related arguments by Eurosceptic political parties for individual countries/periods) would be very helpful for the final comparative analysis.

Specific questions you would like addressing at the oral defence (*at least 2 questions*):

- 1) First of all the author should clarify his methodology. As stated above, explanation is especially needed
 - of the criteria for choosing political parties to be included in the analysis
 - of the criteria for choosing individual primary sources to be included in the analysis
- 2) Does the specialist literature the author is referring to offer, in general terms, any assumptions about the focal issues of this thesis, that is about the way Eurosceptic discourses might tend to invoke economy- or democracy-related arguments? (*In other words, I am asking the author to make up for the missing part of the literature overview*)
- 3) Seeing that the conclusions emphasise the identified differences between the argumentative repertoires/patterns of left-wing and, conversely, right-wing Eurosceptic parties, does the author envisage a way this finding could feed back into the theoretical conceptualization of Euroscepticism as presented in the opening chapter of the thesis?