Connecting Audio Students

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Context and problem

- Audio courses are often highly collaborative, but collaboration is often limited to the same institution

- Advances in software and networking technologies are providing opportunities for global collaboration

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Background

- GCU has two established Audio Technology degrees (Since 1995), approx. 150 students
  - BSc(Hons) Audio Tech with Multimedia
  - BSc(Hons) Audio Tech with Electronics
- Engineering focus featuring music recording and production, games sound, audio programming, acoustics / psychoacoustics
- Little international component before COIL project (only Erasmus)

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Background

- SUNY Oswego has an Audio Design & Production minor (since 2010), approx. 60 students
- 24 credit, interdisciplinary program
- Features music recording and production, broadcast audio, live sound for the theater, and sound design
- Students come to the minor with majors in Broadcasting, Music, Theater, Graphic Design, Cinema and Screen Studies, and more
- No international component before COIL project

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Commonality

- Although there is a different emphasis to the degrees, there is overlap in the subject of Music Production

- Both universities place emphasis on studio recording work and have similar facilities for supporting students

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Forming a partnership

- Faculty at GCU and SUNY Oswego developed a 6-week COIL course (implemented September 2014)
  - Contact between academics was made in November 2013
  - Visit to SUNY Oswego - big help
  - Most of the development work took place in summer of 2014
- Mutual aim: to better embed internationalization principles and offer some international experience in audio context

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COIL course

- Students formed cross-institutional groups for collaboration on a music recording assignment

- Objective: to produce a **demo quality, multitrack recording** with students collaborating on all the musical and technical aspects involved.

COIL course

- 6 cross-institutional groups took part, with 6-7 students per group (4 SUNY / 2 GCU)
    - GCU - 14 freshman (all aged 18-19), 1 international
    - SUNY -18 seniors, 6 juniors (most aged 20-21), 3 international

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COIL course

- Angel VLE- Used as a starting point for posting the project overview and objectives for both SUNY and GCU students

- Included a discussion forum where students introduced themselves as a group

- Discussion forum included a required video posting for each group where they profiled their group members and talked about the styles of music they wished to record for the project

- Students quickly moved away from Angel to the communication method that suited them best (Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, etc.)

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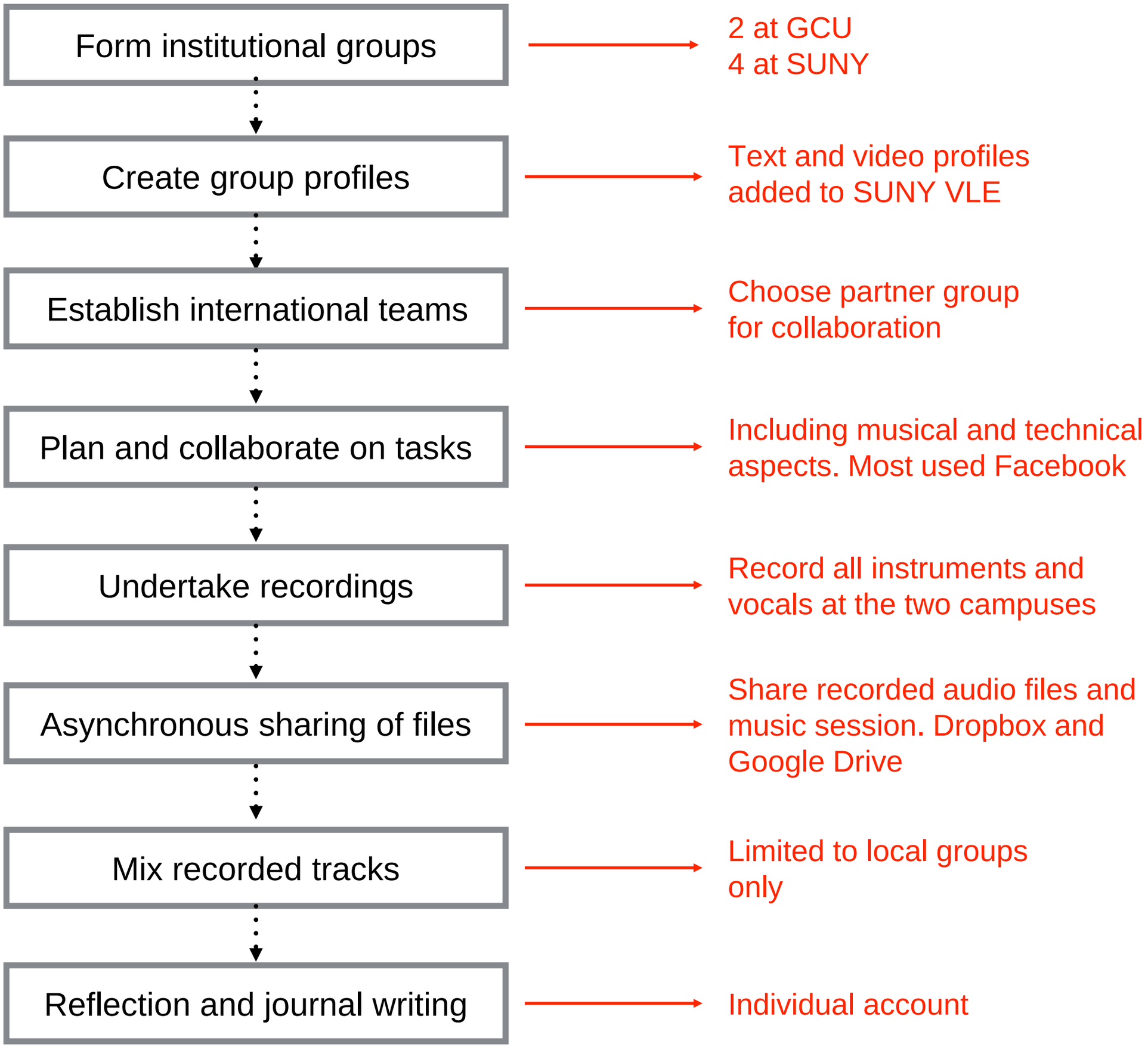
Form institutional groups
2 at GCU
4 at SUNY
Create group profiles
Text and video profiles added to SUNY VLE
Establish international teams
Choose partner group for collaboration
Plan and collaborate on tasks
Including musical and technical aspects. Most used Facebook
Undertake recordings
Record all instruments and vocals at the two campuses
Asynchronous sharing of files
Share recorded audio files and music session. Dropbox and Google Drive
Mix recorded tracks
Limited to local groups only
Reflection and journal writing
Individual account

Evaluation

- Two surveys (pre and post experience) were administered
  - In-house survey developed at GCU by Senior Lecturer Sabine McKinnon.
  - Off the shelf Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) developed by the Kozai Group. http://www.kozaigroup.com

KOZAI GROUP

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The IES examines three main dimensions of intercultural adaptability, and each dimension consists of two sub-dimensions:

Continuous Learning	Interpersonal Engagement	Hardiness
Exploration	Global Mindset	Positive Regard
Self- Awareness	Relationship Interest	Resilience

An *Overall IES* score is generated by combining the scores of the six sub-dimensions

48 questions centred on different survey dimensions

Report generated after survey was a good discussion point

Response rates

- Intercultural Effectiveness Scale
  - pre (100%), post (95%)
  - Approx. 10 minutes to complete
- GCU Survey
  - pre (84%), post (88%)
  - Approx. 10 minutes to complete.

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IES results show some weak evidence for intercultural effectiveness increase

	1. Self-Awareness	2. Exploration	3. Global Mindset	4. Relationship Interest	5. Positive Regard	6. Emotional Resilience	A. Continuous Learning	B. Interpersonal Engagement	C. Hardiness	Overall IES Score
Combined Pre N	38									
Combined Post N	36									
Combined Pre Mean	3.83	4.22	2.97	3.91	3.28	3.55	4.02	3.44	3.42	3.63
Combined Post Mean	3.98	4.13	3.03	3.94	3.39	3.63	4.06	3.49	3.51	3.68
t-test p =	0.04	0.22	0.44	0.43	0.18	0.28	0.26	0.43	0.17	0.2
Pre N	14									
Post N	13									
GCU Pre Mean	3.67	4.06	2.95	3.92	3.38	3.29	3.87	3.43	3.34	3.55
GCU Post Mean	3.85	3.98	2.97	3.99	3.42	3.41	3.92	3.48	3.41	3.60
t-test p =	0.05	0.22	0.47	0.38	0.38	0.34	0.26	0.42	0.32	0.30
Pre N	24									
Post N	23									
SUNY Pre Mean	3.93	4.31	2.99	3.91	3.23	3.70	4.12	3.45	3.47	3.68
SUNY Post Mean	4.06	4.22	3.07	3.91	3.37	3.75	4.14	3.49	3.56	3.73
t-test p =	0.12	0.22	0.39	0.50	0.20	0.39	0.40	0.41	0.24	0.26
	Increase	Decrease	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase

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What do students say?

- Student responses ranged widely-
  - Mostly quite positive (2 of the 6 groups)
  - “Some good parts, some not so good parts” (2 of the 6 groups)
  - Mostly frustrating (2 of the 6 groups)

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Common themes

“I learned how much work it takes to collaborate with another country. I learned that we have different communication styles and different work ethics.”

“It was good to work on music with people from somewhere else and figure out ways to find common ground when working together.”

“I gained insight into some of the struggles that I may face as an audio engineer. I also learned that I need to be more assertive with asked for something in a timely manner because everything is on a time schedule and it will not fluctuate just because something goes wrong.”

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Challenges

- The students met a number of technical and cultural challenges. These were considered ‘real world’ however.
  - Communication issues because of time zone differences
  - Slow responses to requests
  - Project specific time constraints
- Typical creative process issues related to recording and sharing “on demand.”

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Recommendations

- Most students reported that they felt pressed for time so we will look at other ways running the course over different or longer periods.

- Students tended to parse the project into “you all do this, we will do that” leading to less of a sense of shared community

- More regular synchronous learning activities could help

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Future plans

- This project may be better suited to more developed student recording engineers and producers

- Many students felt that the collaboration added a layer of complexity that was beyond what they expected in an introductory audio recording course

- Despite these feeling by students, the instructors felt that they actually performed quite well in producing demo recordings

- Future collaboration may be better received by students if it is offered as part of advanced recording coursework instead of introductory (foundational) coursework

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Student work example