

HKU EUROPEAN POLICY STATEMENT

The mission of HKU University of the Arts Utrecht (HKU) is to provide innovative learning contexts in which art can be practiced, experienced and researched. With 4000 students, HKU is the largest educational institution for arts, culture and media in the Netherlands and one of the largest in Europe. Across nine schools, HKU offers preparatory courses, Bachelor and Master programmes in fine arts, media and design, music, theatre, games, interaction, music and technology, arts education and arts and economics. Foreign students can attend as a Bachelor or Master student as well as an exchange student within the framework of programmes such as Erasmus+.

The educational philosophy of HKU is future-oriented and grounded in practice-based education and research. HKU seeks to make critical connections between educational, research and industry-based activities. HKU offers a challenging and stimulating educational environment that rewards curiosity and experimentation. Such an environment is essential for the growing creative artist and the budding creative entrepreneur.

The motto of HKU is: The Art of HKU – new practices, new solutions. This statement directly points to our connection with the outside world. Regional and international collaboration is a high priority for the creative industry and for HKU. In recent years HKU has entered alliances with educational and research establishments, companies, and governments in various parts of the world. These alliances comprise student exchanges, internships, lecturer exchanges, research collaborations, education and applied research and innovation networks and projects.

Internationalisation strategy

HKU's internationalisation strategy is an integral part of the overall HKU strategic plan of 2019 -2024 and contributes to the six key themes of the strategic plan which are: New Professional Practices, HKU at the Heart of Society, Lifelong Learning, Creative Technology, Active Participation, Learning.

At a policy level, HKU holds the view that direct individual experience with(in) another cultural, linguistic and educational setting is a very powerful and useful element in the development of a person's growth and enhances their professional, social and intercultural skills and employability. International student mobility is a direct and important way to achieve this goal, but naturally not the only one. HKU also focuses on an indirect, but more structurally guided approach by increasing the international dimension of the education itself, through international student and staff mobility, international curriculum development and international projects. In this respect the development of the idea of blended mobility is one of considerable strategic interest to HKU. The idea of short-term physical mobility that is integrated and combined with diverse virtual components is likely to become a norm for many students and staff within and outside Europe.

As HKU we feel a strong responsibility to educate hybrid makers who can contribute to today's society that is global and intercultural in itself. Our focus for the coming years is to enable all students and staff within HKU to acquire international and intercultural competencies, which make them more creative, confident, resilient, interculturally sensitive and aware. Internationalisation is a means to achieve this goal, and gaining international experience will boost our students' self-esteem and improve their international and language competences.

HKU strongly believes that students become better learners through international and intercultural experience. By meeting different cultures (through talking, making and learning together), students become aware of their own perspective, of their own (mostly Western European) lenses. By becoming conscious of this, they leave the programme with a broader view of the world and of themselves. Students are trained to enter the labour market openly and inclusively from their art practice, and students are allowed to discover who they are during their studies at HKU. HKU seeks to educate students who can respond to changes in society, are flexible, and are aware of the global field of the arts' learning and working environment.

Similarly, HKU also wants its teachers, researchers and employees to be aware of their own perspective and to be given the opportunity to learn how to properly guide an international classroom and how to offer inclusive education. By making, learning, developing, experiencing, sharing, talking to partner institutions / partners / international students, a teacher, researcher or employee becomes at least consciously competent with regard to their own actions, perspectives and didactic repertoires. A large percentage of the staff members who gain such experience become aware of the fact that they want to be trained more in-depth on intercultural competences in order to properly lead / teach an international classroom. We would like to see a growth in staff mobility in the coming years. We want to create this impact, among other things, through the Erasmus+ programme. Because mobility contributes to achieving these goals.

Inclusivity has been a strategic spearhead policy within HKU since 2019. We work from the principles of the "Diversity & Inclusion Code" (<https://codedi.nl/>). Our internationalization strategy complements this inclusion policy. HKU has also joined the Sustainable Development Goals coalition of universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. They have signed a letter of intent to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into the education programmes.

Research and Innovation

At HKU we have identified five research areas. These are frameworks rather than strict boundaries, and so one research study could span two research areas. We strive for cohesion and synergy. The research areas do not have a fixed organisational structure, but each area is linked to one professorship. A typical HKU research project has an impact on several domains: education, the professional field, society and/or art practice. It not only produces knowledge, insights and perspectives within the arts and art teaching, but also contributes to innovation outside the arts.

We see the creative process as an alternative form of knowledge production when developing research questions, methods and outcomes. The focus is research of making art, media and design, that allows us to take a fresh look at existing processes, to improve or revitalise them. The aim of these research and innovation projects is to contribute to the further development of the sectors for which we are training students. Many of our research projects are on the cutting edge of various disciplines. We encourage future designers, creators and producers to develop research skills to help them see past the borders of their own disciplines and create meaningful crossover initiatives.

HKU has been a successful pioneer in the Netherlands, participating in many international research and innovation projects and establishing strategic cooperation and partnerships with pan-European research consortia and other types of stakeholders. This has delivered rich research and educational outcomes as well as providing a strong basis for the further sustainable development of knowledge and innovation clusters, new networks and incubators and policy support at regional and European levels. These initiatives take place within the framework of programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Creative Europe and INTERREG.

Partnerships

An important instrument to achieve our internationalisation objectives are long-term and strategic partnerships. HKU has carefully built an active and a reliable global network of strategic partners from different sectors in Europe, Northern America, Latin America, Asia, Australia and Africa. HKU selects its partners based on their added value for institutional educational, related business or industries, research development and innovation. These alliances strengthen the 'knowledge triangle', linking education, research and business or industries in various parts of the world.

Joining forces with partners will enable HKU to have a bigger impact on society by sharing intellectual, material, financial and - last but not least - human resources, and to gain more focus and mass in our international activities. This also has a direct impact on our education and capacity-building and professionalisation of staff. The wider impact on society comes after students graduate and deploy their trained skills in a wide variety of cultural and creative contexts. We will continue our priority on exchange partnership with the EU, which has already led to a level of understanding of and support for the EU education area and systems.

International cooperation activities are usually developed and implemented in bilateral or multilateral (network) agreements.

HKU is an active member of many international networks such as the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), the art, design and media education association Cumulus, the Theatre Network IETM, the European network on cultural management and policy (ENCATC) and the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC).

Our new partnership approach (currently under development) is to ensure a bigger impact by increasing the focus and mass of our joint activities with a selected number of both university- and school-level partners in the EU and third countries. This will boost the numbers and quality of student and staff mobility, and lead to the introduction of new exchange formats such as international minors and international educational project assignments. The creation of synergies between educational and research collaboration within the HKU and with strategic partners will also be encouraged by inter-faculty and cross- disciplinary initiatives.

Over the coming years, HKU's new internationalisation policy will offer more flexible educational possibilities to HKU students. It will offer its students more opportunities to shape their own study path - inside and outside. Considered alongside developments around blended mobility, this offers the prospect of greater flexibility and inclusivity.

HKU is convinced that physical and virtual exchanges of both teaching and policy staff, with structured administrative and financial support, will lead to improvements of the quality, methodology and implementation of our study programmes, research projects and the efficiency of our organisation.

Structured board and school-level policy meetings will encourage cross-disciplinary and inter-faculty sharing and collaboration between staff members on specific topics, to benchmark and improve education programmes, research partnerships, themes and internal processes.

Collaborative educational and research projects will be prioritized to connect HKU lecturers and researchers to their counterparts at partner universities to increase understanding of specific needs and the national, regional and cultural contexts and facilitate joint participation in EU programmes

HKU is also considering what's the best way to involve national and regional stakeholders, such as local governments, companies and cultural institutions to share real-world problems and challenges that will be tackled by our students and researchers. They will create innovative solutions, new research/innovation questions and educational cases in international challenge seminars such as 'Imagining Tomorrow International'. These real- world cases could also be used to innovate our educational programmes.

Regular strategic meetings with selected strategic partner universities in the EU and third countries will enable policy dialogues between board members and policy staff. A focal point will be to obtain access to new European companies, local governments, and cultural institutions in the local ecosystems of partner universities. The ambition is to increase the number of joint applications in EU research and innovation programmes and collaborate with other stakeholders and national authorities to share good/bad practices, and support policy dialogues and improvements on the systematic level.