

STATEMENT

for a competition for the academic position of “associate professor” at the
International Business School - Botevgrad,

in the field of higher education - 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional
direction - 3.9. Tourism (Sustainable regional development of tourism), announced in
SG no. 103 of 12.12.2023, for the needs of the International Business School

by Prof. Mariana Atanasova Asenova, PhD

from the Geography of Tourism Department, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",
member of the scientific jury for the competition, according to order No.
29/13.02.2024 of the Rector of the International Business School

1. Candidates admitted to participate in the competition

For the competition for “associate professor”, announced by the International
Business School in the field of higher education - 3. Social, economic and legal sciences,
professional direction - 3.9. Tourism (Sustainable regional development of tourism),
published in SG no. 103 of 12.12.2023, documents for participation were submitted by
one candidate:

- **Chief Assistant Professor Desislava Ivanova Alexova, PhD** (born 23.08.1979);
Bachelor (2001) and Master (2003) degrees in Tourism at New Bulgarian
University; PhD degree at the International Business School - Botevgrad in
professional direction 3.9. Tourism (2019), Chief Assistant Professor at the
International Business School since 2012.

The submitted documents for participation in the competition are properly prepared
and meet the requirements of Art. 26 and Art. 28 of the Ordinance on the Development
of the Academic Staff of the IBS. Only a general list of publications is not presented,
according to item 6 of Art. 28 (2).

For participation in the competition Chief Assistant Professor Desislava Alexova, PhD,
submitted 54 publications, including the dissertation for the PhD degree, as well as one
publication repeating (according to a reference in NACID) already submitted one for
the acquisition of the PhD degree, therefore their total number for participation in the
competition is reduced to 52. They include one independent monograph as a
habilitation work and one published book based on the defended dissertation work for
the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor", as well as 50 scientific
articles, studies and published papers.

The article presented as a published scientific publication, referenced and indexed in
world-renowned databases of scientific information (group D, indicator 6) cannot be
found in these databases, but the study presented in Group D, indicator 8 is available

in Scopus. Another two studies were published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals (Group D, indicator 9). All other publications are articles or papers published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes (Group D, Indicator 7).

Candidate's independent publications prevail. The presented list includes only 20 co-authored scientific publications, with her being second author in 8 publications and third author in only one co-authored publication. All other publications are solely authored or she is listed as the first author. That presupposes the high share of the candidate's own contribution in the presented research items. A significant part of Dr. Alexova's scientific output is in English - 12 publications (23%). Of these, 10 articles were published abroad – 83% of those in a foreign language and 19% of all publications presented. The monograph presented in group B, indicator 3, has a volume of 419 pages and has 3 scientific reviewers, and the one in group D, indicator 5 - has a volume of 309 pages and 2 scientific reviewers. Both are registered in the catalog of the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius".

2. Fulfillment of the conditions for occupying the academic position "associate professor"

The conditions for occupying the academic position "associate professor", according to Art. 24 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), Art. 53 of the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB, as well as Art. 26 of the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the IBS, include:

2.1. Applicants must have acquired an educational and scientific degree "doctor"

The candidate admitted to participate in the competition acquired the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in 2019 (Diploma No. 15 of 12.04.2019 of the IBS-Botevgrad) in professional direction 3.9. Tourism, for a defended dissertation on the topic: "Research on the tourism potential of Botevgrad municipality for sustainable development of the destination".

2.2. For no less than 2 years, applicants must have held an academic position of "assistant professor", "chief assistant professor", or have been a teacher, including part-time, or a member of a research team at the IBS or in another higher school or scientific organization

Dr. Desislava Alexova has provided certificates and a copy of her work record book, which chronologically certify the fulfillment of the specified criterion, namely:

a) Desislava Alexova was a part-time lecturer at the **New Bulgarian University** from 2004/2005 until academic year 2011/2012 (**8 years**), having taught disciplines in the field of tourism education for "Bachelor" and "Master" degrees, including in a distance learning form;

b) At the **Private Professional College of Management in Tourism, Restaurant and Hospitality** "Interbusiness" D. Alexova lectured during the academic years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 (**2 years**);

c) In 2012 Desislava Alexova was permanently employed OTD as a chief assistant professor in professional direction 3.9. Tourism, where she holds the position to date (**12 years**). This fact is indicated only in the CV form;

d) In addition, certificates for participation with lecture courses in training programs provided by **Centers for Professional Education and non-governmental organizations** - to Bulgarian Tourism Chamber (March-April 2012) and "Mountains and People" Association (2017-2020), are presented.

2.3. Candidates must have submitted a published monographic work or equivalent publications in specialized scientific journals that do not repeat those provided for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

As already stated, for the participation in the competition, Mrs. Alexova submitted a total of 54 scientific papers, of which 52 scientific papers can be recognized for the purposes of the competition. They include 2 author monographs, one of which was published on the basis of her defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor". In general, the publication list for the competition does not include the publications, provided for the acquisition of the PhD degree, but probably inadvertently, one repeats the already registered in NACID in connection with the acquisition of the PhD degree.

3. Compliance with the mandatory minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3, respectively under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the LDASRB for occupying the academic position "associate professor"

With regard to the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor", the national regulations apply to the applicant, since the Ordinance of the IBS does not introduce increased requirements compared to the minimum national requirements.

To participate in the competition, the candidate has provided a bibliographic reference (list) of the publications and copies of them, two lists of citations, incl. a reference for citations from NACID, as well as a Self-Assessment Reference for fulfilling the minimum requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor", in accordance with the normative documents mentioned above. The review of the specified documents allows the following findings to be made:

- 1) **Group A and Group B** - From the Reference for compliance with the minimum requirements attached by the candidate, their fulfillment according to the indicators of group A and group B is established. The candidate has acquired the PhD degree (group A), for which he is awarded 50 points. The book "Sustainable development of the municipality of Chiprovtsi as a tourist destination. Creating a tourism brand and strategic planning" was presented as a habilitation work - monograph (group B), for which the candidate is awarded 100 points.
- 2) **Group D** - The monograph published on the basis of the candidate's doctoral dissertation (**D5**) brings her 75 points. There are no publications that can be attributed to group **D6**. In group D three studies are also presented - one for indicator **D8** (45 points) and two for indicator **D9** (20 points). All other publications belong to group **D7** – 28 independent (280 points), 15 with 2 authors each (75 points), three with 4 authors each (7.5 points) and one with 5 authors (2 points). The number of points achieved for group D7 is **364.5 points**, for the whole **group D – 504.5 points**, against 200 points required.
- 3) **Group E** presents citations in world databases - 2 citations (30 points), in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review - 3 citations (30 points), as well as in non-refereed journals with scientific review - 41 citations (205 points). The number of points collected for **Group E is 265 points**, against a required minimum number of 50 points.

The compliance with the required points by groups of indicators is summarized in the following table, from which it is clear that the applicant meets the requirements for the minimum number of points by groups, and the total number of points **exceeds more than 2 times** the required minimum.

Groups of indicators	Content	Required points for associate professor	Performance by the candidate
A	Indicator 1	50	50
C	Indicator 3	100	100
D	Sum of indicators from 4 to 10	200	504,5
E	Sum of indicators from 11 to 13	50	265
Total		400	919,5

4. Additional requirements

For the additional criteria, according to Art. 27 (3) of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 57a (2) of the Regulations for the implementation of the same law, there are no provided evidentiary documents. Of the additional criteria related to the educational activity, there is no current reference from the IBS regarding the academic workload and the subjects taught. No published teaching materials are presented. There is also no reference for the candidate's work

with students and doctoral students (supervision of graduate students, preparation of reviews, etc.). For the additional criteria related to scientific and research activity, no reference on participation in scientific and research projects is attached, but in the curriculum vitae the participation in 38 applied projects in the field of tourism is indicated as achievement. A certificate of membership in the Bulgarian Tourism Chamber is available. A large number of references, certificates for participation in scientific conferences and international exchange, as well as 12 certificates for acquiring new knowledge and qualification upgrading are presented.

The acquired professional experience of the candidate in the field of tourism can be considered as an advantage - in various travel agencies, non-governmental organizations and in the public sector, as well as through the activities of her own company "Creativo.com" Ltd., Bozhurishte.

5. Scientific contributions of the candidate

The scientific interests and research activity of Dr. Desislava Alexova, outlined through the presented publications, are thematically related to the announced competition, namely - sustainable regional development of tourism. In the reference of the contributions in her scientific works, Dr. Alexova separated them into two groups - those relating to the habilitation monographic book and those relating to the other publications, which to a certain extent coincide, since the monograph was developed on the basis of the previous experience of Dr. Alexova in scientific and applied research.

It is appropriate to combine and summarize these scientific contributions as follows:

1. *Sustainable development of tourism, incl. planning and management of tourism in protected areas:*

- Tourism resources, tourism planning and management in protected areas (Publications №: 2, 6, 10, 16, 17, 20, 24, 28, 46);
- Sustainable development of tourism in the national resorts in Bulgaria (Publications № 4, 38, 54);

2. *Управление на туристически дестинации, по-специално на местно ниво:*

- Planning and development of a tourist destination at the local level - the strategic planning of destinations and the creation of a brand identity, including research aimed at positioning and marketing of tourist destinations, development of a regional mark, certification, etc. (Publications № 2, 3, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, 27, 37, 41). The most significant contribution is related to the creation and testing of a model for sustainable local tourism development based on zoning and micro-regionalization of the territory;
- Tourism branding, gamification and its application in the tourism sector, education and culture (Publications № 2, 7, 15, 32, 43, 45, 46);

- Human resources management in tourism (Publication № 40);

3. Специализирани видове туризъм и продуктова политика на дестинациите:

- Specialized types of tourism and alternative tourist offer of the destinations (Publications № 5, 8, 18, 35, 36, 39,42, 47, 50, 52, 53);
- Alternative, solidarity, voluntary and responsible tourism and good practices from Bulgaria and abroad (Publications № 21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 33, 51);
- Educational tourism (including international traveling universities) (Publications № 30, 31,48, 49).

6. Critical notes and recommendations to the candidate

The main critical note that can be formulated to the applicant, based on the review of the scientific publications submitted for the competition, is related to the limited set of cited sources used in the publications (excluding the monographs) and the high rate of self-citation.

The main recommendation to the candidate is related to the above finding: In the future scientific articles and papers to pay more attention to theoretical statements and methodology, to the study of literary sources and a thorough scientific literature review, which would allow the realization of more publications in journals, refereed and indexed in global databases.

7. Conclusion

Taking into account the results from the review of the submitted documents and publications, as well as based on the references prepared for the fulfillment of the minimum requirements and for the original scientific contributions, I express my opinion to the scientific jury **in support of the candidacy** of Chief Assistant Professor Desislava Ivanova Alexova, PhD, for acquiring the academic position of "associate professor" in accordance to the announced competition. I recommend to the scientific jury for this competition **to elect** Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Desislava Ivanova Alexova for the academic position "associate professor".

04.04.2024 г.

Sofia

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