Oulu Game Lab

The award-winning incubation model that turns talent into game companies

Gate system · Four-way coaching · Real business simulation · New jobs & companies

WHY A NEW MODEL

Education that creates jobs, not just fills them

Traditional game education

- Course-based, single skill
- Theoretical
- Prepares for existing jobs

Studio model

- Multidisciplinary
- Learn by doing
- Soft skills, but still for existing jobs

LAB model = startup DNA

- Multidisciplinary + multi-experience
- Business is one of the professions
- Prepares participants to create jobs

Mission: Create employment & new game companies

2011 Nokia cuts R&D jobs in Oulu → Games seen as the new growth industry → **2012** Oulu Game Lab opens its doors

Every gate: fewer projects, stronger teams

CONCEPT

2 people per team

How does the game work?

G1

DESIGN

4 people per team

Is it fun & how does it make money?

G2

DEMO

8 people per team

Does the demo convince a game company?

G3

GAME PATH

+ startup

Extra time: demo → launch & startup

Projects halve at every gate · team size doubles · team lead's responsibility grows · the industry judges every gate

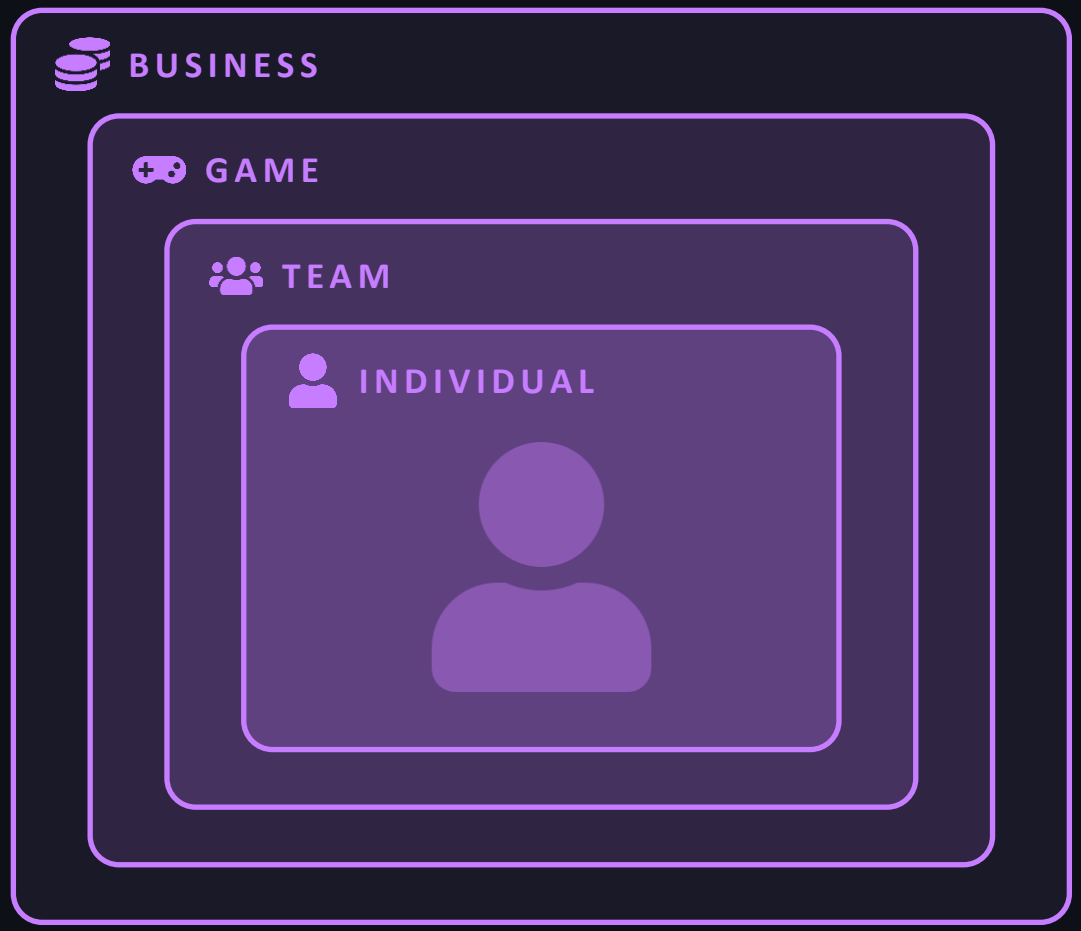
Fail fast, fail often = fail cheap. The model has run both as a 12-month and as a 6-month program.

Failing is part of the program

	GATE 1	GATE 2	GATE 3
Pitch	5-min concept speech, high-concept doc, paper prototype	3-min elevator pitch + 30-min GDD & business case	60 minutes with a game company representative reviewing the demo
Who builds the teams	LAB Masters pair individuals and teams	LAB Masters suggest, team leads bargain for who they want	Full responsibility on team leads: slackers nobody picks don't reach Game Path

Almost everyone sees their project cancelled. They vote which surviving project to join, and learn to adapt to change instead of fearing it.

Four layers grow at once, each with its own coach



BUSINESS *the startup*

Monetisation, marketing, pitching, funding

Coach: Business role coach Output: **Business case & funding plan**

GAME *the product*

Core fun, target audience, prototype → demo

Coach: Industry reviewers at every gate Output: **Playable demo**

TEAM *the future company*

Roles, leadership, team dynamics

Coach: LAB Masters → team leads Output: **Team ready to found a company**

INDIVIDUAL *the professional*

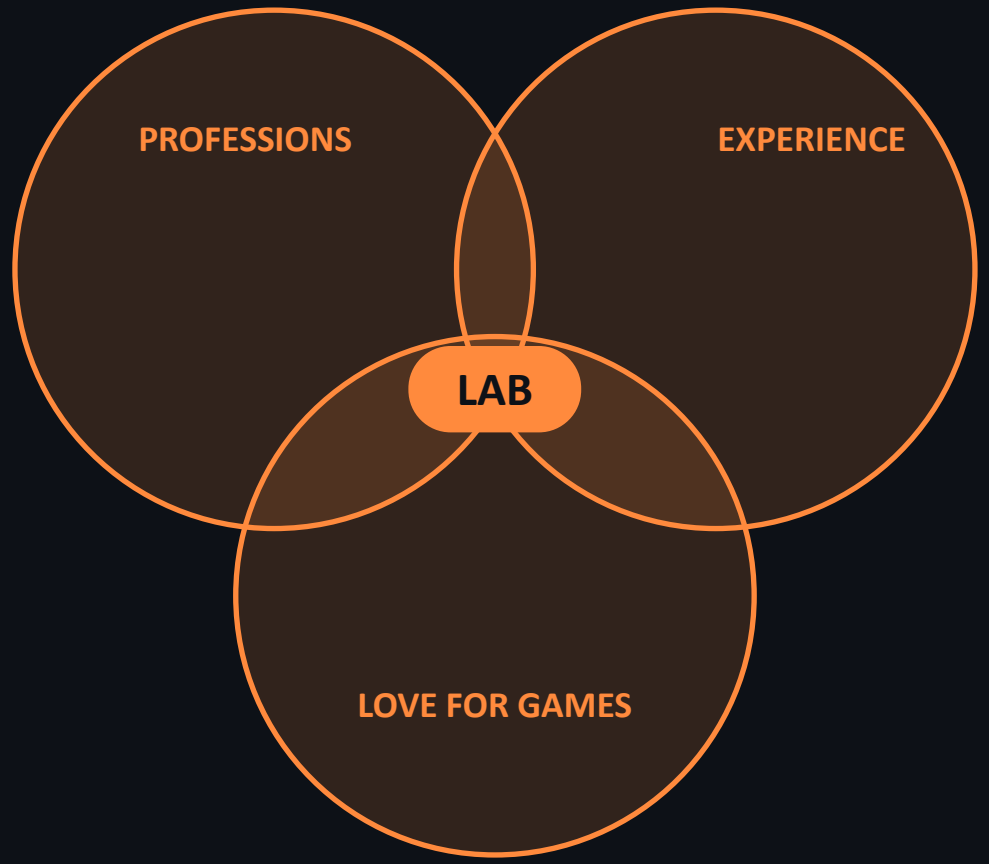
Deep skill in own profession, T-shaped

Coach: Role coaches: design, code, art, audio Output: **Portfolio & CV**

“Act more as a game startup than a school”

	A REAL GAME STUDIO	OULU GAME LAB
Ownership	Founders own the IP	**The team owns what it makes. The Lab owns nothing.**
Funding	Investors decide which projects get money	**An industry jury decides which projects continue**
Hiring	Leads hire the people they need	**Team leads bargain for who joins after each gate**
Constraints	Budget, milestones, deadlines	**≈ 6,000 work hours for a demo; gates are the deadlines**
Trust	Own office, own rules	**Participants hold the keys and set their own rules**

A real studio mix: professions × experience × passion



Industry professionals

Already working in games; teams often form around them

Career changers

Solid base skills from another field

Students

Studying the field, with base skills in their craft

Unemployed talent

A route back to work through a new team

Founders without a team

The startup drive is there, the team is not yet

The output is companies; learning is the by-product

30–100

participants per intake

The model has run with groups of every size in between

15

game studios, one round

Saudi Arabia

~3

new companies a year

Oulu, from university students alone

Recognised and exported around the world

AWARDS

2014 Best project to boost innovation in Finland

Arene

2016 Certificate of Merit, Innovative Youth Incubator Awards

Malaysia

2017 2nd best entrepreneurship & innovation model in Europe

ECIE

2017 World's best innovation & entrepreneurship model

GCEC

WHERE THE MODEL HAS RUN

> ***OGL was life-changing for me.***
> OGL alumnus, survey 2025

2 4 8 ▲

Four pillars, one goal

New jobs and new game companies

Gates

kill bad projects early

Four-way coaching

individual, team, game, business

Business simulation

act like a startup, not a school

New companies

the result, not a side effect

Let's bring the LAB model to your region.

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