Using Groups & Groupings in the VLE

GUIDE

v3.0
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A. Groups

The Groups feature allows tutors to organise VLE area participants (students and tutors) into groups. Students can then undertake VLE activities within these groups, allowing them to work more closely together, and encouraging more collaboration from each member than they might get in a whole-class exercise.

When tutors use groups, they are able to create one activity instead of an activity for each group. For example, the tutor organising an online discussion for four (4) groups can set up one discussion forum that will contain four unique areas (one for each group), effectively creating four distinct discussions.

B. Creating Groups

To create a group:

1. Click Course administration > Users > Groups in the Administration block (left side of VLE area homepage).

   The Groups page displays two columns (which are initially empty):
   - Groups:
   - Members of:

2. To add a new group, click Create group button.
3. In the **Group name** field, type a name for the group e.g. Group A.

![Group name field example](image)

4. In the **Group description** field, you may choose to write a brief description of the group and its purpose.

5. Click **Save changes** button.

   The name of the group will now appear in the group list. Repeat steps 2-5 to create other groups e.g. Group B, Group C etc.

![Group creation example](image)
C. Adding Participants to Groups

To add participants to a group:

1. Click Course administration > Users > Groups in the Administration block.
2. From the left column, select the group you want to add participants to, e.g. Group A.
3. Click the Add/remove users button.

The ’Add/remove users’ page displays two lists. The Group members column (left-side) lists all members assigned to the group. Initially, this column is blank. The second column lists all participants of the VLE area.

4. From the Potential members list (right-side), click the participant’s name you want to add to the group.
5. Click Add button. The selected participant’s name will be displayed as a member in the ‘Group members’ list.

If you have added a participant to a group by mistake, click the member’s name in the Group members list and click Remove button.
Repeat steps 4 and 5 for all the participants you want to add to the group.

To select multiple participants, you can select the first participant in a list, press and hold the **Shift** key on your keyboard, and click the last participant in the list. Similarly, you may also use the **Ctrl** key to select non-adjacent participants.

6. When you have added all required participants to the group, click **Back to groups** button.

Repeat steps 2-6 to add participants to other groups.
Alternatively, you may easily add participants to multiple groups from the **Enrolled users** page.

To add a participant to multiple groups:

1. In the required VLE area, access the **Enrolled users** page. Click **Course administration > Users > Enrolled users** in the Administration block.
2. Locate the required participant and click the **Add user into group** button.

3. The **Add user into group** page is displayed. Choose which group you would like to add the participant to. If the participant needs to be added to more than one group, hold the **Ctrl** key and click on the different groups you would like the participant to be added to.

4. Click **Save changes**.

The groups will be displayed adjacent to the participant under the **Groups** column.
D. Auto-Creating Groups

Creating large numbers of groups and adding participants to them can be a cumbersome process. With the Auto-create groups feature, the VLE can automatically create and name a required number of groups, and also add participants to them.

To automatically create groups:

1. Click Course administration > Users > Groups in the Administration block.
2. Click Auto-create groups button.

3. In the Naming scheme text field, define how your groups will be named. You may use the ‘@’ sign to assign a letter in sequence (A, B, C, etc) to each new group, or the ‘#’ sign to assign a number in sequence (1, 2, 3, etc) to each new group. Consider the following examples:
   - ‘Group @’ will create groups with a naming scheme Group A, Group B, Group C, etc.
   - ‘Group #’ will create groups with a naming scheme Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, etc.
4. Using Auto create based on and Group/member count settings, define how groups will be created:
   - If you want to create a specific number of groups \(x\) with an equal amount of members in each group, select Number of groups from the Auto create based on drop-down menu and type the number of groups required \(x\) in Group/member count.
   - If you want to create groups with a specific amount of members \(y\) in each group, select Members per group from the Auto create based on drop-down menu and type the number of members required \(y\) in Group/member count.
In some cases, it may not be possible to divide participants equally between groups due to the amount of participants. If, for example, 15 participants are divided into groups of 6 members each, two groups of 6 and one group of 3 members will be created.

If you do not wish to have a group with a smaller number of participants, tick the Prevent last small group checkbox. In the example mentioned above, the 3 members from the latter group will be added to the former two groups, thus having two groups of 8 and 7 members respectively.

5. In the Select members with role drop-down menu, choose which participants (students, tutors or all) you want to sort into groups.

6. From the Allocate members drop-down menu, select the method of sorting members into groups; randomly, or alphabetically by first name or last name. If you set the option to ‘No allocation’, the groups will be created but no members will be allocated to them. You can choose to place your new groups in a grouping, by selecting New grouping from the Grouping of auto-created groups drop-down menu, under the Grouping section. Alternatively, you may place groups in existing groupings from the drop-down menu. For more information on working with groupings, refer to Section E.

7. Click the Preview button to view the groups being created and members assigned to each group (if applicable). If you are satisfied with how the groups are set up, click Submit button.

If you want to make any modifications, amend the settings accordingly and click Preview button again.

Note:
- Whichever method is used (manual or automatic), groups are configured based on existing students in the VLE area. Students who are added to a VLE area at a later stage will need to be manually added to a group. Students removed from a VLE area, will automatically be removed from any group they are a member of. Tutors are encouraged to verify group membership in such situations.
E. Making use of Groups

Once you have created groups, you can set VLE area activities with Group mode. There are three Group mode options that define the level of interaction of groups with each other in an activity, which are:

- **No groups** – All students can view and participate together in the same activities.
- **Separate groups** – Students can view and participate in activities within their own group. They cannot view or participate in other groups’ discussions.
- **Visible groups** – Students can view and participate in activities within their own group. They can also view other groups' contributions but not participate in them.

Group mode may be set at VLE area level or when the tutor creates an activity within an area. When Group Mode is set at VLE area level, it becomes the default mode for all activities within the area. Each activity which supports groups can also define its own group mode, though if the Group Mode is forced at VLE area level (explained below) the group mode setting set at activity level is ignored.

At VLE Area Level

To set Group Mode at VLE area level:

1. Click **Course administration > Edit Settings** in the **Administration** block.
2. Scroll down and click the **Groups** section title to expand further settings.
3. From the **Group mode** drop-down menu, select how you prefer the activity (such as a forum) to operate. Definitions of the different options are explained above.
4. From the **Force group mode** drop-down menu, select one of the following:
   - **No** – although the selected group mode is set for every activity in the VLE area, it can be changed at activity level (recommended).
   - **Yes** – the selected group mode will be enforced for every activity in the VLE area, and cannot be changed.
5. Click **Save and display** button.
At Activity Level

You can set the Group Mode for each individual activity so that it need not necessarily follow the Group Mode set at VLE area level. However, if the Force option is set to Yes at VLE area level (explained above), Group Mode settings already set at activity level are ignored.

To set the Group Mode at activity level:

1. Click Turn editing on button located at the top-right of the VLE area homepage.
2. Select an activity from the Add an activity... drop-down menu.
   Alternatively if you want to apply Group Mode to an existing activity, click the Edit drop-down menu adjacent to the activity, and click Edit settings.

3. Scroll down to the Common module settings section.

4. From the Group mode drop-down menu, select how you prefer the activity to operate. Definitions of the different options are explained above.
   If Group Mode is pre-set as either Separate groups or Visible groups (without the possibility of changing the option), this means that Group Mode has been forced at VLE area level (explained above).
5. Click Save and return to course button.
F. Groupings

The Groupings feature allows tutors to organise groups into groupings. A Grouping is two or more groups merged together for the purpose of completing an activity. For example, you may have several smaller groups working on specific tasks but may want some of those groups to come together to work on a project with a broader topic or to compare notes. To utilise groupings, tutors must first create the groups in the VLE area and add participants to each group. If groupings have been created, an activity can be set to use only groupings, or to use both groupings and groups. This is ideal for when you want students to be in multiple groups throughout the semester.

From a categorised point of view, VLE area participants belong to a group while groups belong to a grouping. Groupings can be effective when a VLE area has a large number of activities which need to be divided among different groups of participants, or when more control over which groups of participants have access to particular activities is required.

The diagram below explains a few distinct ways you can use groupings. As illustrated below, you might also want to use differently sized groups depending on the type of activity.

![Diagram of groupings](image)

Finally, there may be times when you want to create an activity that’s intended for only a number of participants (e.g. a resit assignment). Since you can assign an activity to a grouping, but groups within the grouping do not have to contain every participant in your VLE area, only participants contained in that grouping can see the activity and participate. This is explained in detail in Section J below.
G. Creating Groupings

To create a grouping:

1. Click Course administration > Users > Groups in the Administration block.
2. Click the Groupings tab.
3. To add a new grouping, click Create grouping button.

4. In the Grouping name field, type a name for the grouping e.g. Grouping 1.

5. In the Grouping description field, you may choose to write a brief description of the grouping and its purpose.
6. Click Save changes button.
The name of the grouping will now appear in the grouping list. Repeat steps 3-6 to create other groupings e.g. Grouping 2, Grouping 3 etc.

### H. Adding Groups to a Grouping

Note that you must first create a grouping (refer to Section G) before proceeding with the following instructions.

To add groups to a grouping:

1. Click **Course administration > Users > Groups** in the Administration block.
2. Click the **Groupings** tab.
3. Click the **Show groups in grouping** icon in line with the respective grouping.

The Add/remove groups page displays two columns. The left column (Existing members) lists all member groups assigned in the grouping. Initially, this column is blank. The right column (Potential members) lists all groups in the VLE area.

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**Note:**

- To rename a grouping, click the **Edit** icon in line with the respective grouping. Edit the name (and/or the description) and click **Save changes** button.
- To delete a grouping, click the **Delete** icon in line with the respective grouping. You will be prompted to confirm whether you wish to proceed with deleting the grouping or not.
4. From the right column (Potential members list), click the group you want to add to the grouping.

5. Click **Add** button. The selected group will be displayed as a member in the left column.
   If you have mistakenly added a group to a grouping, click the group in the left column and click **Remove** button.
   Repeat steps 4 and 5 for all the groups you want to add to the grouping.
   To select multiple groups, you can select the first group in a list, press and hold the **SHIFT** key on your keyboard, and click the last group in the list. Similarly, you may also use the **CTRL** key to select non-adjacent groups.

6. When you have added all required groups to the grouping, click **Back to groupings** button.

Repeat steps 3-6 to add groups to other groupings.
I. Using Groupings

Tutors who need to create a resource or activity targeted to one or more particular groups can use the Groupings feature. By assigning a grouping to a resource or activity, the tutor can make the resource or activity accessible only to the relevant groups (within the grouping).

To make a resource or activity available to groups within a specific grouping only:

1. Click **Turn editing on** button located at the top-right of the VLE area homepage.
2. Select a resource/activity from the **Add a resource...** or **Add an activity...** drop-down menu.
   Alternatively click **Edit Settings** from the **Edit** drop-down menu adjacent the resource/activity if it already exists.
3. Scroll down to the **Common module settings** section and click its title to expand further settings.

4. From the **Group mode** drop-down menu, select how you prefer the resource/activity to operate. Refer to **Section E** for definitions of the different options.
   If Group Mode is pre-set as either Separate groups or Visible groups (without the possibility of changing the option), this means that Group Mode has been forced at VLE area level (refer to **Section E**).
5. From the **Grouping** drop-down menu, select which grouping you want to assign to the resource/activity.
   The name of the chosen grouping will eventually be displayed adjacent to the resource/activity link in the VLE area main page. This is applicable to tutors only, as students will only see the resource/activity link that they have access to.
J. Restricting access to specific Groups/Groupings

If you would like to make the activity link unavailable to students who are not part of these groups, you may restrict access to the resource/activity.

1. Click Turn editing on button located at the top-right of the VLE area homepage.
2. Locate the required resource/activity. Click the Edit link adjacent to the resource/activity and select Edit settings. The respective settings page is displayed.
3. Scroll down and click to expand the Restrict access section. Click the Add restriction... button.

The Add restriction... dialog box is displayed.

4. Click the Group / Grouping button, and select the group / grouping you wish to allow access to.

5. Click on the Hide/Show icon to establish whether the activity title in the VLE area homepage will be visible:
   - When the icon is shown, the activity title will be displayed as greyed-out and will not be clickable to students who do not form part of the selected group/s or grouping/s (refer to screenshot below).
   - When the icon is shown, the activity title will be hidden entirely from the view of students who do not form part of the selected group/s.

6. Click Save and return to course button.
Alternatively, you may restrict access for groups and groupings using the Add group/grouping access restriction option in the Common module settings section.

If the Group mode option is set as No groups (this is the default option unless groups are forced at VLE area level), the Add group/grouping access restriction will be disabled.

If you set the Group mode option as Separate groups or Visible groups, subsequently you can click the Add group/grouping access restriction button.

The activity’s restriction will be set as Not available unless: You belong to any group.

Therefore, if you require the restriction to be linked to a specific group, you can update the restriction from the activity’s Restrict access section.

If in addition to setting the Group mode option, you also choose a grouping and then click Add group/grouping access restriction, the restriction will be set as Not available unless: You belong to a group in Grouping 1.

Note:
- The Add group/grouping access restriction option is only available for VLE activities (i.e. assignments, forum, quiz, etc.). The option is not available for VLE resources.