

## Groups Tool Guide

### WHAT IS THE GROUPS TOOL?

Groups are a means of organizing learners within a course offering into a smaller unit. Groups are individual org units that exist below course offerings in the org structure. Groups are more than an organizational element of the Learning Environment. They also have cross-functionality with multiple tools within the system. In this document you will find instructions and information on how Groups interact with the Discussions, Dropbox and Locker tools.

### WHY USE THE GROUPS TOOL?

The Groups tools can be used for:

- Any group assignment or activity that requires users to interact, submit or share materials within the Learning Environment.
- Collaborative activities.
- Peer editing and assessment.
- Creating smaller or differentiated learning cohorts within a course offering.

### USER STORY

Professor Reais is teaching an online course in astronomy. She decides to create a group for each of the planets in our solar system and to randomly assign students to each group. She has the group's tool automatically provide each group with their own discussion area and tells them to use that to document their progress on their project. This way the students can collaboratively work together to create a final presentation on their planet and she can track their progress and see how they are doing. This also provides her with a way to keep them all accountable by giving them a separate grade for their individual contribution to the overall project based on their postings on the group project discussion topic. In addition, she can

guide them as needed and provide the groups materials specific to their planet of study.

### HOW TO CREATE GROUPS

Groups can be created before all users have been added to a course, but it is considered a best practice to wait until all users are enrolled. This prevents manual user additions to groups later on.

In the Groups tool, create a **New Category** for this set of groups. As an effective practice, the category is generally the assignment/activity the groups relate to; for example, "Romeo and Juliet Presentations" or "Ethics Discussion Groups". Choose the **Enrolment Type** based on the following criteria:

- Will the group enrolment be based on the number of people per group, the number of groups in the class, or both?
- Will you allow students to self-enroll in a group?
- Will you manually assign students to groups?

Depending on the enrolment type, you will be asked for the number of students per group or the number of groups you wish for the class. You will also be asked for a **Group Prefix**, which will be given to each group in this category and will allow for easier searching in the Org Unit Editor (an Administrator tool). Select via checkbox which tools you wish to auto-set up for the groups: Discussions, Locker and/or Dropbox.

**Note:** If you allow learners to self-enroll, they will be able to join and leave groups up until the expiry date. If you select **Allocate unenrolled users after Self Enrolment Expiry Date**, all learners not in a group at the time of the expiry date will be placed in a group, and no learners will be able to leave or change groups.

## GROUPS VS SECTIONS

Sections and groups exist on the same org level, but do not share the same functionality. Sections are purely an organizational org unit that allows for multiple students in the same course to be organized by lecture date, tutorial time and size. Groups have cross-functionality with some tools that sections do not (Discussions, Dropbox and Locker). Learners should belong to only one section within a course offering but can belong to multiple groups.

## THE LEARNER VIEW

Learners are able to see the member capacity (if applicable) and names of their group members. For self-enrolment groups, learners are able to join and leave groups until the self-enrolment expiry date.

## GROUPS AND DISCUSSIONS

Discussion forums can be restricted to specific groups. Discussions can be created during the group creation process or after. All forum/topic setup, availability and restriction options will still be valid and available (see the Discussions Guide for further info).

If the discussion is automatically created from the Groups tool, it will auto-format the discussion to have a forum under the group category name, with an individual topic for each group under the group name. Those topics will automatically be restricted to the members of those groups. Existing forums and topics can be restricted to groups manually by finding them within the Discussions tool and selecting **Edit** from the drop-down menu.

- Enter the Restrictions tab and click Create and Attach under the Release Conditions header
- From the drop-down menu, find the Classlist header and select Group Enrolment
- Select the appropriate group from the drop-down menu that appears

## GROUPS AND DROPBOX

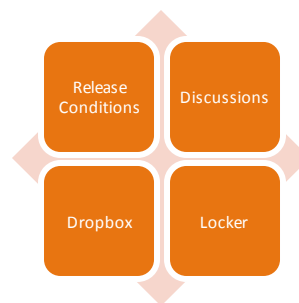
Dropbox folders automatically created in groups' setup are configured for group submissions. This means that any member of the group can submit the assignment on behalf of the group. Any assessments within the dropbox folder will be given to each group member.

Groups must be in place before a group dropbox can be created. Individual dropboxes can be assigned to specific groups using release conditions as described above; however, once a dropbox folder is created it cannot be changed from individual to group submission or vice-versa.

## GROUPS AND LOCKER

Lockers are simply a place for users to store files. Group Lockers provide a space restricted to members of a group for users to upload and download files relevant to their group work. Each user has a personal locker as soon as they are created, and this is managed at the org level. Group Lockers are created at the course level because of groups' place in the org structure. They can only be created during the group category setup process. No management is required after setup because of their basic nature.

## WHAT TOOLS INTERACT WITH GROUPS?



### WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Visit the Brightspace Community (<https://community.brightspace.com>) or D2L Resource Centre (<https://documentation.desire2learn.com>) for videos, documents and other resources.

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