

STATEMENT OF OPINION

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regarding the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of “associate professor” at the Department of Developmental Biology, Faculty of Biology at the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” in: field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics; professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences; scientific specialty “Morphology”

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 98 of 19. 11. 2024 and on the website of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Developmental Biology at the Faculty of Biology, the only candidate is the Chief assistant professor Dr. Stela Georgieva Stoyanova from the same Department and University.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

I am appointed by order No. PD – 22 – 441 of 18. 02. 2025 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU) as a member of the Scientific Jury for the academic competition concerning the position of “associate professor” at PU in the field of higher education: 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field: 4.3. Biological Sciences (Morphology), announced for the needs of the Department of Developmental Biology at the Faculty of Biology.

The only candidate who has submitted documents for this participation in the competition is Chief Asst. Dr. Stela Georgieva Stoyanova – a lecturer at the Department of Developmental Biology, Faculty of Biology, University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The presented by the candidate – Dr. Stela Stoyanova set of documents on paper and electronic media is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv. It includes the following documents: a sample application to the rector for

admission to participate in the competition; a curriculum vitae in European format; a diploma of higher education with an acquired educational and qualification degree "Master"; a diploma for an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"; a list of scientific works; scientific works; a list of citations; a certificate of compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements; annotations of the materials (in Bulgarian and a foreign language) with an extended habilitation certificate; self-assessment of contributions; a declaration for originality and authenticity of the attached documents; a certificate for work experience; documents for academic work; documents for scientific research work; documents in accordance with the additional requirements of the respective faculty; other documents.

In this competition, Dr. Stela Stoyanova participates with a total of 33 scientific publications, 10 of which are presented under indicator B4 and 23 – under indicator D7. Separately, a list of 6 publications for the acquisition of the academic position of "chief assistant" is presented, which, although reviewed during the relevant competition, according to the current legislation, should also be taken into account in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor". The works available in the set of documents have been not used in the procedure for acquiring the PhD degree "doctor", which is the legal requirement. All articles submitted for participation in the competition have quartiles (Q1-4) and most of them are with IF. Their total IF is 24.221 (25.951 with added IF from the publications in the list for chief assistant). According to Scopus data, Dr. S. Stoyanova has an h-index of 14.

2. Brief biographical data of the candidate

Dr. Stela Stoyanova was born in 1986. She is a graduate of the Mathematical School "Acad. Kiril Popov" in Plovdiv (mathematics, informatics and French language major – 2005) and of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", where she obtained a diploma for the "bachelor" degree in "Biology" (2009), the "master" degree in "Anthropology" (2011) and the PhD degree in the doctoral program "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation" (2015). Since 2009 to 2014 she was a part-time assistant professor, and from 2014 to the present she has been working as an assistant professor and chief assistant professor in the Department of Developmental Biology. Her teaching activities are in the fields of embryology, histology, histopathology, and human developmental biology, and her scientific interests and achievements are in the fields of embryology,

histopathology, environmental toxicology, biomarkers, bioindicators, and organic pollutants in aquatic ecosystems.

In her professional CV, Dr. Stoyanova has indicated data on her participation in 10 significant projects funded by the National Science Foundation and European operational programs, which is proof of competence and professionalism, as well as certificates for additional training directly related to professional responsibilities. Dr. S. Stoyanova is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, she has the necessary skills to work with a computer and specialized software, and uses spoken and written English, as well as works successfully and effectively in a team.

3. Personal impressions

I know Dr. Stela Stoyanova from her work in the Department of Developmental Biology, where, in addition to being an university lecturer, she was also a department secretary, involved in a lot of administrative work for the benefit of the department and faculty team. I have excellent impressions of her academic and professional training, her expressed interests in the field of histology and histopathology, her striving to achieve the set goals. She is a lecturer and researcher with great potential, proven over the years through responsible teamwork on a number of projects, through ethics, goodwill and dedication to her students and colleagues.

4. General characteristics of the candidate's activities

Evaluation of educational and pedagogical activities

The educational and pedagogical activities of Dr. S. Stoyanova are expressed in the leading of lectures and exercises on the complex of disciplines in the field of embryology, histology, histopathology and human developmental biology. During her work as a lecturer, she has been a scientific supervisor, co-supervisor or consultant to a total of 10 graduates, participated in the discussion and development of curricula for the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs and assisted in the administration of the Master's program in Reproductive Biology. As could be seen from the submitted documentation, the standard for the academic years in the bachelor's specialties Biology, Medical Biology, Molecular Biology, Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies, Microbiology and Virology, Environmental Protection, Biology and Chemistry, Biology and English in the period from 2019 to 2025 ranges from 484 to 618 hours, and the report on her classroom workload in master's programs also demonstrates a high level of workload. Dr. Stoyanova is a co-author of

two textbooks for students – Handbook of Histology (2025) and Handbook of Histopathology (2025).

Assessment of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activity

The scientific and applied scientific activity of Dr. Stela Stoyanova includes publication and project activities, participations in scientific forums and work on organizing scientific forums.

The information provided regarding the scientific works of S. Stoyanova shows full compliance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation. For all required indicators, there is an excess in the point indicators: indicator B – with a required 100, 146 points have been presented; for indicator G – with a required 200, 332 points have been presented; for indicator D for citations – with a required 50, 544 points have been presented, etc.

The certificate given by the Project scientific division at the University of Plovdiv shows that Dr. Stoyanova is the head of one student project and a participant in the teams of 9 projects funded by the National Science Foundation and European operational programs.

The candidate for this competition has duly provided documentation – lists, certificates, etc., proving participation in organizing committees and scientific forums.

Contributions (scientific, applied science, applied) and citations

In the self-assessment presented by Dr. Stela Stoyanova, the contributions are considered in the following areas: 1. Contributions regarding the use of hydrobionts as suitable bioindicator species for monitoring the pollution of aquatic ecosystems with organic pollutants and heavy metals; 2. Contributions to the study of the influence of organic pollutants in aquatic ecosystems; 3. Contributions to the study of the influence of heavy metals in aquatic ecosystems; 4. Contributions to the study of the influence of nutritional supplements in male infertility; 5. Contributions to the study of metabolic syndrome (MetS) and the influence of the hormone ghrelin and 6. Contributions in the field of educational activities.

In my opinion, the indicated contributions are with original scientific and applied scientific nature.

Scientific recognition of the professionalism of S. Stoyanova, for the quality of the results published by her and the teams she works in, and for the contributions of her research activity is the high number of citations and the high h index (14).

The review of the report on covering the minimum national requirements and the additional criteria of the Faculty of Biology shows that the results for the groups of criteria B, G, D and E exceed the minimum requirements. It can be summarized that the total number of points reported for criteria A – E amounts to 1142, which exceeds the required minimum points by more than 2.5 times.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks regarding the documentation provided, the evidence on its essence and the quality of its design.

I believe that Dr. Stela Stoyanova will continue to develop her professionalism and research ideas, sharing her experience and accumulated knowledge with students, researchers and teachers.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Stela Georgieva Stoyanova meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”.

For her participation in the competition, Dr. Stela Stoyanova has presented a sufficient number of scientific papers published after obtaining the PhD “doctor”. Her studies are with original and applied significant nature. The scientific results of her activities have been published in prestigious international scientific journals and have been cited by many authors in a number of their articles. Her contribution to the educational, research and project activities of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” is significant.

The results achieved by Dr. S. Stoyanova fully comply with the minimum national scientific and metric requirements and the additional requirements of the Biological Faculty at the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”.

After reviewing the materials and scientific papers submitted for participation in the competition, analyzing their significance and the contributions contained therein, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Scientific Council at the Biological Faculty of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" for the election of Dr. Stela Georgieva Stoyanova to the academic position "associate professor" at the Department of Developmental Biology in the field of higher education: 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field: 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty: Morphology.

21. 03. 2025 г.
Plovdiv

Reviewer:
(Prof. Evgeniya N. Ivanova, D.Sc.)