

REPORT OF OPINION

By assoc. prof. Anelia Bivolarska, MD, PhD

By order No. R-109-119/22.03.2024 of the Rector of MU-Varna, I have been appointed as a member of a Scientific Jury. According to Protocol No. 1/4.04.2024, I have been selected to prepare an opinion regarding the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of "Biochemistry, Molecular Medicine and Nutrigenomics" at MU-Varna, announced in the State Gazette issue 7/23.01.2024, in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, specialty "Biochemistry."

The sole candidate is Chief Asst. Prof. Dr. Deyana Georgieva Vankova, PhD in Biology.

Brief Information about the Candidate – Biography, Career Development

Deyana Vankova graduated with a Master's degree in "Molecular Biology" and a professional qualification "Master – Molecular Biologist in Animal and Human Physiology" from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2004. She became an assistant professor in the Department of "Biochemistry, Molecular Medicine and Nutrigenomics" at MU-Varna in 2009, and since 2016, she has been a Chief Assistant Professor and Chief Administrative Assistant. She conducts practical exercises for students in Medicine, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy, and is also engaged in English-language teaching. From 2012 to 2015, she was a PhD student at the same department, where she defended her dissertation on "Investigating the Role of Genetic Factors and Lifestyle in the Manifestation of Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome in a Sample of the Bulgarian Population." In 2015, she obtained a specialty in "Biochemistry" at MU-Varna.

Scientometric Indicators and Scientific Contributions

From the comparison and provided data by the candidate, it is evident that Deyana Vankova meets the national criteria for the academic position.

Minimum Requirements by Indicator Groups for the Academic Position "Associate Professor" according to ZRASRB and PPZRASRB

<i>Group of indicators</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Associate professor (points)</i>	<i>Deyana Vankova</i>
A	<i>Indicator 1 PhD Dissertation</i>	50	50
B	<i>Indicator 3 Habilitation work (monograph)</i>	100	100
C	<i>Sum of indicators 7 and 8</i>	200	255

	<i>Publications</i>		
D	<i>Sum of indicators 7 and 8 Citations</i>	50	54

The candidate has presented 16 publications covering those required for the PhD degree. Of these, 14 are full-text publications in English, in journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science (C7.1- C7.14) and 2 book chapters (C8.1 and C8.2), in one of which Chief asst. prof. Vankova is the first author. Among the published articles, one is in a Q1 journal and four are in Q2 journals. The candidate is the first author of one of the articles. The total number of points for this indicator is 255, which significantly exceeds the minimum requirement of 200 points according to the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Varna for the position of "Associate Professor". Additionally, three full-text publications in English are presented outside the minimum scientometric requirements.

Scientific Activity

The results of Deyana Vankova's research have been presented at 13 scientific forums in Bulgaria, where she is the first or last author of five, and 9 abroad, where she is the first author of two.

The provided list of citations includes 27 citations of a single article. The total number of points for this indicator is 54, meeting the minimum requirement of 50 points. Information on the impact factor (Web of Science) and/or impact rank (Scopus) of the citing journals is not provided. Her citation index (h-index Google Scholar) is 7.

Contributions

The candidate has systematized her research work into two main areas:

1. Investigation of biomarkers in socially significant diseases.
2. Investigation of the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of medicinal plants and biologically active substances *in vitro* and *in vivo*.

Her research activities include working with cell cultures, experimental animals and humans. She demonstrates experience in studying molecular mechanisms in experimental models of mouse preadipocyte and macrophage cell cultures. Additionally, she applies *in vitro* and *in vivo* methods for analyzing medicinal plants and biologically active substances.

In the competition documents, Deyana Vankova has presented a monograph titled "The Role of Certain Adipokines in the Pathogenesis of Socially Significant Diseases" (B3). The monograph meets the national mandatory scientometric requirements for presenting a habilitation work, which is evaluated with 100 points. Basically, it is necessary for a monograph to include reference to several scientific papers. Notably, the presented monograph references only one of the candidate's articles (Vankova et al., 2012).

Teaching Activity

Deyana Vankova is involved in teaching students in Medicine, Dental Medicine, and Pharmacy in Bulgarian and English. Over the last five academic years, from 2018/2019, her teaching load averages 400 hours per academic year, slightly above the norm for a lecturer from preclinical departments.

The candidate has co-authored four guidebooks in Bulgarian and English for the course of Biochemistry at MU-Varna.

She has actively participated in 10 scientific projects, one of which international, where she served as the coordinator's assistant, 4 with national funding from the Scientific Research Fund, and five funded by the MU-Varna "Science" Fund, where she served as a researcher.

She is a member of four scientific organizations: the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, section Biochemistry, Biophysics and Molecular Biology (a member of FEBS), the Union of Scientists - Varna, Bulgaria, the European Nutrigenomics Organization (NuGO) and the Association of Biochemistry Departments in Bulgaria (ABDB). Her membership in the international organization FEBS, mediated by the Union of Scientists-Varna, is commendable.

Conclusion

Chief asst. prof. Deyana Vankova, PhD, is a competent scientist and lecturer. Her scientific output meets the minimum requirements for the position of Associate Professor in "Biochemistry," as outlined in the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedures for Holding Academic Positions at MU-Varna.

I give a positive opinion and recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury vote positively for Deyana Vankova to be appointed to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, specialty "Biochemistry".

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Prepared by:

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