

Practical Guide

LAB 2 | GHENT

Target group

This lab is aimed primarily at artist-researchers engaged in an intensive individual project – so probably PhD or perhaps Masters students. The most appropriate stage would be early enough in students' projects for this lab to provide material input to their thinking.

Duration and intensity of the Lab

The duration of such an event is a major decision: it needs to be long enough to be effective, short enough to be practicable. A working week was appropriate in the 'bootcamp' case. This necessitated arrival for everybody on a Sunday in order to commence work immediately Monday morning; the uniform pattern of daily work must be established immediately.

Schedule:

Six months before:

Selection of subjects, identification and invitation of teachers
Issue of call for students

Three months before:

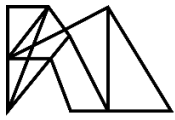
Selection of students

Four, two and one month before:

Individual and group meetings with teachers to ensure common understanding and purpose, to compare strategy and materials, and to determine practicalities

During the project:

After an initial introduction on the first day, establishing the spirit, aims and rhythm of the project with students, the daily timetable is uniform through the week. To balance the curve of attention and energy through the day, the sequence of taught subjects changes daily.



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09:00 – 10:30 Teaching session 1
10:30 – 11:00 Coffee
11:00 – 12:30 Teaching session 2
12:30 – 14:00 Lunch
14:00 – 15:30 Teaching session 3
15:30 – 16:00 Tea
16:00 – 19:00 Homework
16:00 – 19:00 Tutorials – consultation with teachers

External experts needed

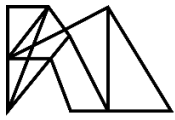
The selection of subjects and teachers is paramount; this initiative relies above all on the quality of the teachers. The intensity of this lab requires that the teachers each have an original but well-established pedagogical approach, and are able to quickly, sensitively and empathetically create an effective group learning situation. It is therefore likely that institution will have to look beyond its own walls to identify such individuals.

Group size

The structure of the Rapplab project implied a body of twelve students (two from each participating institution). In the event, Covid circumstances meant that eleven were able to attend. A group of this scale proved ideal: larger, and it would be difficult to maintain full engagement with every student; smaller, and there would be less sense of a student community and of the wide range of research interests they bring. Critical mass is important to establish the broad relevance of the subjects being taught, and for students to see the number of possible common threads that might emerge. A size limit is necessary to maintain intimacy and the encourage the full, continuous engagement and support for all students. The necessary close mentoring would also be difficult for teachers to maintain with a group larger than twelve.

Interdisciplinary potential

In its intensive focus on three areas of study, none of which directly questions of artistic research or the students' individual projects, the bootcamp is inherently interdisciplinary. It strengthens students' capacity to investigate their own topics by training them in three new sets of conceptual techniques – in



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this particular case, two from other disciplines but highly generalisable, and one from music but both strict and abstract.

Related musical disciplines

In the case of the three subjects chosen for this lab, we can see that Critical Reasoning relates to thought in general, Sixteenth Century Counterpoint to a major underlying principle of Western art music, and Creative Programming to every musical discipline as it now exists in the digital world. These would be relevant to artist researchers in any musical field.

Skillsets of teachers

It is critical that the teachers involved are not only experts in their field, but are expert and experienced teachers. This crucially includes the capacity to engage with a group of artist-researchers who a) bring a wide range of backgrounds, experience and interests, and b) have already established a substantial degree of intellectual maturity and independence if thought.

Availability of materials for the students

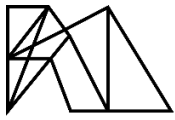
Any practical requirements or preparation are shared with the students in advance of the bootcamp, and they are reminded in the week before. This might include necessary equipment (e.g. laptop etc.). Handout summaries are provided at the end of teaching sessions, to avoid unnecessary continuous note-taking, along with instructions for that day's homework.

Preparation needed by participants (or not)

Preparation with the teachers and students is paramount – in terms of course materials and equipment, but also of understanding the ethos and aims of the project. However, no subject-specific preparation is required of the students, in keeping with the intensive, constrained nature of the lab.

Infrastructural needs (rooms, media, technique, ...)

Physical requirements are minimal:



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- a large, light, quiet, airy space of which the joint community of students and teachers can have ownership for the duration.
- Beamer, sound and whiteboards for the teachers
- Students require only laptop, pencil and paper
- Spacious table provision, so that each student has sufficient working space
- In this case, Arduino microprocessors (in cheap generic versions – a few euros each) and cable were supplied for all students

Suggestions of expected outcomes

The immediate outcome is that students should have an enjoyable, enriching, and stimulating week, following which they find new perspectives as they return to work on their individual projects. In the longer term, it is hoped that the skills acquired are sufficiently well-established to contribute to the expansion and coherence of students' thought and practice as they develop in their careers.

Student assessment

Monitoring student 'success' in terms of 'mastery' of the subjects being taught would be contrary to the ethos of the lab. However, careful, incremental teaching engaging the whole group, and the structure of planned homework with the provision of daily tutoring sessions to make sure that nobody is left behind, should ensure that every student feels they have satisfactorily and usefully assimilated the teaching.

Module evaluation

Evaluation is carried out in three stages.

At the beginning of the week:

A questionnaire interrogating the expectations and specific knowledge and experience of students.

At the end of the week:

A questionnaire interrogating the general and specific learning experience of students in the course of the project.

Six months after the project:

A questionnaire interrogating the further contribution this experience has had on students' further work.