5.2.1 Before You Start

A Learning Module is a hybrid work which crosses the legacy educational practices of lesson plan, syllabus and textbook. Unlike a lesson plan which is mainly written for a teacher’s design purposes, a learning module has both teacher and learner sides.

- On the left side of the screen you speak to learners in “classroom discourse,” however in the case of the learning module, in a dialogical mode, rather like social media.
- On the right side of the screen, you speak to other teachers in the professional discourse of the curriculum and pedagogy.
Unlike a syllabus, a learning module contains content as well as an outline of coverage. And unlike a textbook which typically summarizes and transmits content for learners to remember, a learning module curates a variety of digital media and web content (links, embedded media etc.). It establishes a dialogue with and between learners, positioning them as active seekers and producers of knowledge.

The Learning Module architecture is agnostic about pedagogy. You could create in the same design as conventional learning management systems or MOOCs. You could, for instance, deliver video lectures as Updates into learners’ activity streams in the Community app, then check what students have remembered with CGScholar Knowledge Surveys.

However, this would be to squander the affordances of CGScholar as a social learning space, and the potentials of “reflexive pedagogy.” In an ideal Learning Module, you will create some or all of:

1. *Admin Updates* in the Community app, with textual, image, video and other content, prompting learner response and interaction with each other in the comments area below the post.
2. *Learner Updates* where learners share content knowledge that they have researched in a “jigsaw” fashion (adding and piecing together different pieces of an intellectual puzzle). Learners can also be expected to comment on each other’s updates.
3. *Peer-reviewed Projects* in the Creator app, with prompts for multimodal writing and assessment rubrics.
4. *Information Surveys* which solicit opinions.
5. *Knowledge Surveys* in the form of quizzes or item-based texts which solicit answers that are potentially right or wrong.
7. *Pedagogical Rationales* for activities, how-to-instructions, teaching suggestions, standards mapping, and supplementary resources for the right (admin) side of the screen.
8. *Assessment Strategies* in the form of settings created for the intended learning community in the admin area of the Analytics app.

For examples of Learning Modules, visit the CGScholar Bookstore:

- The [Literacies](#) series. Take [this link](#) for more on the theory and practice of Literacies.
- The [Learning by Design](#) series. If you chose to use the Learning by Design pedagogy it is [described here](#). Cut/paste the Learning by Design icons to be [found here](#).
- The [Higher Education](#) series.
- The [Learning Design and Leadership](#) series.
5.2.2 Starting a New Learning Module
There are three ways to start to create a Learning Module:

1. You can start to create a new Learning Module at Works => New. You might decide to Share this directly to your personal profile page or a community where you admin at About This Work => Info => Share.

2. You might look for Publisher who will either publish it directly or arrange a peer-reviewed project for you. Go to About This Work => Publish.
3. If you are part of a publishing project where participants are creating Learning Modules, you will receive a request from an admin via the CGScholar notifications and email to create a peer-reviewed Learning Module. Take the link in the request and you will reach a blank Learning Module.

5.2.3 Formatting a Learning Module
The exam-dissertation process is a sequence of activities culminating in a dissertation, where you demonstrate your capacity to be a scholar in terms of rigorous methodology and scholarly discourse, and where you demonstrate that you are able to push the frontiers of knowledge with original thinking.

Before he became a world-famous theorist of communication (and later a novelist whose books were turned into movies), Umberto Eco wrote a little book, *How to Write a Thesis*. After he became famous, it was translated into English.

![Umberto Eco](https://example.com/umberto-eco.jpg)

Like a daunting task, so daunting in fact that can easily slip from one’s grasp. In each course, you will be creating text that can potentially be part of your final dissertation. You will be adding to a single large work that will be your dissertation. For instance, from the general field and special field examinations, you will be creating sections of what might become a literature review section, the first part addressing the wider literature of the discipline, and the second reviewing literature closest to your chosen topic. The research methodology examination might become a chapter that provides a rationale for your chosen methodology, and an explanation of how it will be implemented. The preliminary thesis examination, the cumulation of work done in three research exam courses - introduction with the research questions, hypotheses, literature review, selected methodology and plan of going forward with research project may also include a description of a proof-of-concept pilot study. As you move forward, the earlier sections will inevitably change. Although the focus in each course will be in the newly added sections, we will be interested also in how the earlier sections are also evolving.

**Approach**

Our aim in this course sequence is to create and nurture a vibrant scholarly community in support of a sustained intellectual project of your design. Not only is this an incremental process, where you work towards the overall task of the dissertation by working through a series of defined and manageable milestones. It is also, at every stage in the process, a social and collaborative process, with multiple cycles of peer review and feedback from your committee. We have taken this approach in order to address the two main criticisms of doctoral work: all too frequently it is experienced as a solitary and isolating experience.

Go to About This Work => Structure. When you go to create a new element, you will find the following different kinds of element that are possible in a Learning Module:

- **Full Width Section**: creates a heading followed by a section that crosses both columns.
• **Two-sided Section**: creates a heading for a two-column section.
• **Left (Member) Side of a Two-sided Section**: for content that a teacher can post to learners.
• **Right (Admin) Side of a Two-sided Section**: contains curriculum objectives, standards or advice to other teachers.

How to use the Structure tool to create a learning module:
1. Create a new element by selecting [Add New] at the bottom of the Structure tab.
2. Use the pencil tool to rename the “Untitled Element.”
3. Select the Element Type. Two-sided sections must begin with a Two-sided Section. They should then be followed, first by a Left Side Element, then a Right-Side Element. Name these according to the roles for members (e.g. For the Student) or admin (e.g. For the Teacher). Then use the drag + tool to pull these to the right, as illustrated in the screenshots above.
4. Drag and drop sections as your learning design evolves. Wait until the spinner stops and a green check/tick mark appears to be sure you have saved before you make another move.
5. Add Abstract, Keywords and Work Icon at About This Work => Info => Work.
6. Regularly take the Export icon in the dark blue bar above the edit screen, selecting [View in Browser] to check that all is presenting the way you expect.
Some recommendations when writing Updates:

- If at all possible include media for students to make your Update interesting (such as an image or a video). One measure of potential engagement of an update should be, “how interesting would this update feel in social media?”

- End the Update with a prompt or request for learners to comment or discuss. Updates are not (just) about delivering content. They should nurture dialogue! Suggest that learners talk among themselves, starting their comment with @Name as they address others already in the conversation.

- If your learners are working in an unrestricted community, suggest the kind of Update that you would like them to make. (Restricted communities only allow admins to make updates. Unrestricted communities allow any community member to make an update.) In this way, learners become co-designers of the learning and co-contributors to course content.

- Have learners read and discuss peer-reviewed Works when they are published to the community page. In this way as well, students are contributing learning content in a culture of collaborative knowledge creation.