

Robot Operating System 2

Lecture 3: Node Configuration

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Roadmap

1 Node Parameters

2 Launch Files

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Why Parameters?

Example: The Camera Node

Suppose you have to integrate an **RGB camera** into your architecture, by writing a ROS 2 node that acts as a **driver**:

- the node uses the necessary libraries to interact with the camera hardware;
- RGB frames are constantly published on some topic;
- during constant operation, you would like to **change some values** to tune image quality, e.g. exposure.

Why Parameters?

Example: The Controller Node

Suppose you implemented some **discrete-time control law** in a ROS 2 node:

- subscribers constantly sample sensor measurements, and callbacks embed the control algorithm;
- the control law depends on some **parameters**;
- you would like to change the parameters without having to **recompile** your software each time;
- you would like to have **other modules** to change such parameters automatically if need be.

Node Parameters

A ROS 2 node can have one or more **parameters**: values that can be specified at startup, changed at runtime, and used in the implementation.

The parameter system is **decentralized** and **built on messages and services**: each node has its own parameters and related service, and updates are **broadcasted** to every other node.

Parameters can be **listed**, **queried**, **described** and **set**, using either **CLI tools** or **service calls**; YAML configuration files may be **loaded** or **dumped**.

It is possible to specify what to do when a parameter update is requested by defining a **callback**.

A parameter may be **read-only** and its type may be **dynamic**¹.

¹Only from Galactic.

Parameter Types

From the `rcl_interfaces/msg/ParameterType` message file:

- `bool`
- `integer`
- `double`
- `string`
- `byte array`
- `bool array`
- `integer array`
- `double array`
- `string array`

Parameters CLI Commands

- `ros2 param list NODE_NAME`
Lists available parameters of a node.
- `ros2 param describe NODE_NAME PARAMETER_NAME`
Shows information about a parameter.
- `ros2 param get NODE_NAME PARAMETER_NAME`
Returns the value of a parameter.
- `ros2 param set NODE_NAME PARAMETER_NAME VALUE`
Sets a given value for a parameter.
- `ros2 param dump NODE_NAME`
Dumps the current parameter configuration in a YAML file.
- `ros2 param load NODE_NAME PARAMETER_FILE`
Loads parameters from a YAML file.

Parameters Best Practices

- Parameters are referred to by their **name**.
- Before being used, a parameter must be **declared** to the middleware: this is usually done in the constructor of a node.
- Parameter values can be retrieved **atomically** by calling an API, but accessing the middleware's internals to do this might be **slow**: it is best to define **local variables** that track the value of each parameter by being updated each time the parameter is.

Example: Parametric Publisher

Now go have a look at the [ros2-examples/src/parameters_example](https://github.com/ros2/examples/tree/master/src/parameters_example) package!

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Scripting ROS 2 Architectures

A ROS 2-based control architecture for a robot can easily get to have 20 nodes or more.

It then becomes critical to be able to **automate startup and configuration** of all the modules, or some subsets, also for testing.

That is what the ROS 2 **Launch System** is for.

Launch Files

Launch files are **Python scripts** that specify how ROS 2 modules must be **located**, **configured** and **started**. Their format is such that the Launch System can parse and integrate them when invoked.

Many things can be configured about modules in such files:

- console and text files **logs**;
- command line **arguments**;
- node **parameters**;
- **remappings**.

Targeted modules may even not be ROS 2 nodes.

Launch files may be **included**, so that large architectures can be started with single commands.

Launch Files

```
1 from launch import LaunchDescription
2 from launch_ros.actions import Node
3
4 # The following function MUST be specified
5
6 """Builds a launch description."""
7 def generate_launch_description():
8     ld = LaunchDescription()
9     node = Node(
10         package='PACKAGE_NAME',
11         executable='EXECUTABLE_NAME',
12     )
13     ld.add_action(node)
14     return ld
```

Listing 1: Minimal example of a launch file

Launch Files Best Practices

- Their extension is usually `.launch.py`.
- They are usually placed in a directory named `launch` that is installed in the workspace path during build.
- A module can have its own launch files but those for the entire architecture must form an appropriate package, whose name is usually `PROJECT_bringup`.

A comprehensive description of all the features of launch files can be found in [launch_files.md](#).

Example: Bringup Package

Now go have a look at the [ros2-examples/src/ros2_examples_bringup](https://github.com/ros2/examples/tree/master/src/ros2_examples_bringup) package!