

To the Chair of the Academic Committee
Appointed by Order of the Rector of MU-Varna R-109-254/06.06.2025
Regarding the Competition for the Academic Position of "Associate Professor"
(State Gazette Issue 30/08.04.2025)

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Desislava Nikolaeva Koleva-Georgieva, PhD, FEBO
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Member of the Academic Committee for the Competition (SG Issue 30/08.04.2025) for the academic position "Associate Professor" in Ophthalmology, Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, Area of Higher Education 7. Healthcare and Sports – one position, 0.5 FTE for the Department of Optometry and Occupational Diseases, Faculty of Public Health, and 1 full-time position for USBAL-VARNA Ltd.

By decision of the Faculty Council (Protocol No. 244/15.05.2025) of the Faculty of Public Health and Order of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna No. 109-254/06.06.2025, I was appointed as an external member of the Academic Committee. According to Protocol No. 1/18.06.2025 of the Committee meeting, I was assigned to prepare a review for the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Area of Higher Education 7. Healthcare and Sports, Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, and scientific specialty "Ophthalmology" – one position: 0.5 FTE for the Department of Optometry and Occupational Diseases, Faculty of Public Health, and 1 FTE for "USBAL-VARNA" Ltd., announced in State Gazette Issue 30/08.04.2025.

The competition announcement procedure complies with the legal requirements. One candidate has applied: Dr. Elitsa Gercheva Hristova, PhD.

The set of documents I received in due time, in electronic format, complies with the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the related Implementation Regulations, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University – Varna for acquiring the academic position "Associate Professor."

General Biographical Data and Professional Development of the Candidate:

Dr. Elitsa Gercheva Hristova, PhD, graduated in Medicine from MU-Varna in 2012. She completed her residency in Ophthalmology at "SOBAL – Varna" and

obtained the specialty in 2017. Dr. Hristova's interest in scientific work began during her residency, evidenced by numerous published articles and scientific presentations. She has experienced rapid academic growth in a short time, accompanied by rich experience.

Her doctoral studies (full-time) in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences were conducted from 2013 to 2016, and in 2016 she was awarded the PhD degree for her successfully defended dissertation titled: "Microstructural characteristics of macular changes in socially significant retinal diseases."

From 2016 to 2020, she was an assistant professor, and since 2020, she has held the position of senior assistant professor in the Department of Optometry and Occupational Diseases, MU-Varna. In 2024, she also obtained a second Master's degree in Health Management and Medico-social Care.

She holds numerous additional professional qualifications, with the appropriate certifications.

The candidate meets the habilitation requirements for this criterion.

Scientific Research Activity:

Dr. Elitsa Hristova submitted an Academic Reference summarizing 20 scientific works, grouped as follows: 1. Doctoral Dissertation; 2. Monograph (Habilitation Work); 3. Publications. Publications are classified as: G7 – publications in peer-reviewed journals indexed in globally recognized scientific databases – 5 publications, and G8 – publications in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited volumes – 12 publications. Additionally, 1 publication is presented beyond the minimum scientometric criteria.

She has 4 citations of her work in other scientific publications.

Her habilitation work is a sole-authored monograph: "Refraction – Clinical Principles and Algorithms" (2024), published by MU-Varna, ISBN 978-619-221.

Dr. Hristova regularly participates in national and international scientific events, presenting:

- 29 presentations at national congresses and conferences
- 8 presentations at international scientific forums

She has contributed to the development of educational materials and participated in 5 scientific research projects:

1. Project No. 16018/2016 – Development of infrastructure for dynamic microstructural analysis of the visual analyzer using modern OCT-A technology – PI: Dr. Elitsa Hristova
2. Project No. 19020/2019 – Electronic registry of stroke, diabetes, and diabetic retinopathy to study epidemiology and management effectiveness – PI: Assoc. Prof. Kristina Bliznakova
3. Project No. 20012/2020 – Upgrading infrastructure for high-tech anterior segment analysis based on corneal biomechanics during the COVID-19 pandemic – PI: Dr. Evgeni Neshkinski, PhD, FEBO
4. Project No. 22009/2022 – Quality of life in patients with diabetic retinopathy. Assessment of treatment effect – PI: Assoc. Prof. Natalia Usheva
5. Project No. 24025/2024 – Application of geographic information systems to assess health inequalities in Bulgaria – PI: Prof. Klara Dokova

Her main research directions include the scientific and clinical aspects of ophthalmology – diagnostics, treatment, and prevention of various eye diseases. Her research interests are grouped into six areas:

- I. Refraction – Clinical Principles and Algorithms
- II. Microstructural changes and prevention of anterior eye surface damage
- III. Diabetic retinopathy and other socially significant retinal diseases – epidemiology, microstructure, and diagnostics
- IV. Pediatric eye health and preventive approaches in ophthalmology
- V. Modern diagnostic technologies and digitalization in ophthalmology
- VI. Rare eye diseases and interdisciplinary approach

The scientific work – publications, presentations, monograph, and dissertation – aligns with her research interests and applied scientific activity and is consistent with the scientific field in which the competition is announced.

Her activity in this indicator meets the requirements of the LDASRB and MU-Varna's internal rules for the position of "Associate Professor."

Teaching Activity:

Dr. Elitsa Hristova has 9 years of teaching experience at various academic levels. She lectures and conducts practical exercises in: Lectures (Perimetry, Pharmacological and Surgical Treatment, Eye Examination Algorithm and Emergencies, Lasers in Ophthalmology) and Practical Exercises (Perimetry, Eye Examination Algorithm and Emergencies, Lasers in Ophthalmology, Vision Pathology, Pharmacological and Surgical Treatment, Pediatric Optometry) for students from the Optometry program and Students from Medicine programs, Ophthalmology discipline, both in Bulgarian and English. Her annual teaching workload exceeds the normative requirements of MU-Varna.

Her teaching activities meet the requirements of the LDASRB and the internal regulations of MU-Varna for the position of "Associate Professor."

Conclusion:

Dr. Elitsa Gercheva Hristova, PhD, based on the submitted documents and evaluation of her scientometric indicators in scientific research and teaching, exceeds the minimum national requirements set by the LDASRB and those of MU-Varna's internal regulations for the academic position of "Associate Professor."

She is a recognized specialist with extensive clinical and research experience and possesses the necessary theoretical and practical skills to further develop research and teaching in the field of ophthalmology.

I confidently vote in favor of awarding the academic position of Associate Professor to Dr. Elitsa Gercheva Hristova, PhD.

Запчено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
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Plovdiv

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/Assoc. Prof. Desislava Koleva-Georgieva, PhD, FEBO/