To the Chair of the Scientific Jury
Appointed by Order No. R-3352/04.06.2026
of the Medical University of Plovdiv

EVALUATION REPORT

by

Assoc. Prof. Vanya Slavcheva Popova, MD, PhD

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Head of the Clinic of Clinical Hematology

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Regarding: Competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty Hematology and Blood Transfusion at the First Department of Internal Diseases, Section of Hematology, Medical University – Plovdiv.

Dear Madam Chair,

Pursuant to the Regulations governing the conditions and procedures for the acquisition of academic degrees and the appointment to academic positions at the Medical University of Plovdiv, and based on a decision of the Scientific Council, an order was issued appointing me as an external member of the Scientific Jury and assigning me to prepare an evaluation report on the competition announced and published in the State Gazette, Issue No. 26 of 13 March 2026, for the appointment of two Associate Professors, with three candidates participating.

All stages of the procedure for announcing and conducting the competition have been carried out in compliance with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and the relevant regulations of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

The candidates Chief Assistant Dr. Katya Georgieva Sapunarova, MD, PhD, Chief Assistant Dr. Vasko Graklanov, MD, PhD, and Chief Assistant Dr. Pencho Georgiev Georgiev, MD have submitted all required application documents, including a list and copies of scientific publications, monographs, conference participations with published abstracts, a curriculum

vitae, a citation report, a report on teaching activities, and documentation of participation in research projects.

Assistant Professor Dr. Katya Georgieva Sapunarova, MD, PhD

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATE'S ACADEMIC PROFILE

1. Education and Qualifications

Dr. Katya Georgieva Sapunarova graduated with a Master of Medicine degree from the Medical University of Plovdiv in 1993. Six years later, she obtained a specialty in Pediatrics. In 2014, she completed her specialization in Clinical Hematology, acquiring a second medical specialty. In the same year, she successfully completed a specialized Master Class organized by the European Hematology Association (EHA), further enhancing her professional qualifications.

In 2020, Dr. Sapunarova was awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) in the scientific specialty Hematology and Blood Transfusion at the Medical University of Plovdiv. Her doctoral dissertation was entitled: "Bone Mineral Density and Bone Metabolism Markers in Bulgarian Adult Patients with Transfusion-Dependent Beta-Thalassemia."

In 2017, she obtained a Master's degree in Health Care Management.She is a member of the Bulgarian Society of Hematology and the European Hematology Association (EHA).

2. Professional Experience

Dr. Katya Georgieva Sapunarova, MD, PhD, is a member of the academic staff of the Medical University of Plovdiv. From 1994 until November 2008, she worked as a physician at the Clinic of Pediatrics, University Hospital "St. George" EAD, Plovdiv. Between 2008 and 2015, she successively held the positions of physician and Assistant Professor at the Clinic of Clinical Hematology, University Hospital "St. George," Plovdiv.Since 2021, she has served as Chief Assistant Professor at the Medical University of Plovdiv, where she is actively involved in the education and training of medical students. She has excellent written and spoken fluency in English, as well as intermediate proficiency in Russian and German.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CANDIDATE'S RESEARCH ACTIVITY AND EVALUATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE MINIMUM SCIENTOMETRIC REQUIREMENTS

The materials submitted for participation in the competition are well organized and fully comply with the statutory requirements and the internal regulations of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

Indicator Group A

A.1. Doctoral Dissertation (Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor (PhD)") – **50 points**

Indicator Group B

B.3. Habilitation Thesis (Monograph) – "Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in Adults", ISBN 978-619-189 – **100 points**

Indicator Group C – Total: 559.13 points (minimum required: 220 points)

C.5. Published monograph not submitted as the principal habilitation thesis – "Osteoprotegerin" (2025) – **100 points**

C.6. Published book based on a successfully defended doctoral dissertation – "Thalassemic Bone Disease" (2026) – **40 points**

C.7. Publications indexed in refereed databases (Scopus/Web of Science) – **273.39 points**

A total of 20 scientific articles have been submitted, distributed across journal quartiles as follows:

15% of the publications are in the Q1

20% of the publications are in Q2

65% of the publications are in the Q4

Dr. Sapunarova is the first author of five publications. Particularly noteworthy is the high scientific standing of the journals in which her work has appeared, including The Lancet Oncology (Impact Factor 54.4) and The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) (Impact Factor 78.5).

C.8. Publications and conference papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes – **134.79 points**

C.9. Published chapter in a collective monograph – "Multisystem Infection with Mycoplasma pneumoniae in Childhood" (ISBN 978-619-189-353-9) – **10.95 points**

Indicator Group D – Total: 5,155 points (minimum required: 100 points)

D.10–D.12. Citations in Scopus and Web of Science:

The total number of citations excluding self-citations is 405, of which: 313 are indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus; 92 are recorded exclusively in Google Scholar and/or Research Gate. Accordingly, the awarded points are: D.10 – 4,696 points; D.12 – 460 points

Indicator Group E – Total: 265 points (minimum required: 60 points)

E.15. Three recognized medical specialties – Pediatric Oncology, Pediatrics, and Clinical Hematology – **120 points**

E.16–E.17. Participation in seven research projects comprising: two international projects, two national projects, three intramural university projects,for a total of **115 points.**

E.22. Supervision and training of interns, medical residents, and doctoral students (seminars and practical classes) – **30 points**

Indicator Group F – Total: 832.5 points

According to the official report issued by the Medical University of Plovdiv concerning the candidate's teaching workload (lectures and practical training) and academic position, Dr. Sapunarova exceeds multiple times the minimum national requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.

III. EVALUATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Katya Sapunarova's scientific interests are focused on the following major research areas:

• *Hereditary Hemolytic Anemias.* This constitutes the principal focus of the candidate's research activity. Her doctoral dissertation, entitled "Bone Mineral Density and Bone Metabolism Markers in Bulgarian Adult Patients with Transfusion-Dependent Beta-Thalassemia," represents the first systematic study conducted in Bulgaria addressing one of the major yet insufficiently investigated aspects of the disease—disturbances in bone metabolism. The study established an association between sclerostin levels, bone mineral density, and the severity of osteoporosis in patients with hereditary hemolytic anemia. The findings were published in the international peer-reviewed journal Annals of Medicine. As a continuation of her doctoral research, Dr. Sapunarova authored the monograph "Thalassemic Bone Disease" and contributed as co-author to the collective monographs "Osteoprotegerin" and "Thalassemia and Hemoglobinopathies: Diagnosis, Therapy and Prevention." Her research on thalassemia-related complications and the assessment of iron-chelation therapy has also been presented in a series of scientific publications.

• *Disorders of Hemostasis and Coagulation.* Dr. Sapunarova's research in this field focuses on platelet function disorders, rare inherited coagulation defects, and thrombotic complications.As a member of the International Glanzmann Thrombasthenia Registry, she has made a significant contribution to the characterization of the clinical phenotype and therapeutic strategies for patients affected by this rare inherited disorder of hemostasis. An additional scientific contribution is her analysis of the clinical characteristics and diagnostic

challenges associated with congenital Factor XIII deficiency. Based on these investigations, she has proposed a laboratory monitoring algorithm for patients with disorders of hemostasis that is applicable in routine clinical practice.

• *Malignant Hematological Diseases.* In the field of malignant hematology, Dr. Sapunarova's scientific contributions are primarily related to her participation in international registration clinical trials and analyses of real-world clinical data. Of particular scientific significance is her participation in the international CHRONOS-3 study, published in The Lancet Oncology, whose findings have made an important contribution to the evidence supporting the use of copanlisib in patients with relapsed indolent non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

• *Other Scientific Publications.* The publications included in this category address complications in immunosuppressed patients, rare clinical cases, and interdisciplinary diagnostic challenges. These studies have substantial practical value, contributing to the optimization of diagnostic and therapeutic approaches in everyday clinical practice.

IV. EVALUATION OF THE HABILITATION MONOGRAPH

The habilitation monograph entitled "Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in Adults", in addition to providing a comprehensive and up-to-date review of the subject, presents the author's original findings from a 12-year follow-up study of 69 patients with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, thereby conferring originality and scientific merit to the work. Based on the candidate's own clinical data, the role of minimal residual disease (MRD) as an independent prognostic factor influencing disease outcome has been confirmed. Particularly valuable is the analysis of the unmet needs in Bulgarian clinical practice related to the limited availability of modern immunotherapeutic approaches and the specific characteristics of the treated patient population. This analysis was carried out through a comparative evaluation of healthcare systems and treatment opportunities available in different countries.

V. PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECTS

Dr. Sapunarova has participated in three intramural university research projects, serving as the principal investigator in two of them. She has also participated as a sub-investigator in two internationally funded projects: PERIMED-2, funded under the Programme "Research, Innovation and Digitalisation for Smart Transformation 2021–2027," co-financed by the European Union; the applied research project "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Neuroimaging of Small Ischemic and Hemorrhagic Lesions of the Brain Parenchyma within the Diagnostic Algorithm of Ischemic Stroke," implemented under the Programme for Strategic Research and Innovation Development of the Medical University of Plovdiv and financed through the European Union Recovery and Resilience Facility (NextGenerationEU).

Her teaching activities are further complemented by her active participation as a mentor and academic supervisor of medical students within the two national educational projects of the Ministry of Education and Science entitled "Student Internships" – Phase I and Phase II.

VI. TEACHING ACTIVITY

Dr. Sapunarova successfully combines extensive clinical and teaching experience with active academic and research work. For more than 15 years, she has participated in the education and training of future physicians and medical specialists. Her academic activities include mentoring medical students, supervising residents in Clinical Hematology, and serving as a lecturer at numerous national and international scientific meetings, congresses, and educational programmes.

VII. PUBLICATION ACTIVITY

According to the submitted documentation, Dr. Sapunarova's scientific output comprises: 5 monographs (one habilitation monograph, one book based on her doctoral dissertation, and three collective monographs); 33 scientific articles; 63 conference presentations and oral communications. A substantial proportion of these publications (20 scientific articles and 18 conference papers) are indexed in the international databases Scopus and Web of Science. Six articles have been published in journals with an Impact Factor, including one publication in a Q1-ranked journal. Dr. Sapunarova's publication record demonstrates sustained, in-depth scientific research characterized by originality and significant practical relevance.

VIII. EXPERT ACTIVITY

Dr. Sapunarova participated in the preparation of the National Pharmacotherapeutic Guideline in Hematology. Her active involvement in professional and scientific organizations constitutes an important component of her profile as an academic with high scientific and professional qualifications. She has served for many years as a consultant to the Centre for Rare Diseases and Orphan Drugs and is a member of the scientific committees of numerous national and international conferences dedicated to rare diseases.

Assistant Professor Vasko Graklanov, MD, PhD

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATE'S CAREER PROFILE

1. Education and Qualifications

Dr. Vasko Graklanov, MD, PhD, obtained his Master's Degree in Medicine from the Medical University of Plovdiv in 2008. In 2014, he acquired the specialty in Clinical Hematology. Six years later, he successfully defended his PhD dissertation in Hematology and Blood Transfusion at the Medical University of Plovdiv on the topic "Serum Vitamin D Levels in

Patients with Non-Hodgkin Lymphomas." During the same year, he also obtained a Master's Degree in Health Management.

Throughout his professional career, Dr. Graklanov has completed more than 15 long-term and short-term training courses and educational seminars in Bulgaria and abroad. He is a member of national and international professional organizations. He is an active participant in the specialized working groups of the Bulgarian Society of Hematology and the European Hematology Association.

2. Professional Experience

Dr. Vasko Graklanov, MD, PhD, is a member of the academic staff of the Medical University of Plovdiv. Since July 2009, he has been working as a physician at the Clinic of Hematology of St. George University Hospital, Plovdiv.

In 2016, he was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student at the First Department of Internal Medicine of the Medical University of Plovdiv. In 2020, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, and since 2021 he has held the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor at the Section of Hematology of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

He has participated as both Principal Investigator and Sub-Investigator in numerous international multicenter clinical trials. He has an excellent command of spoken and written English.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY AND ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE MINIMUM SCIENTOMETRIC REQUIREMENTS

The materials submitted by Dr. Vasko Graklanov for the competition fully comply with the requirements of **the** Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, its Implementing Regulations, and the internal regulations of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

Group of Indicators A

A.1. Doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree Doctor (PhD) entitled "Serum Vitamin D Levels in Patients with Non-Hodgkin Lymphomas." – **50 points**

Group of Indicators B

B.3. Habilitation thesis (monograph) – "Classical Hodgkin Lymphoma", ISBN: 978-619-189-351-5 – **100 points**

Group of Indicators C – Total: 412.74 points *(minimum required: 200 points)*

C.6. Published book based on a successfully defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree Doctor (PhD) or the scientific degree Doctor of Sciences

– "Vitamin D – Clinical Perspectives in Hematology." V. Graklanov. Plovdiv: Laks Book; 2026. ISBN 978-619-189-348-5 – **40 points**.

C.7. Publications and reports published in scientific journals indexed and abstracted in internationally recognized scientific databases.

The list submitted by Dr. Graklanov includes a total of 22 publications. Upon verification, it was established that publications Nos. 9, 11, and 13 did not meet the criteria for inclusion under Indicator **C.7** at the time of their publication. Therefore, these publications should be excluded from this indicator and reassigned to Indicator C.8. As a result, the recalculated total score for Indicator **C.7** amounts to **197.54 points**.

Of the 17 publications evaluated under Indicator C.7, the quartile distribution is as follows:

- 17.6% are in Q2;
- 17.6% are in Q3;
- 17.6% are in Q4;
- 47.1% are publications in national journals without a Journal Citation Reports (JCR) quartile.

C.8. Publications and reports published in peer-reviewed journals not indexed in internationally recognized databases or published in edited collective volumes.

Following the transfer of publications Nos. 9, 11, and 13 to this indicator group, the total score under Indicator C.8 was recalculated to **145.2 points**.

C.9. Published chapter in an edited monograph.

Dr. Graklanov's scientific output includes an independently authored chapter entitled "Acute Leukemias", as well as a co-authored chapter entitled "Eosinophilia", written together with Dr. Emil Spasov, MD, PhD – **30 points**.

Group of Indicators D – Total: 905 points *(minimum required: 100 points)*

D.10–D.12. According to the performed verification, the total number of citations is 66, of which 49 are indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus, and 17 are identified exclusively in Google Scholar and/or ResearchGate. Accordingly, the total score amounts to **905 points**.

Group of Indicators E – Total: 178.3 points *(minimum required: 60 points)*

E.13–E.22. Dr. Vasko Graklanov obtained the clinical specialty in Hematology and Blood Transfusion in 2014.

The candidate has participated in a total of four national and intramural research and educational projects, serving as Principal Investigator in one of them and leading a research project directly related to the subject of his doctoral dissertation.

He is also a co-author of Volume I of the textbook "General and Clinical Oncology" (2021), representing a valuable contribution to teaching activities.

In 2025, he participated in the training of medical interns in the specialty Medicine, conducting seminar classes.

Group of Indicators F– Total: 936 points *(minimum required: 300 points)*

III. ASSESSMENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Vasko Graklanov's research interests are focused on the following areas:

• *Biomarkers, molecular diagnostics, and personalized medicine in hematologic malignancies.* A significant scientific contribution of the candidate is his research on the role of serum vitamin D levels in patients with lymphoproliferative disorders, which constituted the subject of his doctoral dissertation. The results of these studies were also published in the original article **"Vitamin D Levels in Patients with Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma/Diffuse Large B-Cell Lymphoma, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia and Multiple Myeloma"**, ***Journal of International Medical Research*. 2020;48(7).** For the first time in Bulgaria, serum vitamin D levels were investigated in patients with diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, and multiple myeloma. An association was established between the clinical characteristics of these diseases and serum vitamin D levels. Subsequent publications on the treatment of acute myeloid leukemia reflect the development of the concept of personalized medicine through the introduction of molecularly targeted therapeutic strategies based on contemporary genetic stratification of patients.

• *Innovative therapies in hematologic malignancies*. This represents the principal direction of Dr. Graklanov's publication activity. The submitted publications address contemporary therapeutic approaches in acute myeloid leukemia, diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, follicular lymphoma, classical Hodgkin lymphoma, and acute lymphoblastic leukemia, emphasizing the importance of innovative therapeutic agents in improving treatment response and clinical outcomes. The publications cover various classes of therapeutic agents, including BTK inhibitors, BCL-2 inhibitors, monoclonal antibodies, immune checkpoint inhibitors, and novel biological therapies.

• *Review articles on immunological mechanisms and complications of contemporary treatment.* These publications examine current topics such as the interaction between inflammation and the tumor microenvironment, secondary immunodeficiency, virus-associated hematologic diseases, immune-mediated adverse events, and expert recommendations for their management.

• *Rare diseases, clinical case reports, and review articles.* This area includes publications devoted to rare hematologic diseases, unusual clinical cases, and review analyses of current issues in clinical practice. The submitted works include reports on myeloid sarcoma, Rosai–

Dorfman–Destombes disease, rare dermatological manifestations, and other clinical observations of educational and practical significance.

IV. The monograph entitled "Classical Hodgkin Lymphoma – Clinical and Prognostic Aspects" represents not only a comprehensive review of the disease but also a complex assessment of the clinicopathological characteristics of patients in Bulgaria. It reports specific features of the clinical course within the Bulgarian population, including a higher proportion of patients presenting with advanced-stage disease at diagnosis, which defines the original contribution and distinctive character of this monographic work. The role of laboratory parameters as prognostic factors has been evaluated. Practical recommendations for diagnosis, risk stratification, and therapeutic approaches have been formulated.

V. PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PROJECTS

The projects in which Dr. Graklanov has participated have been focused on the molecular diagnostics of hematological diseases, prognostic markers, personalized medicine, and the implementation of innovative technologies aimed at improving patient care.

VI. TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Dr. Graklanov's teaching activities are associated with the practical training of medical students, medical residents, and nurses. According to the submitted summary report, Dr. Vasko Graklanov's total annual teaching workload ranges from 589 to 652 hours, exceeding the minimum regulatory requirements.

VII. SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION ACTIVITIES

Dr. Graklanov's scientific interests are highly diverse, which is reflected both in the thematic scope and the volume of his scientific output. In the present competition, the candidate participates with a total of 40 scientific publications, of which 19 have been published in peer-reviewed and indexed international and national scientific databases, while 15 have appeared in non-indexed national journals. His scientific output also includes one monograph, two chapters in monographs, co-authorship of a textbook, a pharmacotherapeutic reference guide, and a book based on his doctoral dissertation.

VIII. EXPERT ACTIVITIES

Dr. Graklanov has participated as a reviewer in the evaluation of 6 scientific articles submitted for publication in international scientific journals indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, and other international bibliographic databases.

Dr. Pencho Georgiev Georgiev, PhD

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATE'S CAREER PROFILE

1. Education and Qualifications

Dr. Pencho Georgiev Georgiev, PhD, holds a Master's degree in Medicine, having graduated from the Medical University of Plovdiv in 2001. In 2010, he obtained a specialty in Internal Medicine, followed one year later by a second specialty in Clinical Hematology.

In 2020, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation and was awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in "Hematology and Blood Transfusion" at the Medical University of Plovdiv. His dissertation topic was: "Effect of Chelation Therapy on Iron Overload, Hepatic and Cardiac Dysfunction in Adult Patients with Transfusion-Dependent β-Thalassemia."

In 2025, he obtained a Master's degree qualification in Health Management. He is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association (BMA), the European Hematology Association (EHA), and the Bulgarian Medical Society of Hematology.

2. Professional Experience

During the period 2004–2006, Dr. Pencho Georgiev successively held the position of Assistant Professor at the First Department of Internal Medicine, Medical University of Plovdiv. From 2006 to 2021, he worked as an Assistant Professor at the First Department of Internal Medicine, Hematology Section, and since 2021 he has held the position of Assistant Professor in the same academic unit. He has been actively involved in scientific research activities and in the education and practical training of medical students. He has excellent written and spoken proficiency in English and intermediate proficiency in Russian and German.

Group of indicators A

A.1. Doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" – 50 points.

Group of indicators B

B.3. Habilitation monograph – *"Contemporary Therapeutic Strategies and Future Directions in Philadelphia-Negative Myeloproliferative Neoplasms"*, Varna, 2026, ISBN: 978-619-7503-61-6 – **100 points.**

Group of indicators C – total 254 points (minimum required: 200 points)

C.5. Published monograph not submitted as the main habilitation work (+ number of points):

"From the Defective Gene to Gene Therapy", Sofia, 2021, ISBN: 978-619-188-649-4 – **100 points**.

C.7. Scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science – 144 points.

The analysis of the submitted list of publications identified duplication of the articles listed under No. 14 and No. 9. The latter, as well as the articles under No. 21 and No. 32, had also been submitted and used for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree **"Doctor"**. Therefore, in accordance with the applicable requirements, these publications were excluded from the present evaluation.

After exclusion of the aforementioned publications, a total of **28 scientific publications** remained eligible for assessment, of which **14 were published in journals with an Impact Factor (IF)**. Their distribution by quartiles is as follows:

- **39.3%** are published in **Q1 journals**;
- **7.1%** are published in **Q2 journals**;
- **3.6%** are published in **Q3 journals**;
- **50%** are published in **Q4 journals**.

C.8. Publications and scientific presentations published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes – one publication submitted – 10 points.

Group of indicators D – total 20,430 points (minimum required: 100 points).

D.10. Following a review of the submitted citation list, self-citations were excluded. As a result, the total number of citations in **Web of Science and/or Scopus** was determined to be **1,362**, including 1,264 citations of scientific articles and 98 citations of abstracts. According to these data, the total number of points awarded is **20,430 points**.

Group of indicators E – total 125 points (minimum required: 60 points)

E.13–22. Dr. Pencho Georgiev is a specialist with two clinical specialties and extensive professional experience. He was a member of the team involved in the international **PERIMED-2 project**.

Group of indicators F – total 936 points (minimum required: 300 points)

Dr. Pencho Georgiev fulfils the minimum national and institutional scientometric requirements for holding the academic position of **Associate Professor**. The total number of points achieved under the mandatory indicators is **21,895**, compared with the required minimum of **810 points**.

III. ASSESSMENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The scientific activity of Dr. Pencho Georgiev is focused on several main research areas:

- **Research in the field of hereditary hemoglobinopathies.**

The doctoral dissertation entitled *"Effect of Chelation Therapy on Iron Overload, Hepatic and Cardiac Dysfunction in Adult Patients with Transfusion-Dependent β-Thalassemia"* represents an in-depth investigation of the complications associated with transfusion-dependent β-thalassemia. Severe forms of the disease require regular blood transfusions to maintain adequate hemoglobin levels. Although regular transfusion therapy is life-saving, its long-term application leads to progressive iron accumulation in the body, which may result in damage to vital organs, including the liver, heart, and endocrine system. Therefore, chelation therapy, applied as part of the comprehensive treatment strategy, represents a fundamental approach for the prevention and management of iron overload. It plays a crucial role in limiting organ complications, improving prognosis, and prolonging patient survival.

The data presented in the dissertation have an original character, as this is the first comprehensive assessment performed in Bulgaria evaluating the effect of chelation therapy in adult patients with transfusion-dependent β-thalassemia. The importance of serum ferritin levels and MRI T2* assessment is emphasized, as these investigations provide opportunities for monitoring treatment efficacy and optimizing therapeutic strategies.

Research in the field of coagulopathies.

The monograph *"From the Defective Gene to Gene Therapy"*, co-authored with Dr. A. Banchev, represents an in-depth and systematic review of current concepts regarding inherited and acquired forms of hemophilia. The work is structured into two main sections comprising 229 pages and combines fundamental knowledge of hemophilia with contemporary scientific achievements, outlining current diagnostic algorithms and therapeutic approaches. Particular emphasis is placed on personalized treatment strategies. Due to its systematic approach and practical orientation, the monograph represents a valuable contribution to Bulgarian medical literature in the field of hemostasis and hemophilia.

- **Research in the field of chronic myeloproliferative neoplasms.**

The monograph *"Contemporary Therapeutic Strategies and Future Directions in Philadelphia-Negative Myeloproliferative Neoplasms"* is the habilitation work submitted by the candidate for participation in the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor**. The monograph has both a scientific-analytical and scientific-applied character. It reflects the candidate's extensive work in summarizing, analyzing, and presenting the results of international multicenter clinical trials, in some of which he participated as an investigator. The work presents the author's perspectives and practically relevant conclusions related to contemporary therapeutic approaches.

In a separate section, Dr. Georgiev analyzes the efficacy and biological profile of action of Ropeginterferon alfa-2b and Hydroxyurea in 15 patients with polycythemia vera treated at the Clinic of Clinical Hematology of University Hospital "St. George" – Plovdiv. Despite the limited sample size, the analysis confirms the therapeutic potential of Ropeginterferon alfa-2b in achieving sustained disease control.

A significant strength of the monograph is the critical analysis of published clinical trial results, enabling the author to draw well-founded conclusions regarding the role and effectiveness of contemporary therapeutic approaches in the treatment of Philadelphia-negative myeloproliferative neoplasms.

• **Research in the field of lymphoproliferative and other hematological diseases.**

A series of scientific publications presents results dedicated to multiple myeloma, acute leukemias, lymphomas, and rare hematological disorders. These studies contribute to expanding knowledge regarding the diagnosis, treatment, and management of patients with various hematological diseases.

IV. PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PROJECTS

As a member of the team of the Clinic of Hematology, Dr. Georgiev has participated in an international research project- PERIMED-2.

V. TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Dr. Pencho Georgiev has extensive teaching experience of more than 20 years in the education and training of medical students. He has participated in teaching activities both in Bulgarian and English. He has also been involved in the training of medical students within the **Erasmus+ programme**.

VI. SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION ACTIVITIES

For the present competition, Dr. Georgiev has submitted two monographs and 28 scientific articles indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus, of which 8 have been published in journals with a high Impact Factor, including prestigious journals such as The New England Journal of Medicine and The Lancet Haematology.

Dr. Georgiev is the first author of one of the 28 publications, the second author in three publications, and the third author in 15 publications. This demonstrates his active participation in international multicenter clinical research studies and his significant contribution to the published results.

VII. EXPERT ACTIVITIES

Dr. Georgiev has contributed to the preparation of a section of the *"Methodological Guidelines for the Treatment and Follow-up of Diseases of the Blood and Hematopoietic System."*

He has also participated in safety committees for the clinical research programmes Alnylam–Fitusiran and the Safety Review Committee, contributing his expertise to the evaluation and monitoring of clinical study safety aspects.

Table 1. Fulfilment of the Minimum National Requirements by the Candidates for the Academic Position of Associate Professor (points)

Indicator Group	Minimum Requirements for Associate Professor	Dr. Vasko Graklanov, MD, PhD	Dr. Katya Sapunarova, MD, PhD	Dr. Pencho Georgiev, MD
Group A (Doctoral Dissertation)	50	50	50	50
Group B (Habilitation Thesis)	100	100	100	100
Group C (Publications, Books, Patents)	200	412.74	559.13	254
Group D (Citations in Scopus/WoS)	100	905	5155	20430
Group E (Research Projects, Textbooks, Specializations)	60	178.3	265	125
Group F (Teaching Workload and Academic Experience)	300	798.5	832.5	936
TOTAL POINTS	810	2.444.54	6.961.63	21.895.0

Conclusion – Recommendation for Appointment

Following a detailed analysis of the submitted materials and the scientometric indicators of the three candidates, I conclude that all three candidates substantially exceed the minimum national and institutional requirements. However, they demonstrate different academic profiles, shaped by the regulatory frameworks governing the acquisition of professional

qualifications at different periods. Taking these considerations into account, as well as the candidates' scientific publications, citations, monographs, teaching experience, and academic commitment, I recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty Hematology and Blood Transfusion, Professional Field 7.1. Medicine, to Dr. Katya Sapunarova and Dr. Pencho Georgiev. In view of the academic potential demonstrated by Dr. V. Graklanov, I would also like to recommend that the leadership of the Medical University of Plovdiv consider the possibility of announcing an additional competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the same scientific specialty.

31 July 2026

Prepared by:

Заличено на основание
Чл.5 §1, б."В" Регламент (ЕС)2016/679

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vanya Slavcheva Popova, D.M.