

OPINION

by **Prof. Dr. Nadya Petrova Cherneva**
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regarding the materials submitted for participation in a competition
for the academic position of **Associate Professor**
at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv
in the field of: **Field of Higher Education 1. Humanities,**
Professional Field 2.1. Philology
(Modern Korean Language – Cultural Studies)

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

By Order No. RD-22-46 of 09.01.2026 of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, I have been appointed a member of the Scientific Jury for a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Field of Higher Education 1. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1. Philology (Modern Korean Language – Cultural Studies), announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, for the needs of the Faculty of Philology of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The only candidate in the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang, a lecturer in the Department of Bulgarian Language at the Faculty of Philology of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The submitted set of documents and materials, both in printed and electronic form, in terms of volume and scientific scope, fully corresponds to the profile of the competition and complies with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and their implementing provisions, as well as with the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

For the purposes of the present procedure, Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang has submitted a scientific portfolio containing a total of 12 works, of which 11 are accepted for evaluation (including a habilitation thesis, one chapter in a collective monograph, seven articles, and two dictionaries) in the research fields of Korean language, history, diplomacy, culture, and education, demonstrating diverse research, teaching, and practical experience.

The presented studies have not been used in previous procedures for academic advancement. Two of the selected scientific works have been published in internationally refereed and indexed databases. Seven citations have been reported, demonstrating the visibility of the candidate's research activity. Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang is also a co-author of a collective monograph and the author of two dictionaries of the Korean language.

The report on compliance with the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor indicates a sufficient number of points across the various indicator groups required for eligibility in the procedure.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

Brief biographical data

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang is a graduate of Kookmin University in the Republic of Korea. He obtained a Master's degree in Public Administration from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, where he also defended his doctoral dissertation entitled:

“Relations between the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Bulgaria: From Recognition to Prospective Cooperation” (2025).

The candidate's academic career is connected with three Bulgarian universities. From 1998 to 2015 he served as a lecturer at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, where he taught Bulgarian-Korean relations. Since 2015 he has been a lecturer, successively assistant and chief assistant professor, at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, where he currently teaches lecture courses and seminars to students enrolled in bachelor's programmes with Korean language.

Since 2023, Chief Assist. Prof. Kang has also been a visiting professor at Kangnam University in Korea.

The candidate's broad and diverse public activity is also noteworthy: as a public figure, translator, and journalist; a leader of the Korean diaspora in Bulgaria and Europe; and a supporter of the development and strengthening of Bulgarian-Korean diplomatic relations, for which he has received numerous awards. He is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists, the Association of Korean Journalists, and the Bulgarian-Korean Journalists Association.

Evaluation of the teaching activity

Chief Assist. Prof. Kang has considerable experience in teaching courses in practical Korean language and Korean literature. He delivers lecture courses in Old Korean Literature, Korean Literature of the 20th Century, Korean Language through Korean Films, and Area Studies.

A central focus in his work with students is the development of their linguocultural and intercultural competence. A traditional event at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv is the annual celebration dedicated to the Korean language and culture, organized by his students.

All of the above provides grounds for a high evaluation of the candidate's teaching activity, with sufficient teaching workload and experience required for holding the academic position of Associate Professor.

Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and applied research activity

A central place in the scientific production of Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang is occupied by the monograph:

“The Korean Spirit of Resistance during the Japanese Occupation (1910–1945) and the People of the Pen.”

This work makes a significant contribution to illuminating the history, diplomacy, and literary life of Korea during the occupation period from the early to the mid-20th century, and the role of “people of the pen” as representatives of cultural self-determination and the spirit of the Korean people.

The study focuses on the relations between the two neighbouring nations, the political and social changes during the era of colonialism, and resistance literature (presented through works from various genres) as a factor in shaping political and cultural self-awareness. An indisputable contribution is the author’s original translation of literary texts essential for understanding Korean mentality and national psychology.

The candidate’s scholarly works highlight several research fields, including:

- historiography and analysis of **Japanese colonialism** as a factor in shaping national identity and social attitudes;
- literary analysis and translations into Bulgarian of classical Korean poetic works;
- the **industrial revolution** and transformations in the Korean educational system;
- challenges in the use of **artificial intelligence** in Korean language teaching and in the construction of contemporary Korean media discourse;
- the social functions of the **Korean Protestant Church** as a cultural and public factor;
- the global missionary activity of the **Republic of Korea** and the profile of **Bulgarian-Korean diplomatic relations**.

Particularly valuable for the practice of studying Korean in Bulgaria are the candidate’s two dictionaries: one of Korean nouns and one of Korean verbs.

Among the main merits of both the candidate’s overall and competition-submitted scientific production are: diverse research interests, an innovative interdisciplinary approach, and originality in scholarly inquiry.

The materials submitted for the competition present the candidate as a successful lecturer and a competent researcher in the selected scientific fields corresponding to the requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

No evidence of plagiarism has been found.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no significant critical remarks regarding the submitted documents.

I would recommend a more careful editing of the habilitation thesis, particularly with regard to spelling, punctuation, and footnotes, as well as refinement of the bibliography and its enrichment with studies by foreign authors.

The overall presentation of the candidate’s scientific production would benefit from a general summary of the scientific contributions formulated by the candidate (currently detailed separately for each article).

I also consider that the somewhat partial and axiomatic interpretation of certain historical facts is not fully consistent with the academic style.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang for participation in the present competition comply with all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its implementing regulations, and the relevant regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The scientometric indicators are accurately and reliably presented in the attached report. All submitted works are conscientiously and comprehensively annotated.

The candidate has presented a sufficient number of scientific works containing original scientific and applied contributions. The theoretical studies also have practical applicability. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang are beyond doubt.

After reviewing the submitted scientific works and the scientific contributions contained therein, I have every reason to give a positive evaluation of the candidate's professional qualities and to recommend that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury elect Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Hwang Jong James Kang to the academic position of Associate Professor at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, in Field 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1. Philology (Modern Korean Language – Cultural Studies).

04.03.2026

Prepared by:
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