

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.

Student:	Fei Song
Dissertation title:	Social Determinants of Life Expectancy in Transition Economies

	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:		UCL Mark:	C	Marker:	Petr Háva
<i>Deducted for late submission:</i>				Signed:	
<i>Deducted for inadequate referencing:</i>				Date:	10.6.2018

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.

CONTINUES OVERLEAF

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

There is no explicit formulation of the **research problem**. The reason for this is the lack of introductory analysis of the subject of the research (instead of the introductory analysis there is presented in the second and third chapter only the literature review on selected factors - variables). Part of the missing analysis of health, healthcare and health policy development should also be an overview of the current level of knowledge, both at the level of the theory of determinant health, health promotion, health care system, health policy, WHO knowledge networks, as well as the results of research conducted in selected countries, which are labeled as transitive economies. All this could lead to the formulation of a legitimate research problem.

Goal of research (page 5.): "This research aims to develop an **explanatory** model for the factors that contribute to life expectancy in these transition economies."

Research question (page 5.): "This study aims to trace how social determinants affect population health since their transition in 16 transition economies from 1995 to 2012. In this study, population health is measured by life expectancy at birth."

There is a logical inconsistency between the research objective (which should be the explanation) and the research question (which is only on the level of descriptiveness and panel analysis of a relatively limited set of aggregated data).

An approach to the **research work plan** is leading to methodical simplification of the quantitative regression analysis method. The fundamental weakness of the work is a simplifying quantitative approach that neglects the specific goals and functions of the health system in relation to health policy and determinants of health and disease. Regression analysis cannot replace other social/political research methods e.g.: institutional analysis or research of health policy actors in the context of a democratic system, social and cultural development. The regression analysis can be performed as introductory analysis of research problem. A quantitative approach to assessing democratic developments using unified democracy scores completely overlooks and conceals the existing development of democracy theory, existing problems in relation to health policy making. Some theorists or policy makers are easily convinced that knowledge of several statistical correlations is capable of solving existing social problems by changing selected factors.

The knowledge gain in conclusions of the thesis fulfills the basic analytic-descriptive function of science. The research objective of the explanation could not be achieved because of the simplified methodological approach chosen. Thus, the thesis has rather comparative and overview significance. The author of the thesis demonstrated the basic ability to work with literature and the regression analysis method used.

From a pedagogical point of view, I can recommend for a further work orientation on a multidisciplinary approach, taking into account, besides the economic approach itself, also the knowledge of public health, health promotion, health policy, system approach, political and legal sciences. On a methodological level, I recommend extending the attention to institutional analysis, stakeholder research using critical discourse analysis in the context of philosophy and science methodology. An interesting philosophical inspiration here could be found in Oreskes, N., Conway, E.M. (2014) *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View From The Future*. Columbia University Press.

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

Question 1.What is the knowledge contribution of statistical correlation (regression analysis using a limited set of panel data) to understanding (explanation of causality) the phenomena studied in the field of social and economic determinants of health (Is there equality between statistical correlation and causality)?

Question 2.What knowledge, questions, and data / methods would you add to your research plan if its goal was to truly understand and explain the differences in the spectrum of social determinants and their impact on health in China and Central Europe?