

EVALUATION REPORT

for the purposes of a conferral procedure of the academic rank of Associate Professor

Higher educational area: 1. Pedagogical Sciences

Professional field: 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education)

Candidate: Senior Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD

Reviewer: Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DSc, Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”

on the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic rank of

Associate Professor at Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University

(Order No. RD-447 of 27.12.2024 of the Rector of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University)

1. Description of the competition procedure

By order No. RD-447 of 27.12.2024 of the Rector of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for a competition for the academic rank of **Associate Professor** at Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University in area of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education), promulgated for the needs of the Department of Pedagogy within the Faculty of Social Sciences at Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University in State Gazette, issue 91/29.10.2024.

A single candidate has submitted their documents for participation in the announced competition: Senior Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD from the Department of Special Education at the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The set of materials, presented by Senior Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD on paper respects the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University and includes the following documents:

- application for participation in a competition;
- professional CV in a Europass format;
- copy of the diploma for the educational and qualification degree of Master of Arts
- copy of the diploma for the educational and scientific degree of Doctor of Philosophy
- medical certificate

- non-conviction certificate
- list of research works
- scientific papers (copies of publications)
- statement of compliance with minimum national requirements
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents
- work experience documents
- documents for teaching and learning activities
- list of graduate students supervised by the candidate
- proof for participation in research projects
- feedback on the candidate's work
- reference to the citations of the candidate's work
- author's reference and summaries of scientific papers

The candidate has attached a list of his 31 scientific papers. I find all of his research papers acceptable for the competition.

In 2000, the candidate graduated from Ivan Vazov Secondary School in Stara Zagora, majoring in philosophy. In 2003, he acquired a Bachelor degree in Special Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Trakia University. In 2005, he completed his master's degree in social pedagogy at Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Cyril and St. Methodius". In 2010, he finished another master's degree in Intercultural and Ecological School Management at Ca Forcari University, Venice, Italy. He also completed a master's degree in Special Education - Speech Therapy at Trakia University-Stara Zagora in 2012. In 2024, he did a master's degree in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Sofia University. He has received additional qualifications in English, school psychology and aerotherapy in inclusive education at New Bulgarian University. In 2012, he defended his PhD thesis in the area of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy - Special Education. In 2009, he was appointed an assistant professor at the Department of Social Activities and Sports at the Faculty of Medicine of Trakia University - Stara Zagora. Since 2023 to date, he has held the position of a senior assistant professor at the Department of Special Education of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Since 2016 to date, he has been the Director of the Regional Center for Supporting the Inclusive Educational Process - Sofia City. From 2016 to 2017, he acted as an advisor to the Minister of Education. From 2014 to 2016, he was the Director of the Resource Center for Integrated Education of

Children and Students with Special Educational Needs in the city of Stara Zagora and Sofia City. He was the Head of the Child Protection Department - Stara Zagora from 2003 to 2005.

Since 2017 to date, he has served as the National Coordinator of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education for Bulgaria. He has been a member of the editorial board of the journal "Preschool and School Education", Management-Upbringing-Training, since 2016 to present. From 2011 to 2019, he was the Chairman of the National Association of Resource Teachers. In 2023, Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov was awarded the honorary distinction - the "Neophyte of Rila" Diploma by the Ministry of Education and Science.

I have known Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov since 2003 and he has impressed me as a young scientist with uncommonly creative thinking, who seeks innovations in both special and inclusive education, both in Bulgaria and abroad. He was an organizer of numerous conferences, forums and round tables. I have been a reviewer of his monographs "*Educational and social inclusion of students with mental retardation and multiple disabilities*", "*Inclusive education and organization of the supportive environment*", "*The teacher's assistant in inclusive education*", "*Socio-pedagogical support in inclusive education in the context of a pandemic*", "*Socio-pedagogical support and prevention of school dropout*".

Dr. Damyanov is a responsible, diligent and respected scientist and teacher.

2. Scientometric indicators

Fulfillment of minimum national requirements

From the attached report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements, it is evident that Senior Assistant Professor Kaloyan Damyanov, PhD has acquired 50 points on indicator A, 100 on indicator B, 625 on indicator D, 160 on indicator E, and 180 on indicator E, i.e. the total number of points is 1115 against 400 points required. There is full coverage of the minimum national requirements and even a significant surplus of the points on indicators D, E and E. I agree with the thus shown values.

3. Main areas of the candidate's research work and most important scientific contributions

Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activities

Senior Assistant Professor Kaloyan Damyanov, PhD teaches various academic disciplines in specialties leading to the acquisition of bachelor and master's degrees. All of them are related to special education.

Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activities

Senior Assistant Prof. Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov has submitted for the purposes of the announced competition 31 scientific publications. The distribution of scientific works is as follows: habilitation thesis – 1 monograph; 3 monographs that are not presented as the main habilitation thesis, 3 articles and reports published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information, 19 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, 2 independent chapters in collective works and 3 studies published in non-refereed journals with scientific review, or in edited collective volumes. One university textbook has been published independently and one methodological guide in co-authorship.

Dr. Damyanov's teaching activities include lecture courses in Special Education, seminars in Special Education, current and internship practices in the field, directly corresponding to the announced competition. Dr. Damyanov also delivers lecture courses in the master's and qualification programs. In his lecturing, Damyanov uses innovative methods based on modern science and technology in education, which leads to improving the quality of the educational process and the overall knowledge of students.

The candidate's activities also include participation as a leader of one international educational project and two national scientific and educational projects. In addition, he acted as a participant in one international scientific project. The attached references show the candidate's work in two areas: teaching and research, interconnected by a constant flow of activity.

Contributions (scientific, applied science, applied) and citations

In the presented **citation report**, I have found a total of 15 duly documented citations, of which 5 in scientific publications indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus; Web of Science), 7 in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, 3 in citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review. The citations cover the timeframe between 2014 and 2023.

Information about **the contributions** is contained in the self-assessment made by the candidate Kaloyan Damyanov, which highlights the contributions of his publications in the following areas:

- *Development of inclusive education*

The contributions are in theoretical-methodological, practical, social and political aspects. A theoretical and empirical study of inclusive education has been carried out with a proposed and experimented new assessment tool. A new framework for applying the

classification to students outside the scope of traditional special educational needs, such as students at risk and with outstanding talents, is presented, which expands its application in the educational space. For pedagogical practice, the introduction of an assessment model for the intensity of additional support for personal development is of utmost importance, as well as the inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI), augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) to facilitate the assessment processes and differentiated support. For the sustainable development of inclusive education, the application of a holistic approach is proposed, encompassing cooperation between the educational, social and health systems.

- *Educational approaches and therapeutic support for children and students with special educational needs*

Contributions in this area are focused on approaches and strategies for providing inclusive education for children with special educational needs, with the main emphasis on creating an individualized and supportive educational environment that meets the diverse needs of children and students in preschool and school education. The importance of professional development of teachers and a supportive environment for the successful integration of children with special educational needs in preschool education is highlighted. The need for integration of knowledge and experience from different disciplines, such as pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy, occupational therapy and social work, is emphasized in order to provide comprehensive support to students with special educational needs. The need for a comprehensive approach is indicated, which includes an assessment of the strengths and limitations of students, as well as effective cooperation between specialists, parents and teachers to implement inclusive practices in educational institutions.

- *Socio-pedagogical and intercultural interaction in the educational environment*

A comprehensive concept for socio-pedagogical support in schools aimed at preventing dropout from the educational system is presented, as well as current problems, policies and practices related to early school leaving. Effective strategies for inclusive education and intercultural communication in school education have been examined: differentiated learning, cooperative learning and universal design for learning.

The possibility of implementing a STEAM approach in the vocational education of students with special educational needs is revealed, with a stated emphasis on the individualized nature of STEAM training and its ability to meet the specific needs of students, while providing socio-pedagogical support.

A comprehensive approach to socio-pedagogical support has been developed, including emotional, informational and instrumental assistance for students, as well as the development of sustainable mechanisms for dealing with critical and crisis situations facing school education.

4. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no comments or recommendations regarding the documentation and publications for the competition.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by the Senior Assistant Professor Kaloyan Damyanov, PhD **meet all** the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADSRB and the relevant Regulations of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University.

The candidate in the competition **has presented a sufficient number** of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of his PhD thesis. The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, as some of them have been published in journals and scientific collections published by national and international publications. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, as some of them are directly oriented towards academic work. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov **are incontestable**. The achievements of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD in teaching and research activities **fully comply** with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Social Sciences, adopted in connection with the Regulations of Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University for the implementation of the ADASRB.

After reviewing the materials and scientific papers presented for the competition, and analyzing their significance and the scientific, applied science and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to offer my **positive evaluation** and **urge** the Scientific Jury to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Social Sciences to approve the conferral of the academic rank of **Associate Professor** at Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education) to Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov.

07.02.2025

Reviewer:

/Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DSc/