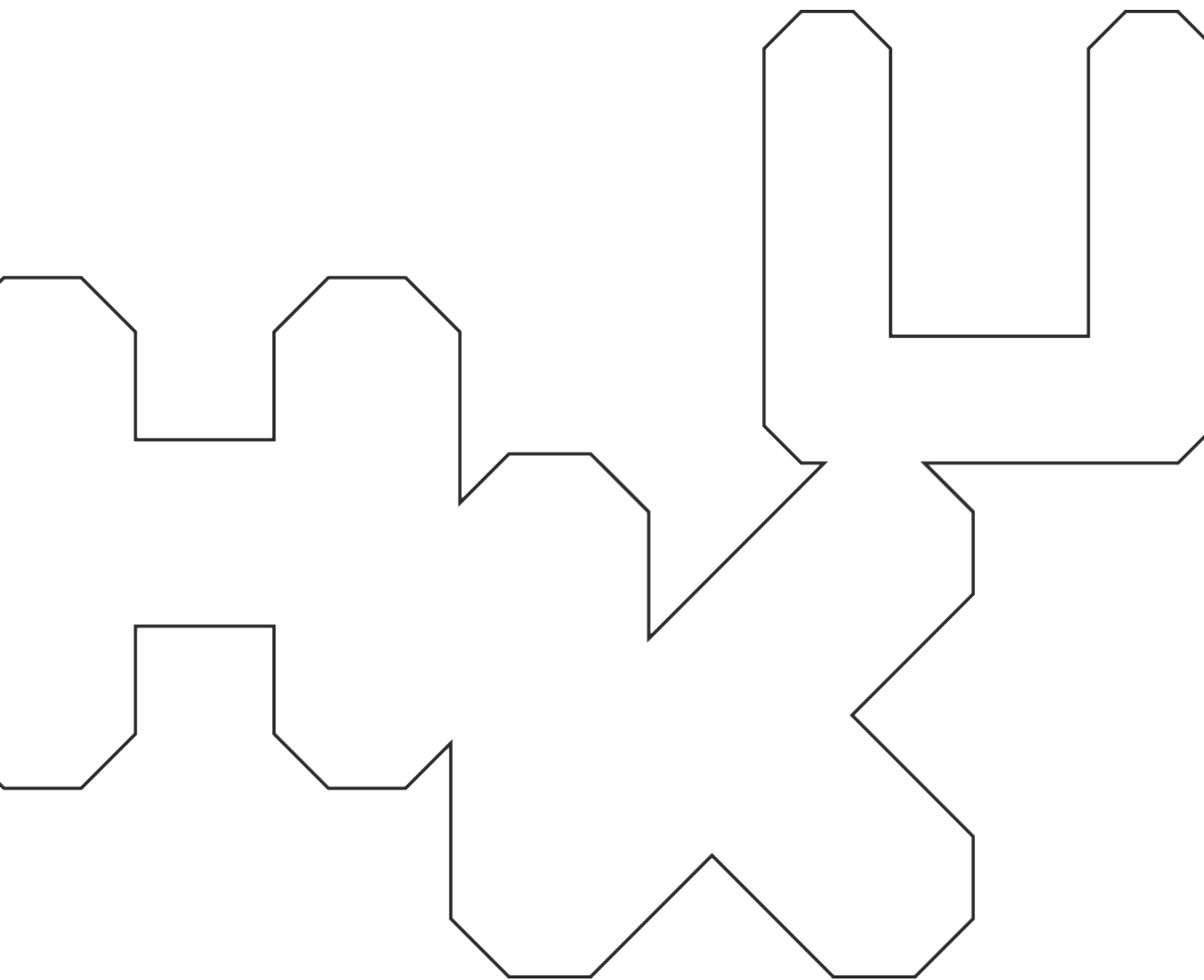




Development dialogue HKU Master of Arts in Fine Art and Design (MAFAD)

Key points and conclusions
22 June 2026 (online)

Participants

On behalf of the audit panel:

- The two external experts

On behalf of the HKU Master of Arts in Fine Art and Design (MAFAD):

- The study programme leader MAFAD – Scenography
- The study programme leader MAFAD – Fine Art
- A lecturer MAFAD – Scenography and member of the Board of Examiners
- A lecturer MAFAD – Fine Art
- A quality assurance officer - HKU OOI (reporting)

Introduction

On 30 June 2025, the HKU Master of Art in Fine Art and Design was visited by an audit panel of independent experts (peers) as part of the accreditation renewal process conducted by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The purpose of the audit was to assess the quality of the programme against six quality standards and to provide the NVAO with an independent recommendation regarding the renewal of its accreditation.

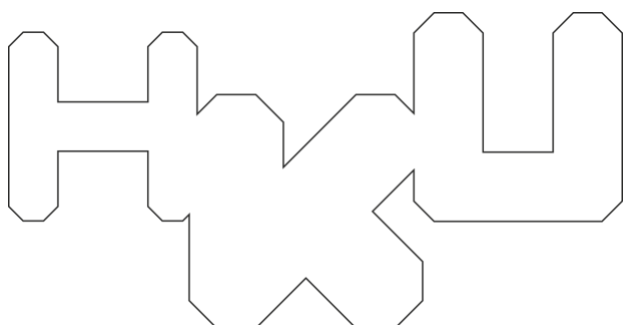
The audit panel gained a comprehensive understanding of the programme through its review of the programme's self-evaluation report (SER), the accompanying student chapter, and the supporting documentation. In addition, the panel studied fifteen students' final projects prior to the audit. For eight of these they also attended the exams of the students live.

During the site visit in June, the panel spoke with the programme's management, lecturers, students, alumni, representatives of the professional field and the Board of Examiners. These meetings completed the panel's understanding of the programme.

In its report to the NVAO, the audit panel concluded that the HKU MAFAD meets all six accreditation standards. Consequently, the panel issued a positive overall conclusion and recommended renewal of the programme's accreditation.

Overall conclusion:

"The panel encountered two strong programmes in which artistic research, as expected from a professional master's programme, runs as a central thread throughout. The competencies are well-defined, and the



corresponding coherent curricula offer a clear structure while allowing students sufficient freedom to develop artistically.

The teaching team is passionate and fully supports the design and content of the programme. Assessment procedures are well-organized, with the panel particularly highlighting the frequent feedback moments and the detailed evaluations of the final exams.

However, the panel believes that more collaboration between the two programmes could be pursued; a wish also expressed by students". (Source: Hobéon Assessment report, 16 October 2025)

Development dialogue

On 22 June 2026, representatives of the programme met with two members of the audit panel for a development dialogue, marking the conclusion of the accreditation process. Whereas the site visit focused primarily on evaluating the programme against the accreditation standards, the development dialogue provided an opportunity for the programme and the panel members to reflect on the panel's recommendations and to explore future directions for further development.

The dialogue centred on the two recommendations outlined in the audit panel's assessment report:

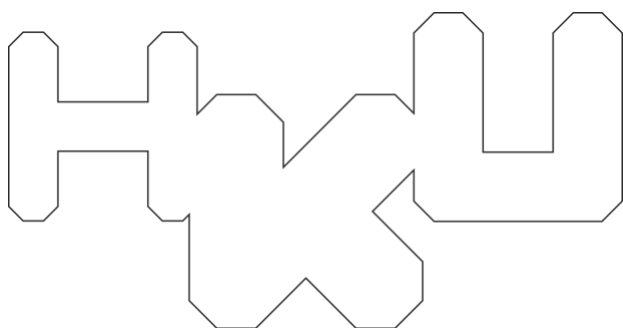
1. *Seek greater collaboration between the two study programmes so that students can inspire and learn from one another.*

The audit panel saw room for increased collaboration between the two study programmes, a wish also expressed by staff and students, and recommended exploring opportunities.

2. *Include more focus in the curriculum on 'life after graduation' to better prepare students for the post-study phase.*

The panel recommended that the programmes strengthen the connection between the curriculum and students' professional futures.

The dialogue provided an opportunity to explore the background to these recommendations and to jointly identify possible directions for further development.



Key points and conclusions

1. Collaboration between Fine Art and Scenography

Key findings

The panel explained that this recommendation was based on discussions with both students and staff during the site visit. It became clear that there is a shared desire to strengthen contact and collaboration between the two programmes. Students expressed curiosity about each other's work and believed that greater interaction would enrich their learning. Likewise, lecturers indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to learn from one another's educational practices and areas of expertise.

Although both programmes are part of the same master's programme and share a similar educational philosophy, collaboration is currently limited. The main reasons identified during the dialogue were:

- the organisational structure, with the two study programmes belonging to different academies (HKU Theatre and HKU Fine Art) and reporting to different directors;
- the absence of regular structural consultation between the study programme leaders;
- the physical separation of the study programmes across different locations;
- limited time and resources.

At the same time, both study programme leaders and the lecturers participating in the dialogue expressed a strong willingness to collaborate, provided that new initiatives remain feasible and do not create additional workload.

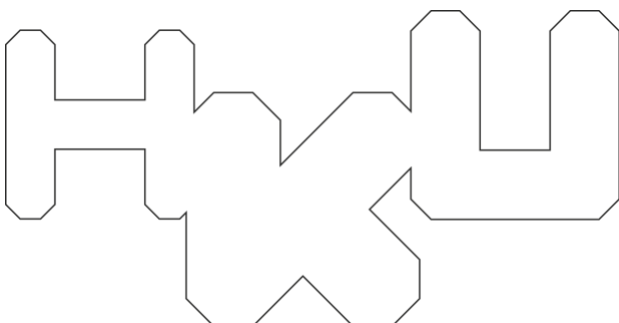
Possible directions for development

A number of practical opportunities were identified that could be implemented without major organisational changes:

- inviting lecturers to attend each other's team or curriculum meetings;
- organising reciprocal visits to educational activities;
- enabling students from one study programme to visit the graduation exhibitions of the other study programme during HKU Exposure. This could also be interesting for first year master students;
- further developing existing initiatives such as *Share Your Practice* as joint activities;
- expanding successful formats, such as seminars in which master's students Fine Art guide bachelor's students through graduation exhibitions.

The participants emphasised that collaboration does not need to be fully formalised from the outset. Small-scale experiments can help identify where collaboration adds the greatest value and may gradually develop into more structural forms of cooperation. This cooperation could in time also involve other HKU master programmes.

Conclusion



There is broad support for strengthening collaboration between Fine Art and Scenography. An important first step is to create more opportunities for staff and students to meet and exchange ideas. The audit panel encourages the study programmes to embark on a joint journey of discovery to further explore opportunities for collaboration. Sustainable development, however, will require institutional support. Several participants stressed that the academies' directors should be involved in order to make sufficient time, resources and organisational capacity available. It would also help if both study programmes shared the same location.

2. Preparing students for professional practice after graduation

Key findings

The second part of the dialogue focused on preparing students for their professional careers after graduation. The study programmes could also explore opportunities for collaboration in this area.

The study programme leaders concluded that considerable attention is already devoted to this area.

Throughout the programme, students collaborate with professionals from the field, learn how to apply for grants, present project proposals to programmers and artistic directors, and build professional networks. In addition, several initiatives exist outside the formal curriculum. One prominent example is the Fine Art Mutual Support Platform (MSP), through which students and alumni support one another on topics such as grant applications, artistic development, visa issues, employment opportunities and sustaining an artistic practice.

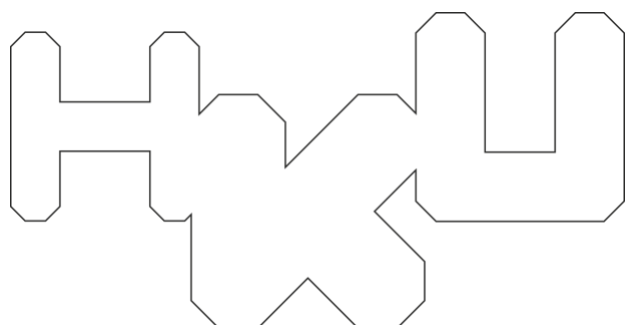
The discussion highlighted that students need not only practical information but also support in dealing with the uncertainties associated with a career as an artist. Questions such as *How do I earn a living? How do I sustain my artistic practice? How do I build a sustainable professional network?* play an important role.

It was also noted that students are not always fully aware of the initiatives already available. During the accreditation process, it became apparent that some existing activities are insufficiently visible to students.

Possible directions for development

Several opportunities for further development were discussed:

- extending the Mutual Support Platform to Scenography;
- sharing knowledge about the development and organisation of the MSP;
- developing joint themes for both programmes while maintaining separate communities where appropriate;
- strengthening collaboration with HKU X in preparing students for professional practice;
- involving alumni more actively to gain better insight into graduates' needs;
- creating stronger connections between students of the two study programmes earlier on so that professional networks continue after graduation.



Participants emphasised that preparation for professional life extends beyond entrepreneurship alone. Equally important are developing sustainable professional networks, learning to cope with uncertainty and finding ways to sustain an independent artistic practice over the long term.

Conclusion

The programmes already have a solid foundation of initiatives but recognise opportunities to improve their visibility and further develop them. The Mutual Support Platform was identified by both the panel and the participants as an inspiring example that could be explored further for Scenography. Increased collaboration between the two study programmes also offers opportunities to share knowledge and experiences related to professional practice.

Overall conclusions

The development dialogue confirmed that the two recommendations are closely connected. Increased interaction between Fine Art and Scenography can not only strengthen collaboration during the programme itself but also contribute to shared professional networks after graduation.

Participants concluded that the main challenge lies not in the willingness to collaborate, but in the organisational conditions required to support such collaboration. While there is considerable enthusiasm and commitment, limited capacity makes it difficult to embed new initiatives in a sustainable way. At the same time, participants recognised that meaningful improvements can begin with small, practical actions that build on existing activities.

Agreed follow-up actions

- Encourage lecturers to attend each other's teaching activities and team meetings.
- Further develop existing joint student activities.
- Explore the establishment of a Mutual Support Platform for Scenography.
- Further strengthen collaboration with HKU X.
- Involve alumni more actively to gain better insight into graduates' needs.
- Engage academy directors in discussions about structural collaboration, organisational support and available capacity.

The development dialogue once again proved to be a valuable enrichment of, and complement to, the accreditation process. The opportunity to explore a number of topics in greater depth together after the site visit and the audit panel's report was greatly appreciated. We would like to thank everyone for their valuable contributions and constructive engagement.

The development dialogue concluded with the observation that the meeting itself represented an important first step towards strengthening collaboration. Participants expressed their intention to continue this dialogue and further develop the ideas discussed.

