

# IMESS DISSERTATION



**Note: Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator (cc Chiara Amini [chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:chiara.amini@ucl.ac.uk) and fiona.rushworth@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.

<b>Student:</b>	Simon Bill
<b>Dissertation title:</b>	Bandwagoning with the Belt and Road: Russia's Changing Attitude towards the Chinese Presence in Central Asia post-Crimea

	70+	69-65	60-61	59-55	54-50	<50
	A	B	C	D	E	F
<b>Knowledge</b> <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>	√					
<b>Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b> <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>	√					
<b>Structure &amp; Argument</b> <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 arguments limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>	√					
<b>Presentation &amp; Documentation</b> <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>	√					
<b>Methodology</b> <i>Understanding of techniques applicable to the chosen field of research, showing an ability to engage in sustained independent research.</i>	√					

<b>ECTS Mark:</b>	A	<b>UCL Mark:</b>	74	<b>Marker:</b>	Pete Duncan
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				<b>Signed:</b>	P J S Duncan
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				<b>Date:</b>	31.5.19

## 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):**

**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.

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

This excellent dissertation argues convincingly that Russia shifted from a policy of ‘soft balancing’ against China in Central Asia to a policy of ‘soft bandwagoning’ with it after Western countries imposed sanctions on Russia following the annexation of Crimea.

The discussion of realism and neorealism and of balancing, hedging and bandwagoning is clear and illuminating. The dissertation reveals excellent knowledge of the Sino-Russian relationship in Central Asia and of the literature on Russo-Chinese relations in general. The dissertation makes an important distinction between regime security and (implicitly) state security. It rightly argues that China is not a threat to the security of the Putin regime, but it might be a long-term strategic threat to the Russian state. It might have noted that the May 2015 agreement between Putin and Xi seems to have been made without consulting the other EAEU members.

Some Russian primary sources, such as foreign policy concepts and speeches by Putin and others, and more recent academic-cum-propaganda works of experts such as Luk’ianov and Karaganov might usefully have been consulted. These are available in English. Recent books on Russo-Chinese relations, such as Lo, *A Wary Embrace* and Lukin, *China and Russia*, have not been consulted, nor has Aris’ book on the SCO.

The dissertation is very well written. The structure is good, but it would have been more logical if the research questions had emerged out of the literature review, and with the methodology following from the research questions. The literature review is rather repetitive, and is actually longer than the case study which represents the core of the research findings.

More might have been said about how the Russo-Chinese cooperation in Central Asia impacts on Russo-Chinese relations elsewhere.

The Chatham House work cited on p. 50 is not in the bibliography. Otherwise, the presentation of the text and the bibliography is excellent, with very few typos.

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

1. Why did you not conduct any field work or interviews?
2. How does the Russo-Chinese cooperation in Central Asia impact on Russo-Chinese relations elsewhere?
3. What is the attitude of the Central Asian elites towards Russian and Chinese influence in their countries?