Groups

Best Practices for Setting up Groups

- If you want users to see all users and content for a course but be a part of a group for a specific project or activity, use the Groups tool. However, if you want users to only see learning materials and users from their own section, use the Sections tool.
- To organize users' work on projects and assignments or to create special work areas for users with different learning needs, use the Groups tool.
- Users can belong to multiple groups within the same course.
- For each group, create separate discussion forums, Assignment submission folders, and Locker areas to work in.
- Grade members of groups individually or as a team.

Before setting up groups, know how you want to organize them. The following factors can affect how users enroll in groups:

- Setting groups up before or after you have enrolled users.
- Enabling auto-enrollment in groups.
- Enabling randomization of users in groups.
- Enabling self-enrollment in groups.
- The Enrollment Type you choose.
- Set up groups after the majority of users enroll in your course. This gives you a better idea of how many users you are organizing and how many groups you need. Setting up groups after enrollment can also ensure better distribution of users between groups.

Please contact eLearning for assistance in setting up Groups for your Course(s):

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Create a Group Category

To organize and manage related groups, use categories. For example, you can have a category for Assignment 1, Assignment 2, Seminars, Remedial Help, and Book Reviews.

Before you create a new set of groups, you must set up a category and create restricted work areas for the groups.

**Step 1:** From the navigation bar, select the More dropdown menu. Select Groups.

![Image of eLearning Course 3](image)

**Step 2:** From the Manage Groups page, select New Category.

![Image of Manage Groups page](image)
Step 3: Enter a Category Name and Description.

Step 4: Select an Enrollment Type from the dropdown menu.

Step 5: Depending on the chosen Enrollment Type, enter the Number of Groups to create, the Number of Users per group, or both.
To apply a distinctive prefix to each group name and code in the category, enter it in the **Group Prefix** field. If you do not fill in this field, the prefix defaults to "Group".

Depending on the chosen Enrollment Type, select **Auto-enroll new users**, to automatically enroll users to groups and select **Randomize users in groups**, to enroll users randomly to groups.

**Note:** If you do not choose this option, users are placed alphabetically based on the Classlist.
If you select an Enrollment Type that supports self enrollment (Groups of # - Self Enrollment, # of Groups – Self Enrollment, # of Groups, Capacity of # - Self Enrollment), to set a deadline after which learners can no longer self enroll in the group, select **Set Self Enrollment Expiry Date**.

If you select **Set Self Enrollment Expiry Date**, but you want all learners who do not enroll before the expiry date to be enrolled, you can select **Allocate unenrolled users after Self Enrollment Expiry Date** to automatically, randomly and evenly distribute them into the available groups.

**Note:** This option adds group members beyond the capacity of groups, if applicable. The automatic enrollment recurs at a set interval after the expiry date to ensure that all learners are assigned to a group.

**Note:** Enable the options in the Create Workspace area under Additional Options only after you've customized your group names. The Discussions areas are then created with the customized group names right away, and you do not have to edit their names manually later.

**Note:** If you are not customizing your group names skip to Step 15.

**Step 6:** Select **Save**.
Step 7: To customize individual group names, select the group and enter a new **Group Name**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Assignments Submission Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Week Discussion (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups for week 1 discussion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Edit Group - Group 1**

**Edit Group**

**Group Name**

Group 1

**Group Code**

grp_1

**Description**

Step 8: Select Save.
Step 9: To set up discussion areas, locker areas, and assignment submissions folders with the customized group name, from the category name's context menu, select Edit Category.

In the Create Workspace area, select Set up discussion areas, Set up lockers, and/or Set up Assignment folders. Select Save.
Depending on your selection(s) under Create Workspace, you may see the following:

**Discussions:** Select the discussion forum for which you are setting up group topics by selecting the pulldown menu and then selecting the forum title, then select **Create and Next**. If you are adding group topics to multiple forums, select the forum from the dropdown menu and select **Add Another**, on the final forum select **Create and Next**. If you have not yet set up a forum you may do so now by selecting the **New Forum** link.
Assignments: Create your Assignment folder by filling out the necessary fields and then select Create.
If you are creating more than one folder, select **Add Another**.

### Add a Group

**Step 1:** From the navigation bar, select the **More** dropdown then select **Groups**.
**Step 2:** On the Manage Groups page, from the View Categories dropdown menu, select the category you want to add a group to.

From the context menu of the category, select **Add Group**.

**Note:** If you do not want to use the default name provided, enter a group name. If you do not want to use the default group code provided, enter a group code.
Step 3: Enter a Description for the group. Select Save.

Group Enrollment Types

The following descriptions explain the enrollment type options available when creating a new category and provide conceptual information on when you should use them.

**# of Groups – No Auto Enrollments:** Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups, for which you can add any number of users using the Enroll Users page.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many groups you want to create and which users you want in each group. Select this option when you have a teaching model that divides course participants into specific learning levels or when you want to divide users by skill or interests.

**Groups of #:** Selecting this option creates the minimum number of groups needed to place users in groups of a specified maximum size. More groups are created when they are needed to accommodate users. In the Members column of the Groups table, capacity markers display in the form x/y, where x is the number of enrolled students and y is the capacity.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many users you want in each group. Select this option when you have assignments that require work to be divided between a specific number of users, or when you can only accommodate a set number of users in a lab or work area at one time.

If users are enrolled before groups are set up and the Can be auto enrolled into groups option is enabled, users are added using a brick laying algorithm. For example, if a maximum group size of 5 users is chosen for a class of 23, then 5 groups are created. The first user is added to Group 1, the second to Group 2, and so on. The sixth user returns the enrollment sequence to Group 1. Groups 1, 2 and 3 have 5 users and Groups 4 and 5 have 4 users. If a new user enrolls later, they are put in Group 4.

If you also enable the Auto-enroll new users option and all of the existing groups reach their maximum size, new users are added to a new group. Because there is no way to know how many new users will

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join, all new users are added to the same group until it is full. This is called a bucket-filling algorithm because the limits of one group must be met before creating another group.

If users are enrolled after groups are set up, users are added to groups using a bucket-filling algorithm because there is no way for the system to determine how many groups in total are needed. For example, if a maximum group size of 5 users is chosen for a class in which 23 users eventually enroll, the first five users are added to Group 1, the sixth through tenth user to Group 2, and so on. After 23 users are enrolled, groups 1-4 have 5 users and Group 5 has 3 users.

If the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is cleared, the minimum number of groups needed to create groups under the specified size are created with no users enrolled in them. If no users are enrolled in the course, one group is created. You can enroll users using the Enroll Users page.

**Note:** If a learner is unenrolled from a course, and new learners enroll in the course, and the original learner re-enrolls into the course, the group the original learner was in will exceed the maximum number of learners. This is done to ensure learners are able to maintain the work they contributed to previously. If you would like to maintain a strict number of learners per group, reorganization of groups after unenrollments and re-enrollments must be done manually.

### # of Groups:

Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many groups you want to create, but want the system to place users in groups for you. Select this option when you want group membership to be indiscriminate, or when classroom, resource, or teaching assistant availability restricts the number of groups you can have.

If the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is enabled, users are added using a brick laying algorithm, regardless of whether they enrolled before or after the groups were created. For example, if a class has 23 users and 5 groups, the first user is added to Group 1, the second to Group 2, and so on. The sixth user returns the enrollment sequence to Group 1. Groups 1, 2, and 3 have 5 users and Groups 4 and 5 have 4 users. If a new user enrolls later, they are put in Group 4.

If the **Can be auto enrolled into groups** option is not enabled, the specified number of groups are created with no users enrolled in them. You can enroll users using the Enroll Users page.

### Groups of # – Self Enrollment:

Selecting this option creates the minimum number of groups needed to accommodate users in groups of a specified maximum size automatically. Users choose the group they want to enroll in from the Groups page. In the Members column of the Groups grid list, capacity markers display in the form x/y, where x is the number of enrolled students and y is the capacity.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many users you want in each group, but you want to allow users to choose their own groups. Select this option when you want users to choose their groups based on friendship, learning style, schedules, or geographic location.

If there are no users enrolled in your course at the time of creation, then only one group is initially created. You can use the Edit Category page to add additional groups. Add additional groups if you want to ensure all users have options when forming groups.

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**# of Groups – Self Enrollment:** Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups, which users enroll in from the Groups page.

Use this enrollment type when you want to make a specific number of groups available for users to join. Select this option when you want to organize groups on specific topics, which users can join based on interest, or for creating groups that are responsible for specific aspects of a larger project, which users can join based on knowledge or task preferences.

**# of Groups, Capacity of # – Self Enrollment:** Selecting this option creates a specified number of groups with a specified number of enrollments per group. Users choose the group they want to enroll in from the Groups page. In the Members column of the Groups table, capacity markers display in the form x/y, where x is the number of enrolled students and y is the capacity.

Use this enrollment type when you know how many users you want in each group, you want to allow users to choose their own groups, and you want each group to have a maximum number of users. Select this option when you want users to choose their groups based on areas of interest or responsibility in larger projects, but you want to limit membership in each group to a certain number of users.

**Single user, member-specific groups:** Using this option creates a group with a single user where the first name and last name of the learner is the name of the group. When a new learner is enrolled in the course a group is automatically created for them.

Select this option when you want to create journal type groups with a single member.

**Set up Self-Enrollment in Groups**

Self-enrollment allows users to enroll in groups on their own. Use this option when you want users to choose their own group members or to be a part of a group on a topic that interests them.

Users can self-enroll in groups by selecting the **Join Group** link beside the name of a group category set up for self-enrollment.

**Note:** A link displays at the top of the user's Groups page when self-enrollment is available.
If a group is full, the Members column displays the total number of group members with (Full) beside it.

Restrict a Forum or Topic to Specific Groups

Using topic or forum restrictions, you can create discussion areas where members of a group can collaborate on assignments or discuss course material in small teams. You can also use restrictions to create separate forums or topics for each group in a course offering.

**Step 1:** Select Discussions from the navigation bar.

**Step 2:** On the Discussions List page, from the context menu of the forum or topic you want to restrict, select Edit.
Step 3: In the Restrictions tab, select the Restrict this forum/topic to the following groups and sections checkbox.

Step 4: Select Add Groups and Sections. Select the groups you want to add, then select Add.
To remove a specific group’s access, select the Remove icon for the group or section.

To open the forum or topic to everyone again, clear the **Restrict this <forum/topic> to the following groups and sections** check box. Select **Save and Close** to save your changes.
Enroll Course Leaders in Groups

The way to enroll a course leader into groups depends on whether they have access to all groups or only select groups. Users should have access to all groups if they are responsible for mediating, grading, and working on material for the entire class. They should have access to select groups, if they are only responsible for mediating, grading, or working on material for a particular group.

Add staff that are working with select groups the same way you add users. However, if an administrator enables the Can be auto enrolled into groups permission, users that lead courses and assist users (like teaching assistants) are added to groups at the same time as regular users; this could mean that all or most of your staff end up in the same group. Make sure you even out enrollment using the Enroll Users page.

**Step 1:** On the Manage Groups page, select Enroll Users from the context menu of the category that contains the group (or groups) you want to enroll a user in.
**Step 2:** In the **Search For** field, search for the user you want to add. To see a list of users that need to be enrolled, select the **Not Enrolled** search option.

To add users to groups, select the checkboxes beside each user's name. Clear check boxes to remove users from groups. Select **Save**.
Delete a User from a Group

When you delete a user from a group, all of their files remain in the system, including discussion posts, Assignments submissions, and Locker files.

**Step 1:** On the **Manage Groups** page, from the **View Categories** dropdown menu, select the category containing the groups with users you want to delete.

**Step 2:** From the context menu of the category, select **Enroll Users**.

**Step 3:** On the **Enroll Users** page, beside the user’s name, clear the checkbox for each group you want to remove the user from. Select **Save**.
Best Practices for Group Enrollment

To illustrate best practices for group enrollment, the following scenario includes a class of 185 users. Your latest assignment requires users to use a software program that is only available in certain labs which must be booked and supervised. You book 4 labs that can hold 50 users each and create 4 corresponding groups.

You select the following group options:

- For the Enrollment Type, you select **# of Groups** and set the Number of Groups to 4.
- You leave both **Auto-enroll new users** and **Randomize users in groups** cleared because new users will not be joining your course and you are not worried about having an unbiased distribution of users, since group membership will not influence users’ grades.
- You select **Set up discussion areas** and create discussion forums where users can post and answer questions about the computer software.
- You leave **Set up lockers** and **Set up assignments submission folders** cleared because you do not want users collaborating on their projects and you already have your assignments organized.

**Note:** On the **Enroll Users** page, if the option is configured, an Advanced Search Options link displays. Organizations can create their own custom search and enroll page using Brightspace Valence that opens in a new browser window via this link. Instructors can use this custom search and enroll page to filter students according to certain criteria, such as age or demographic data, to determine who to put into each group.

**What Happens When You Delete a Group or Group Category?**

When you delete a group, the following things happen:

- If you’ve selected the **Auto-enroll new users** option, users are automatically distributed in the remaining groups.
- If groups are set up for manual enrollment, you must add users to the remaining groups using the Enroll Users page.
- Group discussion forums remain available for reference. You can delete them in the Discussions tool.
- Group locker areas and the files they contain are deleted.
- Group assignment submission folders and the files they contain are deleted.
- When you delete a category, the following things happen:
- Users are no longer enrolled in groups because they do not exist.
- Group discussion forums remain available for reference. You can delete them in the Discussions tool.
- Group Locker areas and the files they contain are deleted.
- Group assignment submission folders and the files they contain are deleted.
What Happens When You Move Users to a New Group?

Discussion posts remain in the old group and do not count towards a user’s grade if the forum or topic is associated with a grade item. The user must satisfy the discussion post requirements in the new section. You can override a grade using the Grades tool.

Locker files remain in the old group. Users must add any files they want to keep to the new Locker area themselves.

Assignments submissions submitted for the old group remain with the old group. The user receives the grade achieved by the new group on any group assignment submission folders. You can change the user’s grade back to the original group’s mark in the Grades tool.