

STATEMENT

REGARDING THE COMPETITION FOR THE ACADEMIC POSITION "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" AT MU-PLOVDIV

I. Analysis of the candidate's career profile

Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova was born in the town of Stamboliyski in 1971. In 1996, she graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the Medical University-Plovdiv. In 2009, she started working initially as a part-time assistant at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine, and subsequently in 2011 became a full-time assistant. In 2018, she defended a dissertation on the topic "Tissue expression of TNF- α and RANKL in patients with inflammatory joint diseases and acute coronary syndrome," for which she acquired the scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) in rheumatology. Since October 2019, she has held the position of "Chief Assistant." Her clinical work as a rheumatologist is related to her positions held at University Hospital "Plovdiv" during the period 2003-2008, then at University Hospital "St. George" from 2008 to 2012, and from 2013 to the present at University Hospital "Kaspela" EOOD.

Dr. Velichka Popova is a member of the Union of Scientists of Plovdiv, the Bulgarian Association for Musculoskeletal Ultrasound (BAMSU), and the Bulgarian Medical Society for Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis, and Other Rheumatological Diseases (BMDOO). She is also a reviewer at Rheumatology International, cited by Scopus/WoS with impact factor. Dr. Popova has participated in numerous events as a lecturer at national and international congresses.

II. General description of the materials submitted for the competition

The candidate has submitted all required documents and materials under Art. 108 of Section IV of the Regulations for Education of the Medical University of Plovdiv. These include resumé; a higher education diploma with appendix (notarized); a certified copy of the PhD degree in the scientific specialty of the announced academic position; a certificate of internship in the relevant specialty; a reference for the academic positions held; an academic reference for the candidate's academic workload for the last three years; a copy of the latest attestation sheet; an abstract of the PhD dissertation; a published habilitation monograph that is not part of the dissertation; publications in scientific journals indexed only in Scopus and/or Web of Science; non-refereed peer-reviewed publications in journals, citations and reviews of scientific publications indexed only in Scopus and/or Web of Science; notarized diplomas for acquired specialties; a certificate of participation in national or intra-university scientific projects; a textbook for a higher education institution; certificates for training of interns, postgraduates, and doctoral students from a relevant department of a higher education institution/scientific organization; a reference to scientific originality; a sample referential self-assessment for the scientometric requirements of the main units of MU-Plovdiv; a declaration of originality and authenticity of the document according to the template, copies of publications; a summary of publications in Bulgarian and English; and other documents such as certificates, memberships, and acquired qualifications.

III. Assessment of the candidate's scientific works for overall academic development

The candidate's scientific activity is of high scientific contribution both to Rheumatology and to other specialties such as cardiovascular pathology, neurology, and internal diseases. Doctor Velichka Popova, MD, PhD, has published 14 refereed articles in Scopus and/or Web of Science, 9 of which with an impact factor, as well as 32 publications in non-refereed journals with scientific review, in most of which she is the first author.

For her candidacy, Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, PhD, has presented a monographic work on the topic: "Practical guidelines for vascular ultrasonography in rheumatology", University Publishing House of MU Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-237-126-5 published in 2024.

In her work, she analyzes the basic ultrasonographic techniques for assessing vascular changes and their application in rheumatology, performs a detailed analysis of published international scientific literature, presents personal results from studies, and outlines future projects such as the application of elastography in vascular pathology in rheumatology patients. The work thoroughly investigates the complex relationship between vascular changes and autoimmune inflammatory joint and systemic connective tissue diseases.

IV. Evaluation of the monographic work or equivalent publications submitted for participation in the competition for "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" by the candidate

The monographic work: "Practical guidelines for vascular ultrasonography in rheumatology" is a thorough work that covers both the anatomical and the pathogenetic foundations of this pathology, as well as the clinical and ultrasound signs that help with its accurate diagnosis in clinical practice. It would undoubtedly be of great help in everyday practice, not only to rheumatologists but also to general practitioners, physiotherapists, and orthopedists.

V. Reflection (citation) of the candidate's publications in the national and foreign literature (publication image)

For her candidacy, the candidate has submitted 20 citations in journals referenced in Scopus/Web of Science.

VI. Comprehensive, qualitative assessment of the educational, methodological, and teaching activities, incl. scientific guidance of students, doctoral students, and postgraduates

Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, PhD, started working as an assistant at the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine in March 2011 and chief assistant since October 2019. Her teaching workload includes over 1110 hours per year. She teaches both theoretical courses and supervises the training practice of medical students. She is also a member of examination committees. Dr. Popova leads basic courses for rheumatology residents and is one of the lecturers of the postgraduate qualification courses in capillaroscopy for specialist physicians.

Dr. Velichka Popova, MD, PhD, has participated in five intra-university projects with other researchers from different departments and universities. The results of these projects have been published in international journals. In addition to her dissertation work, she continues to work on the popularization of the benefits of vascular sonographic evaluation in rheumatology, vascular

ultrasonography in vasculitis by rheumatologists and, for the first time in Bulgaria, the use of pSWE - elastography in vascular pathology.

VII. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no critical notes or additional recommendations.

VIII. Overall assessment of the candidate's compliance with the minimum national requirements

I believe that the candidate fully meets the requirements, mandatory conditions, and scientometric indicators described in the Regulations for Academic Development at the Medical University - Plovdiv: Art. 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3, as well as the requirements under Art. 2b, paragraph 5 of the Law on Academic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria. Additionally, the candidate meets the specific requirements for the Medical University - Plovdiv by field of study and for units with clinical activity.

Group indicators	Content	AD " Associate professor" (number of points)	Dr. V. Popova, PhD (number of points)
A	Indicator 1	50p	50p
B	Indicator 2	-	-
C	Indicators 3 and 4	100p	-
D	Sum of indicators 5 to 9	200p	663.38p
E	Sum of indicators 10 to 12	100p	300p
F	Sum of indicators 13 to 22	60p	193,41p
G	Teaching activities and academic position	300p	1668,4p
Total		810p	2875,19p

IX. Conclusion

I firmly believe that Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova, MD, PhD, fully meets and satisfies the mandatory and specific conditions and scientometric criteria required for acquiring the academic position of "Associate Professor." I recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury vote in favor of awarding Dr. Velichka Zaharieva Popova, MD, PhD, the academic position of "Associate Professor" for the Department of Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine "Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov."

Date: 07.03.2025

Statement provided by:

Prof. Dr. Mariela Geneva-Popova, MD