

STATEMENT

By Assoc. prof. Natalya Usheva, MD, PhD

Head of Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation
Deputy Dean "Scientific affairs" Faculty of Public Health
Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov", Varna

Regarding: Competition for the **academic position "Professor" in the field of higher education „7. Healthcare and Sport”, in professional field „7.1 Medicine”, in specialty „Social Medicine and organisation of Healthcare and Pharmacy”** for the needs of Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, published in the State Gazette, issue 7, 23.01.2024.

One candidate - Assoc. prof. Dr. Desislava Ivanova Vankova, Ph.D. - submitted documents within the legal deadline for participation in the announced competition, and the submitted documents comply with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Application, and the Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at MU Varna. This statement follows a decision from of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, recorded in Protocol No. 1/02.04.2024.

Biographical data about the candidate's career development

Desislava Vankova was born in Burgas. She completed her secondary education at "Geo Milev" English Language School with excellent grades and "Gold Medal". In 1993 she obtained educational and qualification degree "Master" in the specialty "Medicine" and in 1999 – in Public Health at Maastricht University, the Netherlands.

Dr. Desislava Vankova started her work experience in 1994 as a physician-resident in the internal ward of the Municipal Hospital - Malko Tarnovo and as an emergency room therapist in Avren Municipality. In the period 1996-2001 she worked in the Hygienic-Epidemiological Inspection in Varna as a physician-epidemiologist. For 14 years he grew professionally to a high managerial position in a large pharmaceutical company in Bulgaria.

Dr. Desislava Vankova started her academic career as a part-time assistant at the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation at MU-Varna to teach students of the specialty "Sanitary Inspector" (1999-2001). She returned to teaching at the Department in 2016, when she was elected as a Senior Assistant Professor, and in 2018 as an Associate Professor.

In 2000 she obtained degree in Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation at the Medical University of Varna.

She defended her dissertation on "Quality of Life related to Community Health" in 2013 for the degree of PhD, and on " Integrative Medicine - Holistic Conceptual Model, Scientific and Educational Approaches" for the degree of "Doctor of Sciences" (DSc) in 2023.

Assoc. prof. Vankova has participated in numerous international and national training courses in social medicine and health promotion, modern epidemiology, health technology assessment, integrative medicine, unified health and antimicrobial resistance, medical pedagogy, etc.

The candidate has managerial experience at the Medical University, holding the position of Head of the "Scientific Department" since 2015. She has participated in the following committees: Medical Ethics at St. Marina University Hospital - Varna (2018-2022), Research Ethics at MU-Varna since 2020.

She is member of the following professional and scientific organisations: Bulgarian Medical Association, "Public Health-99" union, European Public Health Association, European Society of Integrative Medicine, Bulgarian Public Health Association, Bulgarian Scientific Society of Public Health, Union of Scientists in Bulgaria - Varna Branch.

Assoc. prof. Desislava Vankova is fluent in written and spoken English and Russian and at good level in French.

Evaluation of the candidate's scientific research and applied activities

Assoc. Prof. Vankova has submitted for her participation in the competition through Academic Reference from the Library of MU Varna scientific production, exceeding the minimum requirements for the scientific activity of the candidates for the acquisition of the academic position "Professor":

- ✓ Dissertation for the award of PhD degree - **50 points**;
- ✓ Habilitation thesis -1 monograph - **100 points**;
- ✓ Dissertation for the award of the degree of "Doctor of Sciences";
- ✓ Published 1 monograph not submitted as a main habilitation thesis - **100 points**;
- ✓ 1 book published on the basis of a defended dissertation for the degree of "Doctor of Sciences" - **40 points**;
- ✓ Publications and reports in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information- 15pts - **428.57 points**;
- ✓ Publications and reports in non-refereed peer-reviewed scientific journals or published in edited collective volumes - 34 pcs - **773 points**;
- ✓ Published chapter of collective monograph- 1 pc - **15 points**;
- ✓ Published textbooks- 2 pcs;
- ✓ Published handbooks - 3 pcs.

Additional 6 research articles not included in the minimum requirements are also submitted. Assoc. prof. Vankova is independent or lead author in almost half of the submitted scientific papers, which shows her creativity, initiative and ability to develop, write (incl. in English) and publish in both national and international journals.

The total number of citations of the scientific works under Indicator E is **135**, derived from citations in the following sources:

- refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information - 42 (E.10),

- monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes - 15 (E.11),

- unrefereed peer-reviewed journals - 78 (E.12)

The cumulative Impact Factor (IF) of the journals in which 6 articles and abstracts

were published is 14.715.

Participation in scientific research projects

Assoc. prof. Vankova has participated and successfully lead 15 national and international projects with scientific research or educational focus.

Work with PhD students and graduates

Experience, expertise and mentoring skills make Assoc. prof. Vankova a very desirable supervisor of PhD students and postgraduate students. A total of 6 PhD students have been enrolled with independent or shared supervision in the scientific specialties of "Social Medicine and Organisation of Healthcare and Pharmacy" and "Public Health Management", of which two PhD students already successfully defended.

Scientific journals

Assoc. prof. Vankova participates in the editorial board of the journal "Asklepios", reviews scientific articles for national and international journals, textbooks, monographs and books.

Compliance with the requirements of the Medical University - Varna for the academic position "Professor" with the submitted evidence

Indicator group	Minimum required number of points	Number of points indicated by the candidate
A	50	50
B	-	-
C	100	100
D	200	1356.57
E	50	1140
F	40	595

Main areas of scientific works and contributions

The presented scientific works from Assoc. prof. Desislava Vankova are 5 monographs and nearly 200 publications and contributions to scientific journals and events, all in the scope of the scientific specialty in which the competition was announced and can be thematically divided into the following areas:

1. Quality of life and health. Social inequalities.

Research papers in this field are grouped along two lines according to the target groups and the level of study of the problems (group/individual):

- public health - studying the problems of different vulnerable populations;
- medical - focusing on person-centred holistic care for chronic patients.

Leading topics of the scientific works of Assoc. prof. Vankova is quality of life, starting from the dissertation for PhD, scientific articles, monographs, dedicated to health-related quality of life and its importance in the evaluation of health-promotional interventions, for the formation of health policies aimed at reducing health inequalities.

An innovative approach in research methodology with the application of new and diverse tools makes it possible to conduct more in-depth and collaborative work with specialists from different fields. Impressive are also the large-scale population studies using for the first time in a Bulgarian population the EQ-5D-3L quality of life questionnaire, the studies on subjective health in patients with different pathologies, early childhood development, which have significant theoretical, methodological and practical-applied contributions to public health and medicine.

2. Health promotion and preventive medicine

Assoc. prof. Desislava Vankova works thoroughly for health promotion in the age group over 60-65 years old, and revealing their human and social capital for full use by society, contributes to the promotion and stimulation of healthy aging through health-promotional approaches. Of particular importance for the favourable development of contemporary society, characterised by stratification, dispersion and the dominance of individualism, are the developments on values in society, continuity and solidarity between generations, common human virtues, and the relationship between culture and health.

A worthy place in the scientific production of Desislava Vankova on health promotion is dedicated to the traditional Bulgarian folk dances with their unifying social role and health-promoting intervention, the inclusion of Bulgarian folk dances in the curricula of the discipline "Sport" as a way to preserve and promote Bulgarian folklore, traditions and culture.

The candidate's innovative approach is also evident from the introduction of the concept of unified health through her expert and research work at international level and the introduction of the idea into Bulgarian healthcare, including routine activities for infection prevention and control, as well as for tackling antimicrobial resistance.

3. Integrative medicine - conceptual modelling and research in the field of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and health promotion

In this field Assoc. prof. Vankova presented 24 scientific papers, including the dissertation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science, the habilitation paper "Integrative Medicine: history, conceptual development, informed choice and intelligent investment in the future" and other publications. Again, through her innovative approach, Assoc. prof. Vankova has presented the development of CAM, creating the holistic conceptual model for the study and application of integrative healthcare. She has managed to exhibit balance and make the case for the need for integrative medicine development and research. The contributions of the scientific developments in this field are significant in both theoretical and practical-applied aspects (including the published monograph, terminology guide, Dynamic Delphi-Interview, scientific supervision of a dissertation on CAM topics, expert participation in various scientific events).

4. Education and Research

In this field Assoc. prof. Vankova brings together 17 scientific developments, divided into 2 themes - public health education and research methodology.

Public health education has been of interest and has been addressed since the early 2000s, and with the accumulation of many years of scientific and practical experience, she presented a paper at the EDULEARN2020 International Conference on Education and

Technology.

An innovative model of teaching with an original character has been created – it has found application in many areas of higher and secondary education in Bulgaria.

The research methodology is touched in the candidate's research work through the application of qualitative methods in field research and a number of projects, sequential-explanatory mix-method design, Dynamic Delphi interview. Assoc. prof. Vankova is involved in two research projects with the University Press of MU- Varna in the direction of increasing the visibility of research at institutional level.

Evaluation of the candidate's teaching work

Assoc. prof. Desislava Vankova has almost 30 years of work experience and for the last 8 years she has been a lecturer at the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation of the Medical University of Varna. The teaching load of Assoc. prof. Vankova exceeds the norm for MU-Varna and in some years approaches 400 hours/year. She delivers lectures and seminars for students of the following specialties: medicine and dentistry with teaching in Bulgarian and English, midwife, nurse, pharmacist, assistant pharmacist, kinesitherapy, speech therapy, optometrist, health management, health care management, etc. Assoc. prof. Vankova participates in the training of trainee physicians in the discipline of "Social Medicine" and participates in the state examinations of medical students and Chair of the State Examination Commission in Social Medicine and Health Law for the specialties "midwife", "nurse". She is member of program councils, takes part in the training of graduates specialising "Social Medicine and Health Management".

Assoc. prof. Vankova actively participates in the development and updating of the educational documentation of the various specialties, including the new master's programs for the application of artificial intelligence in health care and medicine. She is the author of two textbooks on social medicine for nurses and midwives and three handbooks.

Expert activity

Assoc. prof. Desislava Vankova exercises diverse expert activities through participation in: Ethics Committees - University Hospital "St. Marina" and MU-Varna, Health Technology Assessment Committees, Expert to the European Commission for project activities, member of the EUPHA Working Group on Access to Medicines (since 2023); she is member of scientific juries for the award of scientific and educational degree "Doctor", academic positions, three international groups of health policy strategies to the European Commission and WHO.

Awards

Assoc. prof. Desislava Vankova was awarded with the Oxford Publishing Award for Poster at the VIII European Conference on Public Health in Milan, Italy (2015).

Assoc. prof. Dr. Desislava Vankova, PhD, DSc is a respected and beloved lecturer, a responsible and responsive colleague and specialist, inspiring and engaging younger students as well as experienced colleagues, a versatile personality bringing innovative spirit and empathy.

Conclusion

The candidate for participation in the present competition - Assoc. prof. Dr. Desislava Ivanova Vankova, PhD, DSc meets and exceeds the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Application and the Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at the Medical University - Varna for holding the academic position of Professor.

On the basis of the candidate's overall professional development, significant scientific research and applied scientific activity, teaching activity and practical experience, I express a *positive* opinion and propose to the members of the Scientific Jury to elect Assoc. Prof. Dr. Desislava Vankova, PhD, DSc, for the academic position of "Professor" in the field of higher education "7. Health and Sport", in professional field "7.1. Medicine", in the specialty "Social Medicine and Organisation of Healthcare and Pharmacy" for the needs of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation, at the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University - Varna.

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679

25.05.2024 г.
Varna

Chairman of the Scientific Jury:

/ Assoc. prof. Natalya Usheva, MD, PhD /