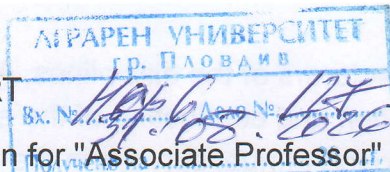


EVALUATION REPORT



Regarding: Competition for "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 6. Agricultural science and veterinary medicine; professional field 6.3 Animal husbandry; Specialization "Horse breeding and other equine sciences", announced in the State Newspaper No. 41 of 05.05.2026 with candidate - Maya Georgieva Popova

Prepared by: Prof. Dr. Dimo Stefanov Penkov, DrSci, Department of Animal Sciences, Faculty of Agronomy (FA) at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv (AU). I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in accordance with Order No. RD 16-811/29.06.2026 of the Rector of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

1. Brief presentation of the candidate.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Georgieva Popova is the only candidate in the announced competition. She was born on 27.11.1985 in the city of Shumen. She graduated from higher education:

- Education Qualification Degree (EQD) Bachelor of Science in Zoo Engineering in October 2008 at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv
- EQ Master Degree in "Equestrian Sports" in October 2010 at the Thrakia University - Stara Zagora
- Education Scientific Degree (ESD) Doctor (Dr) in the scientific specialty "Breeding of farm animals, biology and biotechnology of reproduction" in 2016 at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

She worked/works successively as a zoo engineer - junior expert at DP Kabiyuk - Shumen (2008-2010), junior expert control and coordination in horse breeding at the General Directorate "KKRD" at the EASRJ (2010-2013), successively: Assistant Professor (2013-2017) and Chief Assistant Professor (2017-2026) in the Department of Animal Sciences – Agricultural University-Plovdiv.

2. General description of the scientific production.

In the competition for "Associate Professor" the candidate Maya Georgieva Popova participates with a total production of 25 works, grouped as follows:

Scientific publications in the nomenclature of specialty - 25 pieces, of which:

- Publications related to the PhD thesis - 3 pieces, which are not subject to consideration;
- Publications in magazines with impact factor/SJR - 7 pieces
- Publications in peer-reviewed and refereed scientific journals - 15 pieces;

The personal participation of Dr. Maya Popova in the mentioned 22 works is illustrated by the fact that she is in 3 only one author, in 13 she is the first, in 4 she is the second, and in the remaining 2 she is the third and subsequent author.

To prepare the evaluation report, 22 scientific articles are subject to analysis, grouped as follows: 10 in group B1 and 12 in group D according to the guidelines of the minimum national requirements for the respective scientific specialty.

3. Teaching activity.

Since 2013, Maya Popova has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences, starting with the delivery of exercises not only in disciplines related to equine sciences, but also in genetics and animal breeding, as well as in general animal husbandry courses in all faculties of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

According to data from the ordinary lecturers of the disciplines, Assistant Professor Popova has coped very well with the preparation and conducting of the exercises, and from the students she has taught (according to the annual surveys in the Quality Commission) she has always received positive assessments, both in terms of the level of teaching (organization, compliance with innovations and practical relevance of the practical exercises), but also in terms of the teaching style and the collegial attitude towards the students.

Since her election as Chief Assistant Professor (Order of the Rector of the Agricultural University - RD 16-1114/17.11.2017), Popova has been assigned the task of presenting lectures on all equine disciplines contained in courses of all faculties of the AU. Most of them are elective, but they are elected every year, which is a guarantee of the interest of students from all faculties, a consequence of the high professionalism and accessibility of teaching by Chief Assistant Popova.

It is not to be underestimated that in the absence of an equestrian facility at the Plovdiv Agricultural University, Chief Assistant Professor Popova always finds ways to conduct practical classes in private and state equestrian facilities. This is also due to the fact that she is the chair of the Association for Breeding the East Bulgarian Horse in Bulgaria.

Particularly attractive are her classes with students in the disciplines of Horse Riding and Therapeutic Riding.

Since 2020, Chief Assistant Professor Popova has also been assigned to conduct classes in the "equine" profile in the Master's Degree "Selection and Reproduction" in the Department of Animal Sciences.

The candidate's teaching activities are complemented by the supervision of 25 successfully defended graduation thesis, of which 19 in the Bachelor's Degree and 6 in the Master's Degree.

Academic workload of the candidate.

According to the official report of AU, for the last 5 years the academic workload of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Popova is more than 3500 hours, which exceeds more than 2 times the normal annual academic workload of a lecturer.

Published teaching materials.

The candidate has not presented published teaching materials, which I consider a serious omission. I attribute this to the fears that she will not cope, because in Bulgaria, specialized literature on equine disciplines has not been published in recent years, i.e. all "horse breeders" are significantly lagging behind on this issue.

Developed curricula.

Dr. Popova is the author of a total of 13 curricula-programs. Nine of them are for the Bachelor's degree. For students of the specialty "Zooengineering", PN 6.3. Animal Husbandry, she has developed curricula for the mandatory disciplines "Biological foundations of horse breeding", "Equestrian technology" and "Equestrian breeding", as well as for the elective disciplines "Ethology" and "Equestrian tourism, amateur and therapeutic riding", for full-time and part-time study. She is also the author of a curriculum-program for the mandatory discipline "Horse Breeding" for the specialty "Zoo Engineering with Information Technologies", a full-time form of study. For students from other professional fields, she has developed a curriculum-programs for the optional discipline "Horse Breeding and Equestrian Sports" for the specialty "Agronomy (Field Crops)", PN 6.1. Plant Breeding, full-time and part-time form of study. For the specialty "Agricultural Tourism", PN 3.9. Tourism, she is the author of curriculum-programs for the elective discipline "Equestrian Tourism, Amateur and Therapeutic

Riding" and for the mandatory discipline "Animal Breeding", also for full-time and part-time forms of study. For the Master's Degree Programme, Dr. Popova is the author of four curricula in the Master's course "Animal Selection and Reproduction" - "Fundamentals of Horse Breeding", "Breeding Programs in Horse Breeding", "Management of Genetic Resources in Horse Breeding" and "Biotechnologies of Reproduction in Horse Breeding". The disciplines are included as electives in the various areas of the Master's course and are offered in full-time and part-time forms of study.

Conclusion: Following the above, my opinion is that Chief Assistant Professor Maya Popova meets the requirements for the academic position (AP) "Associate Professor" in terms of pedagogical experience, high-level performance as a lecturer and an attractive leader for students in the field of equine disciplines.

4. Scientific research activity.

Areas of publication.

The scientific research activity and scientific publications of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Popova are in the field of horse breeding. A positive activity is also the fact that in recent years she has connected this field with new trends in science - ecology and the implementation of modern technical means for tracking ethological features in equids.

3. FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF ACADEMIC POSITION

3.1. QUALIFY IN TABLE 1 OF Annex 8.1. OF RALDASRB: 6.3 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY and additionally requirements of AU):

By group of indicators A – Successfully defended dissertation with title: Condition, dynamics and development directions of the breeding and reproductive status of horses of the Purebred Arabian and Shagiya breeds (Diploma RD 93/3 April) – I recognize 50 points out of the minimum required 50.

By group B (Habilitation work - monograph or habilitation work - scientific publications (not less than 10) that are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information) – 10 articles (in co-authorship) have been submitted in referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information - I recognize 180 points out of the minimum required 100.

By group D: A total of 12 articles and reports have been submitted under all subgroups, published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information - I recognize 207.5 points out of the minimum required 200.

Note: This group includes most of the articles of which Popova is the single or first author. In group D (Citations or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes) - 4 citations in journals with Impact Factor/SJR are presented - I recognize 60 points out of the minimum required 50.

Note: All of the above-described activities are from the period after taking up the position of "Chief Assistant Professor".

Participation in scientific projects:

The candidate has participated in a total of 4 scientific research projects - 3 at the university level and 1 national project. In 2 of the projects she is a scientific supervisor, and in 2 she is a member of the scientific teams.

4. General conclusion regarding scientific and research activity:

In all the presented articles, the personal contribution of Chief Assistant Professor Maya Popova is evident. From my acquaintance with the essence of the scientific publications, as

4. General conclusion regarding scientific and research activity:

In all the presented articles, the personal contribution of Chief Assistant Professor Maya Popova is evident. From my acquaintance with the essence of the scientific publications, as well as from the fact that most of them have been published in refereed and indexed scientific journals (and most of them have also been reported at prestigious forums with international participation in our country and abroad), it is evident that the candidate's scientific work is at a high professional level and meets the requirements for obtaining the position "Associate Professor". An additional advantage is the participation in projects with high scientific value.

5. Notes and recommendations.

The main remark to the candidate is to participate in the writing of textbooks and teaching aids in the relevant scientific field, because specialized educational literature in Bulgaria is extremely scarce, and Dr. Popova has sufficient scientific and practical experience, which she must pass on to specialists in practice.

6. Conclusion.

Based on the analysis of the candidate's pedagogical, scientific and scientific-applied activities, I state that Maya Popova meets the minimum requirements for the academic position "Associate Professor".

All this gives me reason to evaluate her overall activity POSITIVELY.

I would like to propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury also vote positively, and that the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Agronomy at the Agrarian University - Plovdiv elect Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Georgieva Popova as "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "Horse Breeding and Other Equine Sciences".

Date: 10.08.2026

Plovdiv

Prepared Report:
(Professor Dimo Penkov)

