

## REFEREE'S REVIEW

<b>Program:</b>	Master in International Business
<b>Student:</b>	Sergey Ermilov
<b>Title of thesis:</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility in the Oil and Gas Industry: Environmental Management Systems as a Source of Sustainable Development

<b>Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis.</b> Justification of the topic choice; accuracy in defining the aim and tasks of the thesis; originality of the topic and the extent to which it was covered; alignment of the thesis' topic, aim and objectives.	5	4	3	2
<b>Structure and logic of the text flow.</b> Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives.</b> Adequacy of objectives coverage; ability to formulate and convey the research problem; ability to offer options for its solution; application of the latest trends in relevant research are for the set objectives.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of data gathering and description.</b> Quality of selecting research tools and methods; data validity adequacy; adequacy of used data for chosen research tools and methods; completeness and relevance of the list of references.	5	4	3	2
<b>Scientific aspect of the thesis.</b> Independent scientific thinking in solving the set problem/objectives; the extent to which the student contributed to selecting and justifying the research model (conceptual and/or quantitative), developing methodology/approach to set objectives.	5	4	3	2
<b>Practical/applied nature of research.</b> Extent to which the theoretical background is related to the international or Russian managerial practice; development of applied recommendations; justification and interpretation of the empirical/applied results.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of thesis layout.</b> Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense, correct layout of tables, figures, references.	5	4	3	2

Each item above is evaluated on the following scale, as applicable: 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor.

### Additional comments:

The introduction is too long and starts with a ritualistic discussion of CSR, its definitions, relevance, history, and even some normative justification – this would be more suitable for the first chapter. Introduction should concentrate only on the precise description of the research: goal, tasks, methods, etc.

It seems, that the purpose of the thesis (“how the implementation of environmental management systems (EMS) can contribute to sustainable development of the oil and gas companies”) is weak. The answer for this question is obvious: a good EMS contributes much to sustainable development. The purpose of the research should be “what are key elements of the good EMS” or similar.

The first theoretical chapter represents a review of the literature and conceptual introduction to the relationship of EMS to CSR. There are two shortcomings in this chapter. First, the literature review is too wide and covers the whole CSR field instead of being focused on EMS-in-CSR issue. Second, the conceptual interpretation of EMS and CSR looks too abstract. There is a couple of key theoretical problems in EMS-and-CSR issue: 1) how much should be spend to EMS, 2) how these funds should be allocated among alternative ways of use, 3) what is the most effective approach to manage these issues (organizational structures, contracts, etc.). It seems that the author almost completely neglects these problems and it would be right thing to ask his opinion on them at the defense.

The second chapter is devoted to the methodology of empirical research and proposes three hypotheses. Here the problem is that the hypotheses predict some behaviour of companies (as usually for economic or organizational research) but such hypotheses should be based on a positive theory that models this behaviour and allows to derive predictions. However, the first “theoretical” chapter was devoted to evolution of CSR and EMS concepts and offers no theory of that kind. This is an obvious methodological gap and it would be nice to get author’s comment on this.

The third chapter presents a rich empirical material but again there is a certain lack of focus. The chapter starts from another short literature research but this is quite inappropriate for the empirical chapter. Then the author starts empirical descriptions of the sector and after several pages offers results of sustainable performance assessment of the sampled companies in the basis of a “specifically designed assessment matrix” that is placed in an Appendix. This looks as a serious methodological mistake – such a matrix and its theoretical justification should be put in the center of the whole thesis instead of broad descriptions of CSR and EMR development. Without such theoretical foundation it is strange to discuss the results of this assessment.

The paper ends with a row of conclusions about imperfections in EMR management and recommendations to companies on the ways of improving of EMR management and social reporting. This part of the paper is the most useful and interesting because it deals with real problems and not broad and vague conceptual writings. The only problem is that this ending should be better supported by the rest of the paper and explored in a more detailed manner.

However, regardless of this criticism, I can state that Sergey Ermilov has read a lot of literature, gathered large empirical data and wrote a generally literal and formally correct text that meets minimal requirements of Master of International Business program and deserves a “satisfactory” grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

June 17, 2012

Referee: *Senior Lecturer Maxim A. Storchevoy*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Storchevoy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.