

STATEMENT OF OPINION

Prepared by Assoc. Prof. Marinela Ivanova Grudeva, PhD

Member of the Academic Jury determined by Order No. P-109-325/7 October 2019 of the Rector of the Medical University – Varna

Regarding: *A competition for holding the academic position “Professor” within the higher education field of 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional subfield 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching..., with the scientific speciality of “Pedagogy of teaching specialised German for the purposes of medical sciences (and electronic teaching)” for the needs of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna, which was announced in Issue 62/6 August 2019 of the State Gazette.*

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Merdzhyanov, PhD, from the Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Communications and Sport at the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna, participated in the announced competition as a single applicant. He has presented all documents required under The Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Application of the aforementioned Act, as well as the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University – Varna dated 29 October 2018.

I. Brief details about the applicant

Ivan Stoyanov Merdzhyanov was born on 3 April 1962 in Varna. He completed his secondary education at First Language School – Varna in 1981 and he acquired a higher education degree in German Philology at the University of Veliko Tarnovo “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” in 1987 with the professional qualification of “German Philology Specialist and Teacher of German Language and Literature”.

In 2013, he acquired the academic degree of Doctor of Science in the scientific speciality of “Pedagogy of teaching... (Methodology of Teaching German Language)” at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” after the successful defence of a dissertation on the topic: “Didactic-Methodological Aspects of the Development and Application of an Internet-Based Medium for Teaching Specialised (German) Language to Students of Medicine”.

II. Professional development

Ivan Merdzhyanov started his professional career in 1987 as a Teacher of German Language at the “Ivan Vazov” Primary School in the town of Provadia. From 1990 to 1994, he accumulated professional experience within the higher education field as a Lecturer of German Language:

first, he worked at the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at the “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics in the town of Svishtov (from 1990 to 1992); then, he worked as a Lecturer and Senior Lecturer of Specialised German for the Purposes of Medical Sciences at the Department of Foreign Languages (and later – Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Communications and Sport) at the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna.

Since 2014, he has held the academic position “Associate Professor” at the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna, after winning the announced competition, along with the administrative positions of Director of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Communications and Sport at the Medical University – Varna and Director of the International Centre for E-learning and Distant Education.

Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov manages to fulfil his professional and administrative duties successfully and skilfully in combination with his main teaching activity.

In parallel with all this, he also managed to realize four specialisations outside Bulgaria between 1995 and 2009: Austria (Salzburg and Krems) and Germany (Düsseldorf and Munich), whereby he expanded and deepened the spectrum of his professional competence and scientific research interests (Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov’s high-level language and communication culture based on his professional grammatical, lexical, and methodological command of several languages including: *Bulgarian, German, English and Russian*, which makes the applicant’s verbal and written style of expression clearly recognizable for its exceptional precision, logic, and fluency, was a prerequisite to this).

III. Educational and teaching activity

Ivan Merdzhanov’s educational and teaching activity as an associate professor at the Medical University – Varna is primarily connected with the preparation and conduction of teaching sessions in Specialised German Language for six main specialities: *Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Midwifery, and Health Care Management*. It reflects an enviable experience of over 29 years, which has been acquired mostly at the Medical University – Varna.

The presented teaching workload reference testifies not only to the applicant’s fulfilment of his determined annual workload (as per Academic Council Decision Protocol No. 4 dated 11 April 2011), but also to the fact that the applicant has exceeded his determined workload nearly 4 times for the required reporting period in connection with the competition.

The applicant’s professional experience in his practised speciality also commands respect and admiration. Its estimated span to 27 August 2019 equals nearly 32 years.

IV. Scientific, research and publication activity

As per Article 138 (1), Item 4 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University – Varna, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov, PhD, has submitted a

standardized reference reflecting the minimal national requirements for holding the academic position “Professor” (in both paper and electronic form).

The applicant’s scientific production presented as proof of fulfilment of the minimal requirements includes 37 titles in total, out of which: 10 presented as proof of fulfilment of the minimal requirements for holding the academic position “Professor”, which have been scientometrically distributed as follows:

- Per Criterion A1 – Dissertation on the topic: “Didactic-Methodological Aspects of the Development and Application of an Internet-Based Medium for Teaching Specialised (German) Language to Students of Medicine” (2012).
- Per Criterion C3 – Independent Monograph/Habilitation Thesis/ “Dimensions of the E-exam. The Electronic Examination in the Context of the Digitalization of the Higher Education Field” (2019), ISBN 978-619-221-221-6, Publishing House of Medical University – Varna.
- Per Criterion D4 – Collective Monograph “Contemporary Challenges to the Medical Higher Education (Distance and Electronic Learning)”, co-authored with Marinela Grudeva, which has not been presented as a habilitation thesis (2018), ISBN: 978-619-221-123-3, Publishing House of Medical University – Varna.
- Per Criterion D5 – Published book based on a defended dissertation for conferment of the academic degree of Doctor of Science – Electronic Learning and Specialised German Language. Didactic-Methodological Aspects in the Implementation of an Electronic Platform for Teaching Specialised (German) Language in the Field of Medicine (2019), ISBN: 978-619-241-061-2, STENO Publishing House.
- Per Criterion D6 – Publications and papers in scientific editions, referenced and indexed in world databases – 1 in total “Didactic Approaches to Preclinical E-testing for Medical Students”, co-authored with Iлина Doykova (*in print*) (2019).
- Per Criterion D7 – Publications and papers, published in unreferenced scientific editions with scientific reviewing or published in edited collective volumes – 3 in total
- Per Criterion F20 – Published textbooks – 3 textbooks.

Besides the publications included in the reference reflecting the minimal requirements, a total of **27** other publications **have been submitted**, out of which:

- **26** – actually printed in unreferenced editions with scientific reviewing or published in edited collective volumes with ISBN, including 1 in print (as per a presented certificate from the Spanish publisher).
- **1** – actually printed in unreferenced journals with scientific reviewing with ISSN.

The publications written in a foreign language, which are included in the two submitted lists besides the reference reflecting the minimal requirements, are 12 in total, whereas the publications written in Bulgarian are 24.

The academic reference prepared by the library of the Medical University – Varna in connection with the publications submitted in the competition testifies to the fact that Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov is the independent author of over 70% of the submitted publications and the first author of over 20 % of the co-authored publications, which highlights his leading position in the realization of scientific research projects dealing with various issues that are consistent with the main direction of the announced competition.

Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov's scientific activity within the period from his election for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" up to the present moment is characterized by a total number of 17 participations in national and international forums.

The publications included in the reference as proof of fulfilment of the minimal requirements for holding the academic position "Professor", as well as the submitted publications besides the ones included in the reference, have been summarised in both Bulgarian and English.

The monograph /habilitation thesis/ "Dimensions of the E-exam. The Electronic Examination in the Context of the Digitalization of the Higher Education Field" has also been submitted along with two statutorily required summaries (in Bulgarian and English), each in a volume of 10 pages. The monograph is focused on a popular segment of electronic learning – the electronic test or electronic exam, which is still not investigated sufficiently well and, therefore, still falls within the spectrum of discussion. It reveals the clearly stated aspiration of the author to highlight the objective reasons and the actual prerequisites related to finding a lasting solution to the problem, as well as his ambition to contribute to the establishment of a new and necessary pedagogical speciality, which was reached in the development of examination didactics within the last decade, and to contribute to the differentiation of a specialised electronic examination didactics within said speciality.

The monograph outlines several logically connected highlights towards the achievement of the formulated aim and tasks of the investigation:

- Revelation of the significance of the digitalization process in the modernization of the higher education institutions, as well as the place of the electronic tests within the educational process.
- Clarification of the advantages and disadvantages of the electronic examination with regard to the conventional examination formats and the quality criteria for the electronic tests.
- Revelation of the content and outlining of the frameworks of the examination didactics as an independent discipline, the place of the classical theory of testing, and its relevance with regard to the electronic examination.
- Highlighting the evidence that further clarifies the necessity of a relation between the formulation of the educational aims and the selection of suitable indicators for measuring their achievement, which also determine the development of the examination tasks.

Thereby, the monograph also stands out as a significant contribution of the author with regard to the deepening of the pedagogical (theoretical and methodological) preparation of the

university lecturers in relation with the development of didactic electronic tests for establishing the level of knowledge, skills and competencies of the students.

The materials of proof of scientific research and publication activity submitted in the competition constitute particular instances of significant scientific contributions, which have been systematised and presented in *five thematic categories*:

- Investigation of the lexical, syntactic and semantic characteristics of the medical documentation in German (3 - 6, 10, 11,12; 4-7, 8, 10)
- Typology of the tasks and exercises employed in the Specialised German Language discipline for students of Medicine (3- 5,7, 11, 13; 4-6, 8, 9, 13)
- Revision of the educational aims and determination of the key competencies in the process of teaching Specialised German Language in the field of Medicine. (3 – 1, 3, 8, 11; 4 - 4, 5, 10)
- Pedagogical aspects of the electronic learning process (D4, D5, D6 – 1, D7 - 3; 3-1, 2, 3, 4,7, 9; 4 – 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 12)
- Examination didactics and electronic examination didactics (C-monograph, D6-1, D7-2 3 – 2, 8, 4; 4 -1, 8, 10,11)

The submitted materials also reveal some additional contributions of applied scientific nature made by Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov, which include:

- 11 developed and updated syllabi in Specialised German Language for the specialities: "Medicine", "Dental Medicine", "Pharmacy", "Nursing", "Midwifery", "Speech Therapy", "Kinesitherapy", "Public Health Care", "Public Health Care and Health Management", "Health Management", "Rehabilitation, Thalassotherapy, Wellness and SPA".
- A printed textbook and workbook in German Language for medical students: Kommunikation in der Klinik I, Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Medizin (2015), which is used in the teaching process for students of Medicine.
- A printed textbook and workbook in German Language for the students of the specialities "Dental Medicine" and "Pharmacy" – Deutsch in der Zahnmedizin und in der Pharmazie. Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Zahnmedizin und der Pharmazie. Textbook and workbook (2015).
- A printed second part to the textbook in German Language for medical students: Kommunikation in der Klinik II, Fachsprache Deutsch für Studenten der Medizin – Textbook and workbook for the levels B2 and C1 (2017)

The presented reference regarding the citations in publications of other authors indicates a total of 21 citations, 20 of which have been found in monographs and collective volumes with scientific reviewing, and 1 of which has been found in unreferenced journals with scientific reviewing. This testifies to the fact that the applicant is a recognizable and respected scholar, whose scientific research activity arouses justified interest.

Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov is a member of prestigious scientific organisations such as: The German Union in Bulgaria and The Union of Teachers of German in Bulgaria.

He has registered participations in national and international projects, and he is the supervisor of three such projects:

- Participation in **an International Educational Project under the EU “Leonardo” program**: All of these pieces of evidence present Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov as a scholar with a wide range of scientific and research interests, creative thinking and aspiration towards the constant innovation of the educational content, the modernization of the methods and means of foreign language teaching in accordance with the educational processes development dynamics on a worldwide scale and the fast introduction and implementation of new technologies.
- **IMED-KOMM - Intercultural Medical Communication in Europe No. DE/12/LLP-LdV/TOI/147501 (2012-2014).**
- **Participation** in a national scientific or educational project No. BG051PO001-3.1.07-0061 under the Human Resources Development operational programme. Name: “Improvement of the communicative competence of the students of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Care Management and Health Care 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).**
- Bulgarian coordinator of an **International Educational Project under the EU “Grundtvig” programme: Ripe for the Internet – senior education and eLearning in a cross-generational context, 1142 74-CP-1-2004-1-DE-Grundtvig-G1 (2005-2007).**
- Bulgarian coordinator of an **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).**
- Bulgarian coordinator of an **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).**

V. Conclusion

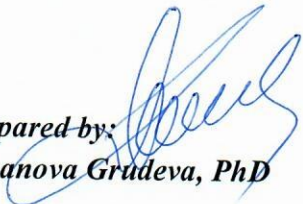
Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov, an applicant for holding the academic position “Professor”, completely fulfils the obligatory and specific requirements and scientometric criteria, indicated in The Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the

Regulations of Medical University – Varna. Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov has a serious participation in the educational process at Medical University – Varna. He is the author and co-author of a professionally directed monographic and educational-methodological literature that is also tenable in content. He participates actively in scientific forums and the development of projects. He is a member of prestigious scientific organisations. His in-depth and versatile scientific and research activity stands out.

Our joint research and publication activity provides me with the grounds to characterise Assoc. Prof. Merdzhanov as an exclusively well-intentioned, ethical, erudite and highly competent colleague and specialist.

The precision of the documents and materials submitted in the competition, their objectivity and correctness, as well as their scientific value and practical applicability in the education of lecturers and students, provide me with the grounds to vote for the election of *Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Merdzhanov, PhD, to hold the academic position “Professor” in the scientific speciality of “Pedagogy of teaching specialised German for the purposes of medical sciences (and electronic teaching)”* for the needs of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna.

11 December 2019

Statement of opinion prepared by: 
Assoc. Prof. Marinela Ivanova Grudeva, PhD