

## **PEER REVIEW**

By Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Dimitrov, PhD

of the materials presented for the selection procedure for obtaining the academic position of  
Associate Professor in 2.3 Philosophy (Rhetoric),  
at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”,  
announced in State Gazette, no. 103 dated 10.12.2021, for the needs of “Rhetoric” Department of  
The Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”

### *PARTICULARS OF THE PROCEDURE*

Donka Gencheva Petrova, PhD, who is Chief Assistant Professor at Sofia University “St Kl. Ohridski” is the only applying candidate.

I know I am expected to express a far more strict opinion and evaluate the materials presented, but I would like to ask the rest of the jury members to allow me to distract from the administrative style and to express my envy in a purely human way to the colleagues in the Rhetoric Department for they already work with Chief Asst. Prof Donka Petrova, PhD. I am well familiar with her scientific work because I have used some of her ideas and empiric findings to support my own research and publications, and my humble opinion is that her work is always performed with proficiency and correctly, and the texts are brilliant – in accordance with her absolutely legitimate scientific self-confidence, but without falling into pseudo-academic wordiness and verbosity in meaningless expansion of the text. Moreover, I generally welcome any scientific research intention that then gets realized with the purpose of being practical and useful, and not remain just a text in the NACID Register, and D-r Petrova’s works are such.

A little bit of facts. D-r Petrova graduated BA with honors/magna cum laude in 2002, and MA in 2004, both in Psychology at Sofia University, and in 2010 the candidate defended her doctoral dissertation titled “Ageism and Cooperation in Teachers-Students Communication” at Sofia University/then-existing Higher Attestation Commission (05.06.05, Educational Psychology). She also holds a master’s degree in Nordic Studies.

Donka Petrova is a long-standing practitioner in Psychology but concerning her teaching activity: between 2006 and 2013 she was a part-time lecturer at the then-called ‘Department of Social, Occupational and Educational Psychology’ of Sofia University. After successfully passing

the competition in 2013, Petrova joined the 'Department of Rhetoric' as a full-time Chief Assistant Professor, and she currently works there. The submitted reference on the applicant's work experience shows that she has approximately 9 years of work experience in the Department and the lecture courses she holds correspond to the subject of this particular procedure. She teaches 'Non-verbal Communication', "Communication Skills", "Communication Skills and Teamwork" to BA students of Faculty of Educational Studies and The Arts, and Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics at Sofia University. She also teaches MA students at the "Rhetorics" and "Management of Socio-pedagogical Work" programs of Faculty of Philosophy and FESA.

Additionally, Dr. Donka Petrova supervises student empirical projects and master's theses in the "Rhetoric" program and the post-graduate programs in "Educational Psychology" and "Psychoanalytic Practice with Adults and Children Fundamentals" at the University of Sofia.

*ACCORDANCE TO MINIMAL NATIONAL CRITERIA FOR THE 'ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR'  
ACADEMIC POSITION*

Chief Asst. Prof. Donka Petrova, PhD presents a document that shows she meets the minimal national criteria according to the Regulations on the Implementation of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act. In details: concerning groups A, B and C, indicators 1, 2 and 3 respectively, she has the required 150 points, 50 of them – for the Doctor's degree, and the other 100 – because the candidate has included a habilitation paperwork in order to join the procedure. Group D (P4 to P10) of the Regulations for the Implementation of the mentioned act sets requirements concerning the publications of an associate professor candidate, sets that such must prove least 200 points. Based on the report presented by Dr. D. Petrova, her publications give her 220 points. Also, according to the Regulations mentioned, the candidate must prove a minimum of 50 points gained from citations of her papers. The information presented by Chief Asst Prof. Donka Petrova proves she claims 70 points. In addition, Dr. Petrova has been participated in an impressive number of scientific and practical projects.

*PAPERS, RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTIONS*

Chief Asst Prof. Donka Gencheva Petrova, PhD presents a reference list with scientific papers on the topic of the competition, which shows the following: a monograph she is the sole author of which is on the topic of the competition; 20 articles, of which 18 she is the only author

and 2 – she is a co-author of, all published in journals with scientific review or peer-reviewed collective volumes, 3 of which in English; plus 2 scientific studies in a referenced editions.

"Audience – Analysis and Rhetorical Impact" meets all the requirements for a monograph and fully coincides with the topic of the competition. This gives me reason to conclude that Chief Asst Prof. Petrova meets the requirements of The Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Science Degrees and Holding Academic Positions in Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", and in particular those of Art. 105, pt. 3, according to which the candidates must "have submitted a published monographic paper or equivalent publications in specialized scientific publications in the field of the competition or evidence of corresponding artistic achievements in the field of arts, which shall not repeat those presented for the acquisition of educational and science degree "Doctor" and for the acquisition of the science degree "Doctor of Science".

Scientific publications presented by Chief Asst Prof. Donka Petrova, PhD are entirely in accordance with the requirements of the announced procedure. The main text – "Audience – Analysis and Rhetorical Impact" – focuses on the problems of the "speaker-audience" system emphasizing on the 'imaginary audience', on the deliberately creating content active audience. Dr. Petrova defends the logical opinion that effective rhetorical influence assumes communicators shall 'center' on the audience. The book also proposes a practice-oriented analytical model of the target audience with five levels of analysis: situational, at the level of interest and prior knowledge of the topic one, demographic, psychological and cultural analysis. The book reviews specific qualitative and quantitative methods and data collection methods concerning the audience, in terms of the objectives of the analysis, not missing some common to the social sciences ones, but the attention is focused on new approaches, specific to the study of audiences, such as protocol analysis or "thinking out loud", participatory rhetoric and rhetorical ethnography, and analysis of secondary texts. The monograph analyzes how the acquired knowledge of the audience could be applied, considering its specific needs, expectations and characteristics, and this analysis is performed in accordance with good psychological theorizing, and the expected main thesis assumes knowing and understanding cognitive processes and motivation at the individual level is essential, the text also focuses and analyzes the characteristics of a particular audience – at a group level respectively. Three separate chapters are devoted to the so-called "Rhetorical Triangle", as each of its elements – ethos, pathos, and logos – is first theoretically reviewed, and then – considered in terms of the correspondence of the audience analysis to each of them. In her text,

Dr. Petrova draws the attention to rhetorical argumentation and its connection with audience analysis, as well as to modern theories of persuasion and impact on audiences, such as the elaboration likelihood model, socio-psychological approach to understanding attitudes, through the prism of auditory analysis.

The other scientific publications the candidate presented treat problems of focus-groups as a qualitative method for information gathering concerning educational needs of the auditoria; the way effective leadership ideas change throughout history; the communication and the role of effective feed-back in the ‘teacher-student’ system etc. But I wish to pay specific attention to “The Identifiable Victim Effect and The Rhetorical Pathos” article, that treats the tendency individuals to appear more concerned and manifest themselves as more compassionate towards personified victim (identified and named), in comparison to towards anonymous (unidentified and unnamed) one, even if the case is with victims of greater number (even of the same tragical event). Although this long-time known interesting phenomenon has been discussed from healthcare and economics to forensic sciences, and moreover it is being vividly dealt with by both cognitive and social psychology, it undoubtedly may be liaised to the rhetoric understanding of the ‘pathos’ as one’s capability to evoke emotional reaction in the public, and Dr. Petrova does so. And that’s I assume (although I wish I wouldn’t have had the reasons) is going to be immediate research interest topic of many scientific works that are going to come to light next months, concerning the war in Ukraine. And – in this sense – this article has its scientific theory and broader-public practical contribution, although it had been written before the mentioned interstate problem commenced.

But in order to comply with the required form, I will turn your attention to the fact that I believe the publications presented by Dr. D. Petrova are entirely in the context of the announced procedure, moreover they reflect the rhetoric ideas. Further: it shall be noted that no plagiarism has been noticed in the materials Chief Asst Prof Petrova presents to the jury. In addition: I fully accept the contributions of Chief Asst Prof. Donka Gencheva Petrova, PhD, but they may be further developed and summarized as follows:

1. The presented scientific works identify Dr. Petrova as a scientist with a strong interest not only in theoretical analysis and empirical research, but also in applied aspects of her papers.
2. Being a graduate psychologist, Doctor of Psychology, a common feature of her scientific publications is the interpretation of ideas and concepts in three metaobjects of psychological knowledge: theory, method, and experiment, in the sense of practical action.

3. Each of the publications is related to existing significant objects or principles of rhetorical knowledge, refracted through the prism of psychological science. The implementation of the solid 'theory-method-action' relationship into research is an important feature of Dr. Petrova's methodological competence.

4. The publications correspond to scientific achievements of Rhetoric and Psychology, as well as to the common sense.

5. The research data and facts in both Dr. Petrova's research and theoretic papers focus on various areas of rhetoric, but moreover they get their psychological interpretations.

### *CONCLUSION*

Chief Asst Prof Donka Gencheva Petrova, PhD meets all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the relevant regulations, both applicable at state level and the internal ones of The Sofia University. She has many years of experience in the university. Furthermore, she is the author and main teacher of the lecture courses in the scope of the current procedure. The overall work of Dr. Petrova offers a thorough, systematic and profound analysis of achievements of Rhetoric and Psychology, refracted through her original interpretation. She has extensive research experience gained from her participation in numerous national and international research and practical projects. As a result of the high evaluation of the scientific and teaching activity of Chief Asst Prof. Donka Petrova, PhD, I strongly support appointing her to the position of Associate Professor of Rhetoric (professional field 2.3, Philosophy) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

And if I started with allowing myself to be jealous, in the end I'd ask again for a permission to distract from the tone and style, and this time – to congratulate the colleagues of Department of Rhetoric for – and I am sure – the right and unquestionably winning choice, which I am sure we, as a respected jury, will come out with and further propose the Council of the Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", and the department staff will continue to work together with Donka Petrova as an elected Associate Professor of Rhetoric!

29.04.2022

Sofia

Jury Member:   
(Assoc. Prof. Nikiolay Dimitrov, PhD)