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ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 13/09/2019

External Evaluation Report

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  Open University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):**
  Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- **Department/ Sector:** -

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
  2 Years FT, 120 ECTS, Master, MA, Distance Learning
  In Greek:

  Βιοηθική - Ιατρική Ηθική

  In English:

  Bioethics – Medical Ethics

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek

- **Programme's status**
  New programme: Yes
  Currently operating: No

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

A. Introduction

The EEC met face to face with the Vice Rector of the University, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, several members of permanent academic staff, administrative staff, the distance learning platform team, representatives of the University's library, the coordinator of the programme and three students, followed by telephone or on-line conversations with five individuals who were in different ways involved in the programme under review. The panel was provided with extensive written material (both in English and in Greek) and ample time for discussion and reflection.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Stavroula Tsinorema	Professor/Member of EEC	University of Crete
Nils Hoppe	Professor/Member of EEC	University of Hannover
Santi Caballé	Professor/Member of EEC	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Panagiota Christodoulou	Student/Member of EEC	University of Cyprus
Jan Helge Solbakk	Professor/Chair of EEC	University of Oslo

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

[...]

* - New programme

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
1.1	Academic oversight of the programme design is ensured.	5
1.2	The guide and / or the regulations for quality assurance provide the adequate information and data for the support and management of the programme of study for all the years of study.	5
1.3	Internal Quality Assurance processes safeguard the quality and the fulfillment of the programme's purpose, objectives and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Particularly, the following are taken into consideration:	
	1.3.1 The disclosure of the programme's curricula to the students and their implementation by the teaching staff	5
	1.3.2 The programme webpage information and material	5
	1.3.3 The procedures for the fulfillment of undergraduate and postgraduate assignments / practical training	5
	1.3.4 The procedures for the conduct and the format of the examinations and for student assessment	5
	1.3.5 **Students' participation procedures for the improvement of the programme and of the educational process**	5
1.4	The knowledge (theoretical and/or factual) gained is of the appropriate level to which the programme of study corresponds to, according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).	4
1.5	The skills (cognitive and practical) obtained are of the appropriate level to which the programme of study corresponds to, according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).	5
1.6	The responsibility and autonomy (the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility) are of the appropriate level to which the programme of study corresponds to, according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).	5
1.7	The purpose and objectives of the programme are consistent with the expected learning outcomes and with the mission and the strategy of the institution.	5
1.8	The following ensure the achievement of the programme's purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes:	
	1.8.1 The number of courses	5

* - New programme

	1.8.2	The programme's content	4
	1.8.3	The methods of assessment	5
	1.8.4	The teaching material	4
	1.8.5	The equipment	5
	1.8.6	The balance between theory and practice	5
	1.8.7	The research orientation of the programme	5
	1.8.8	The quality of students' assignments	N/A*
1.9		**The expected learning outcomes of the programme are known to the students and to the members of the teaching staff.**	5
1.10		The teaching and learning process is adequate and effective for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.	5
1.11		The content of the programme's courses reflects the latest achievements / developments in science, arts, research and technology.	4
1.12		New research results are embodied in the content of the programme of study.	4
1.13		The content of foundation courses is designed to prepare the students for the first year of their chosen undergraduate degree.	N/A
1.14		Students' command of the language of instruction is appropriate.	5
1.15		The programme of study is structured in a consistent manner and in sequence, so that concepts operating as preconditions precede the teaching of other, more complex and cognitively more demanding, concepts.	4
1.16		The learning outcomes and the content of the courses are consistent.	4
1.17		The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied and there is correspondence between credits, workload and expected learning outcomes per course and per semester.	5
1.18		The higher education qualification awarded to the students corresponds to the purpose, objectives and the learning outcomes of the programme.	5
1.19		The higher education qualification and the programme of study conform to the provisions for registration to their corresponding professional and vocational bodies for the purpose of exercising a particular profession.	N/A
1.20		The programme's management in regard to its design, its approval, its monitoring and its review, is in place.	5

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1.21	The programme's collaborations with other institutions provide added value and are compared positively with corresponding collaborations of other departments / programmes of study in Europe and internationally.	N/A
1.22	Procedures are applied so that the programme conforms to the scientific and professional activities of the graduates.	N/A
1.23	**The admission requirements are appropriate.**	**5**
1.24	Sufficient information relating to the programme of study is posted publicly.	N/A
1.25	The teaching methodology is suitable for teaching in higher education.	5

Findings

The importance of establishing a postgraduate distance-learning programme in bioethics/medical ethics based at OUC cannot be emphasised enough. The implementation of this kind of programme in this part of Europe responds to a need which the panel believe will be all the more prevalent in the future. In some areas, the panel's findings were influenced by the fact that this is a new programme, and that the identities of the teaching staff were by and large not known. This aspect is further explicated in D. (Conclusions and Final Remarks) and is a significant factor in every area of assessment that follows.

Strengths

The panel were impressed with most of the curriculum, and with the prospective course coordinator's academic credentials. At the same time, the panel felt that there were a small number of changes which would facilitate the programme's success. Notwithstanding the necessary adjustments outlined below, the panel felt that the thematic units *BIH623* (Neuroethics), *BIH615* (Ethics and Pharma), and *BIH612* (Bioethics and Legislation (sic.)) were particularly strong examples of well-drafted course descriptions.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The panel recommends that the course descriptions, and particularly bibliographies, for each thematic unit (a) are brought up-to-date and further focused, (b) follow a similar structure and length, (c) take into account reasonable reading times, (d) avoid redundancies (in particular in relation to basic teaching materials, e.g. Beauchamp & Childress), and (e) ensure the balance of recommended literature (i.e. appropriate counterpoints to Singer, Harris, Savulescu, where appropriate).

The panel suggest merging BIH611 and BIH614 into one thematic unit entitled "Global Bioethics", which is more in line with internationally visible scholarship in this area.

The panel also suggest changing a number of course titles to better align the course structure to international practices and expectations:

- BIH511 change from "Introduction to Ethics: Major Moral Traditions" to "History of Moral Theories"
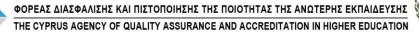
* - New programme

- BIH527 change from "Ethics and Deontology of Research: Personal Data" to "Ethics and Integrity in Research" (also to be made compulsory)

- BIH612 change from "Bioethics and Legislation" to "Bioethics and Law"

- BIH522 change from "Bioethics and Reproduction" to "Bioethics and the Beginning of Life"

- BIH526 change from "Ethics of Reproductive Medicine and Woman's (sic.) Health" to "Ethics and Reproductive Health"

- BIH525 change from "Medical Duty - Medical Deontology" to "Medical Deontology"

Whilst being aware of the side effects to the interdependency of course offerings in this programme, the panel further recommend that the applicants consider changing the programme structure. These changes include making a number of thematic units optional whilst making others compulsory, in order to provide a more consistent learning experience to students:

Common		
BIH511: History of Moral Theories	Compulsory	
BIH512: Human Rights and Theories of Human Rights	Compulsory	
BIH527: Ethics and Integrity in Research	Compulsory	
BIH701A: Master Thesis I	Compulsory	
BIH701B: Master Thesis II	Compulsory	

Bioethics		
BIH513: Introduction to Applied Ethics and Bioethics	Compulsory	
BIH521: Bioethics and the Human Genome	Optional	
BIH522: Bioethics and the Beginning of Life	Optional	
BIH523: Bioethics and Enhancement	Optional	
BIH612: Bioethics and Law	Compulsory	
BIH621: Bioethics and Health Care Policies	Optional	

* - New programme

Medical Ethics		
BIH514: Introduction to Applied Ethics and Medical Ethics	Compulsory	
BIH524: Introduction to Clinical Ethics	Compulsory	
BIH525: Medical Deontology	Optional	
BIH526: Ethics of Reproductive Health	Optional	
BIH615: Ethics and the Pharmaceutical Industry	Optional	
BIH622: Medical Ethics and Marginal Cases	Optional	

Common Electives		
BIH623: Neuroethics	Optional	
BIH 614/611: Global Bioethics	Optional	

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Ad 1.4: In relation to the theoretical and/or factual level at which the programme of study corresponds to the requirements of the EQF, the panel have suggested a number of changes to the coordinator (see above).

Ad 1.8.2, 1.8.4, 1.11, 1.12,: The programme's content requires some adjustment. See above for detailed comments on bibliography/teaching materials, and inclusion of an appropriate (and up-to-date) balance of literature.

Ad 1.15, 1.16: See above comments on the title changes for thematic units to achieve more consistency in the build-up of the programme.

Provide information on:

1. **Employability records**

N/A*

2. **Pass rate per course/semester**

N/A*

3. **The correspondence of exams' and assignments' content to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS**

N/A*

Please tick one of the following for:

Study programme and study programme's design and development

* - New programme

Non-Compliant ☐   **Partially Compliant** ☐   **Compliant** ☒

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment

(ESG 1.3)

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
2.1	The actual/expected number of students in each class allows for constructive teaching and communication.	5
2.2	The actual/expected number of students in each class compares positively to the current international standards and/or practices.	5
2.3	There is an adequate policy for regular and effective communication with students.	5
2.4	The methodology implemented in each course leads to the achievement of the course's purpose and objectives and those of the individual modules.	5
2.5	Constructive formative assessment for learning and feedback are regularly provided to the students.	5
2.6	The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate, and known to the students.	5
2.7	Educational activities which encourage students' active participation in the learning process are implemented.	5
2.8	Teaching incorporates the use of modern educational technologies that are consistent with international standards, including a platform for the electronic support of learning.	5
2.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, journals, databases, and teaching notes) meet the requirements set by the methodology of the programme's individual courses and are updated regularly.	4
2.10	It is ensured that teaching and learning are continuously enriched by research.	5
2.11	The programme promotes students' research skills and inquiry learning.	5
2.12	Students are adequately trained in the research process.	5

Findings

See below.

* - New programme

Strengths

The panel notes that OUC has extensive experience in offering distance learning courses of this kind and is confident that the institution is capable of delivering this programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

This is a new programme, and the panel assessed a number of criteria by way of matching them against the potential coordinator. It is crucial to the academic quality of this programme that it is ensured that when OUC advertises for and selects adjunct faculty, the appropriate level of research activity and expertise is sought for and present in the successful candidates.

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Ad 2.9 - See comments above (No. 1) on changes to bibliography and structure.

Please tick one of the following for:

Teaching, learning and student assessment

| *Non-Compliant* | ☐ | *Partially Compliant* | ☐ | *Compliant* | ☒ |

3. Teaching Staff

(ESG 1.5)

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
3.1	The number of full-time teaching staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, and their fields of expertise, adequately support the programme of study.	N/A
3.2	The members of teaching staff for each course have the relevant formal and fundamental qualifications for teaching the course, including the following:	
	3.2.1 Subject specialisation	N/A*
	3.2.2 Research and Publications within the discipline	N/A*
	3.2.3 Experience / training in teaching in higher education	N/A*
3.3	The programme attracts visiting professors of recognized academic standing.	N/A
3.4	The specialisations of visiting professors adequately support the programme of study.	N/A

* - New programme

3.5	Special teaching staff and special scientists have the necessary qualifications, adequate work experience and specialisation to teach a limited number of courses in the programme of study.	N/A
3.6	In the programme of study, the ratio of the number of courses taught by full-time staff, occupied exclusively at the institution, to the number of courses taught by part-time staff, ensures the quality of the programme of study.	N/A
3.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff supports and safeguards the programme's quality.	5
3.8	The teaching load allows for the conduct of research and contribution to society.	5
3.9	The programme's coordinator has the qualifications and experience to coordinate the programme of study.	5
3.10	The results of the teaching staff's research activity are published in international journals with the peer-reviewing system, in international conferences, conference minutes, publications etc.	N/A
3.11	The teaching staff is provided with adequate training opportunities in teaching methods, adult education and new technologies.	5
3.12	Feedback processes for teaching staff in regard to the evaluation of their teaching work, by the students, are satisfactory.	5

Findings

Given that the panel is at this point not aware of the identities of the actual teaching staff, it was not possible to assess the prospective staff's suitability. This is to be expected in the context of distance learning courses offered by OUC and not a matter for concern. Where appropriate, the panel based their assessment on the background of the prospective coordinator, and the written materials provided.

Strengths

The panel note the CVs provided, and was given an opportunity to speak to some members of the team involved in drafting the programme. Based on a review of the written material and discussions with contributors, the panel consider that suitable candidates will likely be available to teach the programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The panel reiterate the language requirements for teaching this programme; it is paramount that the staff selected to teach in this programme are competent users of the English language given the proportion of required reading in English, and the need to familiarise the students with the dynamic of international debate in bioethics and medical ethics.

* - New programme

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Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Ad 3.1 - The OUC has 25 permanent members of faculty, none of whom are established bioethicists/medical ethicists. This, however, is in line with the expected circumstances in a distance learning / open university environment.

Ad 3.2 - **This is a new programme and the teaching staff have not been selected at this point**. However, the panel would like to emphasise the importance of selecting staff with appropriate academic backgrounds, outstanding publication track record, including the ability to competently select and make use of original materials in this field dominated by English-language literature and debate. Please also see the panel's comments in D. below.

Ad 3.5 - See comment above (3.2)

Provide information on the following:

In every programme of study the special teaching staff should not exceed 30% of the permanent teaching staff.

N/A - distance learning at an open university.

Please tick one of the following for:

Teaching Staff

| *Non-Compliant* | ☐ | *Partially Compliant* | ☐ | *Compliant* | ☒ |

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
4.1	The student admission requirements for the programme of study are based on specific regulations and suitable criteria that are favourably compared to international practices.	5
4.2	The award of the higher education qualification is accompanied by the diploma supplement which is in line with European and international standards.	5
4.3	The programme's evaluation mechanism, by the students, is effective.	5
4.4	Students' participation in exchange programmes is compared favourably to similar programmes across Europe.	5
4.5	There is a student welfare service that supports students in regard to academic, personal problems and difficulties.	5
4.6	Statutory mechanisms, for the support of students and the communication with the teaching staff, are effective.	5

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4.7	Mentoring of each student is provided and the number of students per each permanent teaching member is adequate.	N/A
4.8	Flexible options / adaptable to the personal needs or to the needs of students with special needs, are provided.	5
4.9	Students are satisfied with their learning experiences.	5

Findings

As a new programme, the panel's assessment is based on an interview with three current students from other programmes.

Strengths

The students were articulate and extremely helpful. They highlighted the student experience at OUC as particularly positive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

-

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Ad 4.3 - In line with international experiences and practices, the panel recommend that the programme's evaluation, by the students, is mandatory.

Ad 4.7 - Distance learning programme without permanent teaching staff involved.

Please circle one of the following for:

Students

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* ☒

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5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

	Quality indicators/criteria	1 - 5
5.1	Adequate and modern learning resources are available to the students.	5
5.2	The library includes the latest books and material that support the programme.	5
5.3	The library loan system facilitates students' studies.	5
5.4	The laboratories adequately support the programme.	N/A
5.5	Student welfare services are of high quality.	5
5.6	Statutory administrative mechanisms for monitoring and supporting students are sufficient.	5
5.7	Suitable books and reputable journals support the programme of study.	5
5.8	An internal communication platform supports the programme of study.	5
5.9	The equipment used in teaching and learning (laboratory and electronic equipment, consumables etc.) are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.	5
5.10	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are adequate and accessible to students.	4
5.11	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) are updated regularly with the most recent publications.	4

Findings

The panel found that the available resources are of high quality and in line with expectations for the provision of a programme of this kind.

Strengths

OUC's well established eClass system, extensive library resources and other communication tools are likely to provide excellent support to students and teachers.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

See above (No. 1) in relation to recommendations for the improvement of teaching materials and bibliography.

* - New programme

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Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Ad 5.10, 5.11 - See the panel's comments in relation to the programme's intended bibliography above (no. 1).

Please circle one of the following for:

Resources

Non-Compliant ☐   *Partially Compliant* ☐   *Compliant* ☒

6. Additional for distance learning programmes

(ALL ESG)

	Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 5
6.1	The pedagogical planning unit for distance learning supports the distance learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment.		5
6.2	The institution safeguards the interaction:		
	6.2.1	Among students	5
	6.2.2	Between students and teaching staff	5
	6.2.3	Between students and study guides/material of study	5
6.3	The process and the conditions for the recruitment of teaching staff ensure that candidates have the necessary skills and experience for distance learning education.		5
6.4	Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff through appropriate procedures.		5
6.5	Student performance monitoring mechanisms are satisfactory.		4
6.6	Adequate mentoring by the teaching staff is provided to students through established procedures.		5
6.7	The unimpeded distance learning communication between the teaching staff and the students is ensured.		5
6.8	Assessment consistency is ensured.		5

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6.9	Teaching materials (books, manuals, scientific journals, databases) comply with the requirements provided by the distance learning education methodology and are updated regularly.	5
6.10	The programme of study has the appropriate and adequate infrastructure for the support of distance learning.	5
6.11	The supporting infrastructures are easily accessible.	5
6.12	Students are informed and trained with regards to the available educational infrastructure.	5
6.13	Procedures for systematic control and improvement of the supportive services are set.	5
6.14	Infrastructure for distance education is comparable to corresponding university infrastructure in the European Union and internationally.	5
6.15	Electronic library services are provided according to international practice in order to support the needs of the students and the teaching staff.	5
6.16	The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary electronic sources of information, relevant to the programme, the level, and the method of teaching.	5
6.17	Students' weekly assignments are appropriate for the level of the programme.	4
6.18	Feedback on students' assignments is regular through concrete and published procedures.	5
6.19	The quality of students' final exams is ensured and evidenced.	N/A*
6.20	The teaching e-learning material has been sufficiently enriched with electronic sources, updated research publications and other electronic learning resources that support students' work and learning.	N/A*

Findings

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study.

The university's eClass system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the tutors, the other students and with the materials. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback in order to assess students' knowledge. The provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess competences was not shown.

The university has a unit responsible for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating study materials (Information and Communication Technologies Services). This unit addresses the

* - New programme

requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance with state-of-the-art technological advances and own research activities. A proof of concept of advanced materials based on VR developed by the unit was demonstrated during the on-site visit. The study guide included a suggested time engagement though it was not clear during the evaluation how this time was calculated.

Strengths

More generally, the panel notes that student feedback during the course of the evaluation was very positive in relation to the level of detail usually provided as feedback on written assignments.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

OUC must ensure that candidates have the necessary skills and experience for distance learning education.

The panel suggest that, unless already envisaged, a learning analytics component be included in this programme in order to provide students, teachers, and coordinators with useful knowledge which underpins the learning process and facilitates the improvement of the course.

The proposed thematic units have a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: synopsis, aims, anticipated results, reviewed literature, and self-evaluation exercises. These weekly self-assessment exercises would be improved through the introduction of tutor assessments and formative feedback.

Formative assessment and the corresponding formative feedback to students are provided by teachers through compulsory assignments (twice per semester) plus in live (generally online) meetings. The panel recommend that care is taken, that the formative feedback from assignments is provided more regularly, personalized, and in a timely fashion.

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Ad 6.5 - The panel suggest that, unless already envisaged, a learning analytics component be included in this programme in order to provide students, teachers, tutors, and coordinators with useful knowledge which underpins the learning process and facilitates the improvement of the course.

Ad 6.17 - The weekly self-assignments described in the study guide would be improved through the introduction of tutor assessments and feedback.

Please tick one of the following for:

Additional for distance learning programmes

| Non-Compliant | ☐ | Partially Compliant | ☐ | Compliant | ☒ |

* - New programme

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The panel is grateful for the discussions with the University's and Faculty's leadership during the site visit on 12 September 2019. A particular aspect which impacted the panel's assessment was the fact that this programme is new (i.e. the panel were not able to assess past assignments or theses from students, speak to current students of this programme, or interview teaching staff). In particular, the leadership very kindly and helpfully provided detailed explanations of how OUC advertises and fills vacancies for teaching staff after the approval of a programme, and the panel accept that OUC's processes in this regard are proven and appropriate.

The panel have made several recommendations (all of which the panel believe are easily implementable) pertaining to the course descriptions, the bibliography, the differentiation between compulsory and optional thematic units, the importance of the quality of teaching staff and tutors (including the appropriate language competency). Finally, the panel have made some recommendations pertaining to the distance learning platform in line with appropriate methodology, and on the provision of information to students, for evaluation and monitoring purposes.

The recommendations made in relation to the structure of the programme are intended to stimulate debate and reflection on the part of the programme team. The panel does not consider it an obstacle to approval if the coordinator chooses to retain the existing structure.

Overall, the panel considers that the implementation of a distance learning master's programme in bioethics and medical ethics is timely and important for this region. There is a significant potential for the wider attractiveness of the programme, were it to be offered in English as well in the future.

E. Signatures of the EEC Members

Name	Signature
Stavroula Tsinorema	
Nils Hoppe	
Santi Caballé	
Panagiota Christodoulou	
Jan Helge Solbakk	

Date: 13 September 2019

* - New programme