

Opinion

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On the materials submitted concerning the competition
for the Academic Position of “**Associate Professor**”
at **Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”**

On: field of higher education 2. *Humanities*

Professional field 2.4. *Religion and Theology*

Scientific specialization: *Moral Theology – Religion and Moral Education*

In the competition for the position of “Associate Professor”, as announced in the State Gazette, issue 39 of 02.05.2023, and on the website of the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” for the Department of “Theology” within the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Assoc. Dr. Ivelina Nikolova is participating as a candidate.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

By Order № RD – 21 – 1419/30.06.2023, issued by the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski,” I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at Plovdiv University within the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4, Religion and Theology, as announced for the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History. The only candidate who submitted documents for participation in the announced competition is Assistant Professor Dr. Ivelina Nikolova from the Faculty of Philosophy and History, department of Theology. The set of documents submitted by the candidate is complete and in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Plovdiv University. The candidate has submitted one monograph and five scientific articles, three of which have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. The list of publications also includes four textbooks, along with four methodological guides and one interactive booklet on religion for teaching children at the primary stage.

Ivelina Nikolova was born on 03.02.1979. She completed her secondary education at the National School of Folk Arts “Filip Kutev” in Kotel. She, then studied theology in the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski.” Consecutively, she completed two master’s degrees: one in Theology at the same faculty in 2004-2005, and the second in Medieval Philosophy and Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University in 2006-2007. Ivelina Nikolova was a full-time doctoral student at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University from 2006 to 2009. In 2010, she earned her doctoral degree by successfully defending her dissertation on “The Kingdom of God: Gospel ideal and spiritual-moral realization”. From 2009 to 2010, she served as a librarian and part-time lecturer in Christian Apologetics at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University. Since 2012, she has held the position of Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at the Department of Theology in the Faculty of Philosophy and History at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. Since 2013, she has been Assistant Professor of Moral Theology. Dr. Ivelina Nikolova has also been a teacher of many years of service in Theology and Religion in preschool and primary stages (2004 – 201).

As a longtime professor at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, I have had firsthand personal experiences with Ivelina Nikolova’s work, beginning as a student, progressing to a full-time doctoral student and later as a part-time Assistant Professor of Christian Apologetics. I would like to emphasize that I have consistently been impressed by her precision, analytical abilities, and profound theological expertise.

2. General description of the candidate's activities

Educational-Pedagogical activity: Dr. Ivelina Nikolova is the holder of the course “Moral Theology” at the Department of Theology within the Faculty of Philosophy and History. Additionally, she serves as a lecturer for several specialized courses in the same department. She actively contributes to scientific committees, accreditation processes, curriculum development, and other related activities.

Scientific activity: The presented monograph, titled “The Multiplicity of Christian Hope” published by the University Press “Paisii Hilendarski”, Plovdiv, 2015 (486 pages), represents a comprehensive exploration of hope across a broad spectrum. This work not only underscores the contemporary significance of this subject but also delves into the distinct dimensions and manifestations of Christian hope as found in the Holy Scripture, the works of Holy Fathers, theological thought, and the philosophical reflections of numerous influential philosophers and thinkers. The study comprises two primary sections. The first part (pages 30-236) traces the fundamental historical development of the philosophical and theological perspectives on the topic of hope, while the second part (pages 237-471) primarily focuses on the biblical

perspective of Christian hope. The two sections of the habilitation work serve as the core sources of meaning that offer a comprehensive perspective on the multiplicity of Christian hope, presented by Dr. Nikolova in a thorough and meaningful manner. Christian hope is not only defined as one of the fundamental Christian virtues but also as a “foundational existential category that pertains to the entirety of psychophysical life of human being” (p. 15). The basic scholarly contribution of this study lies in its departure from conventional interpretations of Christian hope, instead directing attention to the prevailing theological trends, debates, and perspectives on the subject in contemporary times. In its entirety, the reviewed monograph stands as a valuable addition to the field of Moral Theology, enriching and rewarding its tradition. What is particularly impressive is the author’s capacity to delve into the subject matter, exploring its fundamental, dynamic, and practical dimensions. The presented monograph has the potential to make significant contributions to various branches of the humanities, offering effective and contemporary programs and strategies designed to serve humanity and society. There is no doubt that Dr. I. Nikolova’s monograph is a meticulously planned, well-conceived, and systematically executed piece of scholarly work that warrants admiration and high acclaim.

Dr. I. Nikolova participated in the competition with five scientific articles, three of which have been published in reputable international journals, while the other two have appeared in prestigious scientific journals in Bulgaria. All of these articles focus on contemporary topics related to religious education in Bulgarian schools.

Dr. I. Nikolova participated in the scientific editing of 16 collective volumes issued by – published by Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”.

Contributions: The Religion textbooks for Grades (1 to 4), along with the Methodological Guides for Teachers of Religion corresponding to these textbooks, authored by Dr. Nikolova and published by the University Press “Paisii Hilendarski” in 2019, serve as highly effective models for appropriate teaching and align seamlessly with the defined goals and objectives of religious education in Bulgarian schools. It’s worth highlighting that both the textbooks and the Methodological Guides are fully attuned to the psychological traits and specific needs of the respective age groups for which they are designed.

Citations: The attached documentation correctly includes five citations to the works of Dr. Nikolova. Each of these citations is comprehensive and relevant.

CONCLUSION

The documents and scientific texts submitted by Dr. Ivelina Nikolova conform to all the legal requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria,

the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff and the relevant Regulations of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. The candidate in the competition has submitted a sufficient number of scientific works published subsequent to the materials utilized in the defense of the scientific degree “doctor” and her participation in the assistant professor competition. The total number of points from all scientometrics is 695. The candidate’s scientific contributions have garnered international recognition with a significant portion published in international academic journals. The candidate’s work includes original applied contributions that have received national recognition. Dr. Ivelina Nikolova’s scientific and teaching qualifications are beyond doubt. The results achieved in both teaching and research scientific-research activities are in complete accordance with the minimum national and additional requirements outlined by the Faculty of Philosophy and History, accepted in conjunction with the Regulation of Plovdiv University for the implementation of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff.

After familiarizing with the materials and scientific works submitted for the competition, conducting a brief analysis of their significance, and considering the scientific, scholarly, and practical contributions they encompass, I find it appropriate to give a positive assessment. I recommend that the Scientific Jury prepares a report –proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of Assistant Professor Dr. Ivelina Nikolova as Associate Professor at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology, scientific specialization, “Moral Theology – Religion and Moral Education”.

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Sofia

The opinion was written by:
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