



OPINION

on the competition for "associate professor" in the major "Horse Breeding and Other Equine Sciences", announced in the State Gazette No. 41 of 05.05.2026 with candidate Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Georgieva Popova, by Prof. Dr. Maya Mitkova Ignatova, Institute of Animal Science-Kostinbrod, appointed as a member of the Scientific jury according to Order No. RD 16-811/29.06. 2026 of the Rector of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Popova graduated from the Agricultural University, Plovdiv in 2008 with a Bachelor's degree, majoring in Animal Husbandry, and a professional qualification as a zootechnician; in 2010 she graduated from Trakia University, Stara Zagora, majoring in Zootechnics, and a professional qualification as a Master of Science in Zootechnics - Equestrian Sports. In 2016 she obtained the educational and scientific degree Doctor after successful defense of her doctoral thesis entitled "Status, Dynamics and Development Directions of the Breeding and Reproductive Status of Purebred Arabian and Shagia Horses" at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv. Since 2013 she has been an assistant professor, and since 2017 - a chief assistant professor at the Department of Animal Sciences at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

2. General description of the scientific production.

In the competition for "associate professor", the candidate, Ch. Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova participated with a total of 25 works, grouped as follows:

❖ *Scientific publications according to the nomenclature major – 25, of which:*

- *Publications related to the doctoral thesis – 3 pcs, which are not subject to consideration;*

- *Publications with an impact factor - 7 pcs;*

- *Publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals – 15 pcs;*

The personal participation of Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova in the indicated 22 works is illustrated by the fact that in 3 she is single author, in 13 - she is the first, in 4 - she is the second, and in the remaining 2 - she is the third author.

Twenty-two papers are subject to analysis for the preparation of the opinion.

In addition to the publications in the competition, Chief Assist. Popova has presented the results of her research at 13 scientific forums in our country and abroad, in nine reports and nine posters. According to the submitted documents for participation in the competition, it is evident that Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova exceeds the Minimum National (according to the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria) requirements for the candidates for holding the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine and professional field 6.3. Animal Husbandry:

➤ Indicators in group "A"

Defended thesis for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" - 50 points;

➤ Indicators in group "V"

Habilitation work - scientific publications (not less than 10) in journals that are peer-reviewed and indexed in world databases with scientific information – 180 points;

➤ Indicators in group "G"

G7 - Articles and reports published in scientific journals, indexed in world databases with scientific information - 12 publications - 207.5 points;

➤ Indicators in group "E"

E13 - Citations in scientific journals, indexed in world databases with scientific information or monographs and collective volumes - Four scientific works cited in four publications in peer-reviewed or those with IF/SJR - 60 points with a minimum requirement of 50 points.

The total number of points of the candidate is 497.5 with a minimum requirement of 400.

2. Teaching activities.

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova has 13 years of teaching experience at the Agricultural University, mainly in the disciplines "Horse Breeding", "Biological Foundations of Horse Breeding", "Horse Breeding Technology", "Fundamentals of Horse Breeding", "Breeding Programs in Horse Breeding", "Management of Genetic Resources in Horse Breeding" and "Biotechnologies of Reproduction in Horse Breeding", as well as "Ethology", "Horse Breeding and Equestrian Sports", "Equestrian Tourism, Amateur and Therapeutic Riding" and "Animal Husbandry".

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova is an author of 13 curricula – nine for the Bachelor's and four for the Master's degree in the disciplines "Biological Foundations of Horse Breeding", "Equestrian Technology", "Equestrian Breeding", "Ethology", "Equestrian Tourism, Amateur and Therapeutic Riding", "Equestrian Breeding and Equestrian Sport", "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 academic workload of Chief Assist. Prof. Popova over the last 5 academic years is an average of 703.6 hours per year, including an average of 256 hours of lectures. Her total academic workload for the period 2021/2022–2025/2026 is 3517.9 hours. She was the supervisor of a total of 25 graduates, of which 19 in the Bachelor's and six in the Master's degree.

4. Research activity.

Areas of publication.

The research activity of Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova is in the field of horse breeding.

➤ Possibilities for development and preservation of Bulgarian horse breeds through the study of their selection, morphological and physiological features.

The genetic structure, pedigree organization and selection characteristics of the Danube and East Bulgarian horse breeds have been studied. (V2, V5 and V6).

Research has been conducted on the exterior, body indices, growth and development of horses of the Karakachan and East Bulgarian breeds, as well as on the heredity of some sports qualities (V1, V3, V4, V10).

The hematological and biochemical indicators of horses of the East Bulgarian, Purebred Arabian and Karakachan breeds have been studied and analyzed, as well as the factors (breed, age, nutrition, season) that affect them (V7, V8, V9).

- Modern approaches to the study, management and conservation of horse breeds in Bulgaria.

The state and development of the linear and genealogical structure of populations of Bulgarian horse breeds have been studied, as well as the genetic parameters of the main selection traits in horses of the East Bulgarian and Danube horse breeds (G1, G2, G4, G9, G12).

The reproductive indicators of mares of the East Bulgarian and Haflinger breeds (G3, G7, G5) and factors influencing reproduction in horses have been studied.

The morphological features, behavioral reactions and ecological role of autochthonous horse breeds have been studied, as well as the possibilities for using modern technologies for monitoring freerange horses (G8, G11, G10, G6).

Citation of the scientific production.

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova presents four citations of four of her publications. The citations are in journals indexed in world databases with scientific information.

Participation in research projects.

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Maya Popova participates in three projects funded by the Agricultural University, and is the principal investigator in two of them. She is also a participant in work package 3 – Reproductive biotechnologies in equidae (mares and donkeys) of the National Scientific Project REPROBIOTECH.

5. Remarks and recommendations.

I have no remarks for the candidate. I recommend that Dr. Popova continue her work in this direction with the same ambitions and enthusiasm as before.

6. Conclusion.

Based on the analysis of the candidate's teaching, scientific and research activities, I believe that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Georgieva Popova meets the requirements of the LDASRB, Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for holding the academic position of "associate professor". I evaluate **POSITIVELY** her overall research, teaching and applied activities. I would like to propose that the esteemed Scientific jury to also vote positively, and the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Agronomy at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv to elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Maya Georgieva Popova as "**associate professor**" in the major "Horse Breeding and Other Equine Sciences".

Date: 18.08.2026.

OPINION PREPARED BY:.....

(Prof. Maya Ignatova, PhD)