



REPORT

Master of Opera
Dutch National Opera Academy
Royal Conservatoire The Hague
Conservatorium van Amsterdam

The Hague and Amsterdam, The Netherlands
5 - 6 February 2026

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Introduction

The Master of Opera is offered by the Dutch National Opera Academy (DNOA), a joint initiative of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam (CvA) and the Royal Conservatoire The Hague (KC). The DNOA was founded in 1996 to combine the expertise and resources of both institutions to provide comprehensive and high-quality training for emerging opera artists. The two-year master's programme is designed for a select group of exceptionally talented and highly motivated young singers and is government-funded for a maximum of 12 students per academic year.

The DNOA is governed by a board comprising the directors of both conservatoires. The programme management team consists of the Artistic Leader and the Productions and Operations Manager. Organisationally, the programme is embedded within the governance structures of both partner institutions.

The programme aims to support highly motivated singers at an advanced stage of their development within a performance-intensive learning environment that closely reflects the realities of the professional opera field. DNOA prepares students for contemporary operatic practice through fully staged productions and collaborative rehearsal processes, enabling them to develop vocal, dramatic, and artistic skills in an integrated manner. Taught in English, the programme has a strong international orientation, with an international student body being trained by an internationally experienced staff for careers in the global opera profession.

Assessment Procedure

The assessment was conducted in accordance with the Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands, following the programme outlined in Annex 1. The evaluation was carried out using the extended framework, focusing on the six standards. The review was coordinated by MusiQuE (Music Quality Enhancement) evaluation agency. The assessment was also based on the MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review, which align with the NVAO Standards for Extended Programme Assessment.

The international review team, appointed by MusiQuE and formally approved by NVAO, consisted of:

- Jeffrey Sharkey (Chair)
- Lynne Dawson
- Hennig Ruhe
- André Angenendt (student member)

The review team was supported by Titia Busing, who acted as NVAO-certified secretary. All team members completed and signed declarations of independence and impartiality, which were submitted to NVAO. The review team's composition received formal approval from NVAO prior to the commencement of the review. The assessment was conducted independently. The review team received a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report (SER) accompanied by a student chapter and supporting documentation, enabling a well-informed and substantiated judgement. The review team selected and reviewed a sample of fifteen student files consisting of the final presentations/assessments in video recordings and the thesis. In preparation for the site visit, the review team convened two online

meetings to review the assessment framework, clarify procedural matters, and identify specific issues to be addressed during the visit. Staff and students were informed of a confidential open consultation hour to provide additional input; however, this opportunity was not utilised.

The site visit to the DNOA took place on 5th and 6th February 2026. During these two days, the review team met with DNOA management, teaching and support staff, students, alumni, members of the professional field, and other stakeholders. The review team also attended a production by students and several singing lessons.

The previous external assessment was held in 2020. The review team noted that the programme considered the recommendations for further development that were made during the previous assessment and concludes that the programme has addressed them accordingly (see Annex 1).

At the conclusion of the site visit, the review team presented its preliminary findings and conclusions to the programme. A draft report was subsequently shared for factual verification and comment, and the responses received were duly incorporated into the final report.

At the programme's initiative, a development meeting is scheduled for May 2026; this will not affect the assessment results presented in this report. The review team expresses its gratitude to the DNOA, its staff, and its students for their contributions to the development of the self-evaluation report, for the warm welcome extended to the review team, and for engaging in open and constructive discussions during the site visit.

Executive summary

On 5th and 6th February 2026, a review team from MusiQuE conducted an extended programme assessment of the Master of Music at the Dutch National Opera Academy (DNOA). The DNOA is a programme built on long-standing collaboration between the Conservatorium van Amsterdam (CvA) and the Royal Conservatoire The Hague (KC). Even though both conservatoires operate in a different context, they are very committed to DNOA and view the partnership as a strength. This results in a student-centred and comprehensive programme with a specific profile that is well aligned with students needs and offered by a very committed and knowledgeable team.

Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are well aligned with (inter)national requirements for the field of music such as the AEC Learning Outcomes / Polifonia Dublin Descriptors. These outcomes are directly derived from the Dutch National Training Profile for Music (2017), which is grounded in relevant frameworks and has been externally validated. The programme's profile is strong and clearly reflected in the teaching and learning environment. The programme successfully fulfils its objective of preparing students not only in standard professional repertoire, but also in developing the skills, adaptability, and artistic craftsmanship that will support them throughout their careers.

Even though the programme is very well aligned with the professional field and has ample connections; the review team supports the programme's intention to establish a dedicated international board of advisors. Such a board could provide more structured input from the professional field and strengthen the programme's quality assurance processes. In addition, it could play a valuable role in promoting the programme and enhancing its visibility.

Teaching and learning environment

The content and set-up of the programme enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The programme is comprehensive, robust, well-aligned with the needs of the students, and offering students a wide range of valuable performance opportunities. The programme is strongly student-centred. The structure of the teaching and learning environment, combined with the programme's small and informal scale, fosters close interaction between students and lecturers and enables an individualised approach. The programme is flexible and nimble in tailoring to students' needs. The small scale also ensures that all students gain experience in full roles within fully staged productions, which the review team considers a key strength.

The programme resembles the structure of an opera studio, and at the same time creates a supportive, personalised, and safe learning environment in which students feel encouraged to take risks and learn from failure. In addition, ample guidance and feedback are available for students.

The international character of the programme is reflected in the international profile of the staff involved, the international students attending and the international character of the field of study and research. The review team understands and supports the fact that the international character of the programme requires its delivery to be in English.

The programme is highly selective and has an extensive selection procedure in place, which ensures that students entering the programme already have a high level of technical skills (singing) and are very motivated. The review team supports how repertoire selection is driven by the incoming student strengths; this ensures that throughout the programme appropriate roles are available for all students.

The staff involved in the programme is very committed, highly qualified and knowledgeable and actively involved in the field of opera. Moreover, sufficient lecturers are available to execute the programme. The programme currently relies quite heavily on the central roles of the Artistic Leader and the Production & Operations Manager. While their strong commitment and willingness to go the extra mile are highly commendable and clearly benefit the programme, this level of reliance may pose risks to its long-term sustainability. In this context, the review team encourages the programme to reflect on succession planning.

Assessment

The programme has an adequate system of assessment in place. The measures taken to guarantee the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessments match the formative and subjective assessments within performing arts education. These include using the more-eye principle, assessment criteria and oral and written feedback. The review team values the involvement of professionals from the opera field as external examiners. This is also highly appreciated by the students.

Both examination boards are active in safeguarding the quality of the assessments. The boards check the quality of the assessments by attending assessments and checking the assessment forms.

Achieved learning outcomes

The programme has a solid and suitable graduation procedure in place. In assessing students' final work multiple examiners are involved, including two external examiners. The sample of the student files and the production attended on site showed a high level. The programme demonstrates a high standard of artistic performance among its singers. In addition, the review team appreciates that the research projects range from more focused to broader inquiries and are aligned with the students' individual ambitions.

The review team confirms that the professional success of alumni demonstrates that the programme's learning outcomes are effectively achieved. The information provided and the discussions with students and alumni show that they are very capable of finding their own path as a professional opera singer.

Facilities

The review team visited both conservatoires during the site visit and gained a clear perspective on the available facilities. Based on this, and on the reviewed documentation, the review team concludes that the programme has sufficient facilities available.

In addition, sufficient support services are in place for the programme, including the dedicated production team at Amare. The engagement of an external social media manager appears to be yielding positive results and Marketing & Communication departments of both conservatoires collaborate effectively work.

The review team values the extra time for rehearsals at Amare in the upcoming years. While the review team values the availability of the concert hall at Amare, it also notes that the venue may impose limitations on repertoire choices and restrict broader student involvement, for example in chorus or non-singing roles and for more structured and therefore professional stage set scenery, when required.

Quality assurance

The review team concludes that the programme has an adequate quality assurance system in place. Stakeholders such as the professional field, students, and lecturers are involved in formal and informal ways in maintaining and improving the quality of the programme. During the site visit, students, alumni and representatives from the professional field, mentioned concrete examples in which the programme acted on their feedback. Based on the reviewed documents and the discussions held, the review team concludes that the councils and education committees are actively engaged and fulfil their roles effectively.

The review team establishes that the programme has adequately followed up on the recommendations made during the previous accreditation.

Recommendations

The review team concludes that the programme meets all standards. The review team has the following recommendation:

- To ensure that all singing lessons take place at one of the conservatoires.

The other suggestions mentioned in the remainder of the report are noncommittal in nature.

NVAO Standard	Assessment
1. Intended learning outcomes	Meets the standard
2. Teaching and learning environment	Meets the standard
3. Assessment	Meets the standard
4. Achieved learning outcomes	Meets the standard
5. Facilities	Meets the standard
6. Quality assurance	Meets the standard
Overall assessment	Positive

All standards of the NVAO framework have been positively assessed. Therefore, the review team confidently issues a positive recommendation for the accreditation of the Master of Opera at the Dutch National Opera Academy.

On behalf of the entire assessment panel,

The Hague, April 2026

Key and administrative data on the Dutch National Opera Academy Master

Degree Programme	
Name in RIO	Master Opera
Location(s)	Conservatorium van Amsterdam Royal Conservatoire The Hague
Website address	https://www.opera-academy.nl https://www.koncon.nl/opleidingen/master/dutch-national-opera-academy/overig-dnoa https://www.conservatoriumvanamsterdam.nl/dnoa/
Number of students enrolled	12
Date of creation	1996
RIO registration number	49105
Degree, Orientation and Level of the programmes	HBO Master of Music
Number of credits	120 ECTS
Length of the programme	2 years
Model(s) of study	Full-time
Research Master	No
Language of instruction	English
(Legal) professional requirement	No
Joint programme (joint degree or multiple degree)	No
Visitation group	HBO Opera (unique)
Deadline visitation report	May 1, 2026
Institution 1	
Name in RIO	Conservatorium van Amsterdam (CVA), onderdeel van de Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten (AHK)
Code and BRIN-number	110A838 (CvA) / 21QA (AHK)
Adres	Oosterdokskade 151, 1011 DL Amsterdam
Status	Publicly funded institution providing higher education
ITK	Yes
Institution 2	
Name in RIO	Koninklijk Conservatorium (KC), onderdeel van de Stichting Hogeschool der Kunsten Den Haag (HdK)
Code and BRIN-number	114A500 (KC) / 23KJ (HdK)
Adres	Spuiplein 150, 2511 DG Den Haag
Status	Publicly funded institution providing higher education
ITK	No

NVAO Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes.

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.

Corresponding MusiQuE standards

MusiQuE Standard 1.1: The programme's goals and context

MusiQuE Standard 1.2: The programme's stakeholders' role in decision-making

MusiQuE Standard 4.2: Engagement within the external institutional and social context

Findings

Profile of the programme

The programme aims not only to prepare students in standard professional repertoire but also to cultivate skills, adaptability and artistic craftsmanship that will serve them throughout their career. The programme offers students a clear progression into advanced artistic practice. The programme integrates technical, vocal, dramatic, and physical training within a performance-led educational model. In addition, students are supported in shaping a clear artistic identity and professional profile to develop a clear sense of who they are as a singer and as an artist.

The professional context in which graduates build their careers is an important factor in the programme's profile. The programme notes that the professional landscape is complex and shifting. It demands not only artistic excellence but also the versatility and reflective skills to navigate ever-shifting structures, expectations, and pressures including calendar management. Instead of the traditional sequential career pathways, current career pathways are more fragmented and unpredictable. Careers comprise short-term contracts, freelance engagements and periods of self-directed study. In addition, the competition for young artist programmes is extremely high. The programme notes that these factors underscore the programme's focus on not only artistic excellence but also on building the foundation for the next step in students' careers.

The programme includes a holistic view of the singer, stimulating vocal, dramatic, and physical development while encouraging reflective practice, audition preparation, and growing professional confidence. The programme is focused on the synthesis of skills in opera production, in which artistic, technical, and professional abilities are brought together in a coherent and powerful whole. The programme notes that this approach helps students understand who they are as artists, how they work, and how they can position themselves with assurance within an increasingly complex operatic landscape.

The programme has an international character. This is reflected in the international field of opera, the professional partners DNOA collaborates with and the international teaching and learning environment (see also Standard 2).

Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are directly derived from the Dutch National Training Profile for Music 2017, which was developed and validated in consultation with representatives of the professional field. The national profile is based on international reference frameworks, including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the

Dublin Descriptors. The profile has been updated in 2025. The intended learning outcomes address six areas of competencies: technical skills, creative skills, contextual focus, research and development skills, communication skills and organizational skills. Both conservatoires take part in the consultative body of Dutch conservatoires and have been involved in the development of the new national profile. The programme translated the intended learning outcomes (and therefore the national profile) into objectives for the different courses (in the DNOA Curriculum Handbook).

Alignment with the professional field

Part of the programme's profile is preparing students for the changing professional opera landscape. The programme notes that opera is a collaborative and international undertaking and that strong networks are essential for building a career. Students gain professional experience and discover and forge new connections during the programme.

The programme also aims to maintain a broad network of partnerships at institutional, professional and societal level, to monitor the relevance of the programme's objectives, the quality of the opera productions and the development of broad professional networks.

Institutional collaboration offers the programme support for the complexities of opera production and cross-disciplinary experience for the students. This includes collaboration with the National Master of Orchestral Conducting (NMO) and the involvement of NMO students in DNOA opera productions. In addition, the programme works closely with undergraduate conducting students from both conservatoires and with the classical and voice departments of both conservatoires (for example for student pianists to accompany coaching sessions or students participating in performances). Moreover, currently a student from the Master of Music in Répétiteurship is following an opera specialisation. Together with Leiden University a joint course Politics, Opera & Philosophy is offered.

The professional collaborations include collaboration with the Residentie Orkest for the annual summer production, with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra for the performances at the annual Bredeweg Festival and workshops and an ongoing cycle of staged Haydn operas with the Dutch Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. The programme is also member of Opera Europe and the Next Generation Programme, to provide visibility and training for emerging artists in partnerships with organisations across seventeen countries and collaborates within the CAMPUS initiative at the Theater an der Wien.

Societal engagement is realised through public performances at the Amare centre for music and dance in The Hague. Here the productions are held, and students present their work and art to the public. In addition, DNOA is involved in the aforementioned Bredeweg Festival in Amsterdam, in Klassiek op het Amstelveld, the Dutch National Opera's Opera Forward Festival and concert series in different venues.

The review team also noted that critical friends, external examiners, guest lecturers, professional production partners, (potential) employers of alumni and other external stakeholders are invited to the DNOA on a structural basis, with the aim to provide an external perspective on (the quality of) the programme. In addition, the review team gathered from the materials received and the discussions during the site visit, that the lecturers involved are professionals in the world of opera and music, which creates a natural and ongoing dialogue with the requirements of the profession.

The DNOA aims to strengthen its connections with the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten (AHK) and the Hogeschool der Kunsten Den Haag, to create cross departmental collaborations. In addition, the DNOA considers installing a dedicated international board of advisors to support the long-term evolution of the programme.

During the site visit, representatives from the professional field expressed strong appreciation for the versatility and entrepreneurial mindset demonstrated by the students. They highlighted that students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and to become self-directed professionals. It was also valued that admission to the programme is based on individual skills and artistic identity rather than solely on repertoire, and that the programme actively responds to feedback from the professional field.

Considerations by the review team

Based on the findings outlined above, the review team concludes that the intended learning outcomes are well aligned with (inter)national requirements for the field of music. These outcomes are directly derived from the Dutch National Training Profile for Music (2017), which is grounded in relevant frameworks and has been externally validated.

The review team considers the programme's profile to be strong and clearly reflected in the teaching and learning environment. The programme successfully fulfils its objective of preparing students not only in standard professional repertoire, but also in developing the skills, adaptability, and artistic craftsmanship that will support them throughout their careers.

Even though the programme is very well aligned with the professional field and has ample connections, the review team supports the programme's intention to establish a dedicated international advisory board. Such a board could provide more structured input from the professional field and strengthen the programme's quality assurance processes. In addition, it could play a valuable role in promoting the programme and enhancing its visibility.

In addition, the review team supports the programme's ambition to strengthen its connections with other departments within the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) and the Royal Conservatoire / University of the Arts The Hague.

Judgement

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the additional documentation including appendices, and the meetings held during the site visit, the review team scores the programme as follows in relation to standard 1.

Standard	DNOA
NVAO Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Meets the standard

NVAO Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Corresponding MusiQuE standards

MusiQuE Standard 2.1: Student-centred learning.

MusiQuE Standard 3.1: Staff qualification, professional activity and development

MusiQuE Standard 4.1: International perspectives and experiences for students and staff

MusiQuE Standard 5.2: Health and wellbeing

MusiQuE Standard 6.1: Internal and external communication processes

Findings

The two-year programme comprises 120 ECTS and is organised in two semesters per year. Each semester consists of a lesson period and a production period. In the lesson period, the programme focuses on students' technical, dramatic and physical skills as well as exploring and broadening their repertoire to define and strengthen their individual profile. In both academic years, students follow modules such as Individual singing lessons, Correpitition / Language Coaching / Repertoire Development, Diction, Acting Skills, Embodiment & Performative Body, Professional Development & Audition Training and Master Research.

The individual singing lessons comprise one hour per week, 32 weeks per academic year. For their individual voice lessons, students can study with a lecturer from DNOA but also with an approved external lecturer. Students are guided in this choice by the Artistic Leader. The singing lessons focus on the further development of the student's vocal technique, as well as exploring and preparing the repertoire for both the performance and auditioning modules.

In the Correpitition / Language Coaching / Repertoire Development module, students work individually with a coach/pianist to develop their musical, interpretative, and performance skills. This includes focused attention on vocal and musical technique, interpretation, as well as language and articulation, delivered through two 45-minute sessions per week. During these sessions, students work on repertoire of their own choosing, alongside repertoire assigned by their singing lecturer and the Artistic Leader. In the Acting Skills module, students acquire and refine techniques such as improvisation, the use of tempo and dynamics, concentration of attention, body awareness and control, emotional transformation, atmosphere creation, and working in the present moment. Throughout the module, students also explore and embody a range of characters from operatic and theatrical repertoire in a meaningful and expressive way. The Embodiment & Performative Body module addresses the body as the instrument. Through somatic practices such as Body-Mind Centering (BMC), combined with principles from dance, the Alexander Technique, yoga improvisation, and physical theatre, students develop greater physical awareness and expressive potential. Students gain trust in their performative singing and learn to demonstrate spatial awareness, understand the relationship between body and voice, and to reflect clearly on their own artistic process.

The Professional Development and Audition Training module offers classes, workshops, and simulated auditions in which students build a structured and tactical approach to auditioning for opera houses, young artist programmes, agents, and competitions. Through this, students strengthen their professional identity and strategic self-management, learn to deal with competitive circumstances, to receive feedback from a wide range of practitioners and learn to develop a tactical approach to choosing audition repertoire both in terms of personal strengths and market expectations.

In the Master Research Module students embark on their research project. The research project addresses a topic that is relevant to their practice as an opera singer. Students are introduced to different types of research (for example artistic research and academic research) and choose the most fitting research method. Students are guided in this process through individual tutorials with their supervisor and so-called master research circles. The Master Research Guide provides students with information about the entire research process. The module results in research portfolio and a research presentation. This is further elaborated on in Standard 4.

Throughout the programme, students work on their Planning and Reflective Portfolio. The portfolio is used as a tool for students to develop their self-reflection skills, critical skills and writing skills. In addition, the portfolio is an aid in planning and effective use of time and for setting objectives (and strategies for achieving these) for the different modules.

The programme includes four productions (15 ECTS each). Each production comprises afternoon rehearsals and singing lessons, coaching sessions and independent study in the morning. The primary focus of the productions is integrating singing, acting and physicality in the context of rehearsals and performances of fully staged operatic productions. The productions mirror a professional opera company. Through the productions students gain understanding of the process of preparing and rehearsing a wide range of roles and gain the experience of performing regularly before the public in diverse circumstances. In addition, the productions allow for students to acquire, rehearse and perform a range of appropriate roles in their entirety. The productions involve guest conductors and directors from the international opera field. The social media channels are used to promote the productions. In addition, the productions are reviewed by Dutch and international critics.

The site visit confirmed that the selection of repertoire is based on the students involved and their vocal and dramatic development. This also implies that, based on the intake of new students, repertoire choices can change. The Artistic Leader is responsible for the repertoire choices.

The Curriculum Handbook comprises an overview regarding the intended learning outcomes and the different modules. The review team notes that this shows that all intended learning outcomes are covered in the programme and have been translated into (module) objectives for each module.

During the site visit, students consistently highlighted the highly individualised approach of the programme as a major strength. The amount of one-on-one teaching and coaching is considered exceptional and allows them to develop according to their personal needs.

Students feel well prepared for the productions through coaching, ensemble sessions, and acting classes. They also appreciate that the programme reflects real professional rehearsal processes, including time management.

Students feel also well prepared for professional practice, particularly through the productions, and exposure to industry professionals. Networking opportunities, such as masterclasses, visits from casting directors and audition training, are highly valued. The programme also helps students explore different career paths beyond traditional opera companies.

Students also described the programme as intensive, particularly during production periods, with a demanding schedule of lessons, coaching, and rehearsals. Adjustments have been made to create some flexibility, such as scheduling singing lessons in 30 weeks to allow downtime during productions. Students accept the workload as part of a high-level training environment.

Alumni whom the review team met, value the diversity of productions. They also reflected on the open dialogue within the programme, which ensures that the programme is tailored to their individual needs. Regarding the Master Research module, alumni noted that they were very well guided in finding a topic that matched their interests and professional development. Alumni remarked that more contact with the vocal departments of both conservatoires would be beneficial.

Teaching and learning environment

As outlined above, the programme equips students with the artistic, technical, and professional competencies required for a career in professional opera practice. It is therefore grounded in competence-based education and adopts a student-centred, holistic approach to teaching and learning, in line with the missions of both conservatoires. Teaching formats include individual and group lessons (such as in the Acting Skills module), practicums, and public presentations.

The programme fosters an open and reflective learning environment that encourages students to critically engage with their artistic practice and professional identity. This is supported through intensive coaching and personalised guidance. Additionally, the Planning and Reflective Portfolio and the Master Research module strengthen students' autonomy, reflective capacity, and their ability to situate their work within broader professional and disciplinary contexts.

In discussions about receiving differing feedback from various lecturers, alumni with whom the review team met, noted that this reflects the realities of professional practice, where multiple perspectives are common and trusting one's own artistic process is essential.

Students the review team met during the site visit, describe the programme as a safe and supportive environment where they feel comfortable sharing concerns. Students highlighted specific training, such as intimacy coaching, which helped them feel safe during rehearsals and (future) performances involving sensitive content.

Student guidance

In addition to the guidance from lecturers, the programme offers various sources for support. This ties in with the programme's aim to prepare students for the mental and physical challenges they may face in their career, including performance pressure, financial uncertainty, managing their personal finances and accounts and the necessity of maintaining vocal health. In doing so, the programme has a holistic approach which includes a balanced schedule to ensure down time and vocal rest, rehearsal and performance planning with built in free days and encouraging students to monitor their

own needs and to discuss these. In addition, students can consult the student counsellors at both institutions involved for support on practical and personal matters. Moreover, students can contact the confidential counsellor and international student advisors at both conservatoire. Both conservatoire also offer extra-curricular activities on for example mindfulness and dealing with stress.

Students the review team met with feel well supported both academically, personally and practically. The latter includes for example support in finding housing. Programme management is easily accessible, and additional support services, including student counsellors, are clearly communicated.

International character

The teaching and learning environment has an international character. This is reflected in the international student body, the international expertise of (guest) lecturers and in the professional partners DNOA collaborates with. In addition, students are prepared for international professional field of opera. The programme is therefore taught in English.

Admission

The legal enrolment criteria apply to the programme. Students must go through three rounds of auditions to enter the programme. These include an online application review (based on a CV, motivational statement and links to three operatic areas/scenes in at least two languages), live auditions before a DNOA panel (including four contrasting arias in at least three languages and a spoken text in their native language) and classes, coaching and an interview in the final round. The final round allows the programme to observe the responsiveness and adaptability of the singers. The auditions give insight into the singers' vocal quality, technical and musical proficiency, artistic personality as well as their creativity, initiative, and their ability to collaborate effectively within an ensemble. The review team notes that the audition process is designed to assess a candidate's suitability for—and potential benefit from—the programme, rather than identifying the best singer on the day. Alongside ability and potential, DNOA focuses on selecting singers for whom two years at DNOA can make a meaningful and transformative impact. The programme has no age limit to apply to the programme.

The review team learnt during the site visit that usually 120 students apply. Each year six singers are admitted to the programme. The majority of the students has an international background. Formally, each year six students are admitted to the programme, three registered at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam and three at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague. Regardless of the registration, all students can use the facilities from both conservatoires.

Staff

The programme is taught by the core teaching staff and a broad range of guest lecturers. The core teaching staff consists of the Artistic Leader, the Production & Operations Manager, the Head of Music, lecturers and voice coaches. The Artistic Leader is responsible for the overall artistic and educational content of the programme. The Artistic Leader also teaches the Professional Development and Audition Training module and provides students with (formative) feedback on their development. The Production & Operations Manager is responsible for all operational and technical matters for DNOA productions (and other events) and the weekly scheduling. The review team observes that

operating in two conservatoires places demands on the Artistic Leader and Production & Operations Manager time and agenda. Broader staff meetings cannot always be attended.

In total the staff comprises 2,9 FTE and the staff student ratio is 0,24. The provided information and the discussions with lecturers and supporting staff during the site visit show that the core staff includes experts on vocal and language coaching, acting and embodiment, performance, artistic research, professional development and audition training. The staff is supported by experienced répétiteurs.

As mentioned before, regarding their individual singing lessons, students can opt to study with a lecturer from both conservatoires or with an external lecturer. The latter requires approval from the Artistic Leader. Students the review team met with are very content with their lecturers. Students studying with an external lecturer noted that the lessons sometimes take place at the lecturer's residence.

Alongside the core teaching staff, the programme regularly welcomes guest lecturers. These include visiting vocal coaches and teachers, stage directors, conductors, and artist agents, as well as professionals from related fields such as cultural management and performance psychology. Guest lecturers are involved by offering masterclasses, seminars, workshops, and specialised teaching sessions. The programme notes that the involvement of guest lecturers from professional practice allows for students to deepen their understanding of the operatic field as well as to expand their professional network.

Lecturers the review team met with during the site visit indicated that they meet every four to six weeks in (online) team meetings, during semester evaluations and assessments to discuss student progress. Lecturers also noted that for the core teaching staff, professional development activities are available. Lecturers described the team as open and communicative, with space for exchanging perspectives. Lecturers noted that interaction with the other programmes of both conservatoires is currently limited. Lecturers find that increased collaboration could be beneficial, although this is constrained by factors such as time and budget. In addition, lecturers expressed a desire for closer collaboration between singing coaches and vocal coaches, to provide students with a clearer sense of alignment among staff.

Lecturers also noted that many of them work on a freelance basis and that contracts are dependent on the number of students. Tasks such as assessments and attending performances require additional time that is not always compensated.

Information and communication

Students are informed about the programme and the schedule through a yearly overview of the upcoming academic year. In addition, a weekly schedule is provided. If needed students can swap individual sessions. The small scale of the programme accommodates informal communication and contact between students, staff and management.

Applicants can inform themselves about the programme through the website and the social media channels. The programme aims to strengthen the use of these channels for other purposes as well. This includes for example more frequent streaming of events and expanding online engagement.

Recommendations from previous accreditation

The previous review team recommended the programme to invest in singing in German, and in diction training. In response to this, the programme incorporated language coaching in French, German, and Italian. All students now receive regular individual tuition in all three languages, ensuring consistent linguistic and stylistic training beyond the context of opera productions. In addition, the core staff has been strengthened with a teacher specialising in German repertoire and style. The review team also noted that the international orientation of the programme could be broader than the more traditional opera countries. Regarding this recommendation, the programme notes that the reality is that Europe and in particular Germany continue to serve as a key and influential gateways into the profession for many emerging singers. This is also reflected in the graduation data. The review team acknowledges the programme's position in this.

Considerations by the review team

The review team considers that the content and set-up of the programme enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Based on the information provided in the Curriculum Handbook, the review team determines that all intended learning outcomes are covered in the programme and translated into objectives for the different courses. The programme is comprehensive, robust, well-aligned with the needs of the students, and offering students a wide range of valuable performance opportunities.

The programme is strongly student-centred. The structure of the teaching and learning environment, combined with the programme's small and informal scale, fosters close interaction between students and lecturers and enables an individualised approach. The programme is flexible and nimble in tailoring to students' needs. The small scale also ensures that all students gain experience in full roles within fully staged productions, which the review team considers a key strength.

Regarding study with external lecturers, the review team recommends that the programme ensure all lessons take place on the premises of one of the conservatoires. This provides a safer and more appropriate setting for both students and lecturers.

The review team suggests the programme to incorporate pianists in some lessons, as this is highly valued by both students and lecturers. In addition, it suggests the programme to consider incorporating practical issues concerning entrepreneurship and business in the Professional Development & Audition Training module.

The review team establishes that the programme resembles the structure of an opera studio, and at the same time creates a supportive, personalised, and safe learning environment in which students feel encouraged to take risks and learn from failure.

The review team also holds the opinion that ample guidance is available for students (also with learning disabilities). The guidance is in line with the independence that can be expected of master's students.

The international character of the programme is reflected in the international profile of the staff involved, the international students attending and the international character of the field of study and research. The review team agrees to the fact that the programme is entirely taught in English. In addition, the review team establishes that the lecturers involved are experienced in English-language teaching to students from diverse disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. The meetings during the site visit showed that both staff and students have excellent command of English.

The legal enrolment criteria apply to the programme. The programme is highly selective and has an extensive selection procedure in place, which ensures that students entering the programme already have a high level of singing and are very motivated. The review team values that the selection of repertoire is based on the (incoming) students; this ensures that throughout the programme appropriate roles are available for all students. Regarding repertoire, the review teams notes that students in general develop a broad and varied repertoire during the programme.

The review team encourages the programme to actively collaborate with the vocal departments of both conservatoires, as this could further strengthen and enrich choral and ensemble-based work within the programme.

The staff involved in the programme is very committed, highly qualified and knowledgeable and actively involved in the field of opera. Lecturers meet on a regular basis to discuss the programme and students' progress. Moreover, sufficient lecturers are available to execute the programme.

The review team also observes that the programme currently relies quite heavily on the central roles of the Artistic Leader and the Production & Operations Manager. While their strong commitment and willingness to go the extra mile are highly commendable and clearly benefit the programme, this level of reliance may pose risks to its long-term sustainability. In this context, the review team encourages the programme to reflect on succession planning.

The review team concludes that the programme acted appropriately on the recommendations of the previous accreditation.

Judgement

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the additional documentation including appendices, and the meetings held during the site visit, the review team scores the programme as follows in relation to standard 2.

Standard	Master of Opera
NVAO Standard 2	Meets the standard

NVAO Standard 3: Assessment.

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Corresponding MusiQuE standards

MusiQuE Standard 2.2: Students' Progression and Assessment¹

Findings

DNOA's assessment policy is based on the assessment policies of both conservatoires. The guiding principles of the assessment policy are that a) where possible and relevant assessment takes place in a professional context, b) assessments provide understanding of students learning processes, c) assessments stimulate students in their development as a professional opera singer and d) assessments allow students to develop their own learning and to set goals in line with their ambitions and potential.

The programme uses a variety of assessment methods, including continuous assessment, written submissions and practical performances. External examiners are involved in the assessment process to safeguard objectivity, to prevent bias and to contribute to the calibration of the panel.

In the audition process, discussed in standard 2, multiple examiners are involved. All examiners submit their individual mark on a standardised form. These marks are collated to create a ranking. After this discussion takes place. DNOA notes that this ensures that examiners are not influenced by the marks from their colleagues.

The Professional Development and Audition training Module is finalised with The Annual Audition Assessment, which involves a panel of external examiners (industry experts) with no faculty involvement. The assessment of the Master Research module has changed recently. Before, the module was assessed by the module leader. Currently it is assessed by an assessment panel consisting of the heads of the Master Research departments from both institutions together with the DNOA module leader. According to the programme, this ensures alignment and integration of the DNOA research module within both institutions.

The opera productions are assessed by an examination commission. This commission consists of the faculty in conjunction with one external examiner (mid-year) and two external examiners (end of year). The individual examiners each complete the feedback sheet individually and assign a mark for Artistic Credibility and Technical Assurance. These individual marks are averaged to determine the final collective mark for the examination. The chair of the commission collates and summarises the feedback from each panel member, and this consolidated report is subsequently recorded in the student's dossier. The programme is currently considering involving the student's rehearsal process in the assessment of the production. The assessment of the opera productions would then include 1) developmental assessment of the rehearsal process by the creative team and artistic leader, 2) a summative and formative assessment of the performance by the faculty and 3) a summative assessment of the performance by external experts.

¹ Standard 2.2. is covered in both NVAO Standards 3 and 4. The part about student assessment, is addressed under NVAO Standard 3 and respectively in the same Chapter in the SER. The part for monitoring and reviewing students' progression is covered under NVAO Standard 4, where is also addressed in the SER.

In addition to the formal, summative assessments, students receive informal formative feedback from their lecturers and the Artistic Leader. This is part of the ongoing dialogue between students, their lecturers and the Artistic Leader about their development and work during the individual sessions. This results, at the end of each semester, in the so-called semester evaluation. During this meeting the student's overall development and progression during the past semester is evaluated and discussed with faculty. At the conclusion of the semester evaluation, the artistic leader meets with each student to provide holistic feedback and recommendations. This is followed by a written report concerning the student's study progress.

Students are informed about the assessments through their lecturers and the Curriculum Handbook. The teaching and examination regulations of both conservatoires outline the structure, content and assessment of the programme, including information about the appeal procedures.

Students the review team met with are aware of assessment criteria through the handbook. They, however, focus primarily on qualitative feedback rather than grades. They value receiving input from both internal and external examiners, as the latter reflects real audition situations.

Lecturers the review team met with during the site visit explained that assessments are based on both formal criteria and in-depth discussions among staff. Regarding the review team's observation that the written feedback is quite limited, lecturers confirmed this but also noted that students receive extensive verbal feedback and that the written feedback during the semester evaluations is quite extensive. Lecturers agreed with the review team that it is not always clear who has provided specific input in the assessment forms.

Lecturers suggested to incorporate feedback from the conductor and director of the productions in the (formative) assessment process.

External examiners, as the review team learnt during the site visit, are appointed by the exam committees and are therefore required to meet the same standards as internal examiners. They are provided with all necessary information and receive on-site guidance through the assessment protocol.

Exam committee

The exam committees of both conservatoires are involved in assuring the quality of the assessments. The formal aspects regarding testing and assessments are laid down in a DNOA specific addendum in the teaching and examination regulations of both conservatoires.

Both exam committees safeguard the quality of the assessments and the final level and appoint examiners. In safeguarding the final level, both exam committees attend a selection of examinations, review the filled-out assessment forms and check student's files. Students graduate with a degree from the conservatoire in which they enrolled.

During the site-visit, the review team met with representatives of both exam committees. It was confirmed that the exam committees attend performances and the accompanying assessment meeting. In evaluating this, the boards use an evaluation form. In addition, the exam committees study the Curriculum Handbook and the course descriptions to check the alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the assessments. The exam committees also review the marks given and compare the marks from the external

examiners with the final mark. It was noted the DNOA is currently in the process of digitalising the completion of all assessment forms.

Considerations by the review team

The review team concludes that an adequate system of assessment is in place. The measures taken to guarantee the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessments match the formative and subjective assessments within art education. These include using the more-eye principle, assessment criteria and written feedback. The review team values the involvement of professionals from the opera field as external examiners. This is also highly appreciated by the students.

The exam committees are active in safeguarding the quality of the assessments. Both boards check the quality of the assessments by attending assessments and checking the assessment forms.

The review team appreciates the revised assessment approach for the Research Module, particularly the inclusion of the four-eyes principle. In addition, it supports the process of digitalising the completion of the assessment forms.

Judgement

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the additional documentation including appendices, and the meetings held during the site visit, the review team scores the programme as follows in relation to standard 3.

Standard	Master of Opera
NVAO Standard 3. Assessment	Meets the standard

NVAO Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes.

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Corresponding MusiQuE standards

MusiQuE Standard 2.3: Students' employability

Findings

The final examination takes place in the second semester of the second year, during the production. During this production (and the other three), students demonstrate their ability to fully prepare and perform diverse roles in a professional opera setting, integrating vocal, dramatic and physical skills at a high level. In addition, students show that they are able to realise the artistic vision of the conductor and director and to effectively incorporate feedback from international opera professionals. As mentioned in standard 3, the productions are assessed by an examination commission consisting of internal and external examiners.

In addition to the final opera production, students also conduct a research project. As mentioned in standard 2, this research project discusses a topic relevant to student's opera practice. The research project results in a research portfolio that is presented by the student during the Master Research Symposium. The research portfolio is assessed by an assessment panel consisting of the heads of the Master Research departments from both institutions and the DNOA module leader.

The programme notes in the self-evaluation report that between 2020 – 2025 all students finalised the programme within two years. In addition, between 2018 – 2025 two graduates have changed their career path from professional singing. Many alumni continue in prestigious young artist programmes across major European opera houses or move directly into soloist roles in Dutch and international opera houses. Other alumni build careers in Dutch and international professional vocal ensembles.

The site visit made clear that success is not defined solely as entering an opera company or studio, but also as students finding sustainable and fulfilling career paths. The programme aims to equip students with the skills, self-awareness, and resilience needed for diverse professional trajectories. Personal development and wellbeing are seen as equally important as career outcomes.

Given the relatively small size of both the programme and its alumni network, contact with graduates is maintained primarily through informal channels. Many alumni continue to work with the voice lecturers and coaches they studied with during the programme. In addition, alumni return to attend productions and support current singers, alumni are invited to contribute to the Professional Development module, where they share their experiences after completing the programme. Alumni have also been involved in recent quality enhancement initiatives, such as the Critical Friend Review. The Artistic Leader often provides alumni with references, introductions and advice on for example how to navigate contracts and professional challenges. The programme notes that a challenge in strengthening contact with alumni is the lack of comprehensive records from earlier, pre-digitalisation years, as well as limited administrative capacity to formalise alumni engagement.

Alumni that the review team met with during the site visit indicated that the programme has given them valuable insight into the professional ecosystem. They particularly appreciate the continued support after graduation, including access to advice and coaching. Alumni are also invited to share their experiences with students. DNOA shares activities from alumni on its social media channels; this allows for alumni to stay up to date with each other.

Graduation files

To assess whether students achieve the required end-level and the intended learning outcomes, the review team studied 15 graduation files. These files consisted of the students' research portfolio, recordings from their performances in the productions and the assessment forms. The selection of these final works was made by the chair and the secretary of the review team based on the full list of graduates for the last two academic years. The selection was representative in terms of score. In addition to studying the research portfolio and the recordings, the review team attended an opera production during the site visit in which first and second year students performed.

Based on this, the review team concludes that the level reflected in these files is high and that students achieve the required master's level. The marking reflected the quality of performance and singing as well as the quality of the research projects. The review team concludes that the studied research projects are of good quality, engaging and show well thought out research methodologies. In addition, the review team was impressed by the quality of the performances presented in the videos and during the site visit.

In the assessment forms regarding the research, the review team noted some slight inconsistency regarding the standards on referencing of text passages and in how the papers are graded regarding the overall character of the paper.

The review team observed that the assessment forms for the productions do not include a rubric or explicit descriptions of what constitutes the different performance levels (e.g. sufficient, good, excellent). Discussions with the examination boards clarified that this is a deliberate choice by the programme, with the interpretation of these categories being addressed through dialogue during the assessment meetings following the performances. It was also clarified that written feedback is provided on the final, collective assessment form, rather than on the individual forms completed by examiners.

Recommendations from previous accreditation

The previous review team recommended the programme to structurally contact alumni and involve them in the programme. As mentioned above, alumni are involved in the programme in several ways: in sharing their experiences with students in the Professional Development and Audition Training module, attending productions and for continuous support after graduation. The review team finds this appropriate to the programmes' small scale.

Considerations by the review team

The review team concludes that the programme has a solid and suitable graduation procedure in place. In assessing students' final work multiple examiners are involved, including two external examiners. The sample of the student files and the production attended on site showed a high level. The programme demonstrates a high standard of artistic performance among its singers. In addition, the review team appreciates that the

research projects range from more focused to broader inquiries and are aligned with the students' individual ambitions.

The review team suggests that the programme consider developing rubrics for the assessment of the productions, to strengthen transparency and consistency in assessing the different performance levels amongst examiners.

The review team confirms that the professional success of alumni demonstrates that the programme's learning outcomes are effectively achieved. The information provided and the discussions with students and alumni show that they are very capable of finding their own path as a professional opera singer.

Judgement

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the additional documentation including appendices, and the meetings held during the site visit, the review team scores the programme as follows in relation to standard 4.

Standard	Master of Opera
NVAO Standard 4	Meets the standard

NVAO Standard 5: Facilities.

The accommodation and material facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.

Corresponding MusiQuE standards

MusiQuE Standard 5.1: Finances, facilities, services and support staff

Findings

The programme is offered at both conservatoires. In Amsterdam, the facilities include studios, rehearsal rooms and four main performance halls. In The Hague, the conservatoire is located in the Amare building where studios, classrooms and practice rooms are also available. Moreover, Amare is home to the Residentie Orkest and the Nederlands Dans Theater (each with their own facilities). The Amare building also has two restaurants, diverse public spaces, and an additional concert hall and meeting rooms (available on a commercial basis). Students can use the practice rooms, libraries and other facilities at both locations.

Classes are held in Amsterdam, and the productions are held in The Hague. During the site visit this was confirmed by the students the review team met with. Students seem to be satisfied with this arrangement.

Regarding the Amare building, in which the productions are held, the programme remarks that the concert hall is shared with other programmes, which places constraints on the time and space available. This impacts the rehearsals before the productions; the rehearsal periods are quite short. This was also noticed in the Critical Friend visit (held in 2025). The Critical Friend visit remarked that more time needed to be reserved for rehearsals on stage with piano, incorporating the intricacies of dealing with staging etc. In response to this, the programme has prioritised planning and increased the hours available to rehearse in the hall.

Even though students and lecturers the review team met with during the site visit are content with the facilities, they indicated that opportunities to perform in a fully equipped theatre and an orchestra pit would be a valuable addition.

In addition to the aforementioned services regarding student guidance and counselling, the programme also uses other support services from both conservatoires. These include Marketing & Communication, Finance, Student Administration, Human Resources and Quality Assurance / Quality Culture. The review team learnt during the site visit that the structure and organisation of DNOA requires quite some collaboration and coordination between the different departments / services. Representatives from Marketing & Communication of both conservatoires described collaboration during the site visit between the two institutions as organic, with responsibilities divided pragmatically rather than through fixed allocations of time or capacity.

DNOA aims to increase its visibility and in doing so hired a dedicated (external) social media manager. This has been helpful and the intention is to continue this. DNOA also aims to strengthen the programme's visibility within both conservatoires by increasing its presence at open days and internal recruitment events. Students are encouraged to contribute to promotion through social media content, such as "day in the life" videos, and

recordings of performances are made available for use in auditions. It was noted that professional skills, including self-promotion and the effective use of social media, are increasingly being integrated into the curriculum.

During the site visit, production staff indicated that production periods are intensive and tightly scheduled, combining rehearsals, coaching, and performances within a structured framework. Students typically prepare their roles in advance, followed by several weeks of rehearsals and a concentrated period in the theatre. Students also noted the intense effort required to fulfil the agenda. From summer 2027 onwards, arrangements have been made to include two additional rehearsal days in the Amare theatre during production periods. Preparation for productions is also addressed in ongoing (informal) discussions with students. In addition, a rehearsal document is currently being developed for students, incorporating input from directors and conductors with whom DNOA has collaborated.

The meeting with the support staff highlighted that sustainability is an important consideration, with efforts made to reuse and recycle sets and materials wherever possible. Collaboration with external partners and the reuse of existing resources are common practices, although storage limitations remain a challenge. The programme also expressed a desire to strengthen collaboration with theatre and dance programmes in this area but noted that limited time and capacity currently constrain these ambitions.

Considerations by the review team

The review team visited both conservatoires during the site visit and gained a clear perspective on the available facilities. Based on this, and on the reviewed documentation, the review team concludes that the programme, across both locations, has sufficient facilities to enable the delivery of the curriculum.

The review team notes that sufficient support services are available to the programme, including the dedicated production team at Amare. The engagement of an external social media manager appears to be yielding positive results and Marketing & Communication departments of both conservatoires collaborate effectively work.

The review team values the extra time available for rehearsals at Amare in the upcoming years. While the review team values the availability of the concert hall at Amare, it also notes that the venue may impose limitations on repertoire choices and restrict broader student involvement, for example in chorus or non-singing roles.

Judgement

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the additional documentation including appendices, and the meetings held during the site visit, the review team scores the programme as follows in relation to standard 5.

Standard	Master of Opera
NVAO Standard 5	Meets the standard

NVAO Standard 6: Quality Culture.

The programme has an explicit and widely supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development.

Corresponding MusiQuE standards

MusiQuE Standard 7.1: Quality Culture at programme level

Findings

The programme's quality assurance approach is based on the quality policies of both conservatoires. At the core of this system lies the cultivation of a shared quality culture that is founded on transparency, reflection, data-driven improvement, and active participation by students, teachers and staff. The quality assurance approach is based on the principle of balancing and connecting internal and external quality cycles. Within the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, the Lemniscate of Continuous Improvement functions as a shared framework for ongoing dialogue and reflection. The Conservatorium van Amsterdam is committed to a transparent and participatory PDCA-cycle. For both conservatoires, surveys, student panels, external reviews and artistic assessments and other quality instruments ensure that insights from all angles feed directly into curriculum development, policy decisions and management reporting. Together with internal enhancement plans and external accountability procedures, this leads to a loop of reflection, adjustment and verification. The programme notes that dialogue about quality is key in an effective quality culture. The programme also integrates international perspectives in this dialogue by inviting external experts as examiners and by inviting international critical friends. These external experts provide independent and formative input on the ongoing development of the programme.

The programme adopted MusiQuE's Critical Friends approach in 2025, with the first critical friend visit to the DNOA, as part of a Critical Friend Review cycle commenced in 2020 at Royal Conservatoire The Hague. This visit resulted in commendations and recommendations for further improvement. The findings were shared with the DNOA student panel, the exam committees, the education committees, the academy councils and the DNOA board.

Students provide feedback on the programme by means of the annual National Student Survey, student panels and on an informal basis. The review team notes that the results of the 2025 National Student Survey show that students are pleased with the programme, the content and teaching, the connection to professional practice and the assessments. The programme scores on average 4.3 (on a 1- 5 scale) on all these aspects. These scores are also higher than the 2024 scores.

In the student panels, which are held twice per year, students reflect on their experiences in the programme with the Artistic Leader and the Production & Operations Manager. Students receive information on previously identified action points, provide their own agenda topics and feedback on a variety of questions. The studied reports of the student panels held in previous years provided the review team with insight into the topics discussed. This included topics such as the audition assessment, the results of the National Student Survey, the Critical Friend report, the different components of the programme, social safety and wellbeing.

Based on the outcomes of student evaluations, DNOA has, for example, adjusted the programme's study load by discontinuing the module that required students to prepare an additional core repertoire role. The time and resources initially allocated to this module have been re-integrated into the Professional Development and Audition Training module. This adjustment has also enabled the programme to expand and enhance the roster of visiting professionals. According to the programme, these changes better support students in their transition to the professional field. The review team notes that the scores for study load in the National Student Survey have improved accordingly.

Based on the results of the Critical Friend visit, DNOA has renewed the use of individual course and project evaluations as an additional instrument in the quality assurance approach. DNOA is currently piloting the evaluation forms of both conservatoires in some courses.

The programme notes that involving staff in the quality assurance process can be challenging, as most lecturers are employed for a limited number of hours. Nevertheless, lecturers are represented in the education committees, participate in the Critical Friend Review, and contribute through more informal exchanges with students and programme management.

The review team notes that, in addition to the formal evaluation instruments outlined above, informal feedback forms an integral part of DNOA's quality assurance approach. This feedback is gathered through monthly informal meetings with students, debriefing sessions with core faculty following major productions, and other ongoing exchanges between students, staff, and programme leadership.

Representatives from the academic council and the education committee from both conservatoires noted during the site visit that currently no DNOA students are involved in these committees. The committees stay in touch with DNOA students by reviewing reports from the student panels and by attending student panels.

During the site visit, both students and alumni expressed that their feedback is taken seriously and can lead to tangible changes. This responsiveness contributes to their positive learning experience.

Considerations by the review team

The review team concludes that the programme has an adequate quality assurance system in place. Stakeholders such as the professional field, students, and lecturers are involved in formal and informal ways in maintaining and improving the quality of the programme. During the site visit, students, alumni and representatives from the professional field, mentioned concrete examples in which the programme acted on their feedback.

Based on the reviewed documents and the discussions held, the review team concludes that the councils and education committees are actively engaged and fulfil their roles effectively. The review team noted, however, that DNOA is currently not represented within the student delegation of these committees. While the review team recognises that this may be challenging in a small-scale and intensive programme, it suggests that the programme actively involves student representatives. This would ensure that, alongside the existing informal channels and evaluations, students are also formally represented in quality assurance processes.

As noted in the other standards, the review team is of the opinion that the programme has adequately followed up on the recommendations made during the previous accreditation.

Judgement

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the additional documentation including appendices, and the meetings held during the site visit, the review team scores the programme as follows in relation to standard 6.

Standard	Master of Opera
NVAO Standard 6	Meets the standard

Overview of judgements by NVAO standard

The review team scores the Dutch National Opera Academy programme's compliance with each standard as follows:

NVAO Standard 1	
Intended learning outcomes. The intended learning outcomes are appropriate to the level and orientation of the programme and are aligned with the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.	Meets the standard
Suggestions for enhancement: - The review team supports the programme's intention to establish a dedicated international board of trustees. Such a board could provide more structured input from the professional field and strengthen the programme's quality assurance processes. In addition, it could play a valuable role in promoting the programme and enhancing its visibility. - The review team supports the programme's ambition to strengthen its connections with other departments within the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) and the Royal Conservatoire / University of the Arts The Hague.	
NVAO Standard 2	
Teaching-learning environment. The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable incoming students to achieve the intended learning	Meets the standard
Suggestions for enhancement: - The review team encourages the programme to actively collaborate with the vocal departments of both conservatoires, as this could further strengthen and enrich choral and ensemble-based work within the programme. - The review team suggests the programme to incorporate pianists in some lessons, as this is highly valued by both students and lecturers. In addition, it suggests the programme to consider incorporating practical issues concerning entrepreneurship and business in the Professional Development & Audition Training module. Recommendation: - Regarding study with external lecturers, the review team recommends that the programme ensure all lessons take place on the premises of one of the conservatoires. This provides a safer and more appropriate setting for both students and lecturers.	

NVAO Standard 3	
Assessment. The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.	Meets the standard
Suggestion for enhancement The review team suggests that the programme considers developing rubrics for the assessment of the productions, to strengthen transparency and consistency in assessing the different performance levels amongst examiners.	
NVAO Standard 4	
Achieved learning outcomes. The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.	Meets the standard
NVAO Standard 5	
Facilities. The building facilities and material resources are adequate for the realisation of the programme.	Meets the standard
6. NVAO Standard 6	
Quality Culture. The programme has an explicit and broadly supported quality assurance system, fosters a quality culture and is focused on continuous improvement.	Meets the standard
Suggestion for enhancement: The review team noted that DNOA is currently not represented within the student delegation of the councils and education committees. While the review team recognises that this may be challenging in a small-scale and intensive programme, it suggests that the programme actively involve student representatives. This would ensure that, alongside the existing informal channels and evaluations, students are also formally represented in quality assurance processes.	

Conclusion

The review team concludes that the Master of Opera is a highly selective two-year master's programme for very talented and motivated singers. The programme provides a performance-intensive environment that closely reflects professional practice. Through fully staged productions, collaborative processes and individual lessons and guidance, students develop integrated vocal, dramatic, and artistic skills.

The intended learning outcomes are directly derived from the Dutch National Training Profile for Music (2017) and clearly defined. The programme successfully fulfils its objective of preparing students not only in standard professional repertoire, but also in developing the skills, adaptability, and artistic craftsmanship that will support them throughout their careers.

The student-centred approach is a key strength of the programme. The structure of the teaching and learning environment, combined with the programme's small and informal scale, fosters close interaction between students and lecturers and enables an individualised approach. The programme is flexible and nimble in tailoring to student's needs. The small scale also ensures that all students gain experience in full roles within fully staged productions, which the review team also considers a key strength.

The staff involved in the programme is very committed, highly qualified and knowledgeable and actively involved in the field of opera.

Assessment processes are well-structured and transparent, balancing formative feedback with summative assessment. The involvement of external experts contributes to objectivity and the calibration of the assessment panels.

The programme has adequate facilities available for students. An effective quality assurance approach is in place that ensures the formal and informal involvement of the different stakeholders.

While the programme meets all NVAO standards, the review team also has the following recommendation:

- To ensure that all singing lessons take place at one of the conservatoires.

Recommendation for accreditation

Based on the programme's compliance with all NVAO standards, the review team awards a positive recommendation for the accreditation of the Master of Opera.

Annex 1. Site visit schedule

Wednesday 4 February 2026

Time	Activity	Participants
18:00	Optional light dinner and welcome (Brasserie Amare)	Review team, KC & CvA management
19:30–21:30	DNOA Performance (Conservatoire Zaal)	Review team, KC & CvA management

Thursday 5 February 2026

Time	Activity	Participants
08:00–09:15	Travel to CvA Amsterdam	Review team
09:30–09:45	Welcome to DNOA / CvA	DNOA Artistic director, CvA Policy advisor
09:45–10:15	Preparatory meeting	Review team
10:15–11:15	Meeting Board, Management & QC	DNOA board & management
11:30–12:15	1-on-1 Coaching classes	Teachers & students
12:30–13:45	Lunch / panel meeting	Review team
14:00–14:45	Individual voice lesson	Teacher & student
15:00–15:45	Production support staff	Production & operations staff
15:45–16:15	Break	Review team
16:15–17:15	Students meeting	Students
17:45–19:00	Travel to The Hague	Review team
19:30	Dinner	Review team

Friday 6 February 2026

Time	Activity	Participants
09:00–09:15	Welcome to DNOA/KC	DNOA Artistic director, KC Quality Culture
09:15–09:30	Preparatory meeting	Review team
09:30–10:30	Exam Committees & Councils	Committee members
10:30–11:30	Break	Review team
11:30–12:30	External Stakeholders	Stakeholders & alumni
12:30–14:00	Lunch / panel meeting	Review team
14:15–15:15	Teaching Staff	Teaching staff
15:15–15:45	Break	Review team
15:45–16:15	Possible final meeting	Stakeholders
16:15–17:45	Preparatory meeting	Review team
17:45–18:15	Feedback meeting and closing	All stakeholders
18:15	End of visit	All stakeholders

Annex 2. Review Team composition

Name	Brief description
Jeffrey Sharkey (Chair)	Principal, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Glasgow, UK)
Lynne Dawson	Head of School of Vocal Studies and Opera, Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester, UK)
Henning Ruhe	Artistic Director, Gothenburg Opera (Gothenburg, Sweden)
André Aguiar Angenendt	Alumnus Master Opera, MUK University (Vienna, Austria)
Titia Buising	Secretary (certified by NVAO)

Annex 3. List of documents provided to the review team

- Self-evaluation report
- CvA Exam Committee Annual Report 2425
- DNOA Alumni and students overview 2020-2025
- DNOA example Audition round 2 collated marks overview
- DNOA example Audition schedule round 2
- DNOA example Audition selection marks form
- DNOA example Technical rehearsal schedules 2024_2026
- DNOA Research Guide 2026 1-1
- DNOA Student Panel Report 251212
- DNOA_Graduate_2020-2025(20.01.26)
- Information on DNOA Alumni tracking
- Information on DNOA and Decisions
- Information on DNOA Audition selection procedure
- Information on DNOA Productions vs Scenes
- KC Exam Committee Annual reports
- Study Guide CvA GENERAL_PART_ENG_2526
- Study Guide KC 25-26
- Assessment policy Royal Conservatoire
- CvA Test policy EN
- DNOA Accreditation Report 2020
- DNOA accreditation SER Template NVAO standards for existing programmes - MusiQuE standards 2025.07.14
- DNOA Alumni and students overview 2020-2025
- DNOA Audition procedure
- DNOA Casting overview 2022-2026
- DNOA Core staff biographies
- DNOA Critical Friend report Wheeler 2025
- DNOA Critical Friend response
- DNOA Curriculum Handbook 2025-2026
- DNOA External students in productions
- DNOA Guest faculty
- DNOA Repertoire 2021-2026
- DNOA Staff Student ratio
- DNOA Student Panel report 240620, 241211, 250623
- DNOA_SKILLS_COURSES_MATRIX
- DNOA-EER-addendum-25-26
- Dutch National Training Profile for Music 2017
- EER_CvA_2024-2025_ENG
- EER_KC_2025-2026_ENG
- European_Approach_for_Quality_Assurance_of_Joint_Programmes
- Example of a semester schedule (Jan - June 2026)
- Example of a Weekly schedule 2025-2026
- Final works
- NSE 2025 DNOA Factsheet (RC-CvA)
- Sample postproduction report (Double bill)
- Sample Programme Book Die-Sieben-Todstunde