

REVIEW

for the competition for the academic position of *Full Professor*
higher education field of *1. Pedagogical Sciences*
professional field of *1.3. Pedagogy of the Education in. . . (Pedagogy of Teaching of
Specialized German Language for Medical Purposes and E-Learning)*
promulgated in State Gazette No 62/6 August 2019
for the needs of the Department of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports at
Medical University – Varna “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov”

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Iliana Tsvetanova Doykova, PhD

Head of Western and Classical Languages Department
Department of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports
Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna
Chair of the scientific committee
appointed by the Rector of Medical University – Varna
with Decree No R-109-325/7 October 2019

The competition for the position of *Full Professor*, specialty of *Pedagogy of the Education in Specialized German Language for Medical Purposes and E-Learning*, higher education field of *1. Pedagogical Sciences*, professional field of *1.3. Pedagogy of the Education in. . . (Methodology of the Education in the German Language)*, is promulgated in State Gazette No 62/6 August 2019 for the needs of the Department of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports (DFLCS) at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov”, Varna. Sole applicant is Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Merdhanov, PhD, Head of said department. The procedure of the competition and the documents that have been presented are in accordance with the regulations of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (art. 4, par. 1 and par. 2, art. 29A, par. 1 of said law), in accordance with art. 6, par. 1, art. 139, par. 1 and par. 3 of the Rules and Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University – Varna, and in accordance with Decree No R-109-325/7 October 2019 issued by Prof. Krasimir Ivanov, D.Sc. – Rector of Medical University – Varna. The applicant meets the minimal national requirements for the position of *Full Professor* per art. 26, par. 2 and 3 of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria on attaining scientific degrees and occupying academic positions.

1. Professional Background of the Applicant

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov, PhD in Pedagogy, was born on April 3rd, 1962 in Varna. He obtained his high school diploma at First Language School, with a specialization in German, followed by a Masters in German Philology at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo. Some of his Masters studies were carried out at the University of Rostock, Germany. Following his university graduation in 1987, he started working as a teacher of German in Provadia, Varna District. In 1990, upon his successful participation in a competition for the position, he started working as a university lecturer at the Dept. of Foreign Languages of Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov. Since 1992 he has been working as a lecturer and senior lecturer in Specialized German for Medical Purposes (for the specialties of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Midwifery, and Health Management) at the DFLCS, Western and Classical Languages Unit at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna. He has had specializations in Salzburg and Krems an der Donau, Austria, as well as in Dusseldorf and Munich, Germany. He successfully defended his PhD dissertation titled *Didactic and Methodological Aspects of the Elaboration and Application of an Internet-Based Educational Environment for Teaching Specialized (German) Language for Students of Medicine* in 2013 at the Dept. of Foreign Language Methodology at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, thus acquiring the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor”, specialty of *Pedagogy of the Education in... (Methodology of the Education in the German Language)*. Since 2014 he has been an associate professor at Medical University – Varna and Director of the Dept. of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports.

2. Research Activity of the Applicant

2.1. A General Description of the Presented Materials

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov, PhD, takes part in the competition for the position of *Full Professor* with a total of **5** academic works, out of which **1** is a single-author monograph, **1** - a monograph that is co-authored with Assoc. Prof. Marinela Grudeva, **1** – an article co-authored with Ilina Doykova in a refereed and indexed scientific journal, **16** articles in Bulgarian reviewed journals, **1** book based on the dissertation, and **3** textbooks. The findings of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov’s research have been presented at **16** national and international scientific forums. Up to the present moment, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov has accumulated 32 years of experience in teaching and research; he has participated in 2 national and 4 international educational projects in the field of Medical Communication.

2.2. Evaluation of the Main Monograph

The main monograph presented in the competition, *Dimensions of the Electronic Test. Electronic Testing in the Context of the Digitalization of Higher Education*, was published in 2019. It has 168 pgs., with 156 cited sources, out of which 11 are Bulgarian and 145 are foreign ones (in German and in English).

The main research focus of Ivan Merdzhanov's monograph is the development of quality electronic content for testing purposes, as well as the corresponding didactic solutions for evaluating knowledge, skills, and competences in academic settings. The effectiveness of electronic testing is examined in light of validity, reliability, and objectivity as criteria for quality in assessment didactics. It is established that the educational goals must be coordinated both with the test content and the pedagogical and didactic preparation of the lecturers who elaborate the electronic tests. The obligatory processes of planning, preparation, and development of the tasks are examined in accordance with the classical Testing theory. Specific observations, based on educational practices from his experience as Director of the International Center for Distance and E-Learning at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna, are made. The typologies of electronic tests and task types, as well as good practices in implementing electronic tests in certain preclinical disciplines, are described. Specific recommendations for structuring and standardizing the testing process in electronic environment are elaborated on the basis of indicators for assessing the quality of electronic tests. Contributions of the monograph are in characterizing assessment didactics as a Pedagogical field, linking the educational goals and key educational competences with the specifics of electronic testing; representation of the task typology in electronic platforms and application of the functional method in Specialized Foreign Language teaching and the communicational specifics in the fields of Medicine and E-testing.

The monograph has good visual support by 34 figures, 7 tables and 1 annex.

2.3. Evaluation of the contributions of the other publications

The second monograph that has been presented, *Contemporary Challenges to the Higher Medical Education (Distance and E-Learning)*, co-authored with Assoc. Prof. Marinela Grudeva, was published in 2018. Ivan Merdzhanov is the author of the third part of the monograph that is again dedicated to distance and e-learning (105 pgs. in total). He analyzes contemporary forms of learning and teaching in Medical Education and their characteristics, as well as the limitations and advantages of various educational platforms, along with opportunities for distance and e-learning via widely accessible online courses that can aid in the modernization of higher education in Bulgaria.

The book *E-learning and Specialized German Language. Didactic and Methodological Aspects of the Implementation of the Electronic Platform for Teaching Specialized (German) Language in the field of Medicine*, based on a defended dissertation, was published in 2019. Along with analyzing both the existing theories in the field of general didactics and methodology, and the methodological particularities of foreign language teaching, Merdzhanov proves the need for the development and implementation of an interactive internet-based platform for teaching a specialized foreign language to provide opportunities for self-learning.

In the article "**Didactic Approaches to Preclinical E-testing for Medical Students**", co-authored with Iliana Doykova, the experience of lecturers at Medical University – Varna in the field of electronic testing is examined in light of the existing assessment didactics criteria. Electronic test forms and mechanisms have been illustrated with examples from preclinical practice. The rest of the publications presented for the competition concern the objective analysis

of the advantages and disadvantages of MOOCs, as well as the need for an innovative didactic approach to the development of the productive skills of speaking and writing by elaborating specific test tasks. Both outside and inside factors (readiness, students' attitudes, (lack of) homogeneity of the target group, restricted number of classes) which influence the effectiveness of the electronic testing have been examined. The suggested innovative didactic approaches for the preparation of test tasks in an electronic format and the perspectives for the enhancement of the electronic test-taking format can be of practical use for lecturers.

An important addition to the publication activity of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhhanov are the three textbooks of German for Medical Purposes *Kommunikation in der Klinik I, Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Medizin, Deutsch in der Zahnmedizin und in der Pharmazie and Kommunikation in der Klinik*, which have been prepared and published from 2015 to 2017, and which have been successfully used for training students from the specialties of Pharmacy, Dental Medicine, and Medicine in Specialized German at Medical University - Varna.

Additional publications above the minimal scientometric requirements for participation in the competition are presented, which reflect the stages in the author's development over time.

2.4. Evaluation of the Scientific Contributions

The scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhhanov belong to five main fields:

2.4.1. Ivan Merdzhhanov carries out **research on the context, structure, lexical and grammar particularities of specialized texts in German**. In 7 publications and scientific conference reports, he analyzes the medical documents that are most often used in the clinical practice in order to integrate interactive exercises in online courses, as well as elaborates tasks for the development of linguistic and communicative competence at the different fluency levels (folder 3 - 6, 10, 11, 12; folder 4 - 7, 8, 10). Based on this research, I. Merdzhhanov describes the methodological aspects for effective application of the educational content and the testing formats in courses in Specialized German Language for Medicine. With the goal of developing productive skills, special attention is paid to epicrisis, history taking, diagnostics and treatment – all aimed at developing productive skills (folder 4 – 7, 8).

2.4.2. Ivan Merdzhhanov **identifies problematic areas in the elaboration and execution of electronic tests; he systematizes factors that ensure the effective and maximally objective process of electronic testing and highlights advantages and opportunities offered by electronic testing** (folder 3 – 8, folder 4 – 1, 9). He provides a description of electronic test typology (diagnostic, formative, and summative), as well as of task typology (in the Blackboard platform). Good practices in the elaboration of electronic tests have been illustrated with many examples from actual tests in various disciplines (B, G6).

2.4.3. **In the context of current educational trends**, Ivan Merdzhhanov **articulates the new educational goals of the Specialized Foreign Language for Medical Purposes in accordance with the principles of assessment didactics and the quality criteria for**

electronic testing. He offers specific techniques for test design that can boost the reliability and validity of the electronic test (folder 3 – 8, folder 4 - 4, 10). The methodology aims at selecting authentic, informative, and diverse texts that are of professional significance in the corresponding specialized fields (folder 3 – 1, 3, 11; folder 4 - 5).

2.4.4. **Based on surveys,** Ivan Merdzhhanov **defines criteria for the quality of the virtual educational environment in the different forms of e-learning.** He pinpoints prerequisites and conditions for the application of different forms of e-learning in the field of teaching Specialized Foreign Languages for Medical Purposes, and identifies factors that are necessary for the effective usage of digital means in the educational process (G4, 5, folder 3 – 5, 6). He analyzes the advantages and limitations of electronic testing and the key role of digitalization for the modernization of higher education institutions (B, folder 3 – 7, 12).

2.4.5. Ivan Merdzhhanov **defines the concept of *didactics of the electronic testing* and applies it to the educational practice by offering specific models for task formats in accordance with the principles of the testing didactics and by making recommendations for the optimization of electronic task and test variants** (B-monograph, G6 - 1, G7 - 2 3 – 2, 8, 4; 4 - 1, 8, 10, 11). The author states that in order to prepare a quality electronic test the educational goals should be directly linked to the testing didactics as a guarantee for an effective educational process, increased motivation and improved student success rate (B-monograph).

An important aspect of the research carried out by Ivan Merdzhhanov not only the review of the current tendencies in academic teaching - in particular the use of electronic testing as a means to ensure an efficient educational process - but also the documented disadvantages of working with the new media and the risks involved herein. Thus, his analysis of the opportunities provided by e-learning compared to the traditional educational means is balanced and objective.

2.5. Citations by other authors and recommendations

Ivan Merdzhhanov has 21 citations, out of which 20 are found in monographs and peer-reviewed works, and 1 – in a non-referred journal. I would recommend that Assoc. Prof. I. Merdzhhanov publish his observations from his research in the form of a practical guide for lecturers looking for guidance in task typology and the format of electronic testing, to fully benefit from the opportunities provided by digital technologies, and to attain quality in academic assessment.

3. Evaluation of the results from participation in scientific research projects and practical application of the research findings

Ivan Merdzhhanov has taken part in 6 projects as a co-author, coordinator and manager of three of them. Four of them are international educational projects under the Grundtvig Programme of the European Union - **Ripe for the Internet - senior education and eLearning in a cross-generational context, 1142 74-CP-1-2004-1-DE-Grundtvig-G1** (from 2005 to 2007), under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme of the European Union - **e-LANCOM: An e-learning**

module to improve LANguage-related COMmunication skills in health, № LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-TR-071 (from 2007 to 2009), and *IMED-KOMM, № DE/12/LLP-LdV/TOI/1475012* (from 2012 to 2014), under the Erasmus+ Programme HELP2 for the development of an online platform of Medical English and German Language - *№ 2018-1-CZ01-KA203-048150* (from 2018 to 2021).

From 2013 to 2014 he took part in 2 national projects under the Operational Programme Human Resources Development: *Creating a Modern System for Career Development for Lecturers at at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna and Enhancing Communicative Competency of Students of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Management, and Health Care by Optimizing and Elaborating New Academic Syllabi in Communication in the Field of Health Care and Specialized Foreign Language that Correspond to the Current Needs of Hospitals and Other Health Care Institutions and the Demands of the Modern Informational Environment.*

4. Academic and Teaching Activity

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhhanov’ pedagogical experience spans a 32-year period, out of which 27 years spent at Medical University - Varna as lecturer at the DFLCS. He has elaborated 11 syllabi in Specialized German for the specialties of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Midwifery, Speech Therapy, Kinesiotherapy, Public Health, Public Health and Health Management, Health Management, Rehabilitation, Marine Therapy, Wellness, and Spa, and teaches the practical classes for students from the abovementioned specialties.

As a key contribution of the teaching and methodological work of Assoc. Prof. Merdzhhanov, I view the elaboration of electronic courses in Specialized German for Medical Purposes and the electronic format of the Specialized Foreign Language Exam, which are in accordance with the contemporary educational trends worldwide and represent the basis of modern academic education.

Assoc. Prof. Merdzhhanov has been surpassing the required workload of classes because he is the only lecturer who fulfills the functions of a lecturer with the preparation, organization, and carrying out of the training in Specialized Foreign Language (German) and the coordinating, administrative, and managing functions he has in two other departments at Medical University - Varna (DFLCS and the International Center for Distance and E-Learning).

5. Personal Impressions

I have known Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhhanov for the past 5 years as a conscientious and beloved educator, but most of all, as a manager who values the achievements and contributions of the team of lecturers at the Department of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports and a colleague who encourages cooperation and a positive outlook in their efforts to achieve academic goals. Assoc. Prof. Merdzhhanov received some of the best responses on the students’ questionnaires first implemented by the Department of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports in 2018/2019 regarding the quality of the educational process. I believe that with his long-

term scientific research and educational activity Assoc. Prof. I. Merdzhanov contributes to the establishment of Medical University – Varna as a trustworthy educational institution that offers a modern and sustainable academic environment for both Bulgarian and international students.

6. Conclusion

Assoc. Prof. I. Merdzhanov, PhD is a competent lecturer and scientist with a lasting interest and real accomplishments in the fields of Teaching Specialized German Language for Medical Purposes and Electronic Education.

Based on the above merits and contributions, on the quantity and quality of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov, as well as on his diverse engagements in the activities of MU - Varna, which completely satisfy the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria as well as the Rules and Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff and the Regulations for the Educational Activity at Medical University – Varna, I hereby give a **POSITIVE ASSESSMENT** and urge with absolute certainty the esteemed Scientific Committee, as well as the Academic Council of Medical University – Varna, to cast a favorable vote for the application of Assoc. Prof. **Ivan Merdzhanov, PhD for the academic position of *Full Professor in the specialty of Pedagogy of the Education in Specialized German Language for Medical Purposes (and E-Learning)*** higher education field of **1. Pedagogical Sciences**.

December 12th, 2019

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Ilina Doykova, PhD

Head of Western and Classical Languages Department

Dept. of Foreign Languages, Communication and Sports

Medical University - Varna