

## OPINION

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professional direction 3.5. "Public Communications and Information Sciences"

on scientific papers for participation in a competition for the academic position

of associate professor, in professional direction 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Digital Communications), FBO Faculty, Department of "Media and Communication", announced in the SG No. 69/16.08.2024, with candidate Justine Toms Jadala Maria, Ph.D.

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University.**

**Under this competition, the candidate has provided materials that meet and exceed both the national minimum requirements** of the existing Academic Staff Development Act, the requirements of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act, and those of the Regulation for the Development of Academic Staff at the New Bulgarian University.

**Indicators group A:** This group of indicators presents the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Justine Toms on the topic "Corporate communication with external audiences through own media. (Corporate blogs in the context of social networks)". Diploma No. 400, dated April 8, 2021, was used as evidence for the successful defence of the doctoral degree. This information can also be confirmed on the website of the National Center for Information and Documentation at: <https://ras.nacid.bg/dissertation-preview/68484>.

**Indicators group B:** This group of indicators includes the monograph "Podcasts. The Voice of the Internet", ROI Communication, 2022, ISBN:.978-954-9335-50-7. In my role as scientific editor of the monograph, it is appropriate to note that Dr. Toms made a precise analysis of the state of podcasts in our country, their application in corporate communication and their establishment as a media for a number of independent content authors. This is the first comprehensive analysis of the state of podcasts in our country. Reviewers are Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoyko Petkov, NBU and Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Manliherova, Sofia University "St. Kliment



Ohridski". Information about the monograph can be found on the COBISS platform at <https://plus.cobiss.net/cobiss/bg/bg/bib/58561544#full>.

**Indicators group Г:** The candidate has submitted materials above the required minimum. Among them is a book based on the defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" - "Blogs are dead. Long live the blogs", ROI Communication, 2021, ISBN: 978-954-9335-47-7. Articles and reports published in refereed and indexed scientific publications, in edited collective volumes, are attached. A chapter included in a collective monograph is also attached. All the attached articles and reports are within the scope of the scientific field "Public Communications and Information Sciences", with their main focus on digital communications.

**Indicators group Д:** Under this group of indicators, the candidate has provided evidence of citations that significantly exceed the minimum required number.

**Indicators group Е:** Under this indicator, the candidate presents evidence of his/her participation in the educational project Information Matters of the Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation, funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union, under Key Activity KA2 - Partnerships for Cooperation in Adult Education and evidence of authorship of a textbook published in 2012, designed to provide information on basic knowledge and skills necessary for creating web pages using the HTML language - "Web Design Programming", "Novi znanja", 2012, ISBN: 978-954-2907-220.

**Indicators group Ж:** According to this indicator, the candidate has provided a concise research program of two points, which are in the focus of the competition announced by NBU and a logical continuation of the scientific interests of Dr. Toms. Evidence of membership in the board of IAB Bulgaria - the largest global organisation of media and technology companies responsible for digital business is presented. Evidence of the application in practice of scientific research results and other intellectual property products, participation in improving the program and developing courses for programs, organising and conducting scientific seminars and conferences, as well as proven professional applied skills in the relevant scientific field and professional direction is attached.



**Indicators group 3:** On this indicator, the candidate has provided evidence of the quality of his work with students - creating teaching materials in the online platform "Moodle", projects with students, providing internships, recommendations for starting a first job for students from bachelor's and master's programs, teaching in English and a high score for student satisfaction - 4.69 out of a maximum score of 5.00.

**Indicators group II:** Under this indicator, the candidate has provided evidence of his/her participation in training seminars organised by NBU, of the regular delivery of lectures, of her participation in the Program Council of the Department of Media and Communication of NBU and of her participation as a team member on behalf of NBU in the project "EUMEPLAT: European Media Platforms: Assessing Positive and Negative Externalities for European Culture", funded under the Horizon 2020 program of the European Union for Research and Innovation.

## **II. Research (creative) activity and results**

**1. Evaluation of the monographic work, creative works or other publications corresponding in volume and completeness to a monographic work, including an assessment of the author's scientific and applied scientific contributions.**

In the monographic work "Podcasts. The Voice of the Internet" submitted for the competition, the candidate has made, at least to my knowledge, the first study of podcasts in Bulgaria (pp. 107-139), which are gaining increasing popularity and audience. The monograph is divided into four main parts and ends with a "Guide to a Successful Podcast", which has high practical and applied value. This approach to offering methods and techniques for applying scientific approaches in practice is characteristic of the candidate. The monograph cites 48 scientific and professional sources in Bulgarian and 19 in English.

**2. Assessment of contributions in other attached publications (creative works) made after the appointment to the academic position of "senior assistant" or the academic position of "associate professor" (for candidates for professor). It also includes an assessment of the requirement for publications to be peer-reviewed.**

The publications submitted for the competition are mainly in the field of communications, or more precisely, digital communications, and have been published in publications with this focus.



Dr. Toms' ability to publish not only as an author, but also as a co-author is extremely impressive. Co-authorship is very valuable because it shows the candidate's ability to work for a greater contribution to the development of the scientific field.

### **3. Citing from other authors**

From the citations selected and submitted for this competition, it is clear that Dr. Justine Toms is an established name in the field of digital communications - 33 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, 5 citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review and one citation in a monograph.

### **4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice.**

As the leader of the NBU team in the project "EUMEPLAT: European Media Platforms: Assessing Positive and Negative Externalities for European Culture", funded under the Horizon 2020 program of the European Union for Research and Innovation, I have extremely positive observations on the work of Dr. Toms. Within the framework of the project, she performed her duties precisely, on time and responsibly, took initiative beyond the duties specified in the project and built lasting and fruitful relationships with colleagues from the other nine European educational institutions. She managed to incorporate the results of the project into her academic and professional work. At the end of the project, with her editorial participation, a book was published with the results of the work on the third work package - HEGEMONY: PLATFORMIZATION OF VIDEO - ISBN 978-619-233-312-6 (paperback), ISBN 978-619-233-313-3 (pdf). The publication is available at the following address: <https://publishing-house.nbu.bg/bg/elektronni-izdaniq/knigi/hegemony-platformization-of-video>.

It is evident from the attached evidence that Dr. Toms is able to turn his participation in scientific and educational projects into practical benefits for a wider range of users. The proof is also the textbook - "Web Design Programming", "Novi znanja", 2012, ISBN: 978-954-2907-220.



### **III. Educational and teaching activities**

#### **1. Classroom and extracurricular employment, work in the electronic learning module "MOODLE - NBU", provision of student practices and internships, work with students and doctoral students.**

NBU works with the Moodle platform, in which lecturers are required to upload teaching materials for the courses they teach. The candidate has attached evidence of uploaded teaching materials for the courses:

1. COMM505- Managing Social Media Communities and Networks
2. BAMB542- Digital Marketing
3. COMM216 Online Reputation Management
4. COMM508 Creating Content for the Web
5. NJRN705- Web Design
6. COMM602- Blogs and Bloggers
7. NPRN505- Online Space and Public Relations.

The active participation of Dr. Toms in the work with students is indicated by the number of scientific supervisions. For the period 2011 - 2021, she was the scientific supervisor of two bachelor's and two master's theses. For the same period, she wrote 9 reviews of bachelor's theses and 3 of master's theses.

During the indicated period, Dr. Toms organised internships for students from the bachelor's program "Journalism" at the Bulgarian National Radio and other media.

She has provided work for students from bachelor's and master's programs of the Department.

#### **2. Working with Erasmus students.**

As a part-time and then full-time assistant, Dr. Toms lectures in English in the Master's program "International Business Communications". Every year, these courses include Erasmus



students from universities with which NBU has signed agreements. Dr. Toms has a high level of English and French, which makes her a qualified teacher of Erasmus students.

### **3. Student survey scores.**

As can be seen from the submitted documents for the competition, the average score from the student satisfaction surveys with the course and the lecturer is above the required minimum of 4.00. Dr. Toms's score is – **4,69**.

## **IV. Administrative and public activities**

### **1. Participation in collective governing bodies of NBU.**

To date, Dr. Toms has not participated in any collective governing bodies of NBU, but has been a member of the program council of the Department of Media and Communication.

### **2. Public activity.**

Dr. Justine Toms is one of the few names recognised by the guild of professionals in the field of communications in Bulgaria, with an established positive image and reputation. She is a member of the Association of European Journalists, the Union of Bulgarian Journalists, the Bulgarian Association of CSR Specialists and IAB Bulgaria. She plays an active role as a member of the Public Council of the National Council for Safer Internet. Her public engagement also includes appearances as a lecturer at public events and seminars. She actively participates in the Bulgarian Wiki community, acting as a mentor to many young people. She is the inspirer and organiser of the "Site of the Year" competition, which is aimed at website owners and creators and aims to establish the high standard of the web in Bulgaria.

### **3. Attracting students to the programs**

Dr. Toms's public and professional activity certainly plays a significant role in the choice of students to begin their studies in the programs of the Department of Media and Communication at NBU. Her participation in the Program Council of the Department of Media and Communication provided valuable practical advice and ideas for the development of the department's activities.



## V. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have known Justine Toms for many years, as our professional and public interests have intertwined and continue to intertwine. Based on the many projects, initiatives and undertakings that we have done together, I can say that Dr. Justine Toms is an extremely responsible, dedicated and capable colleague. Her willingness to get involved in various initiatives is enviable. She always puts her heart and soul into her work, which makes her a dedicated teacher and a preferred colleague.

I can definitely say that Dr. Toms instills initiative in both fellow teachers and students. She is enthusiastic about the activities of the department and NBU, where she teaches in several departments, in two languages, and in distance learning programs. Justine Toms has been a part-time lecturer in the Department of Media and Communication since the academic year 2007/2008. And from day one, in addition to teaching at the required level, she has found ways to provide internships for students and promote them to start working in various media and digital agencies. Every year, NBU students participate as members of the youth jury in the "Website of the Year" competition.

I could write for a long time about the energy, inspiration, steadfastness and human virtues of Justine Toms. But I will stop here with the following sentence: One understands the true meaning of the word colleague and friend when working with Justine Toms.

I sincerely hope that many more joint projects, initiatives and writers' meetings await us.

In conclusion, I express **my positive assessment** of the academic activity of the candidate Dr. Justine Toms and the compliance of the submitted materials **with the minimum national requirements of the ZRAS and PPZRAS and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University** for the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Digital Communications). I propose that Dr. Justine Toms be admitted to election by the Academic Council of NBU for the academic position of Associate Professor, in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Digital Communications).

19<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Sofia

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