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The First Calcium-Catalysed Nazarov Cyclisation

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Supporting Information

Contents

1	General Information	S-2
2	Synthesis of Nazarov Precursors	S-3
2.1	Synthesis of Substrates 1a–j	S-3
2.1.1	Synthesis of the Knoevenagel Precursor S4	S-3
2.1.2	General Procedure for the Knoevenagel Condensation of S4 – GP1	S-4
2.2	Synthesis of 3	S-8
2.3	Synthesis of Substrates 4a–c	S-9
2.3.1	Synthesis of the Knoevenagel Precursor S7	S-9
2.3.2	Knoevenagel Condensation of S7	S-10
3	Nazarov Cyclisations	S-12
3.1	General Procedure for the Screening of the Calcium Catalysts	S-12
3.2	Synthesis of Products 2a–j	S-13
3.2.1	General Procedure for the Nazarov Cyclisation of Substrates 1a–j	S-13
	and 5a–C – GP2	
4	Kinetic Studies by React-IR	S-19
4.1	Overlaid IR Spectra of 1a (dark blue) and 2a (light blue)	S-19
4.2	General Procedure for Kinetic Experiments	S-19
5	Lewis Acidity Studies	S-20
6	Binding Studies	S-22
7	DOSY Studies	S-25
8	X–Ray Structures	S-26
9	¹ H and ¹³ C NMR Spectra	S-28

1. General Information

All required fine chemicals were used directly without purification unless mentioned. All airand water-sensitive reactions were carried out in flame-dried glassware under nitrogen or argon atmosphere using standard Schlenk manifold technique. ¹H, ¹³C and ¹⁹F Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectra were acquired at various field strengths as indicated, and were referenced to CHCl₃ (7.27 and 77.0 ppm for ¹H and ¹³C respectively). Chemical shifts (δ) are quoted in parts per million (ppm) and coupling constants (*J*) are in Hertz (Hz). High resolution mass spectra were recorded using Electron Spray Ionization (ESI). All IR data was obtained on a Perkin-Elmer Spectrum One FT-IR spectrometer. Analytical TLC: aluminium backed plates pre-coated (0.25 mm) with Merck Silica Gel 60 F254. Compounds were visualized by exposure to UV-light or and/or developed with phosphomolybdic acid or KMnO₄ stains. Flash column chromatography was performed using Aldrich Silica Gel 60 (40–63 µm). Solvents were purified by standard methods. Diastereomeric ratios were detrmined by ¹H NMR analysis of the crude reaction mixture.

All reaction progressions were recorded using a Mettler Toledo ReactIR 45m FTIR with a fiber optic probe and DiComp ATR window. IR spectra were acquired every 15 s. Product and reagent concentrations were measured as peak heights to the baseline after applying a second-derivative function to all spectra. Absorbance values were converted to molar concentration based on IR calibrations generated from standard samples of known concentrations.

2. Synthesis of Nazarov Precursors

2.1 Synthesis of Substrates 1a-j

2.1.1 Synthesis of the Knoevenagel Precursor S4



N-Methoxy-*N*-methyl-1*H*-indole-2-carboxamide (S2)

A solution of **S1** (3.5 g, 21.80 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in CH₂Cl₂ (150 mL) was treated with DCC (4.5 g, 21.80 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), *N*,*O*-dimethylhydroxylamine hydrochloride (2.1 g, 21.8 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) and Et₃N (3.1 mL, 21.80 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) and it was stirred for 3 h at room temperature. H₂O (100 mL) was added, the layers were separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (3 x 30 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine (30 mL), dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel, eluting with *n*-hexane:EtOAc (9:1), gave **S2** (3.4 g, 76%) as an amorphous solid; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.33 (1H, s), 7.70 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 0.9 Hz), 7.44 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 0.9 Hz), 7.35-7.26 (1H, m), 7.25-7.23 (1H, m), 7.14 (1H, m), 3.85 (3H, s), 3.44 (3H, s). LRMS *m/z* (ESI): 204 (M+), 144, 116. Data in accordance with the literature.¹

1-(1*H*-Indol-2-yl)ethan-1-one (S3)

A solution of **S2** (3.4 g, 16.51 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in THF (165 mL) was cooled to -78 °C and treated with MeLi (26.0 mL, 41.28 mmol, 1.6 M in Et₂O, 2.5 equiv.). The mixture was stirred at -78 °C for 1 h and then H₂O (100 mL) was added. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed with Et₂O (3 x 30 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine (30 mL), dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel, eluting with *n*-hexane:EtOAc (9:1 \rightarrow 8:2), gave **S3** (2.0 g, 75%) as an amorphous solid; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.05 (1H, s), 7.72 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 0.9 Hz), 7.42 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 1.0 Hz), 7.35 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.21 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.2, 0.9 Hz), 7.16 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 2.60 (3H, s). Data in accordance with the literature.²

Methyl 3-(1H-Indol-2-yl)-3-oxopropanoate (S4)

A solution of **S3** (2.0 g, 12.45 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in THF (45 mL) was slowly treated with NaH (0.4 g, 16.19 mmol, 60% in mineral oil, 1.3 equiv) and KH (1.9 g, 16.19 mmol, 30% in mineral oil, 1.3 equiv.). The reaction mixture was warmed to 40 °C and stirred overnight. The

¹ M. Rawat, W. D. Wulff Org. Lett. 2004, 6, 329.

² Y. Zhao, D. Li, L. Zhao, J. Zhang Synthesis 2011, 873.

mixture was cooled to 0 °C and 1M HCl (10 mL) was added dropwise. H₂O (50 mL) was added and the layers were separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with Et₂O (3 x 20 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine (20 mL), dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel, eluting with *n*-hexane:EtOAc (9:1 \rightarrow 8:2) gave **S4** (2.5 g, 92%) as an amorphous solid; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.26 (s, 1H), 7.70 (dd, *J* = 8.2, 0.9 Hz, 1H), 7.43 (dd, *J* = 8.4, 0.8 Hz, 1H), 7.39-7.33 (m, 1H), 7.24 (dd, *J* = 2.1, 1.0 Hz, 1H), 7.20-7.12 (m, 1H), 3.98 (s, 2H), 3.75 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 184.4, 167.7, 137.9, 134.4, 127.5, 127.1, 123.4, 121.3, 112.4, 111.1, 52.7, 45.3. Data in accordance with the literature.³

2.1.2 General Procedure for the Knoevenagel Condensation of S4 – GP1



A 0.3M solution of **S4** (1.0 equiv.) in CH_2Cl_2 was treated with piperidine (1.2 equiv.), AcOH (1.0 equiv.) and powdered molecular sieves (1 g mol⁻¹). The resultant mixture was stirred for 30 min before the aldehyde (1.2 equiv.) was added dropwise. The mixture was stirred overnight, filtered and adsorbed on silica. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel gave the desired product.

Methyl 2-(1H-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-phenylacrylate (1a)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 6.91 mmol) **1a** (1.7 g, 80%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E:Z* 97:3; R_f 0.54 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 150-155 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/ cm⁻¹ 3301, 2953, 1713, 1634, 1612, 1520, 1480, 1418, 1340, 1239, 1200, 1167, 1141, 1001, 903; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.30 (1H, s, NH), 8.02 (1H, s), 7.59 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.2, 0.9 Hz), 7.45-7.39 (3H, m), 7.34 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.26-7.20 (3H, m), 7.10 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 6.9, 1.0 Hz), 7.02 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.1, 1.0 Hz), 3.77 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.8 (C=O), 165.6 (C=O), 143.7 (CH), 138.2 (C), 134.9 (C), 132.9 (C), 130.6 (CH), 130.4 (2 x CH), 130.2 (C), 128.9 (2 x CH), 127.6 (C), 127.15 (CH), 123.6 (CH), 121.0 (CH), 112.9

³ J. A. Malona, J. M. Colbourne, A. J. Frontier Org. Lett. 2006, 8, 5661.

(CH), 112.4 (CH), 52.8 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 306.1125 C₁₉H₁₆NO₃ requires 306.1125.

Crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were obtained by slow evaporation of a Et_2O -pentane solution of **1a**.

Methyl 2-(1H-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate (1b)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 1.38 mmol) **1b** (410 mg, 89%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E:Z* 95:5; $R_f 0.41$ [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 147-149 °C, FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3324, 1712, 1618, 1600, 1512, 1435, 1342, 1306, 1255, 1204, 1165, 1140, 1018, 905; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.27 (1H, s, NH), 7.95 (1H, s), 7.59 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.2, 0.9 Hz), 7.43 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.3, 0.7 Hz), 7.36 (2H, d, *J* = 8.9 Hz), 7.34 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.10 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 6.9, 1.0 Hz), 7.04 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.2, 1.0 Hz), 6.72 (2H, d, *J* = 8.9 Hz), 3.75 (3H, s), 3.71 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 187.4 (C=O), 165.9 (C=O), 161.5 (C), 143.4 (CH), 138.2 (C), 135.1 (C), 132.5 (2 x CH), 127.7 (C), 127.5 (CH), 127.1 (CH), 125.5 (C), 123.1 (C), 121.2 (CH), 114.4 (2 x CH), 112.8 (CH), 112.4 (CH), 55.4 (CH₃), 52.7 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 336.1230 C₂₀H₁₈NO₄ requires 336.1230. Crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were obtained by slow evaporation of a Et₂O-pentane solution of **1b**.

Methyl 2-(1*H*-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(4-bromophenyl)acrylate (1c)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 2.30 mmol) **1c** (770 mg, 87%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E*:*Z* 91:9; R_f 0.55 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 165-169 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3336, 1707, 1615, 1586, 1517, 1488, 1432, 1341, 1250, 1199, 1165, 1140, 1073, 1010, 904; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.31 (1H, s, NH), 7.94 (1H, s), 7.60 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 0.9 Hz), 7.44 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 1.0 Hz), 7.38-7.33 (1H, m), 7.35 (2H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 7.27 (2H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 7.12 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 6.9, 1.0 Hz), 7.02 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.2, 1.0 Hz), 3.78 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.3 (C=O), 165.3 (C=O), 142.1 (CH), 138.2 (C), 134.7 (C), 132.1 (2 x CH), 131.7 (C), 131.5 (2 x CH), 130.8 (C), 127.5 (CH), 127.2 (C), 125.1 (C), 123.5 (CH), 121.3 (CH), 112.9 (CH), 112.4 (CH), 52.8 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MNa⁺, 406.0038 C₁₉H₁₄BrNNaO₃ requires 406.0049.

Crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were obtained by slow evaporation of a Et_2O -pentane solution of 1c.

Methyl 2-(1H-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(4-fluorophenyl)acrylate (1d)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 2.30 mmol) 1d (0.60 g, 81%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E:Z* 93:7; R_f 0.54 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p 164-170 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹

3344, 1712, 1635, 1618, 1596, 1432, 1257, 1228, 1194, 1158, 1020, 905; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.29 (1H, s, NH), 7.96 (1H, s), 7.59 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.2, 0.9 Hz), 7.43 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 1.0 Hz), 7.40 (2H, dd, *J* = 8.9, 5.3 Hz), 7.35 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.11 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 6.9, 1.0 Hz), 7.01 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.2, 1.0 Hz), 6.90 (2H, t, *J* = 8.6 Hz), 3.77 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.7 (C=O), 165.5 (C=O), 162.3 (C), 142.3 (CH), 138.3 (C), 134.8 (C), 132.4 (*J*_{CF} = 9.0 Hz, 2 x CH), 129.9 (C), 129.2 (2 x C), 127.3 (CH), 123.6 (CH), 121.4 (CH), 116.2 (*J*_{CF} = 21.9 Hz, 2 x CH), 113.0 (CH), 112.5 (CH), 52.9 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MNa⁺, 346.0849 C₁₉H₁₄FNNaO₃ requires 346.0850.

Methyl 2-(1*H*-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(4-nitrophenyl)acrylate (1e)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 2.30 mmol) **1e** (490 mg, 57%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E:Z* 90:10; R_f 0.43 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 77-80 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3308, 1712, 1617, 1596, 1434, 1342, 1201,1167, 1141, 1015, 904; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.23 (1H, s, NH), 8.05 (2H, d, *J* = 8.9 Hz), 8.03 (1H, s), 7.58 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.2, 1.0 Hz), 7.55 (2H, d, *J* = 8.9 Hz), 7.43 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 1.1 Hz), 7.36 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.2 Hz), 7.11 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.1, 6.9, 1.2 Hz), 6.98 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.1, 1.2 Hz), 3.80 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 185.4 (C=O), 164.9 (C=O), 148.3 (C), 140.5 (CH), 139.2 (C), 138.5 (C), 130.7 (2 x CH), 127.7 (C), 127.6 (C), 127.5 (CH), 124.0 (2 x CH), 123.6 (CH), 121.6 (CH), 113.4 (CH), 112.5 (CH), 100.0 (C), 53.2 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MNa⁺, 373.0787 C₁₉H₁₄N₂NaO₅ requires 373.0795.

Methyl 2-(1H-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(3-methoxyphenyl)acrylate (1f)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 1.38 mmol) **1f** (440 mg, 96%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E*:*Z* 95:5; R_f 0.46 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 136-140 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3321, 2948, 1706, 1616, 1576, 1520, 1433, 1340, 1226, 1165, 1140, 1020, 901; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.32 (1H, s, NH), 7.98 (1H, s), 7.59 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.2, 0.9 Hz), 7.42 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 0.9 Hz), 7.33 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.13 (1H, t, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 7.10 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 6.9, 1.0 Hz), 7.02 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.1, 1.0 Hz), 7.00 (1H, d, *J* = 7.8 Hz), 6.94 (1H, t, *J* = 2.0 Hz), 6.79 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 2.6, 0.9 Hz), 3.77 (3H, s), 3.62 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.8 (C=O), 165.6 (C=O), 159.6 (C), 143.6 (CH), 138.3 (C), 135.0 (C), 134.2 (C), 130.4 (C), 129.9 (CH), 127.6 (C), 127.2 (CH), 123.6 (CH), 122.9 (CH), 121.3 (CH), 116.7 (CH), 115.1 (CH), 112.9 (CH), 112.4 (CH), 55.2 (CH₃), 52.8 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 336.1230 C₂₀H₁₈NO₄ requires 336.1230.

Methyl 2-(1*H*-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(naphthalen-2-yl)acrylate (1g)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 1.38 mmol) **1g** (470 mg, 95%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E*:*Z* 87:13; R_{*f*} 0.51 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 73-77 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3315, 2948, 1705, 1616, 1520, 1433, 1343, 1237, 1164, 1141, 1126, 1090, 1020; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.35 (1H, s, NH), 8.19 (1H, s), 7.95 (1H, d, *J* = 2.0 Hz), 7.74 (1H, dd, *J* = 6.5, 2.5 Hz), 7.68 (1H, dd, *J* = 6.9, 2.4 Hz), 7.59 (1H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 7.55 (1H, dq, *J* = 8.3, 0.9 Hz), 7.50-7.39 (4H, m), 7.31 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.07 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.1, 6.8, 1.1 Hz), 7.04 (1H, d, *J* = 1.2 Hz), 3.80 (3H, s);¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.9 (C=O), 165.7 (C=O), 143.8 (CH), 138.3 (C), 135.1 (C), 134.0 (C), 133.0 (C), 132.2 (CH), 130.5 (C), 130.0 (C), 128.8 (CH), 128.7 (CH), 127.8 (CH), 127.7 (CH), 127.6 (C), 127.2 (CH), 126.8 (CH), 125.9 (CH), 123.6 (CH), 121.3 (CH), 113.1 (CH), 112.4 (CH), 52.9 (CH₃). HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 356.1281 C₂₃H₁₈NO₃ requires 356.1281.

Methyl 2-(1*H*-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-(furan-2-yl)acrylate (1h)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 1.38 mmol) **1h** (380 mg, 93%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E*:*Z* 95:5; R_f 0.44 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 180-184 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3287, 2953, 1706, 1616, 1521, 1433, 1345, 1241, 1207, 1139, 1094, 1020, 903; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.36 (1H, s, NH), 7.73 (1H, s), 7.62 (1H, dd *J* = 8.1, 0.9 Hz), 7.45 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.5, 1.0 Hz), 7.34 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 7.0, 1.2 Hz), 7.25 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.4, 0.6 Hz), 7.11 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 7.03 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.1, 1.0 Hz), 6.69 (1H, d, *J* = 3.5 Hz), 6.34 (1H, dd, *J* = 3.5, 1.8 Hz), 3.76 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.0 (C=O), 165.6 (C=O), 149.2 (C), 146.5 (CH), 138.1 (C), 135.4 (C), 129.1 (CH), 127.6 (C), 126.7 (CH), 125.9 (C), 123.5 (CH), 121.1 (CH), 118.5 (CH), 112.6 (CH), 112.4 (CH), 112.3 (CH), 52.8 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 296.0917 C₁₇H₁₄NO₄ requires 296.0917.

Methyl 2-(1H-Indole-2-carbonyl)-4-methylpent-2-enoate (1i)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 2.30 mmol) **1i** (580 mg, 93%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E:Z* 89:11; R_f 0.65 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 139-142 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3311, 2963, 1723, 1611, 1517, 1434, 1417, 1342, 1231, 1168, 1136, 1022, 934; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.50 (1H, s, NH), 7.68 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 0.9 Hz), 7.46 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.5, 1.0 Hz), 7.36 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.15 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 7.06 (1H, dd, *J* = 2.2, 1.0 Hz), 7.01 (1H, d, *J* = 11.0 Hz), 3.72 (3H, s), 2.51 (1H, dp, *J* = 11.0, 6.6 Hz), 1.03 (6H, d, *J* = 6.6 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 185.9 (C=O), 165.3 (C=O), 154.8 (CH), 138.3 (C), 135.6 (C), 130.4 (C), 127.6 (C), 127.1 (CH), 123.5 (CH), 121.3 (CH), 112.7 (CH), 112.7 (CH), 52.5 (CH₃), 29.5 (CH), 22.1 (2 x CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 272.1279 C₁₆H₁₈NO₃ requires 272.1281.

Methyl 2-(1*H*-Indole-2-carbonyl)-3-cyclohexyl-acrylate (1j)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 0.921 mmol) **1j** (170 mg, 59%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *E:Z* 90:10; R_f 0.80 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p: 122-126 °C; FT-IR vmax (film)/cm⁻¹ 3304, 2927, 2855, 1723, 1616, 1572, 1519, 1435, 1418, 1342, 1221, 1172, 1139, 1082, 978; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.83 (1H, s, NH), 7.70 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 0.9 Hz), 7.49 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.4, 0.8 Hz), 7.37 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.2, 7.0, 1.1 Hz), 7.15 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.1, 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 7.11-7.06 (1H, m), 7.07 (1H, d, *J* = 10.9 Hz), 3.72 (3H, s), 2.25 (1H, qt, *J* = 11.0, 3.6 Hz), 1.75-1.54 (5H, m), 1.31-1.04 (5H, m); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.0 (C=O), 165.4 (C=O), 153.4 (CH), 138.4 (C), 135.6 (C), 130.7 (C), 127.5 (C), 126.9 (CH), 123.4 (CH), 121.1 (CH), 112.7 (CH), 112.5 (CH), 52.3 (CH₃), 38.8 (CH), 32.1 (CH₂), 25.5 (CH₂), 25.2 (CH₂); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺ 312.1604 C₁₉H₂2NO₃ requires 312.1594.

2.2 Synthesis of 3



Methyl-2-(1-benzyl-1H-indole-2-carbonyl)-3-phenylacrylate (3)

A solution of 1a (189 mg, 0.62 mmol, 1.0 equiv) in DMF (3.0 mL) was cooled to 0 °C and NaH (26 mg, 1.23 mmol, 60% dispersion in mineral oil, 2.0 equiv) was added portionwise. After stirring for 10 minutes, Bn-Br (0.15 mL, 1.23 mmol, 2.0 equiv) was added and the mixture was allowed to warm to rt. After 2 h, the reaction was quenched with NH₄Cl (3 mL). The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc (3 x 5 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine (5 mL), dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel, eluting with nhexane:EtOAc (90:10 \rightarrow 80:20), gave 3 (121 mg, 47%) as an amorphous solid; E:Z 97:3; R_f 0.63 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p 80–85 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 2922, 1715, 1644, 1512, 1493, 1451, 1407, 1352, 1254, 1199, 1165, 1136, 1024; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.94 (1H, s), 7.62 (1H, dd, J = 8.1, 1.0 Hz), 7.41 (1H, dd, J = 8.6, 1.0 Hz), 7.36 (1H, ddd, J =8.1, 6.8, 1.1 Hz), 7.35-7.26 (6H, m), 7.27-7.07 (6H, m), 6.02 (2H, s), 3.74 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) & 186.5 (C=O), 169.5 (C=O), 142.3 (CH), 138.1 (C), 132.9 (C), 130.3 (CH), 130.2 (2 x CH), 129.0 (C), 128.8 (C), 128.7 (CH), 128.5 (CH), 127.2 (2 x CH), 127.0 (CH), 126.8 (CH), 126.2 (C), 123.5 (CH), 121.2 (CH), 116.0 (CH), 111.0 (CH), 52.6 (CH₃), 48.1 (CH₂); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 396.1595 C₂₆H₂₂NO₃ requires 396.1594.

2.3 Synthesis of Substrates 4a–c

2.3.1 Synthesis of the Knoevenagel Precursor S7



Methyl 3,4-dihydro-2H-pyran-6-carboxylate (S6)

A solution of **S5** (2.9 g, 34.50 mmol, 1.0.equiv) in THF (100 mL) was cooled to -78 °C and treated with *t*-BuLi (24.3 mL, 41.40 mmol, 1.7 M in *n*-pentane, 1.2 equiv.) dropwise. The mixture was allowed to warm to rt, stirred for 30 min and cooled to -78 °C. Dry CO₂ was bubbled through the solution while it was warmed to 0 °C over 30 minutes. The CO₂ supply was then removed and the reaction mixture was diluted with Et₂O (100 mL) and quenched with H₂O (50 mL). The layers were separated and the organic phase was washed with H₂O (3 x 20 mL). The combined aqueous layers were acidified to pH 2 with 2M HCl and extracted with EtOAc (4 x 30 mL). The combined organic layers were dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated to give S6 (2.4 g, 54%) that was used directly in the next step.

A solution of the crude acid (2.4 g, 18.75 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in MeOH (20 mL) was treated with NaHCO₃ (2.4 g, 28.25 mmol, 1.5 equiv.) and a stirred at rt for 30 min. Me₂SO₄ (2.8 mL, 30.00 mmol, 1.6 equiv.) was added and the mixture was heated under reflux for 5 h. The mixture was allowed to cool to rt, diluted with EtOAc (75 mL) and H₂O (30 mL). The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed with EtOAc (3 x 10 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine (10 mL), dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel, eluting with *n*-hexane:EtOAc (90:10) gave **S6** (1.0 g, 38%) as a colourless oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 6.07 (1H, t, *J* = 4.2 Hz), 4.10 (2H, t, *J* = 5.1 Hz), 3.78 (3H, s), 2.18 (2H, td, *J* = 6.3, 4.1 Hz,), 1.91-1.79 (2H, m); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 163.6, 144.3, 111.5, 66.8, 21.5, 20.7. Data in accordance with the literature.⁴

Ethyl 2-(3,4-Dihydro-2H-pyran-6-carbonyl)-3-phenylacrylate (S7)

A solution of EtMgBr (2.4 mL, 7.04 mmol, 3M in Et₂O, 2.0 equiv.) in THF (3.0 mL) was treated with di-*i*-propyl amine (1.0 mL, 7.04 mmol, 2.0 equiv.) and stirred at rt for 5 h. A solution of **S6** (550 mg, 3.52 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in THF (3.0 mL) was added by dropwise. The mixture was stirred overnight, diluted with EtOAc (10 mL), cooled to 0 °C and quenched with MeOH (5 mL). H₂O was added to dissolve all the magnesium salts (50 mL) and the layers were separated. The aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc (3 x 20 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine, dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel, eluting with *n*-hexane:EtOAc (90:10 \rightarrow 80:20) gave

⁴ D. L. J. Clive, M. Yang, H. Yang J. Org. Chem. 2008, 73, 6743.

S7 (284 mg, 37%) as an oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 5.98 (1H, t, *J* = 4.3 Hz), 4.14 (2H, q, *J* = 7.2 Hz), 4.03 (2H, t, *J* = 5.1 Hz), 3.55 (2H, s), 2.17 (2H, td, *J* = 6.5, 4.3 Hz), 1.81 (2H, dt, *J* = 10.4, 6.3 Hz), 1.22 (H, t, *J* = 7.1 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 189.3 (C=O), 167.7 (C=O), 150.5 (C), 110.7 (CH), 66.4 (CH), 61.2 (CH₂), 45.0 (CH₂), 21.5 (CH₂), 20.8 (CH₂), 14.1 (CH₃); LRMS m/z (ESI): 198 (M⁺), 152, 110, 83.

2.3.2 Knoevenagel Condensation of S7



Ethyl 2-(3,4-Dihydro-4H-pyran-2-carbonyl)-3-phenylacrylate (5a)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 0.66 mmol) **5a** (90 mg, 47%) was obtained as a colourless oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.78 (1H, s), 7.39-7.24 (5H, m), 5.96 (1H, t, *J* = 4.3 Hz), 4.24 (2H, q, *J* = 7.1 Hz), 4.03 (2H, t, *J* = 5.1 Hz), 2.10 (2H, td, *J* = 6.3, 4.2 Hz), 1.85-1.70 (2H, m), 1.26 (3H, t, *J* = 7.1 Hz). LRMS m/z (ESI): 286 (M⁺), 257, 241, 212, 203. Data in accordance with the literature.⁵

Ethyl 2-(3,4-Dihydro-2*H*-pyran-6-carbonyl)-3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate (5b)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 0.66 mmol) **5b** (129 mg, 62%) was obtained as a colourless oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.78 (1H, s), 7.34 (2H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 6.85 (2H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 6.05 (1H, t, *J* = 4.0 Hz), 4.23 (2H, q, *J* = 7.2 Hz), 4.14-4.09 (2H, m), 3.83 (3H, s), 2.16 (2H, dd, *J* = 10.5, 6.3 Hz), 1.85-1.80 (2H, m), 1.29 (3H, t, *J* = 7.1 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 191.0, 165.3, 161.5, 151.5, 142.6, 132.4, 127.9, 125.5, 116.1, 114.1, 66.4, 61.3, 55.3, 21.3, 21.0, 14.2. Data in accordance with the literature.⁶

Ethyl 3-(4-Bromophenyl)-2-(3,4-dihydro-2*H*-pyran-6-carbonyl)acrylate (5c)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 0.66 mmol) **5c** (117 mg, 49%) was obtained as a colourless oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.76 (1H, s), 7.48 (2H, d, *J* = 8.3 Hz), 7.27 (2H, d, *J* = 8.4 Hz), 6.03 (1H, t, *J* = 4.3 Hz), 4.29 (2H, q, *J* = 7.0 Hz), 4.14-4.08 (2H, m), 2.15 (2H, dd, *J* = 10.7, 6.3 Hz), 1.88-1.80 (2H m), 1.33 (3H, t, *J* = 6.9 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 190.2, 164.6, 151.2, 141.4, 132.1, 131.8, 131.6, 131.3, 124.8, 116.5, 66.8, 61.6, 21.3, 21.2, 14.2. Data in accordance with the literature.⁶

⁵ D. P. Canterbury, I. R. Herrick, J. Um, K. N. Houk, A. J. Frontier *Tetrahedron* 2009, 65, 3165.

⁶ F. Guo, L. Wang, S. Mao, C. Zhang, J. Yu, J. H. *Tetrahedron* **2012**, *68*, 8367.

Ethyl 2-(3,4-Dihydro-2*H*-pyran-6-carbonyl)-4-methylpent-2-enoate (5d)

Following GP-1 (reaction scale: 0.53 mmol) **5d** (68 mg, 51%) was obtained as a colourless oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 6.81 (1H, d, J = 10.8 Hz), 5.98 (1H, t, J = 4.4 Hz), 4.20 (2H, q, J = 7.0 Hz), 4.15-4.10 (2H, m), 2.57-2.47 (1H, m), 2.23 (2H, dd, J = 10.5, 6.3 Hz), 1.94-1.85 (2H, m), 1.26 (3H, t, J = 7.0 Hz), 1.04 (6H, d, J = 6.1 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 189.4, 164.6, 153.8, 151.7, 130.6, 115.1, 66.5, 61.0, 29.1, 21.7, 21.3, 20.9, 14.1. Data in accordance with the literature.⁶

3. Nazarov Cyclisations

3.1 General Procedure for the Screening of the Calcium Catalysts



A dry tube was charged with $Ca(NTf_2)_2$ (5.0 mg, 8.2 µmol, 5 mol%) and $(Bu_4N)(X)$ (8.2 µmol, 5 mol%) and CH_2Cl_2 (1.0 mL) was added. The mixture was stirred for 30 min to ensure complete solubilisation of the solids. A solution of **1a** (50 mg, 0.16 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in CH_2Cl_2 (0.6 mL) was added. The mixture was stirred overnight (16 h) and then H_2O (2.0 mL) was added. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (2 x 2 mL). The combined organic layers were dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel gave **2a**.

Entry	X ⁻	Yield (%)	
1	PF ₆	87	
2 ^a	PF ₆	66	
3	BF_4	21	
4	SiPh ₃ F ₂	<5	
5	Ι	9	
6	Br	<5	
7	Cl	_	
8	OTf	_	
9	Br ₃	_	
10	OAc	_	
11	HSO ₄	_	
a) 2,6-di-tert-butyl pyridine (1.0 equiv.) was added			

3.2 Synthesis of Products 2a-j

3.2.1 General Procedure for the Nazarov Cyclisation of Substrates 1a-j and 5a-c-GP2



A dry tube was charged with Ca(NTf₂)₂ (5 mol%) and (Bu₄N)(PF₆) (5 mol%) and CH₂Cl₂ was added. The mixture was stirred for 30 min to ensure complete solubilisation of the solids. A solution of substrate 1 (1.0 equiv.) in CH₂Cl₂ was added (the final concentration of the reaction was 0.1M). The mixture was stirred overnight and then H₂O (2.0 mL) was added. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (2 x 5 mL). The combined organic layers were dried (MgSO₄), filtered and evaporated. Purification by column chromatography on silica gel gave 2.

Methyl-3-oxo-1-phenyl-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2a)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), 2a (42 mg, 85%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; anti:syn 94:6; Rf 0.39 [n-hexane-EtOAc (70:30); m.p. 141-144 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3305, 2952, 1734, 1672, 1620, 1540, 1434, 1321, 1246, 1151, 1009, 988, 745, 698; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.76 (1H, s, NH), 7.54 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.4, 0.9 Hz), 7.39 (1H, ddd, J = 8.4, 7.0, 1.2 Hz), 7.38-7.21 (6H, m), 7.07 (1H, ddd, J = 8.1, 7.0, 0.9 Hz), 5.07 (1H, d, J = 2.8 Hz), 3.94 (1H, d, J = 2.9 Hz), 3.85 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 187.2 (C=O), 169.6 (C=O), 148.2 (C), 144.7 (C), 140.8 (C), 137.1 (C), 129.0 (2 x CH), 128.1 (CH), 127.4 (2 x CH), 122.9 (C), 122.3 (CH), 121.3 (CH), 114.0 (CH), 67.8 (CH), 53.0 (CH₃), 44.2 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 306.1127 C₁₉H₁₅NO₃ requires 306.1125.

This reaction was also performed using 250 mg of 1a to give 2a in 83% yield.

Methyl-1-(4-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2b)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2b** (48 mg, 96%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 94:6; R_f 0.29 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 130-133 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3229, 2924, 1735, 1676, 1614, 1512, 1435, 1321, 1244, 1151, 1026, 988; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.77 (1H, s, NH), 7.52 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.5, 0.8 Hz), 7.38 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.4, 7.1, 1.0 Hz), 7.33 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1 Hz), 7.20-7.10 (2H, m), 7.07 (1H, ddt, *J* = 8.0, 7.0, 0.9 Hz), 6.90-6.79 (2H, m), 5.01 (1H, d, *J* = 2.8 Hz), 3.89 (1H, d, *J* = 2.8 Hz), 3.84 (3H, s), 3.78 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 187.3 (C=O), 169.7 (C=O), 159.0 (C), 148.4 (C), 144.7 (C), 137.0 (C), 132.8 (C), 128.5 (2 x CH), 128.2 (CH), 122.9 (C), 122.3 (CH), 121.2 (CH), 114.4 (2 x CH) 114.0 (CH), 68.1 (CH), 55.4 (CH₃), 52.9 (CH₃), 43.5 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 336.1221 C₂₀H₁₈NO₄ requires 336.1230.

Crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were obtained by slow evaporation of a Et_2O -pentane solution of **2b**.

Methyl-1-(4-bromophenyl)-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2c)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2c** (49 mg, 99%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 95:5; R_f 0.40 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)] ; m.p. 134-137 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3312, 2928, 1736, 1677, 1619, 1537, 1487, 1327, 1246, 1225, 1154, 1072, 1010; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.78 (1H, s, NH), 7.53 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.5, 0.9 Hz), 7.44 (2H, d, *J* = 8.4 Hz), 7.40 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.4, 7.1, 1.3 Hz), 7.31 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.3, 1.0 Hz), 7.12 (2H, d, *J* = 8.4 Hz), 7.11-7.09 (1H, m), 5.03 (1H, d, *J* = 2.9 Hz), 3.86 (1H, d, *J* = 2.9 Hz), 3.85 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.7 (C=O), 169.4 (C=O), 147.3 (C), 144.7 (C), 139.8 (C), 137.1 (C), 132.2 (2 x CH), 129.2 (2 x CH), 128.4 (CH), 122.7 (CH), 122.1 (C), 121.5 (C), 121.5 (CH), 114.1 (CH), 67.6 (CH), 53.1 (CH₃), 43.5 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 384.0217 C₂₀H₁₈NO₄ requires 384.0230.

Crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were obtained by slow evaporation of a Et_2O -pentane solution of **2c**.

Methyl-1-(4-flurophenyl)-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2d)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2d** (45 mg, 90%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 92:8; R_f 0.24 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 143-147 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3212, 2928, 1741, 1679, 1509, 1325, 1225, 1153, 1102, 1026, 985; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.85 (1H, s, NH), 7.53 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.5, 0.9 Hz), 7.39 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 7.1,

1.2 Hz), 7.31 (1H, ddt, J = 8.2, 1.3, 0.8 Hz), 7.25-7.15 (2H, m), 7.08 (1H, ddd, J = 8.0, 7.0, 0.9 Hz), 7.05-6.96 (2H, m), 5.05 (1H, d, J = 2.9 Hz), 3.87 (1H, d, J = 2.9 Hz), 3.85 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.9 (C=O), 169.5 (C=O), 163.4 (C), 147.7 (C), 144.7 (C), 137.1 (C), 136.5 (C), 129.0 ($J_{CF} = 7.8$ Hz, 2 x CH), 128.3 (CH), 122.8 (CH), 122.2 (CH), 121.4 (C), 116.0 ($J_{CF} = 21.5$ Hz, 2 x CH) 114.1 (CH), 67.9 (CH), 53.0 (CH₃), 43.4 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MNa⁺, 346.0845 C₁₉H₁₄FNNaO₃ requires 346.0850.

Methyl-1-(3-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2f)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2f** (37 mg, 74%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 93:7; R_f 0.32 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 146-148 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3207, 2952, 1734, 1676, 1598, 1487, 1436, 1322, 1241, 1151, 1026; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.67 (1H, s, NH), 7.52 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.4, 0.9 Hz), 7.39 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 6.9, 1.1 Hz), 7.36 (1H, d, *J* = 8.1 Hz) 7.23 (1H, t, *J* = 8.4 Hz), 7.08 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 6.85-6.80 (2H, m), 6.80-6.76 (1H, m), 5.04 (1H, d, *J* = 2.8 Hz), 3.94 (1H, d, *J* = 2.8 Hz), 3.85 (3H, s), 3.74 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 187.0 (C=O), 169.6 (C=O), 160.1 (C), 148.0 (C), 144.7 (C), 142.4 (CH), 137.0 (C), 130.2 (CH), 128.3 (C), 122.9 (C), 122.4 (CH), 121.3 (CH), 119.8 (CH), 113.9 (CH), 113.3 (CH), 112.7 (CH), 67.7 (CH), 55.3 (CH₃), 53.0 (CH₃), 44.1 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 336.1233 C₂₀H₁₈NO₄ requires 336.1230.

Methyl-1-(naphthalen-2-yl)-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[*b*]indole-2-carboxylate (2g)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2g** (43 mg, 93%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 94:6; R_f 0.35 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 84-88 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3211, 2948, 1734, 1674, 1619, 1540, 1434, 1321, 1246, 1152, 1008; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.17 (1H, s, NH), 7.86-7.70 (4H, m), 7.52 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.4, 0.9 Hz), 7.47 (1H, d, *J* = 9.5 Hz), 7.47 (1H, dd, *J* = 3.0, 1.2 Hz), 7.40 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.4, 7.0, 1.2 Hz), 7.32 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 1.0 Hz), 7.32 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.1, 1.0 Hz), 7.05 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.0, 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 5.24 (1H, d, *J* = 2.9 Hz), 3.99 (1H, d, *J* = 2.9 Hz), 3.86 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 187.0 (C=O), 169.6 (C=O), 148.0 (C), 144.7 (C), 138.2 (C), 137.2 (C), 133.6 (C), 132.9 (C), 129.1 (CH), 128.3 (CH), 127.9 (CH), 127.8 (C), 126.3 (CH), 126.2 (CH), 126.1 (CH), 125.3 (CH), 123.0 (CH), 122.3 (CH), 121.4 (CH), 113.9 (CH), 67.7 (CH), 53.0 (CH₃), 44.4 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 356.1273 C₂₃H₁₈NO₃ requires 356.1281.

Methyl-1-(furan-2-yl)-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2h)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2h** (42 mg, 88%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 95:5; R_f 0.39 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 125-127 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3255, 2953, 1734, 1673, 1619, 1540, 1434, 1320, 1221, 1151, 1007, 929; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.42 (1H, s, NH), 7.63 (1H, dd, J = 8.1, 1.2 Hz), 7.50 (1H, dd, J = 8.5, 1.0 Hz), 7.41 (1H, ddd, J = 8.4, 7.0, 1.2 Hz), 7.37 (1H, dd, J = 1.9, 0.8 Hz), 7.16 (1H, ddd, J = 8.1, 7.0, 0.9 Hz), 6.31 (1H, dd, J = 3.2, 1.9 Hz), 6.17 (1H, dd, J = 3.3, 0.8 Hz), 5.15 (1H, d, J = 2.7 Hz), 4.13 (1H, d, J = 2.7 Hz), 3.85 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.1 (C=O), 169.2 (C=O), 153.1 (C), 145.5 (C), 144.6 (CH), 142.5 (C), 136.6 (C), 128.3 (CH), 122.9 (C), 122.3 (CH), 121.5 (CH), 113.9 (CH), 110.5 (CH), 106.6 (CH), 64.2 (CH), 53.0 (CH₃), 37.6 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 296.0909 C₁₇H₁₄NO₄ requires 296.0917.

Methyl-1-isopropyl-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2i)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.15 mmol), **2i** (45 mg, 90%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 99:1; R_f 0.44 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 128-131 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3217, 2958, 1737, 1665, 1620, 1536, 1466, 1436, 1324, 1248, 1159, 1025, 983; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.96 (1H, s, NH), 7.71 (1H, dd, *J* = 8.2, 0.8 Hz), 7.52 (1H, dt, *J* = 8.5, 0.9 Hz), 7.39 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 7.0, 1.1 Hz), 7.16 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.1, 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 3.83 (1H, dd, *J* = 4.7, 2.3 Hz), 3.79 (1H, d, *J* = 2.3 Hz), 3.78 (3H, s), 2.40 (1H, pd, *J* = 6.8, 4.6 Hz), 1.08 (3H, d, *J* = 6.8 Hz), 0.88 (3H, d, *J* = 6.9 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 188.2 (C=O), 170.7 (C=O), 149.5 (C), 144.8 (C), 137.3 (C), 128.0 (CH), 123.3 (C), 122.6 (CH), 121.0 (CH), 114.1 (CH), 60.6 (CH), 52.8 (CH₃), 46.1 (CH), 31.4 (CH), 20.9 (CH₃), 18.5 (CH₃); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 272.1272 C₁₆H₁₈NO₃ requires 272.1281.

Crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were obtained by slow evaporation of a Et_2O -pentane solution of **2i**.

Methyl-1-cyclohexyl-3-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2-carboxylate (2j)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.19 mmol), **2j** (46 mg, 83%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* >99:1; R_f 0.56 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (70:30)]; m.p. 65-67 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3238, 2923, 2851, 1736, 1670, 1619, 1536, 1482, 1434, 1323, 1224, 1152, 1010; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.77 (1H s, NH), 7.73 (1H d, *J* = 7.9 Hz), 7.51 (1H, d, *J* = 8.9 Hz), 7.39 (1H, ddd, *J* = 8.3, 7.0, 1.1 Hz), 7.22-7.11 (1H, m), 3.84 (1H, d, *J* = 2.2 Hz), 3.79 (1H, m), 3.77 (3H, s), 1.96 (1H, tdd, *J* = 11.8, 6.5, 3.8 Hz), 1.85 (1H, d, *J* = 12.5 Hz), 1.77 (1H, d, *J* = 12.9 Hz), 1.68 (2H, t, *J* = 13.6 Hz), 1.52 (1H, d, *J* = 12.3 Hz), 1.28 (1H, dt, *J* = 13.0, 3.2 Hz), 1.21 (1H, dt, *J* = 12.9, 3.6 Hz), 1.18-1.02 (3H, m); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz,

CDCl₃) δ 188.0 (C=O), 170.6 (C=O), 149.2 (C), 144.7 (C), 137.3 (C), 128.0 (CH), 123.5 (C), 122.7 (CH), 121.0 (CH), 114.1 (CH), 61.5 (CH), 52.8 (CH₃), 45.7 (CH), 41.8 (CH), 31.5 (CH₂), 29.4 (CH₂), 26.5 (CH₂), 26.4 (CH₂), 26.3 (CH₂); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MNa⁺, 334.1409 C₁₉H₂₁NNaO₃ requires 334.1414.

Methyl-4-benzyl-3-oxo-1-phenyl-1,2,3,4-tetrahydrocyclopenta[b]indole-2carboxylatemethyl (4)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.13 mmol), **4** (39 mg, 77%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 88:12; R_f 0.52 [*n*-hexane–EtOAc (80:20)]; m.p. 122-124 °C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹2921, 1730, 1698, 1483, 1456, 1435, 1345, 1320, 1221, 1156, 1016, 954; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.45-7.20 (13H, m), 7.06 (1H, ddd, *J* = 7.6, 6.4, 1.3 Hz), 5.57 (2H, s), 5.06 (1H, d, *J* = 3.1 Hz), 3.91 (1H, dd, *J* = 3.1, 0.9 Hz), 3.84 (3H, s); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 186.6 (C=O), 169.5 (C=O), 146.2 (C), 145.0 (C), 141.0 (C), 137.1 (C), 137.0 (C), 129.1 (2 x CH), 128.9 (2 x CH), 127.9 (C), 127.7 (CH), 127.5 (CH), 127.3 (4 x CH), 123.0 (CH), 122.7 (C), 121.1 (CH), 112.1 (CH), 68.2 (CH), 52.9 (CH₃), 47.8 (CH₂), 43.6 (CH); HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 396.1585 C₂₆H₂₂NO₃ requires 396.1594.

Ethyl-7-oxo-5-phenyl-2,3,4,5,6,7-hexahydrocyclopenta[b]pyran-6-carboxylate (6a)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.31 mmol), **5a** (76 mg, 85%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 97:3; m.p. 122-124 C; FT-IR v_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 2980, 1733, 1710, 1648, 1486, 1459, 1392, 1371, 1326, 1295, 1265, 1246, 1161, 1127, 1050; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.35-7.22 (3H, m), 7.11 (2H, dd, J = 6.7, 1.7 Hz), 4.20 (2H, qd, J = 7.0, 1.0 Hz), 4.14 (2H, td, J = 6.4, 3.9 Hz), 3.27 (1H, d, J = 2.1 Hz), 2.20 (1H, td, J = 12.6, 6.2 Hz), 2.07 (1H, dt, J = 19.7, 6.6 Hz), 2.01 – 1.81 (2H, m), 1.25 (3H, t, J = 7.1 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 193.2, 168.4, 149.9, 147.5, 140.0, 129.3, 127.7, 127.5, 67.2, 61.9, 59.4, 47.8, 22.3, 21.4, 14.2; HRMS m/z (ESI): Found MH⁺, 287.12780 C₂₆H₂₂NO₃ requires 287.1278. Data in accordance with the literature.⁵

Ethyl 5-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-7-oxo-2,3,4,5,6,7-hexahydrocyclopenta[*b*]pyran-6carboxylate (6b)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.24 mmol), **6b** (72 mg, 90%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 94:6; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.06 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 6.88 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 4.23 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 4.19-4.11 (m, 3H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 3.27 (d, J = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 2.22 (dt, J = 18.8, 6.0 Hz, 1H), 2.11 (dt, J = 19.1, 6.1 Hz, 1H), 2.03-1.85 (m, 2H), 1.29 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 193.23, 168.47, 159.07, 149.70, 147.65, 131.79,

128.39, 114.53, 67.06, 61.78, 59.59, 55.31, 47.03, 22.20, 21.31, 14.17. Data in accordance with the literature.⁶

Ethyl 5-(4-Bromophenyl)-7-oxo-2,3,4,5,6,7-hexahydrocyclopenta[b]pyran-6-carboxylate (6c)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.24 mmol), **6c** (72 mg, 90%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 95:5; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.48 (2H, d, *J* = 8.2 Hz), 7.03 (2H, d, *J* = 8.3 Hz), 4.26-4.15 (5H, m), 3.24 (1H, d, *J* = 1.9 Hz), 2.22 (1H, dt, *J* = 19.0, 6.0 Hz), 2.13-2.06 (1H, m), 2.02-1.89 (2H, m), 1.29 (3H, t, *J* = 7.1 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 191.9, 167.8, 150.2, 146.6, 139.2, 132.3, 129.1, 121.6, 67.2, 62.0, 59.0, 47.1, 22.4, 21.3, 14.1. Data in accordance with the literature.⁶

Ethyl 5-isopropyl-7-oxo-2,3,4,5,6,7-hexahydrocyclopenta[b]pyran-6-carboxylate (6d)

Following GP-2 (reaction scale: 0.27 mmol), **6d** (61 mg, 90%) was obtained as an amorphous solid; *anti:syn* 98:2; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 4.31-4.18 (3H, m), 4.10-4.03 (1H, m), 3.13 (1H, d, J = 2.5 Hz), 3.11-3.08 (1H, m), 2.39-2.32 (2H, m), 2.17-2.12 (1H, m), 2.01-1.94 (2H, m), 1.32 (3H, t, J = 7.0 Hz), 1.01 (3H, d, J = 7.0 Hz), 0.76 (3H, d, J = 7.0 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 193.8, 169.7, 149.8, 148.2, 66.9, 61.6, 50.9, 47.8, 27.9, 22.7, 21.4, 20.6, 16.1, 14.2. Data in accordance with the literature.⁶

4. Kinetic Studies by React-IR



4.1 Overlaid IR Spectra of 1a (dark blue) and 2a (light blue)

4.2 General Procedure for Kinetic Experiments

Ca(NTf₂)₂ (10.0 mg, 16 μ mol, 5 mol%) and (Bu₄N)(X) (16 μ mol, 5 mol%) were combined in a dry tube equipped with a stirring bar. CH₂Cl₂ (3.3 mL) was added and the mixture was stirred for 30 min to ensure complete solubilisation. The vial was then equipped with a screwtop cap containing a septum through which the IR probe was inserted and submerged directly into the reaction medium. Spectra were acquired as the solution was stirred before adding **1a** (100 mg, 0.33 mmol, 1.0 equiv.). Reaction progress was monitored in real time looking at the change in the carbonyl stretch part of the IR spectrum.

The concentrations detected by React-IR in the reaction with $Ca(NTf_2)(PF_6)$ have been validated by taking samples from the reaction mixture and analysing them by ¹H NMR spectroscopy.



5. Lewis Acidity Studies

Sample preparation:

A dry tube equipped with a stirring bar was charged with $Ca(NTf_2)_2$ (30 mg, 0.05 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), the appropriate (Bu₄N)(X) (0.05 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) and CD_2Cl_2 (2.0 mL) under nitrogen. The heterogeneous mixture was stirred at room temperature for 1h. 7 (4.8 μ L, 0.05 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) was added and the mixture was stirred for 1h. The solution (0.5 mL) was transferred into a dry NMR tube and the ¹H NMR spectrum recorded.

Each experiment has been repeated twice.



6. Binding Studies

Determination of complexes stoichiometry using the Method of Continuous Variations – Job Plots

Binding of 7 with Ca(NTf₂)(PF₆)

Two equimolar (0.015 M) solution of 7 and $Ca(NTf_2)(PF_6)$ in CD_2Cl_2 were prepared. Then 12 samples were prepared with defined volumes of the two stock solutions to give a total volume of 400 μ L and were analysed by ¹H NMR spectroscopy. The study has been repeated twice.

<i>V</i> ₇ (μL)	$V_{Ca(NTf2)(PF6)}(\mu L)$	Xi7	X _{Ca(NTf2)(PF6)}	d ₇ (ppm)	Δd 7 * Xi7
400	0	1	0	6.96	0
370	30	0.925	0.075	6.99	0.02775
330	70	0.825	0.175	7.04	0.066
300	100	0.75	0.25	7.07	0.0825
270	130	0.675	0.325	7.11	0.10125
230	170	0.575	0.425	7.18	0.1265
200	200	0.5	0.5	7.23	0.135
170	230	0.425	0.575	7.25	0.12325
130	270	0.325	0.675	7.29	0.10725
100	300	0.25	0.75	7.3	0.085
70	330	0.175	0.825	7.32	0.063
30	370	0.075	0.925	7.32	0.027
0	400	0	1	0	0



The maximum of the plot is at $Xi_7 = 0.5$ thus indicating a 1:1 stoichiometry.

Binging of 7 with Ca(NTf₂)(BF₄)

Two equimolar (0.015 M) solution of 7 and $Ca(NTf_2)(BF_4)$ in CD_2Cl_2 were prepared. Then 11 samples were prepared with defined volumes of the two stock solutions to give a total volume of 400 μ L and were analysed by ¹H NMR spectroscopy. The study has been repeated twice.

$V_7 (\mu L)$	$V_{Ca(NTf2)(PF6)}(\mu L)$	X7	X _{Ca(NTf2)(PF6)}	d7 (ppm)	$\Delta d_7 * X_7$
400	0	1	0	0	0
370	30	0.925	0.075	0.01	0.00925
300	100	0.75	0.25	0.05	0.0375
270	130	0.675	0.325	0.08	0.054
230	170	0.575	0.425	0.12	0.069
200	200	0.5	0.5	0.16	0.08
170	230	0.425	0.575	0.17	0.07225
130	270	0.325	0.675	0.18	0.0585
100	300	0.25	0.75	0.19	0.0475
70	330	0.175	0.825	0.2	0.035
30	370	0.075	0.925	0.22	0.0165
0	400	0	1	0	0



The maximum of the plot is at $Xi_7 = 0.5$ thus indicating a 1:1 stoichiometry.

Binging of 8 with Ca(NTf₂)(PF₆)

Two equimolar (0.015 M) solution of $\mathbf{8}^7$ and Ca(NTf₂)(PF₆) in CD₂Cl₂ were prepared. Then 12 samples were prepared with defined volumes of the two stock solutions to give a total volume of 400 µL and were analysed by ¹H NMR spectroscopy. The study has been repeated three times.

$V_7 (\mu L)$	$V_{\text{Ca(NTf2)(PF6)}}(\mu L)$	X7	X _{Ca(NTf2)(PF6)}	d ₇ (ppm)	$\Delta d_7 * X_7$
400	0	1	0	7.73	0
370	30	0.925	0.075	7.81	0.04625
330	70	0.825	0.175	7.95	0.1815
300	100	0.75	0.25	8.08	0.2625
270	130	0.675	0.325	8.28	0.37125
230	170	0.575	0.425	8.32	0.33925
200	200	0.5	0.5	8.34	0.305
170	230	0.425	0.575	8.35	0.2635
130	270	0.325	0.675	8.36	0.20475
100	300	0.25	0.75	8.36	0.1575
70	330	0.175	0.825	8.37	0.112
30	370	0.075	0.925	8.38	0.04875
0	400	0	1	0	0



The maximum of the plot is at $Xi_8 = 0.66$ thus indicating a 1:2 stoichiometry.

⁷ **8** was prepared according to D. Liotta, C. Barnum, R. Puleo, G. Zima, C. Bayer, H. S. Kezar III *J. Org. Chem.* **1981**, *46*, 2920.

7. DOSY Studies

Four samples were prepared and analysed by DOSY: a solution of 7, a 1:1 solution of 7 and $Ca(NTf_2)(PF_6)$, a solution of 8 and a 1:1 solution of 8 and $Ca(NTf_2)(PF_6)$.

Sample A – 7

A dry tube was charged with 7 (3.0 μ L, 0.03 mmol) and CD₂Cl₂ (0.3 mL). The mixture was stirred for 30 min, transferred into a dry NMR tube and the DOSY experiment was started.



$$D_a = (26.7 \pm 1.0) \ 10^{-10} \ \mathrm{m}^2 \ \mathrm{s}^{-1}$$

Sample B - 7 + Ca(NTf₂)(PF₆)

A dry tube was charged with $Ca(NTf_2)_2$ (24 mg, 0.04 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), $(Bu_4N)(PF_6)$ (15 mg, 0.04 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) and CD_2Cl_2 (0.4 mL). The mixture was stirred for 30 min and 7 (4.0 μ L, 0.04 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) was added. The mixture was stirred for 30 min, transferred into a dry NMR tube and the DOSY experiment was started.



$D_a = (15.7 \pm 0.5) \ 10^{-10} \ \mathrm{m}^2 \ \mathrm{s}^{-1}$

Sample C – 8

A dry tube was charged with **8** (4.6 mg, 0.04 mmol) and CD_2Cl_2 (0.4 mL). The mixture was stirred for 30 min, transferred into a dry NMR tube and the DOSY experiment was started.



 $D_a = (19.7 \pm 0.3) \ 10^{-10} \ \mathrm{m}^2 \ \mathrm{s}^{-1}$

Sample D - 8 + Ca(NTf₂)(PF₆) (1:1)

A dry tube was charged with $Ca(NTf_2)_2$ (24 mg, 0.04 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), $(Bu_4N)(PF_6)$ (15 mg, 0.04 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) and CD_2Cl_2 (0.3 mL). The mixture was stirred for 30 min and a solution of **8** (4.6 mg, 0.04 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) in CD_2Cl_2 (0.1 mL) was added. The mixture was stirred for 30 min, transferred into a dry NMR tube and the DOSY experiment was started.



 $D_a = (9.4 \pm 0.2) \ 10^{-10} \ \mathrm{m}^2 \ \mathrm{s}^{-1}$

8. X-Ray Structures

Compound	X-Ray
1a	
1b	
1c	

Structure	X-Ray
2b	
2c	
2i	the sease



¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃)





140 130 120







1d ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



1e ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)





140 130

150

160

:00

190

180 170

120

110

100

ar

1g ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



1h ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) \int s 1 60.1 18.4 244 Ţ-00,ĵ 299989992 Tion 7.5 7.0 4.0).0 9.5 9.0 8.5 8.0 6.5 6.0 5.5 5.0 4.5 3.5 3.0 2.5 2.0 1.5 1.0 0.5

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃)







1j ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃)



2a

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃)



2b





120

140

2c



2d

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃)



2f

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



2g ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)











2i

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃)



¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃)











4

