

Using Groups in Moodle

Overview

The Moodle ‘Groups’ feature allows you to divide up the students on your course into groups, such as their class groups. Students can then undertake Moodle activities within these groups, allowing them to work together more closely, and encouraging more participation from each member than they might get in a whole-class exercise.

Using Groups, you only need to create a single instance of any activity, rather than one for each group.

For example, imagine you’re organising an online discussion and decide to divide 40 participants into 4 groups of 10. Using Groups in Moodle means you only have to set up a single discussion Forum, rather than 4 separate ones. This goes for any Activity on Moodle.

How Might I Use Groups?

Some scenarios:

- Students in Seminar groups share presentations and hold pre- or post-seminar discussions
 - Small groups of students use the Forum tool to cover the same discussion points, increasing chances of individual participation and allowing you to compare the different conclusions drawn by each group.
 - Small groups of students use the Wiki and Forum tools to work together on a group project.
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What Types Of Groups Are There?

Moodle allows you to apply either of two Group modes to any Activity. In addition to ‘No groups’ 🙅 (the default), there are:

- **Visible groups** 👁️ - students can view other groups’ activities but not participate
- **Separate groups** 🙅 - students can neither view nor participate in other groups’ activities

Please note that Groups can only be applied to Activities, not to Resources, so they can’t be used to control access to specific pages of content.

How Can I Set Up Groups?

It is important to set up and apply groups before releasing an Activity rather than afterwards. There are three steps to using groups:

1. Create Groups
2. Add users to the Groups
3. Enable Groups for the Activity

1. Create the groups:

- Click on Groups in the Administration Block.
- You will see a screen with two columns: Groups & Members (Fig 1). If no groups have been set up, both columns will be empty.



Figure 1: The Groups tool before any groups have been set up

- Create each group by clicking the Create Group button, typing a name into the Group name field and clicking Create group. (The other fields are optional – see ‘Further Group Settings’ below). The new group then appears in the left-hand column.

2. Add users to the Groups

- The process described here is a manual one and is dependent on the students having already enrolled on your course. Alternatively, you can allocate students to groups automatically using a Group Enrolment key (See ‘Further Group Settings’ below)
- Select the group you want to populate by clicking it once.
- Click the Add/Remove Users button on the right. You will see lists of existing and potential members (Fig2.) In the ‘Potential members’ list, select the users you want to add to the group (hold down Ctrl to select multiple users). Then click the ‘left arrow’ button to add them to the group. **Note:** You will need to add teachers too if you want them to participate.
- Click the Back to Groups button to return to the Groups page

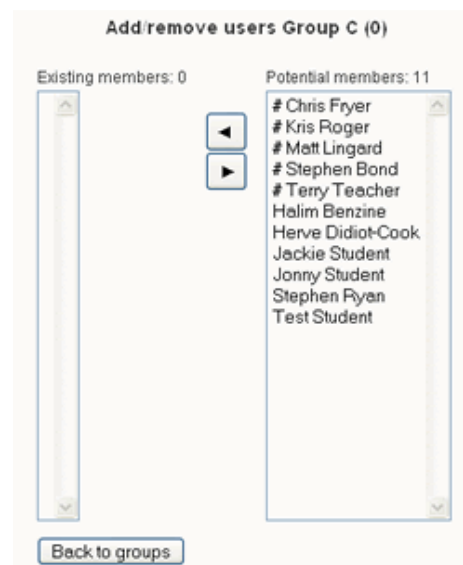


Figure 2: Adding users to a group

3. Enable Groups for the Activity

- Go back to the Course homepage and ‘Turn editing on’
- Find the Groups icon for the activity and click it until you reach your preferred mode. (See the icons above in ‘What types of groups are there?’)

Further Group Settings

Click on 'Groups' in the Admin block. Select a Group and click on the 'Edit Group Settings' button to see the options:

- You can add a **Description** for the group which can be seen by all enrolled in your course area (remember this description applies to the group's entire work, not just an individual activity).
- **Group Pictures** can be uploaded by Tutors. When a individual makes a contribution to a grouped activity, their Group picture appears as an icon alongside their individual picture. The picture replaces the group name (text).
- Assign a separate **Enrolment Key** (one-time password to enter the course) for each group and give each group's members this Key in advance (by email, for example). When a student enrolls in your course for the first time, they will be prompted for their Key, and will automatically become a member of the course and the group whose Key they use. For this to work you must also have a course enrolment key (which wouldn't need distributing).

Can I Apply Different Groupings To Different Activities?

Yes – people can be in more than one group at once. For example, you might have two sets of groups as follows: 'Seminar Class 1' and 'Seminar Class 2' as well as 'Project Group A', 'Project Group B' and 'Project Group C'. However, all groups will have access to all activities so you will need to instruct students on which set of groups to use for which activity.

How Do I Communicate With Grouped Forums?

Moodle Teachers can post to all groups or to individual groups. Remember to select the group to whom you want to post from the pull down menu in the top-left corner of the screen when you enter the Forum (Fig 3).

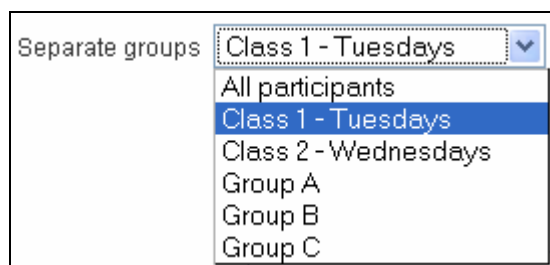


Figure 3: Posting to an individual group within a Forum

Displaying Groups on the Participants Page

You can display Groups on the Participants page which will allow students to see who is in which group. To do this you need to choose 'Visible Groups' at the course level (Admin block > Settings > Group Mode). Note: Changing this setting will also change

the default group mode of any new activity you create. (But you can then change this in the activity's own settings).

What Do The Students See?

As tutor you can log on as any of your students to view the course from their perspective. This is useful for making sure that the groups are set up correctly before you release the course to the students.

1. Click on Participants in the People block
 2. Click on the name of the student you wish to log in as, to load their profile
 3. Click the 'Login As' button below their profile and note that the "You are logged in as" message along the top of the screen changes.
 4. Browse to the Activity you want to check.
 5. Click on your own name to return to your normal view
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Further Help

If you have any questions about using groups don't hesitate to contact the Centre for Learning Technology clt-support@lse.ac.uk



Acknowledgement: This guide is adapted from original material written by CELT at Goldsmiths, University of London and is reproduced here with their permission.