Governance philosophy of the University of the Arts The Hague

June 2025

Introduction

After issues in the field of social safety, it was decided in 2021 to set up a new governance structure. A director-board construction has been changed to a one-man board, with a Management Team together with the faculty directorate and the HR and Finance departments. In this MT structure, the decisions that concern the university are taken by the Executive Board and the directorate. The new structure was laid down in a revised governance model and adapted Board regulations. With the evaluation of the governance model in 2024 and the experiences gained in the first period of the new governance, it is clear that it is good to describe the spirit of the model in a management philosophy, in addition to the articles of association and board regulations.

This means that in a "governance package" consisting of articles of association, Board/directorate regulations, a RASCI matrix and the new management philosophy, the governance is described on all relevant aspects.[1] In the management philosophy, we pay particular attention to the way in which we work together in the MT and with the board and the directorate. This is of great importance. Developments in the arts and culture sector, society and politics, developments and opportunities in education, the need for efficiency and effectiveness demand a closer working relationship as well as standardisation and flexibility in increasingly complex circumstances. It is therefore good to put into words who we want to be, what we stand for and how we want to achieve this in collaboration, partly on the basis of our own formulated ambitions and strategy.

[1] This means that the document "Governance Model Recalibrated" from 2022 expires.

Context en kader

The Hague University of the Arts has a public task and a statutory mission. We therefore work within the frameworks of legislation and regulations, in particular the Higher Education Act. But the branch code of the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences is also a benchmark for us. In doing so, we work on the basis of the governance as laid down therein. The Executive Board bears final responsibility for this from its authorized authority.

Leadership and cooperation are key words for the governance of the university. It formally operates from hierarchical lines and the faculties and supporting services each have their own and separate responsibilities. In some cases, management can be done differently, for example through program or project management. But that is supplementary to the standard responsibility and not a replacement. The university is small and the challenges are big. The formal lines mentioned are important and even essential, but it is also necessary to give space to cooperation and networking. This requires leadership, in the form of joint responsibility for achieving the university objectives. It requires interaction and cooperation between the faculties and the staff departments must work in a more integral, connecting and mutually supportive way, and respond with commitment and expertise where necessary. All this also requires flexibility. In doing so, we do not only put line management at the forefront. Bureau Turner's advisory reports from spring 2024 expose that we need to clarify roles, responsibilities and tasks, precisely in order to know where room for manoeuvring is possible. Where we often work informally and ad hoc, this can be strengthened by clearly formulating ownership from the frameworks of the university. There is a need for sharper delineation and framing. In this management philosophy, we therefore lay down a number of principles. To make that successful, we are working on a culture of accountability, transparency and integrity. This translates into visible exemplary behaviour and a feedback and accountability culture.

Our management philosophy therefore outlines how we manage our university and describes the principles from which we work. It is a document that we can fall back on if there is any ambiguity about how we want to work. With the board regulations, the governance matrix and the articles of association, this forms the heart of our governance.

Who we are

The University of the Arts The Hague (HdK) is a monosectoral art university of relatively modest size (about 1,700 students) compared to other higher education institutions. The university consists of two distinct and internationally well-known faculties: the Royal Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Art, as well as the interfaculties ArtScience and the School for Young Talent. Since 2001, the university has been working closely with Leiden University in the jointly established Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) for PhD programmes in music, visual arts and design.

The university of applied sciences is governed by the so-called Management Team HdK, which consists of the President of the Executive Board, the faculty directors of the KABK and KC and the heads of the central HR and Finance staff services. In his capacity as chairman of the board of the university, the Executive Board member not only acts as an internal and external figurehead, but also as chairman of the three-headed top structure together with the faculty directors KABK and KC.

In the HdK Management Team, the joint policy is determined in mutual consultation. In this way, the developments within the faculties in the boardroom will also continue to be highlighted from the management perspective and central support. The strategic plan establishes and implements the university's strategy for periods of six years. This strategy is translated into faculty and department plans. In the MT HdK, the separation of responsibilities as described in the board /directorate regulations enables the institutional interests on the one hand and the faculty interests on the other to be formulated and represented by the different members on the basis of their own responsibility.

The why of our work

As an educational institution, we work on the basis of the mission, vision, core values and ambitions that we have formulated in our strategic plan and work as one university of applied sciences. Our Strategic Plan puts it as follows:

> *Our mission: Art is invaluable, both intrinsically and for a liveable world. The University of the Arts contributes to this by educating artists who can play an inspiring and leading role in the creation, development, performance and innovation of the arts in an international context.*
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> "We train the artists of the future. And we are ambitious in this. We support the students in the development of their artistic and creative talents and high-level ambitions. We prepare them to be able to function as dancers, visual artists, musicians or designers in a demanding and constantly changing professional environment and to acquire a position in society. We develop the curiosity, knowledge, creativity, independence and critical capacity of students and challenge them to constantly take new paths and paths in professional practice or, if necessary, to create them. We do this based on the following vision:
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> *The dynamics in society and the arts require artists who know how to combine high artistic values with an open, inquisitive attitude. Through education and research, we offer our students an ambitious artistic-educational environment, in which they can develop their qualities to the highest level and focused on international professional practice.*

We work from the strength of the whole and that of our strong brands and have an unambiguous task.

How we work

The basis from which we work is line management. The Executive Board is ultimately responsible and accountable for university decision-making. Decisions are made in the MT of the university, where appropriate in coordination (advisory or consent) with the participation council. Through the different perspectives of faculties and services, we guarantee collective integral approaches In addition, it increases the quality of our decision-making. The quality of our education and research, the perspective of students, staff and our social mission are leading in these considerations.

The Executive Board is responsible for managing the university as a whole. It sets the course and determines the institution-wide strategy. The board can delegate tasks and powers to the faculty directors or to the heads of departments by means of mandates. The starting point is that we assign responsibilities in the right place in the organization to strengthen ownership. This does require investing in leadership and task maturity in the university.

Research and education are organised within faculties. Within institution-wide frameworks, faculty directors are integrally responsible for organising (high-quality) education and research and for operational management within the faculty.

The central staff departments and the secretary of the Executive Board are responsible for the quality and organisation of the supporting business processes, they ensure coherence on the relevant themes within the university and they monitor legislation and regulations. They are responsible for the field of expertise of their department and their own business operations. They are responsible for the way in which university-wide frameworks take shape within their own organisational unit. Finally, they advise the Executive Board and the directorate on the themes relevant to the university and relevant to their discipline, and they have a signalling and monitoring function. Together with the other members of the MT they carry responsibility for (the development of) university policy.

Staff departments and faculties draw up annual plans, translate the ambitions of the university to those of their own department and focus on coordination and coherence on the whole.

Faculties and staff departments work on the basis of equality. Accountability takes place through the planning and control cycle of the university. Directors and heads of central staff departments are accountable to the Executive Board for the realisation of (annual) plans and the joint university goals. Three times a year, discussions take place via management reports about progress on financial and substantive results, based on the annual plans. The Finance Department is responsible for monitoring this cycle. The Executive Board is accountable for the realisation of plans and implementation to the Supervisory Board.

Directors and heads are responsible and accountable for their own unit, but bear joint responsibility for the entire university of applied sciences when it comes to our joint mission. For them, this requires a balance between the interests of their own faculty, the interfaculties, research, the relationship with ACPA and the university-wide interest. The interests of the university are leading where dilemmas arise.

We work together and learn from each other. The board, faculties and departments are actively looking for opportunities for mutual reinforcement, both organisationally and substantively. In this way, we are working on strengthening our quality culture. This also requires a cooperative leadership style that gives room to learn and make mistakes. We discuss, agree and hold each other accountable on all matters that concern our common interest and translate this to all parts of our university.

How we take decisions

Decisions that concern the university are taken in the MT-HdK. We formulate the formal arrangements for this in our articles of association and the board regulations. The core of this is that we work on supported decision-making, because that way we organize more wisdom in decision-making. We carefully prepare decision-making and involve the relevant stakeholders and the necessary expertise, such as IT, Communication or expertise in social safety. For more complex decision-making, we use a two- or three-stage model, from discussion to decision-making and we use the strategic advice of our support departments or advice where we can find expertise in the university of applied sciences or beyond. For each agenda item, we determine whether we discuss or decide and ensure that we pay specific attention to the substantiation and the implementation of decisions. Decisions are brought into the organization through the line. Where the nature of the implementation requires a different type of execution, it is decided to use networking, project or programme management. Where this is the case, it is explicitly formulated and argued, also in terms of governance.

We make decisions based on consensus. Where this does not come about immediately, we ensure a careful follow-up. Only when we do not make any fundamental progress do we ask our Supervisory Board to support us with advice. The Executive Board has the formal space to take the decision, is reluctant to do so and takes into account whether the short-term decision will have a negative impact on the longer term and on our shared values.

We see the participatory bodies as a crucial discussion partner in all themes that affect the university, faculty or department. We work by means of a central participation council that is composed of members of the councils at faculty level. At department level, participation is organised through study programme committees. In addition to this formal role, the councils and committees for both directorate and management also form a sounding board and advisory role about our policy and its implementation so that we can receive informal signals about what is going on in our university. We strive for continuous professionalization of our participatory bodies and committees.

Our students and staff are relevant discussion partners on all themes that affect us as a university and are actively encouraged to jopin thinking processes, through participation or through other forms, such as class representation, unions or general assemblies. We remain curious about other or new forms of methodologies to achieve sound decision-making.

We strengthen our effectiveness through effective organisation of the decision-making process; by monitoring, addressing and complying with our decisions and agreements and by becoming better at giving and receiving feedback.

We form a Home

We want to offer a university environment where students and colleagues feel at home. With this fundamental statement, we want to ensure a culture in which we feel safe, where we value, acknowledge and celebrate our differences and where we attach great importance to the well-being of our colleagues and students. For us, social safety, well-being, and diversity and inclusion come together in a ''Sense of Belonging'' policy that shows that every colleague and student feels welcome and seen. This also requires clear frameworks about how we treat each other and what we accept and what we do not. This translates into a clear code of conduct, house rules and rules of conduct, an integrity code and other ethical frameworks. We encourage each other to reflect on these themes and hold each other accountable.

Finally

This management philosophy requires maintenance. That is why we put it on the agenda once a year as a topic of discussion in our MT to discuss the way in which we apply it. In addition, this document will be recalibrated when a new Strategic Plan has been drawn up.

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