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# BLENDED LEARNING: A GUIDE

FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAMME  
ON MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY ACROSS AGRICULTURAL SECTORS

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## OBJECTIVE

Based on an in-depth needs assessment of a target audience consisting of government and technical experts who can influence policy decisions in the agriculture or environment sector, the Global Landscapes Forum, in partnership with Wageningen University and Research, has developed a six-module course focussing on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors.

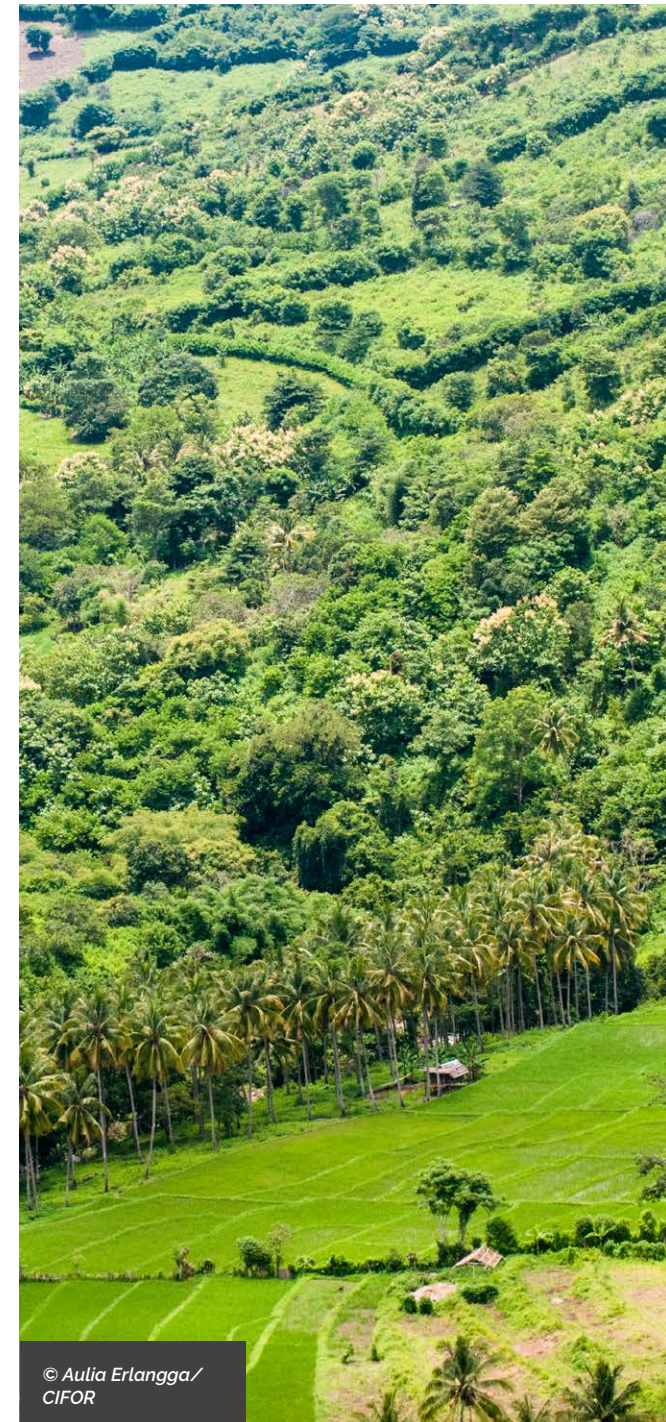
This course has been designed to contribute to FAO's Aspirational Impact of a Better Environment and its Programme Priority Area on Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture – Biodiversity for food and agriculture maintained and sustainable use, conservation and restoration of marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

## INTRODUCTION TO BLENDED LEARNING

Education has long been at the forefront of change, but as the world faces unprecedented, large-scale challenges, now more than ever, transformational education is required to facilitate transformational change. Springboarded by technology, and mainstreamed by the COVID-19 pandemic, digital learning has become a tool that can strengthen the capacities of millions across the globe.

With different methods, challenges, and styles of teaching needed, online learning comes with its own learning curve - and with face-to-face classes becoming the norm once again, capturing the best aspects of both drives the need to properly integrate both modalities.

Blended learning means not only combining face-to-face and online learning, but also combining the most appropriate methodologies of teaching into one coherent stream. This means that not only can blended learning be more accessible, but if formulated correctly, can successfully empower a much wider audience, who all likely learn in different ways.



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Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The  
Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final  
Product

# DESIGNING BLENDED LEARNING

Because blended learning trajectories are created iteratively with the purpose of facilitating and delivering content in a blended modality, there are key elements that go into their design that separate them from normal classroom-based education.

While some of these are outlined below, they are available in more detail in the [Blended Learning Toolkit](#) developed by the Global Landscapes Forum and Wageningen University.

## Jukebox

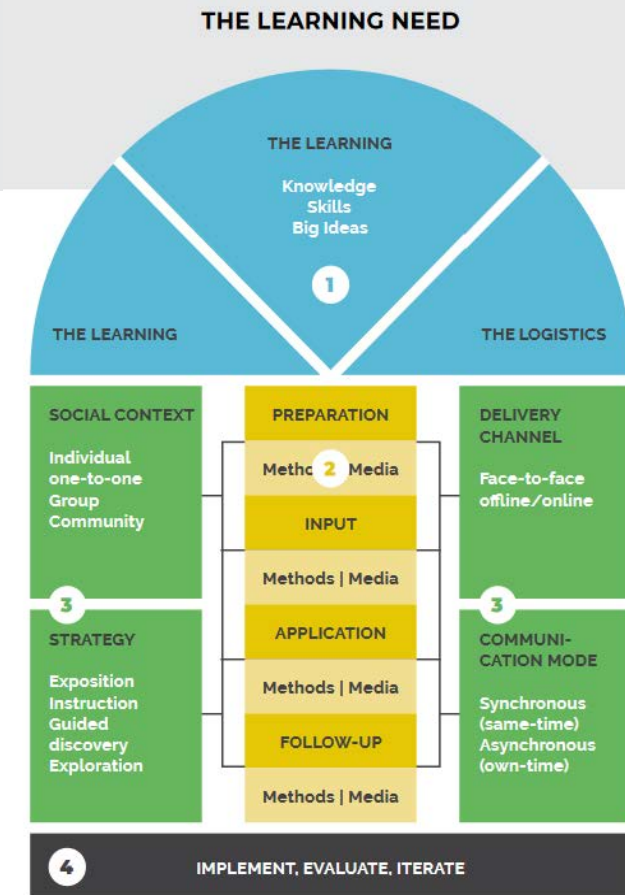
The blended learning jukebox was developed by Skills Journey, and is an overview of the key elements and processes which should be taken into consideration during the creation of a blended learning trajectory.

## PIAF

As seen in the very centre of the jukebox model, PIAF stands for: **Preparation, Input, Application, and Follow-Up**. PIAF represents the core of designing blended learning trajectories - and reminds facilitators to consider the following aspects of any blended learning course:

- **Preparation:** the first phase of the course, where the learner is introduced to the course's ambition and setup. They can be connected to the key administrative aspects of a course here, such as introductions, access to facilities and resources.
- **Input:** Where content is delivered to the learners.
- **Application:** Where learners can apply what they have learned to their own cases.
- **Follow-Up:** Perhaps the most important, learners are monitored, and encouraged to track the impact of the course. This step also helps identify future learning paths.

Figure 1: The blended learning jukebox, © The More Than Blended Learning Company, 2015



- 1 The 3 L's:** the learning, the learner, and the logistics, and how these determine the scope of the pathway to addressing this need.
- 2 PIAF:** the process of designing, developing, and delivering the learning pathway.
- 3 The four major elements** which shape the blended design, social context, delivery channel, strategy, and communication.
- 4** And finally, **a note to the importance** of continuous review and improvement across pathway iterations.



Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final Product

# BLENDED LEARNING FOR TRAINERS



Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final Product

As a modality of education that is still being developed and continually improving, it is as important for trainers as it is for learners to adapt and understand the best way to design, apply, and use blended learning content to make content compelling and enable learners to learn more effectively.

## Applying the Blended Learning Materials

The blended learning content that will be described in this toolkit is a general and expansive overview of a full-fledged course on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors. This content though part of the same course is presented in two different ways; the Blueprint and E-Learning Modules can be applied and adapted in different ways.

## Facilitating, not Teaching

As education transforms and principles such as lifelong, and practice based learning become more and more common, it is important to realise that often, learners who are following

blended courses are not only experts in their sectors, but accomplished professionals whose insight and perspective is a key aspect in ensuring a holistic and rounded discussion about course content. These discussions are the basis for key knowledge sharing activities which enrich the perspectives of the other learners.

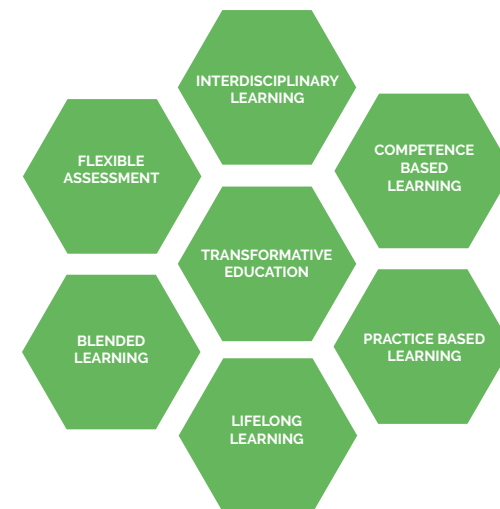
As such, it is important to recognise the role of the “educator” must shift. While possessing and transferring subject knowledge is useful, truly immersive blended learning best occurs with a multi-way communication model, where the trainer or teacher is only facilitating discussion and knowledge sharing, and is as involved in the learning process as the others in the group.

Facilitation means directing the session, listening, learning, but also truly connecting with the group of people, building on common ground, and encouraging and being encouraged to bridge gaps through inquisitive and inclusive discussion. As you facilitate learning, remember that the

creation and use of engaging learning activities and icebreakers, personal interactions whether in breakout rooms, or in additional coaching sessions, and the provision of constructive and diverse feedback remain keystones to the eventual success of the course.

## Principles of Transformative Education

Blended learning is at the forefront of education, transforming learning out of lecture-based “telling” into knowledge sharing. As such, it is the basis of, and included in one of a number of principles of transformative education which are defining new ways to learn. These can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:**  
*Principles of Transformative Education.*



# COURSE FLOWS



Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final Product

## Structure of the Course Flows

Course flows are a diagrammatic breakdown of the overall course. The purpose of a course flow is to offer facilitators a clear overview of the structure of the course, and how each segment of a course builds upon one another to finally be assessed through a summative assessment.

In this case, course flows can also help facilitators find easy entry points into the course - helping them better understand where to place focus for their learner.

An example of a diagram can be seen in Figure 3.

## Understanding the Terminology

The following are definitions of key terms used in the structure and content of this course:

**Vision:** what desired change does this course contribute to?

**Mission:** How does this course contribute to that change?

**Overall Learning Outcomes:** The overall desired outcomes of the course from a learner.

**Course:** A course is a plan of study focussed on a particular subject. It is made up of modules.

**Module:** A module is the largest single section of a course. A course can be made up of one or multiple modules.

**Learning Objective:** A learning objective is a statement which describes what learners are expected to achieve after a period of instruction, and in this course, to successfully complete a module. Each module can be made up of one or more learning objectives.

**Topic:** Each learning objective is supplemented by key topics which facilitators should focus on. These are guides, and the completion of these are basic requirements to achieve a learning objective. As such, sessions for blended learning have been planned around topics.

**Topic Learning Objective:** These are smaller scale learning objectives, which describe what students should achieve after instruction on a topic. It is recommended that facilitators set specific topic learning objectives.

**Assignment:** An assignment is a way of testing whether a learner has achieved a learning objective.

**Summative Assessment:** The summative assessment is the final assessment of the course. It is assigned to measure whether learners have achieved learning objectives, and in turn, the overall learning outcomes of the course.



Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

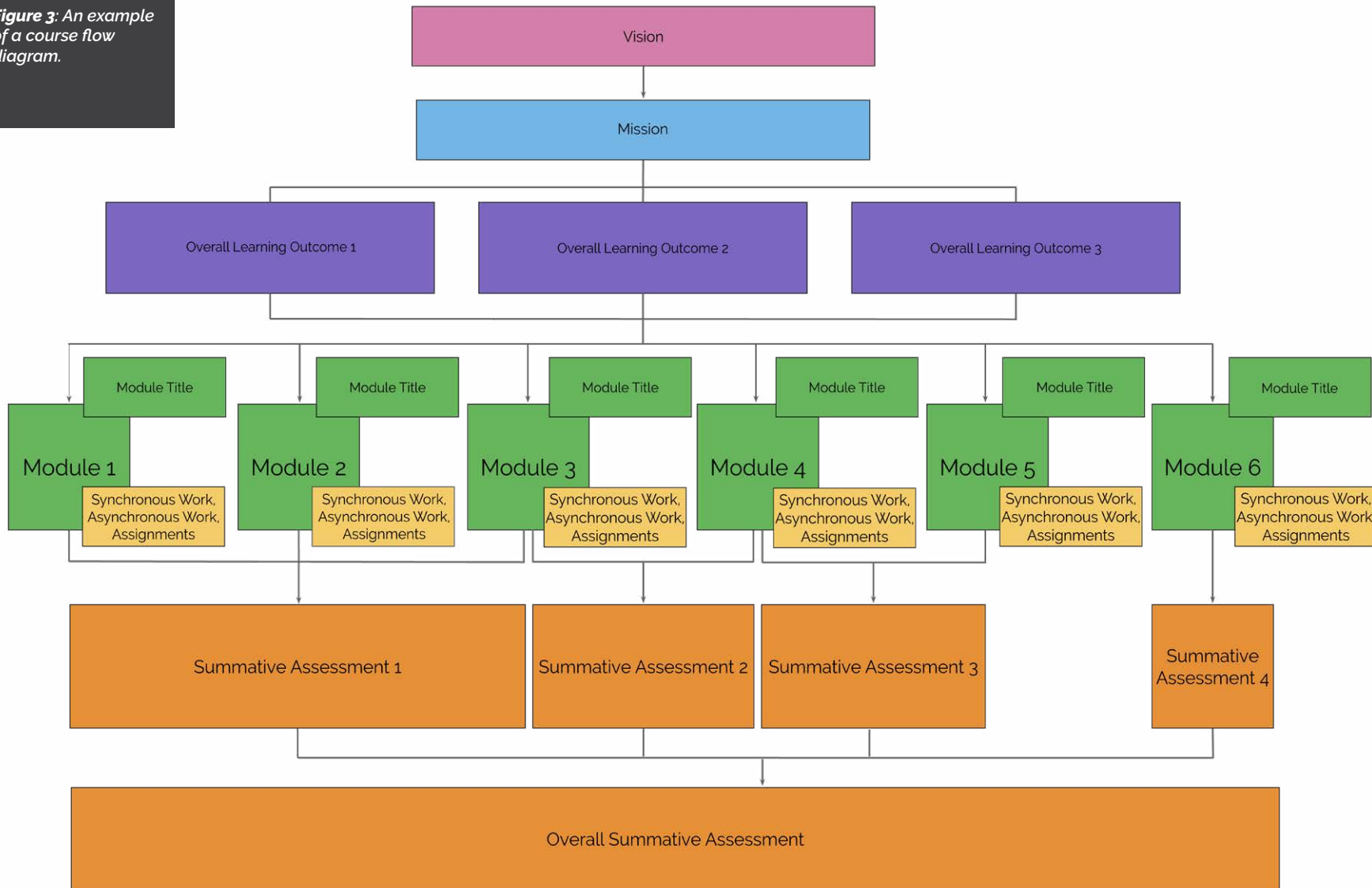
Course Flows

The Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final Product

**Figure 3:** An example of a course flow diagram.



# THE BLUEPRINT



Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final Product

The Blueprint is the overall outline of the course which was designed considering the personas that the learners fit into, their learning needs, and the best path to achieve the overall learning outcomes which were collaboratively decided upon in two intensive online workshops.

To this end, it is recommended that the facilitator of this course carry out an extensive persona exercise.

## Personas

Personas are fictional characters whose goals and characteristics represent the needs of a larger target audience group.

Try to describe your personas in detail. Such descriptions can include behavior patterns, needs, goals, and skills, and other background information, as well as the environment in which a persona operates.

Personas can enable facilitators to consider the goals, motivations, and limitations of their learners. This can help to better adapt the blueprint and course content to a specific

purpose. It also can help to align case studies and examples of best practices more closely with the learning objectives of the course. By carrying out in depth persona exercises, facilitators can better cater to their learner's needs, and in creating a more personalised learning experience, offer them the best opportunity to achieve the objectives and outcomes that are desired.

## Basic Information

Some basic information usually associated with the blueprint can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Basic information associated with the blueprint.

| Programme title                  | The title of the entire course                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Duration</b>                  | The duration of the entire course                                                                                                         |
| <b>Study load</b>                | How long per week learners should spend on synchronous and asynchronous work.                                                             |
| <b>Rhythm</b>                    | Timeline for live sessions, weekly repetition.                                                                                            |
| <b>Vision of the course</b>      | What desired change does the learning programme contribute to?                                                                            |
| <b>Mission of the course</b>     | How does your learning programme contribute to this change?                                                                               |
| <b>Overall learning outcomes</b> | The overall desired outcomes of the course for a learner.                                                                                 |
| <b>Target audience</b>           | Who are the personas that this course targets?                                                                                            |
| <b>Summative Assessment</b>      | The final, overall summative assessment that the learning should complete to assess their progress towards the overall learning outcomes. |
| <b>Feel of the course</b>        | How does the course feel to learners? (For example, is it simple, transformative, enjoyable, etc.)                                        |



## Structure of the Blueprint

The blueprint is made up of numerous different parts which have been designed to offer trainers and facilitators the best possible experience in allowing their learners to achieve the overall outcomes of the course.

The structure of the blueprint is visible in Figure 4.

## Using the Blueprint - Context and Adaptation

As a whole, the blueprint offers trainers with a clear teaching path that should be followed structured through numerous specific learning outcomes that should be achieved in order to finally achieve the overall outcomes of the course. The topics listed are what were considered useful examples and basic ideas that pertain to the associated learning objective.

However, it is important to note that these topics are not applicable globally, nor have they been considered on every scale. Instead, they serve the purpose of a foundation upon which each trainer or facilitator can build based on their and their learner's contexts.

Because of the wide range of possible learner backgrounds, knowledge structures, and areas of expertise, the open layout of this blueprint also offers the opportunity to select aspects, and attribute flexible sections of time to those, which are most useful to any one particular group of learners.

Instead of demanding that learners who exist and understand ideas within their own local contexts learn universally vague ideas which may not be applicable to them, the blueprint offers opportunities to localise and specialise content - affording each learner the best possible opportunity to effectively achieve the desired outcomes of this course.

In order to aid in this venture, keep an eye out for the "adapting this module" section above each module in the blueprint for simple and actionable ways to localise the content to your learners.

**Figure 4:** The anatomy of a blueprint - understanding the different parts.

| MODULE NUMBER | USING THIS MODULE                                                                                          |                                                     | KEY QUESTIONS                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | A guide for facilitators to build more detailed and personalised content for any specific set of learners. |                                                     | These are questions that learners should be able to answer once they have completed all the learning objectives in the module. |
| MODULE TITLE  |                                                                                                            |                                                     |                                                                                                                                |
|               | Learning Objective Title                                                                                   | Learning Objective                                  | Key Topics                                                                                                                     |
|               | A title for this learning objective                                                                        | LO 1.1: The first learning objective of the module  | 1.1.1: A key topic associated with the learning objective                                                                      |
|               | A title for this learning objective                                                                        | LO 1.2: The second learning objective of the module | 1.2.1: A key topic associated with the learning objective<br>1.2.2: Another key topic associated with the learning objective   |
|               | A title for this learning objective                                                                        | LO 1.3: The third learning objective of the module  | 1.3.1: A key topic associated with the learning objective<br>1.3.2: Another key topic associated with the learning objective   |

Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final Product



# E-LEARNING MODULES

Though more structured than the blueprint, the e-learning modules also aim to offer a more globally adaptable facilitating and learning experience.

## Facilitating for Local Learners through Local Knowledge

As with all well-developed e-learning content, the two modules developed from the blueprint offer more in-depth breakdowns and details about each specific learning outcome.

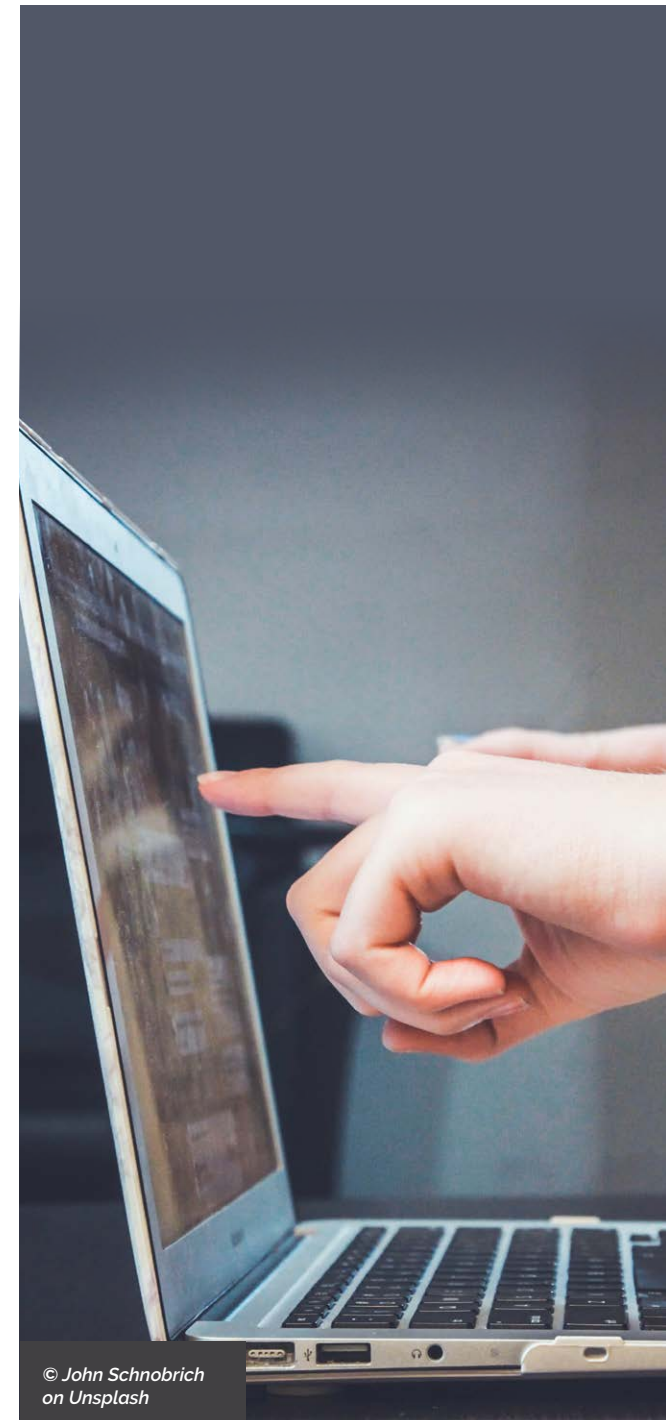
Though these could be seen as limiting, they are most well used when paired with local, contextual knowledge.

It has been recognised when developing this content that all approaches cannot be universally employed, and because truly empowering transformational change takes

place from the ground up, even content in these two e-learning modules has only been developed as a basic framework to further the facilitation of learning through local knowledge.

All written content here is best used complemented, supported, or where necessary even replaced by expertise, case studies, best practices, and contextualised information which can only be determined based on a vast array of factors from location, to the background of the learners, to the eventual scale upon which it is aimed to be eventually enacted.

The addition of the likes of indigenous knowledge, locale-specific case studies, and even personal experiences of the facilitator are not only recommended, but required to provide a holistic and applicable learning experience.



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Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The  
Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final  
Product



## Using Module Outlines

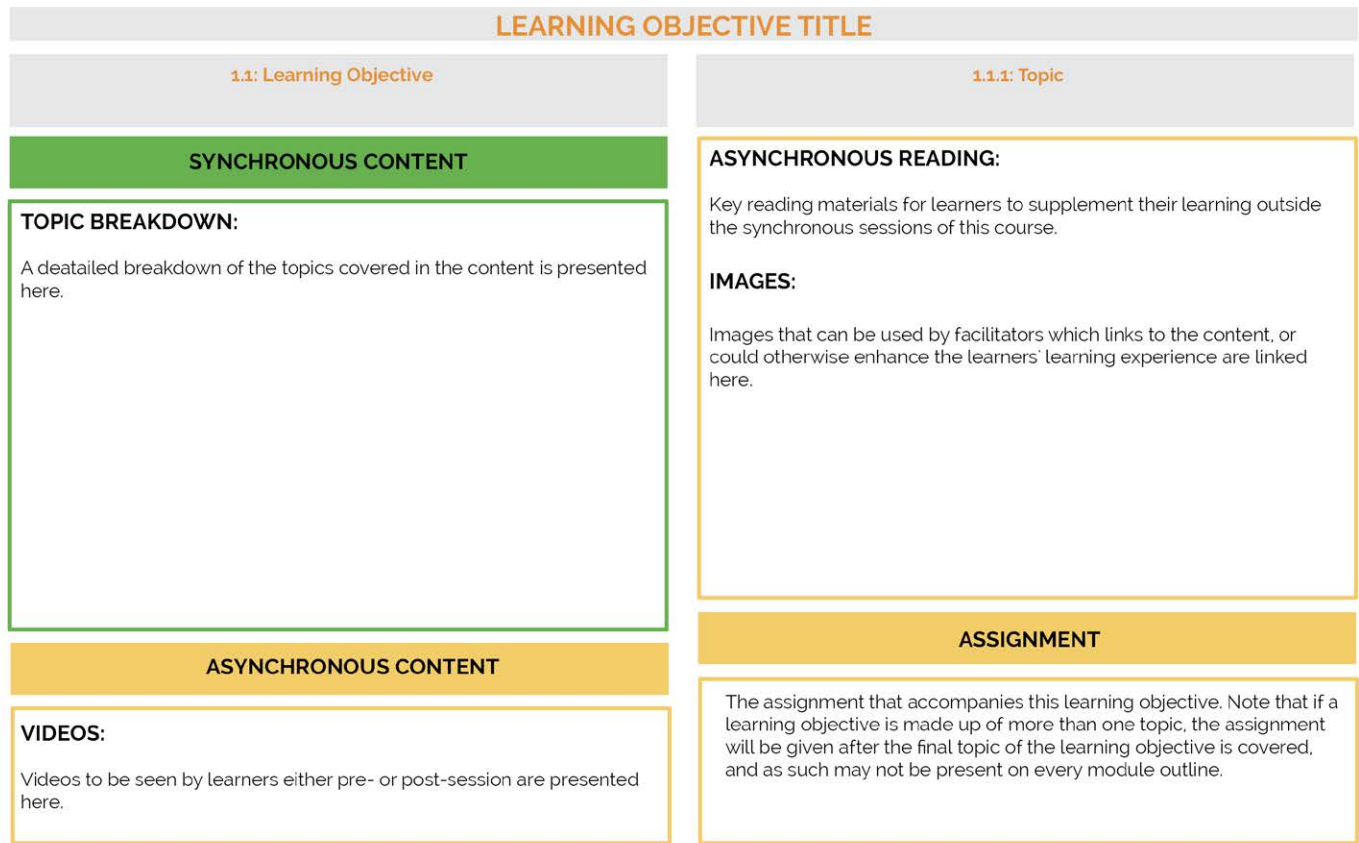
The module outline has been detailed to best enable trainers to structure learning materials, and plan and develop well-rounded and rigorous learning opportunities in both synchronous and asynchronous modes. As such, suggested times, examples of key resources, and more are laid out in detail that can easily be adapted and complemented with more specific and situation-pertinent knowledge products.

As mentioned before, it is important here to adapt this structure into a form that works best for a preferred style of facilitation, so including recap questions, suggesting the minimum requirements to the learners, and adding more pertinent content based on any number of external factors is the responsibility of the facilitator.

## Structure of Modules

The module outline has been segmented into easy to follow section as shown below:

**Figure 5: The Anatomy of a Module Outline - Pointing out Different Parts.**



- Objective
- Introduction
- Designing
- For Trainers
- Course Flows
- The Blueprint
- E-Learning
- The Final Product

## THE FINAL PRODUCT

As with the blueprints, the module outlines are created to be a foundation upon which to be built. The final product for any set of learners is bound to be diverse, but should eventually adhere to the module specific learning objectives, and the course specific learning outcomes - which are well complemented by the formulated forms of summative assessment.

These learning outcomes, and learning objectives are key not only because of the vast range of learners that could follow this course, but because the associated diversity and flexibility that a trainer or facilitator can apply to these formed learning structures are requirements. Only by adhering to each outcome, summative assessment, and objective can the mission and vision of the course be fulfilled.



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Objective

Introduction

Designing

For Trainers

Course Flows

The  
Blueprint

E-Learning

The Final  
Product



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## Global Landscapes Forum

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihoods, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter members: CIAT, CIFOR-ICRAF, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, Ecoagriculture Partners, The European Forest Institute, Evergreen Agriculture, FAO, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, The International Livestock Research Institute, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, Rights and Resources Initiative, SAN, TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, UNCCD, UNEP, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation part of Wageningen Research, World Farmer Organization, World Bank Group, World Resources Institute, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL)

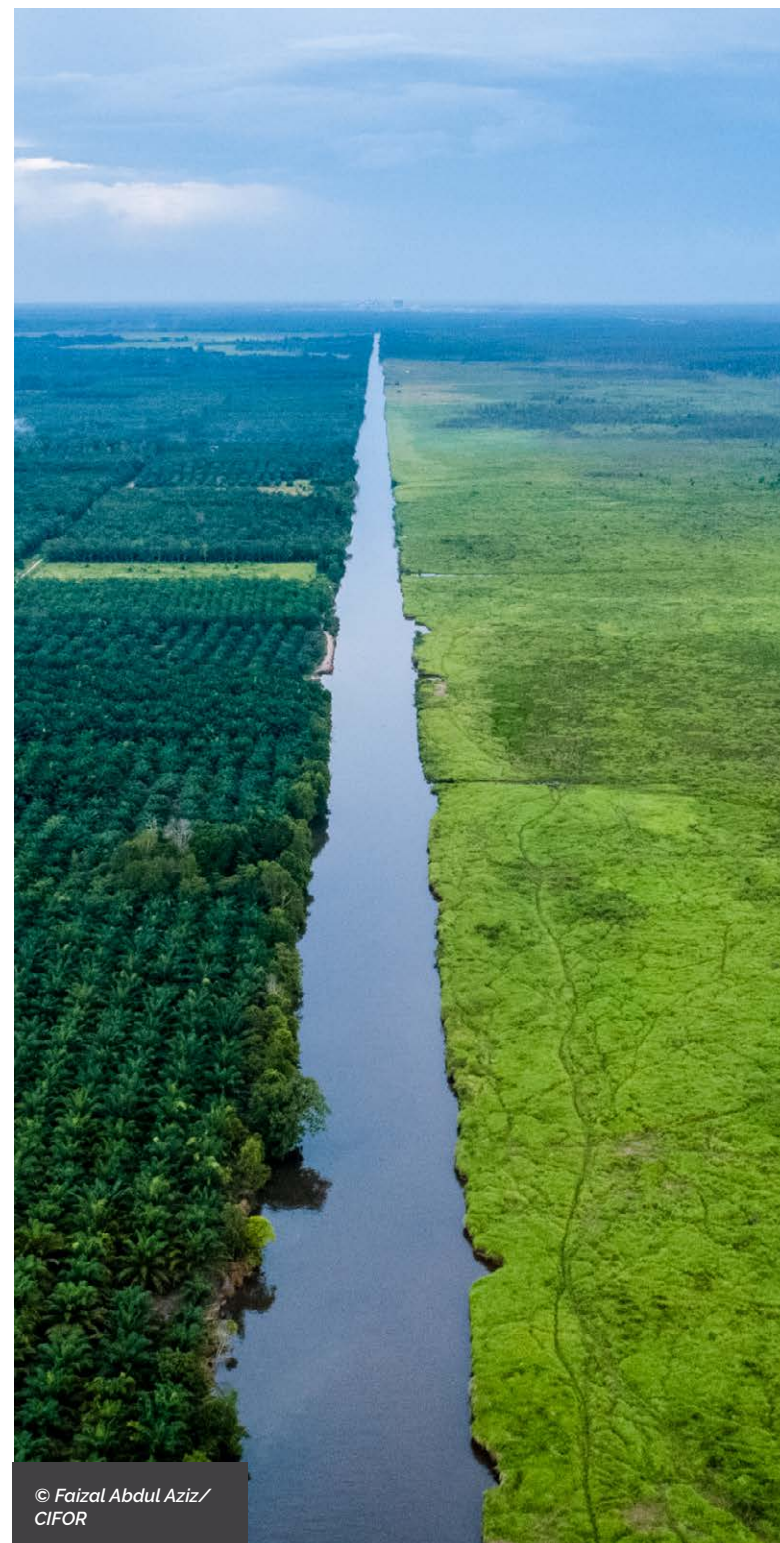
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