

STATEMENT OF OPINION

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Member of the Scientific Jury according to Order № R-109-325/07.10.2019 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna

Regarding: Competition for the occupation of the academic position “Professor” in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogics of training in..., specialty “Pedagogics of the Teaching of Specialized German Language for Medical Purposes (and E-learning)” for the needs of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna according to announcement of the State Gazette, issue 62/06.08.2019.

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Merdzhanov, PhD in pedagogics, associate professor at the Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Communication and Sports at Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna is the only applicant in this competition. He has submitted all the required documents according to the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Application and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at MU – Varna from 29.10.2018.

I. Brief personal and professional details of the applicant

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov completed his secondary education at the First Language School of Varna in 1981 and obtained his higher education at “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” University in Veliko Turnovo in 1987, majoring in German language with the professional qualification “specialist in German language and teacher of German language and literature”.

He started his professional career in 1987 as a teacher of German language at secondary school “Ivan Vazov” in Provadiya and after 1990 he continued his successful career in the field of higher education as a teacher of German language. He began as a teacher at the Department of Foreign Languages at the Academy of Economics “D. A. Tsenov” in the town of Svishtov (1990-1992), after which he continued as an assistant professor and senior assistant professor of specialized German language for medical purposes at the Department of Foreign Languages at Medical University “Prof.

Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna. Today this department is part of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Communications and Sport, and Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov has been its successful head along with his responsibility to be in charge of the International Centre for E-learning and Distant Education at MU – Varna which he undertook after obtaining the academic position “associate professor” in 2014.

Throughout the years, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov has continuously maintained and improved the high level of his professional competence through specializations in Austria (Salzburg and Krems) and Germany (Dusseldorf and Munich).

II. Scientific, Research and Publication Activity of the Applicant

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov has submitted a standardized reference as a proof for meeting the minimum national requirements for the occupation of the academic position “professor” (hard copy and electronic carrier) in accordance with Art. 138 (1), p.4 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at MU – Varna.

The scientific production of the applicant includes a total of 37 titles, of which 10 for the coverage of the minimum requirements for the occupation of the academic position “professor”, distributed from a scientific metric aspect as follows:

- **Referring Criterion A1** – The dissertation work entitled “Didactic and Methodological Aspects of the Development and Application of an Internet-based Learning Environment for Specialized (German) for Students of Medicine” (2012).
- **Referring Criterion C 3** – Independent monograph/habilitation work “Dimensions of e-testing. Electronic examination in the context of the digitalization of the higher education” (2019), ISBN 978-619-221-221-6, Publishing House MU - Varna.
- **Referring Criterion G4** – The collective monograph “Modern challenges in front of the higher medical education (distance and electronic learning)” in co-authorship with Marinela Grudeva is not presented as habilitation work (2018), ISBN: 978-619-221-123-3, Publishing House MU - Varna.
- **Referring Criterion G5** - Published book based on the dissertation thesis for the educational and scientific degree “PhD” – Electronic training and specialized German language. Didactic and methodological aspects in the application of the electronic platform for teaching specialized (German) language in the field of medicine (2019), ISBN: 978-619-241-061-2, STENO Publishing House.

- **Referring Criterion G6** - Publications and papers in scientific journals, peer-reviewed and indexed in world data bases – a total of 1 “Didactic Approaches to Preclinical E-testing for Medical Students”, in co-authorship with Ilina Doykova (*under print*) (2019).
- **Referring Criterion G7** - Publications and papers, published in unreferenced scientific journals with scientific reviews or published in edited collective scientific publications with scientific reviews or published in editorial collective issues – a total of 3.
- **Referring Criterion F 20** – Published textbooks – 3.

Publications included as evidence material in the reference for minimum requirements for the occupation of the academic position “professor” as well as the evidence presented outside them have been reviewed in Bulgarian and English language.

Outside the reference for minimum requirements, a total of **27** publications are presented, of which:

- **26** – printed in unreferenced peer-reviewed journals or published in peer-reviewed collective books with ISBN, including 1 under print (certified by the Spanish publisher).
- **1** - printed in unreferenced journals, peer-reviewed with ISSN.

Publications in a foreign language, in the two submitted reference lists, outside the reference for minimum requirements are 12, and in Bulgarian language – 24.

It is evident from the academic reference prepared by the University Library to verify the publications presented for the competition that Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov is an independent author in over 70% of them and is first author in over 20 % from the publications in co-authorship. This is an indicator for his leading part in various teams, including interdisciplinary ones, in the process of scientific research, related to the aspect and the field of the announced competition.

For the period during which Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov has occupied the academic position “associate professor”, his scientific activity has been characterized by a total of 17 participations in national and international fora.

The monograph/habilitation work “Dimensions of e-testing. Electronic examination in the context of the digitalization of the higher education“ is presented with two summaries as required by the procedure (in Bulgarian and English), each covering 10 pages.

The monographic work is focused on a popular segment of the electronic training, e.g. electronic testing or electronic examination, which is increasingly applied in modern university education but has not been studied profoundly enough. The rich professional experience of the applicant combined with his innovative ideas, presented in his monograph, contribute to the formation of a new and needed

pedagogical specialty, in which testing didactics developed in the last decade as well as for the differentiation of specialized didactics of electronic testing in its framework.

In order to achieve the defined purpose and tasks of the study, **the monograph** highlights several logically related emphases, namely: to reveal the importance of digitalization for the modernization of higher schools and the role of e-testing in the educational process; to argue for the advantages and disadvantages of e-testing versus the conventional examination formats and the quality criteria for the e-tests; to reveal the contents and specify the framework of the testing didactics as an independent discipline, the role of the classical testing theory and its relation to electronic testing; to emphasize the evidence, identifying the need for a link between the formulation of the teaching purposes and the selection of appropriate indicators for measuring their achievement.

The testimonial materials submitted for the competition concerning the scientific and publication activity of the applicant are proves of his scientific contributions, systematized and presented in **five thematic fields**:

- Studies of the lexical, syntactic and semantic peculiarities of the medical documentation in German language (3 - 6, 10, 11,12; 4-7, 8, 10)
- Typology of the tasks and exercises in specialized German language for students of medicine (3- 5,7, 11, 13; 4-6, 8, 9, 13)
- Revision of the teaching purposes and definition of the key competences in the training of specialized German language in the field of medicine (3 – 1, 3, 8, 11; 4 - 4, 5, 10)
- Pedagogical aspects of e-learning (D4, D 5, D 6 – 1, D 7 - 3; 3-1, 2, 3, 4,7, 9; 4 – 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 12)
- Testing didactics and e-testing didactics (C-monograph, D 6-1, D 7-2 3 – 2, 8, 4; 4 -1, 8, 10,11)

Of the enclosed materials, some additional contributions of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov can also be mentioned from a **scientific and application** point of view:

- Development and updating of 11 syllabi in specialized German language for the following specialties: “Medicine”, “Dental medicine”, “Pharmacy”, “Nursing”, “Midwifery”, “Speech therapy”, “Kinesitherapy”, “Public health”, “Public health and healthcare management” “Rehabilitation, Sea Therapy, Wellness and Spa”.
- Development and publication of a textbook with a student’s notebook in German language for physicians *Kommunikation in der Klinik I, Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Medizin* (2015), used for the training of medical students.

- Development and publication of a textbook with a student's notebook in German language for students in the specialties of "Dental medicine" and "Pharmacy" - *Deutsch in der Zahnmedizin und in der Pharmazie. Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Zahnmedizin und der Pharmazie*. Textbook and Student's notebook (2015).
- Development and publication of the second part of the German language textbook for physicians *Kommunikation in der Klinik II, Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Medizin* Textbook and Student's notebook for level B2 and C1 (2017)

In the presented **reference for citations** in other authors' publications, the indicated total number is 21, of which 20 are in monographs and collective peer-reviewed volumes and 1 in unreferenced peer-reviewed journals. Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov is a member of the Bulgarischer Germanistenverband and the Union of German Language Teachers in Bulgaria.

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov has participated in national and international projects, being a leader of three of them:

- Participation in an international educational project within the EU "Leonardo" programme;
- IMED-KOMM – Intercultural medical communication in Europe № DE/12/LLP-LdV/TOI/147501 (2012-2014);
- Participation in a national scientific or educational project № BG051PO001-3.1.07-0061 within the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, entitled: "Improvement of the communicative competence of the students of medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy, healthcare management and healthcare through the optimisation and creation of new syllabi in Communication within the field of Health Care and Specialised Foreign Language, which comply with the contemporary needs of the hospitals and other types of medical institutions, as well as with the requirements of the contemporary information environment" (2013–2014);
- Participation in Project No. BG051PO001-3.1.09-0013 "Creation of a Contemporary System for Career Growth of the Lecturers at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna (2013-2014);
- Leader for the Bulgarian partners of the International Educational Project under the EU "Grundtvig" programme: Ripe for the Internet – senior education and e-Learning in a cross-generational context, 1142 74-CP-1-2004-1-DE-Grundtvig-G1 (2005-2007);
- Leader for the Bulgarian partners of the International Educational Project under the EU "Leonardo" programme: e-LANCOM: An e-learning module to improve LANGUAGE related COMMunication skills in health. No. LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-TR-071 (2007-2009);
- Leader for the Bulgarian partners of the International Educational Project HELP 2 – development of an online platform for English and German Language for Medicine under the ERASMUS + programme No. 2018-1-CZ01-KA203-048150 (2018-2021).

III. General assessment of the applicant's teaching activity

The teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhchanov at the Medical University of Varna is mainly linked to the training and conducting of seminars in specialized German language for six specialties: medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy, nursing, midwifery and healthcare management.

From the submitted reference for the teaching work load it is evident that the applicant not only meets but exceeds the fixed annual workload (according to Decision of the Academic Council Protocol №4 from 11.04.2011). The applicant's experience in the practiced specialty is 32 years as of 27.08.2019.

All the above is accompanied by pedagogical and communicative skills for active work with young people in the transfer and mastering of knowledge and skills in a university environment. This combination has turned Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhchanov into a successful researcher and scholar up to the latest challenges and at the same time into a respected but accessible academic teacher.

IV. Critical remarks and recommendations

In my opinion, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhchanov fully meets the requirements for the occupation of the academic position "professor" and I have no critical remarks.

Concerning the recommendations, I would suggest that Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhchanov establishes a "Master class" for building competences for electronic and distance learning.

V. Conclusion

As a member of the Scientific Jury appointed for the announced competition, I consider that according to the scientific research and scientific metric indicators, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhchanov meets the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Functioning of MU - Varna.

The presented work is sufficient in volume, topics and practical decisions and reveals the applicant Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhchanov as a researcher and expert in the field of foreign language teaching, pedagogics, e-learning and the training of future physicians and leaders at a national and international level. His contributions are summed up in several main areas, he has a significant teaching experience and has been actively working in the selected field. He meets the requirements for the occupation of the academic position "professor".

Our joint work at the University gives me confidence to point out Assoc. Prof. Merdzhchanov's hard work, consistency, intelligence, patience, humanity and high personal and professional

responsibility. His ability to work in a multi-cultural environment makes him a preferred member of the teams, in which he is working and leading.

All the above gives me grounds to propose Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Merdzhanov, PhD, to occupy the academic position "professor" in *the scientific specialty "Pedagogics of the Teaching of Specialized German Language for Medical Purposes (and e-learning)"* for the needs of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna.

09.12.2019

Varna



/Prof. Todorka Kostadinova, PhD/