

SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

Program:	MIB
Student:	Irina Okuneva
Title of thesis:	Impact of Fiscal Regimes on Attractiveness of Investments in Unconventional Oil Production: The Case of Russia, US, and UK

Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis. 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.

Given the current debates on changes in the fiscal (tax) regime for the oil industry in a number of countries, including Russia, as well as high importance of unconventional oil production for maintaining the level of output by oil companies, the topic is one of the most debatable in the industry.

Structure and logic of the text flow. Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.

Structure of the thesis is standard for research papers, all parts are aligned.

Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives. 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.

The author uses the same analytical approach as the oil industry itself – modelling of different fiscal regimes impact on financial outcomes ('bottom-line') using different price scenarios. The thesis develops this approach further by adding production costs scenarios to sensitivity analysis and incorporating industry experts' opinion on the relative importance of tax considerations for making investment decisions.

Quality of data gathering and description. 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.

Survey of industry experts in Russia and excellent data gathering on production costs and tax scheme in the countries of study.

Scientific aspect of the thesis. 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.

The author demonstrated an independent thinking and ability to solve the problem. All models used are developed by the author.

Practical/applied nature of research. 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.

The study is of high practical importance for investment decision making in the oil industry. Unfortunately, since the start of the study external factors had a great impact on the perspectives of investments in Russia. Still, different tax regimes discussed have never being modelled for investment decision making.

Quality of thesis layout. Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defence, correct layout of tables, figures, references.
Very good.

The Master thesis of Irina Okuneva meets requirements for master thesis of MIB program thus the author of the thesis can be awarded the required degree.

25 September 2015

Scientific Advisor: Dr Igor Baranov

