

# IMESS DISSERTATION



**Note:** Please email the completed mark sheet to Year 2 coordinator

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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>	Sophia Rigby
<b>Dissertation title:</b>	How a Realist-Constructivist Theory Can Contribute to Understanding the 2014 Ukraine Crisis

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Poor
<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>		x	
<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>		x	
<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 an arguments limitation or alternative views; Ability to use other evidence to support arguments and structure appropriately.</i>		x	
<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>		x	

<b>ECTS Mark:</b>	c	<b>UCL Mark:</b>	63	<b>Marker:</b>	Svoboda
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>		<b>Signed:</b>			
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>		<b>Date:</b>			

## 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

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

The thesis deals with the problem of interpretations of the Crimean Annexation in 2014. It explores these explanations from the point of view of realism and structuralism, or, more precisely, through the combination of these theories. This, in other words, aims at rejecting the limitation of theoretical approaches as competing paradigms and replacing it with a holistic approach. As the authoress claims, only this may explain this complex issue.

The weakness of the thesis, at least from my point of view, lies in the fact that it considers “Russia” as a monolith. It is highly questionable, especially in the explanations such as “belief to myths”. The authoress writes that Russia sees, but it should be noted that politics is done by people, not by monoliths. I would suggest Mikhael Zygar’s All Kremlin’s Men for an insight into the decision-making around these events. I also expected names such as Richard Sakwa or Stephen Cohen, two probably best-known supporters of the Russian point of view.

Furthermore, the link between the theoretical and empirical part is only outlined. It is not very clear, what is the main argument of the thesis. It must be also said (and the authoress states this in the conclusion) that the realist approaches adopted some of the stipulations of other theories. Therefore it is hard to claim that there is one realism.

The thesis is also brought down by some mistakes. Among them, the authoress claim that the Soviet Union fell in 1989, mixing up Stephen Walt and Kenneth Waltz, 70 years of Cold War etc. None of these mistakes is crucial for the analysis, but they are distractive.

In some cases, the discussion of identity overflows into impressions. For instance, the sentence “Where the Russian almost ‘tradition’ of suffering and collective suffering is ignored, sanctions seem like an effective tool to make the Russian state back down from its actions in Ukraine” ignores the whole debate on sanctions and their effectiveness. Furthermore, this “round the flag effect” is well-known from other states as well and only hardly can serve as an example of Russian exceptionalism. (24).

I would also suggest working on clarifying the structure of the thesis. Authoress still repeats that she will use the combined approach, something that is the very aim of the whole thesis. Also the discussions of the methodology and the state of the art need to be clearer and sharpened.

It is not clear, how the ten categories or narratives have been selected.

Despite all the weaknesses I mentioned, the thesis represents an interesting contribution to the research of the international relations in the post-Soviet space. For contributing to a larger debate, I would suggest working on the theoretical part in terms of its clarity.

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

1. How did you select the main 10 arguments? Are they ranked by their importance?
2. You deal with “Russia” as a monolithic power. However, did you consider also the problem of Russia’s internal decision-making (siloviks, nationalists, liberals etc.)?