

## **STATEMENT OF OPINION**

**Prepared by Assoc. Prof. Ivan Stoyanov Merdzhanov, PhD,**  
Director of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Communications and Sport  
at the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna,  
Member of the Academic Jury determined by Order No. P-109-324/7 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 specialty of “Pedagogy of teaching healthcare sciences” for the needs of the Healthcare Department at the affiliate of the Medical University – Varna in the city of Sliven, which was announced in Issue 62/6 August 2019 of the State Gazette.

Assoc. Prof. Elena Grozeva Zheleva, PhD, from the Healthcare Department at the affiliate of the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna, in the city of Sliven, participated in the competition as a single applicant. The presented documents were prepared in compliance with the requirements of The Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Application of the aforementioned Act, as well as in compliance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University – Varna dated 29 October 2018.

### **1. Professional development of the applicant**

Assoc. Prof. Elena Grozeva Zheleva, PhD, has first graduated from the Paramedic program at the Post-Secondary Educational Medical Institute “Hristina Hranova”, Stara Zagora. Then, she has sequentially acquired a BA degree in Healthcare from the Medical University in Sofia and two MA degrees – one in Pedagogy, with a specialization in adult education, from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and one in Healthcare Management, with a professional qualification and certification as a healthcare manager, from the Medical University in Sofia. In 2015, she acquired a specialist degree in Medical Pedagogy from the Medical University in Sofia. From 2003 to 2005, she was a PhD student on an individual study plan at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, where she acquired the academic degree of Doctor of Science in 05.07.01. Theory of Education and Didactics, with the dissertation topic: “The Educational Practical Seminars for the Shaping of the Future Specialist in the Medical College”. Since 2009, she has been an associate professor in the scientific specialty: 05.07.03. “Teaching Methodology for /General and Special Nursing/”. Currently, she is an employed associate professor at the Healthcare Department at the affiliate of the Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov, Varna, in the city of Sliven.

### **2. Characterization of the scientific and methodological activity of the applicant**

#### **2.1. General description of the presented materials**

As per Article 138 (1), Item 4 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Medical University – Varna, Assoc. Prof. Elena Grozeva Zheleva, PhD, has submitted both paper and electronic copies of a filled-in standardized electronic reference, providing proof

of fulfilment of the minimal requirements for holding the academic position “Professor”. The applicant has also submitted a monograph and a total list of 70 full-text publications in scientific journals and anthologies besides the ones constituting the materials of proof of fulfilment of the minimal requirements – 31 publications in Bulgarian scientific editions and 39 publications in foreign journals and anthologies, 3 textbooks, 34 participations in national and 43 in international scientific forums. Her citations are 13 in total – 9 in monographs and collective volumes with scientific reviewing and 4 in unreviewed journals with scientific reviewing.

## **2.2. Evaluation of the scientific contributions**

The scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Elena Zheleva, PhD, encompass the following main directions: 1) the role, place and status of the healthcare teaching methodology in the delivering of lectures, practical seminars, clinical practice sessions and pre-graduate internships, aimed at the organization and quality conduction of the educational process in the medical higher education institutions, 2) the methodological problems of the theoretical, practical and philosophical aspects of the general and specialized nursing and midwifery care, 3) the shaping function of the healthcare teaching methodology and the conditions and factors for the realization of this function in the practical teaching field, and 4) the utilization of the contemporary technologies in the educational process.

The presented **monograph entitled “Healthcare Teaching Methodology” (2019)** stands out as the greatest scientific contribution of the applicant. The work includes 3 chapters: 336 pages, of which 271 pages of main text, 55 pages of appendices, and 5 pages of a used sources reference list in Bulgarian, English, and Russian. The monograph has been identified with the international standard number ISBN 978-954-490-647-4 and it has been published in Bulgarian by the “EX - PRESS” – Gabrovo publishing house. The textually presented information has been illustrated with 25 figures and 3 tables. The format complies with the standards for a habilitation thesis. The monograph has been structured well and consistently, and it contains the necessary theoretical formulations and empirical evidence, while the drawn conclusions present a serious scientific contribution.

The object of study in the monograph is the healthcare teaching of students from the regulated specialties – Nurse, Midwife, Physiotherapist, etc. Argumentation has been provided in support of the thesis that the shaping of professional aptitude, preparedness and greater confidence in the future healthcare specialists is determined by the in-depth acquisition not only of the required theoretical knowledge, but also of the required practical skills, habits and competencies. The set task of the monograph is to prove that it is necessary to implement a qualitatively new organization of the educational process conducted in the higher education institutions, which prepare the future healthcare specialists. The main questions and directions, theoretical lectures, practical seminars, clinical practice sessions and pre-graduate internships have been outlined in the theoretical and practical preparation and education system for the healthcare specialists. The preparation of the students for their forthcoming independent professional activity has been presented. The arguments encompass the particular organizational pedagogical conditions that contribute optimally to the shaping of the students’ professional knowledge, skills, habits and competencies. The analysis demonstrates that each item of the proposed lectures, practical seminars, clinical practice sessions and pre-graduate internships, conducted in compliance with the higher education

institution healthcare teaching methodology, is a prerequisite and factor for the shaping of the future healthcare specialist – Nurse or Midwife.

The textbooks presented to the attention of the academic jury include all peculiarities of the pedagogical environment, the inpatient and outpatient setting, and the conditions in which the teaching of the nurses and the midwives is conducted. They create the necessary prerequisites for the shaping of the future medical specialists' professional knowledge, skills, habits and competencies, and they also include all modules that are part of the Nurse and Midwife regulated professions syllabi, such as Philosophy and Introduction to the Nursing and Midwifery Care, Theoretical Foundations and Nursing Care Practical Foundations.

**The full-text publications**, which were presented for review, comprise an integral part of the applicant's scientific production. The shaping of the future healthcare specialists' professional and moral knowledge, skills and competencies through the healthcare teaching methodology and the application of the contemporary didactic technologies in the teaching process occupy a significant place in it.

The cited publications examine the individual and professional development of the higher education institution healthcare teacher as a medical professional and a pedagogue, and their organizational behavior ethics and culture, as well as the process of individual and professional development and improvement of the future healthcare specialist. The physical education and sports as a professional necessity and a motivation for the future healthcare specialists to assume a healthy lifestyle occupy a significant place in the publications. The health motivation and the professional necessity for physical education and sports of the specialists studying at the higher education institution is defined as a specific type of system of life activities targeted at the preservation and improvement of their health.

The humanization of the pedagogical process in the higher education institution during the teaching of the healthcare specialists is another main problem discussed in the publications. This is a way for the future healthcare specialists to develop a sense of human relationships, which should manifest in their everyday communication and patient care activities.

The methodology of applied scientific research, studies and publications within the field of Nursing Care is another problem discussed in the applicant's publications as far as the pedagogical research in the higher education institution is targeted at solving the problems concerning the healthcare specialists' education, the generation of new ideas and the attainment of new knowledge about the object of study. A significant part of the applicant's publications is dedicated to the questions connected with the teacher – student – patient relationships and the adaptation of the future specialist to the hospital. This adaptation requires a particular set of moral and will qualities and a value system allowing the individual to adapt to the new social conditions in the hospital environment, as well as to realize their creative potential. This also leads to the topic of the future healthcare specialists' practical training, which is the focus of a substantial part of the applicant's publications, while the clinical practice is considered as a main method in the system for training, organization and management of the education process in the higher education institution. The applicant offers a complex analysis of the role, the functions and the effectiveness of the clinical practice sessions for the optimal professional training and shaping of the future healthcare specialists. Last, but not least, the applicant's publications also pay attention to the psychological-

didactic characteristics of the future healthcare specialist's mental work in the context of university education, as well as to their mental processes and conditions in relation to the exerted stress on their cognitive, emotional, and will spheres, and on their sensory analysis apparatus.

The applicant's contributions achieved beyond the subject scope of her habilitation thesis are targeted at three main fields:

1) The shaping of the future healthcare specialists' professional and moral knowledge, skills and competencies through the healthcare teaching methodology. Assoc. Prof. Zheleva's research within the field of the individual and professional development of the higher education institution healthcare teacher and the development and improvement of the future healthcare specialist is of contributive character, as well.

2) The methodology of applied scientific research, studies and publications within the field of Nursing Care and the questions connected with the teacher – student – patient relationships in the context of the adaptation of the future specialist to the new social conditions in the hospital environment,

3) The future healthcare specialists' practical training and the consideration of the clinical practice as a main method in the education process in the medical higher education institution.


### **3. Educational activity/participation in applied scientific and research projects.**

According to the appended documents, Assoc. Prof. Zheleva has over 32 years of teaching experience and a full academic workload of 241 to 326 hours as annual teaching workload, which exceeds the existing standard significantly. Between 2013 and 2019, Assoc. Prof. Zheleva has been the project coordinator of four national scientific projects. Her scientometric indicators are evidence of a high-level scientific research and teaching activity.

### **4. Conclusion**

The scientific contributions and the serious research work and teaching activity presented in this statement of opinion provide me with the grounds to vote for the election of Assoc. Prof. Elena Grozeva Zheleva, PhD, to hold the academic position "Professor" at the Healthcare Department at the affiliate of the Medical University – Varna in the city of Sliven within the higher education field of 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional subfield 1.3 Pedagogy of teaching..., with the scientific specialty of "Pedagogy of teaching healthcare sciences".

**5 November 2019**

  
**Statement of opinion prepared by:  
Assoc. Prof. Ivan Merdzhanov, PhD**