

Groups and Groupings in Moodle

A Guide for Staff

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GROUPS AND GROUPINGS IN MOODLE

Moodle allows you to define groups within your course. These could be seminar groups, presentation groups or any groups that makes sense for your course. Students can even add themselves to groups using the Group Choice activity. Once you have a group it can be applied to any activity, resource or section on your Moodle course allowing you to restrict access or split activities up for group work.

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WHAT ARE MOODLE GROUPS?

Groups are used to collect together a set of students. For example, you could have a number of different presentation groups, a number of seminar groups or a number of different workgroups. You can define these by setting up Moodle groups and assigning students into those groups

Note: Groups contain students and a student can be a member of multiple groups.

WHAT ARE MOODLE GROUPINGS?

Groupings are logical collections of groups. If you have 6 seminar groups you could make a grouping of all 6 groups called 'Seminars.' You could also make a grouping of all presentation groups that will present on 'Monday' and a grouping of all groups that will present on 'Tuesday.' If you want to apply groups to a Moodle activity then they must be in a grouping.

Note: Groupings contain groups and a group can be part of multiple groupings.

WHAT ARE THE PRE-EXISTING GROUPS?

When you first take a look at the Moodle group options you may notice that a number of groups have already been created. Moodle gets data from LUSI, so if your module has 3 seminar groups you will see these groups in Moodle with the appropriate students added to them. Moodle will also automatically create lecture groups for you.

WHAT CAN GROUPS AND GROUPINGS BE USED FOR?

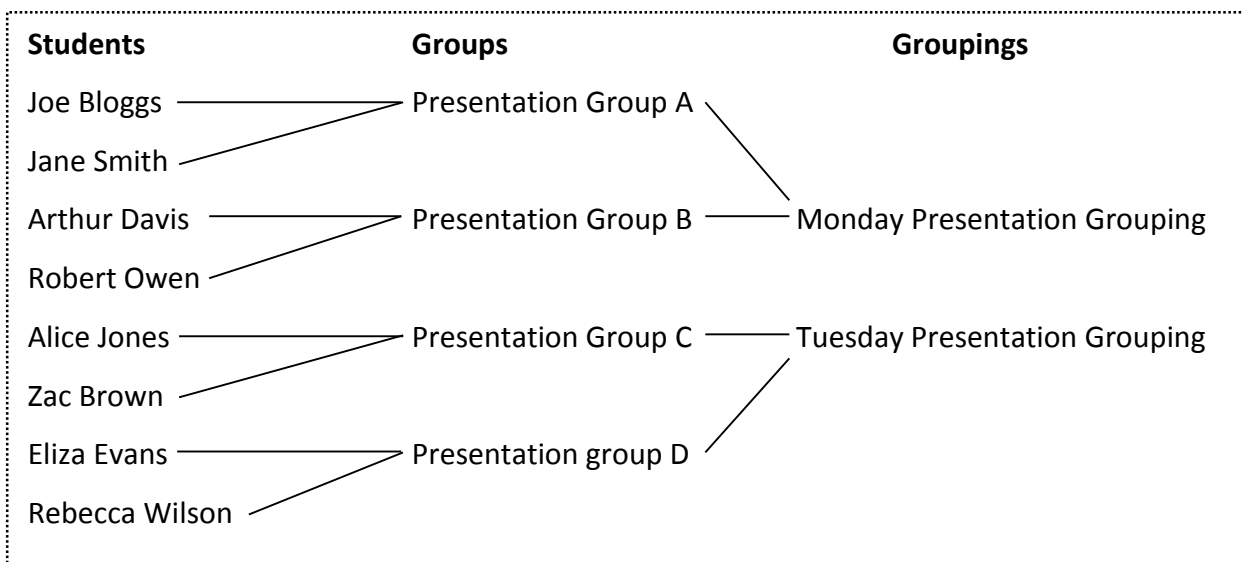
There are many ways you can use groups and groupings within your Moodle course, you could:

- Restrict a section of your Moodle page to specific groups.
- Setup a forum that has separate areas for each group (one group cannot see another groups discussion).
- Send a message to a specific group instead of the whole class
- Upload a document that is only available for specific groups

USING GROUPS AND GROUPINGS

There are three steps required to make groups and groupings work in your Moodle course.

1. Create the **groups** and allocate students – setup the groups that you need and allocate the students into those groups.
2. Collect the groups together into a logical **grouping** – collect each of the individual groups you have just made into a common grouping.
3. Configure a Moodle resource or activity to make use of the grouping - setup an activity or resource and adjust the '**Common module settings**' so it makes use of the grouping you've just created.



Above is an example of how groups and grouping might be applied to a Moodle course. There are 8 students who are split into 4 x 2 person groups. The 4 groups are put into groupings. The first grouping contains the groups that will present on Monday and the second grouping contains the groups that will present on Tuesday.

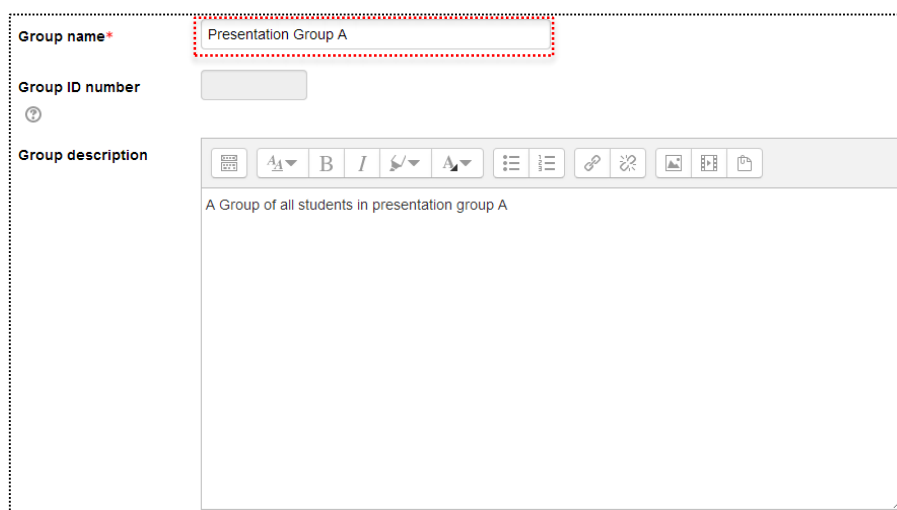
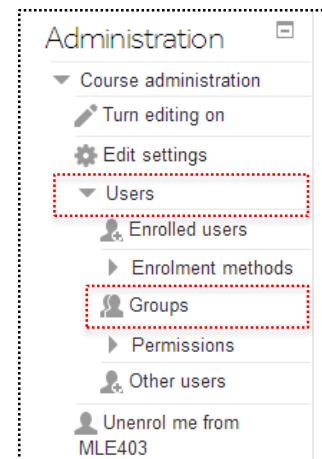
All groups on Monday will present about topic A and all groups on Tuesday will present about topic B. You could set up a section in Moodle to provide resources about topic A for the Monday group and a separate section to provide resources about topic B for the Tuesday group. These resources would only be available to the appropriate groups. i.e. group C will not be able to see any resources about topic A.

You could develop this further by setting up a discussion forum using groupings. This could be done in a way so that Group A and Group B can use the same forum but cannot see each other's discussions.

HOW TO CREATE A GROUP

Firstly you will need to go to the Moodle course where you would like to setup groups and access the group settings area

1. Navigate to the appropriate Moodle course
2. Go to the **'Administration'** area on the left-hand side of the page
3. Expand the **'Users'** option
4. Click on **'Groups'**
5. Click the **'Create group'** button
6. Give the group a **'Group name'** (required)
7. Optionally you can enter a description for the group
8. Click the **'Save changes'** button
9. Repeat steps 5 – 8 for each group you would like to make

A screenshot of the Moodle 'Create group' form. The form has three main sections: 'Group name', 'Group ID number', and 'Group description'. The 'Group name' field is filled with 'Presentation Group A' and is highlighted with a red dashed box. The 'Group ID number' field is empty. The 'Group description' field contains the text 'A Group of all students in presentation group A'. The form also includes a rich text editor toolbar with various icons for text formatting and insertion.

Now that you have your groups setup you need to allocate the students into them, this is done one group at a time.

1. Select a group from the left-hand side of the group settings screen
2. Click the **'Add/remove users'** button
3. On the right hand side of the screen you will see a list of the people who are enrolled on your Moodle course.
4. Select the people you want to allocate to the group (if you hold down the **'ctrl'** button on your keyboard you can select multiple users at once)
5. Click the **'<- Add'** button
6. When finished allocating students to the group click the **'Back to groups'** button
7. Repeat steps 1 – 6 for each group

HOW TO CREATE A GROUPING

Note: you need to have setup groups in order to create a grouping. If you've not yet done this please refer back to the previous section.

Now that you have your groups setup you need to collect them together into logical groupings. This is usually a collection of all related groups i.e. a collection of all seminar groups.

1. Click the **'Grouping'** tab
2. Click the **'Create grouping'** button
3. Give the grouping a **'Grouping name'**
4. Optionally you can give the grouping a description
5. Click the **'Save changes'** button
6. Repeat steps 2 – 5 for each grouping you require

The screenshot shows a form for creating a grouping. The 'Grouping name*' field is filled with 'Monday Presentation Grouping'. The 'Grouping ID number' field is empty. The 'Grouping description' field contains the text 'Groups A and B will present on Monday'. At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'Save changes' (highlighted with a red dashed box) and 'Cancel'.

Now that you have all of your groupings created you need to allocate the appropriate groups into them.

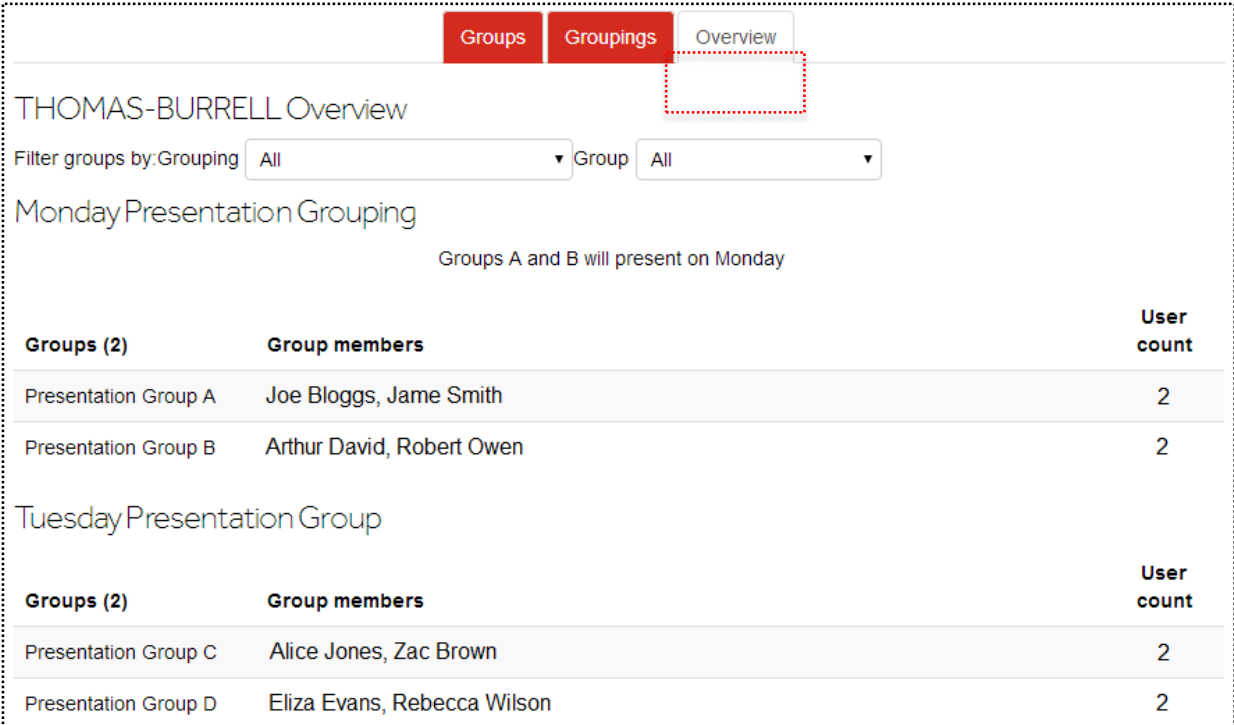
1. Click the **'Show groups in grouping'** icon

Grouping	Groups	Activities	Edit
Monday Presentation Grouping	None	0	
Tuesday Presentation Grouping	None	0	

On the right hand side of the screen you will see a list of the groups available for you to add into your grouping

2. Select the groups you want to allocate to the grouping (if you hold down the 'ctrl' button on your keyboard you can select multiple groups at once)
3. Click the '<- Add' button
4. When you've finished allocating groups into the grouping click the 'Back to groupings' button
5. Repeat steps 1 – 4 for each grouping

Note: to see a summary of all your groups and groupings including the people who are in them click the 'Overview' tab



The screenshot shows the 'THOMAS-BURRELL Overview' page. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Groups', 'Groupings', and 'Overview'. The 'Overview' tab is selected and highlighted with a red dashed box. Below the tabs, there are two dropdown menus for filtering groups by 'Grouping' and 'Group', both set to 'All'. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Monday Presentation Grouping' and 'Tuesday Presentation Group'. Each section contains a table with columns for 'Groups (2)', 'Group members', and 'User count'. The 'Monday Presentation Grouping' section notes that 'Groups A and B will present on Monday' and lists 'Presentation Group A' (Joe Bloggs, Jame Smith) and 'Presentation Group B' (Arthur David, Robert Owen). The 'Tuesday Presentation Group' section lists 'Presentation Group C' (Alice Jones, Zac Brown) and 'Presentation Group D' (Eliza Evans, Rebecca Wilson).

Groups (2)	Group members	User count
Presentation Group A	Joe Bloggs, Jame Smith	2
Presentation Group B	Arthur David, Robert Owen	2

Groups A and B will present on Monday

Groups (2)	Group members	User count
Presentation Group C	Alice Jones, Zac Brown	2
Presentation Group D	Eliza Evans, Rebecca Wilson	2

CONFIGURE A MOODLE RESOURCE OR ACTIVITY TO MAKE USE OF GROUPINGS

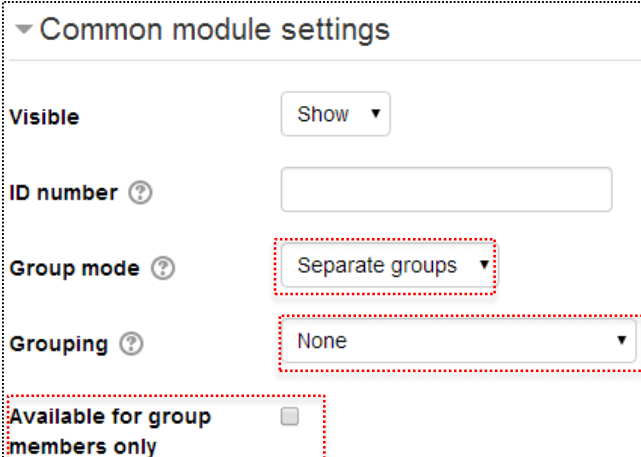
Note: you need to have setup your groups and grouping in order to use them to configure a Moodle resource or activity.

The majority of Moodle resources or activities (single files, discussion forums, quizzes, etc.) can be configured to work with groupings. When configuring an activity you will see a section called **'Common module settings'**

1. Add an activity or resource to your Moodle page (or edit an existing one)
2. Expand the **'Common module settings'** section
3. Choose which **'Group mode'** to use

Note: there are two different types of group mode – **'Separate groups'** and **'Visible groups.'** Visible groups allows each group to see the other group's content but not edit it. Separate groups prevents a group from being able to see or edit another group's content

4. Choose which **'Grouping'** to use
5. Choose whether to make the activity/resource **'Available for group members only'**
6. Configure the rest of the settings for your activity/resource
7. Click the **'Save and return to course'** button



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Common module settings' section in Moodle. The settings are as follows:

- Visible:** Set to 'Show' (dropdown menu).
- ID number:** An empty text input field.
- Group mode:** Set to 'Separate groups' (dropdown menu).
- Grouping:** Set to 'None' (dropdown menu).
- Available for group members only:** An unchecked checkbox.

Red dashed boxes highlight the 'Group mode' and 'Grouping' dropdown menus, and the 'Available for group members only' checkbox.

RESTRICTING A SECTION OF THE PAGE TO A SPECIFIC GROUPING

You can setup a section of your Moodle page so that it can only be accessed by certain groupings. Think of the example mentioned at the start of this document, there are 2 presentation groupings one of which will present about topic A and the other about topic B. We want to keep the resources about these topics away from the other grouping.

1. If needed add some extra sections to your Moodle page by clicking the **'Increase the number of sections'** button (at the bottom of the page)
2. Click the **'Edit Section'** button
3. Give the section a **'Section name'**
4. Optionally give the section a **'Summary'**
5. Expand the **'Restrict access'** section
6. Click the **'Grouping access'** selection box and choose which grouping can see this section
7. Click the **'Save changes'** button
8. Repeat for the other sections and groupings

The screenshot illustrates two Moodle sections with restricted access. The first section, titled "Monday Group Presentations", contains two resources: "Topic A - Reading List" and "Topic A - Presentation Brief". A red dashed box highlights these resources with the text: "Monday groups can see these resources. Tuesday groups cannot". The second section, titled "Tuesday Group Presentations", contains two resources: "Topic B - Presentation Brief" and "Topic B - Reading List". A red dashed box highlights these resources with the text: "Tuesday groups can see these resources. Monday groups cannot".

SETTING UP A FORUM THAT HAS A PRIVATE AREA FOR EACH GROUP

You can setup 1 forum so that it has separate spaces, one for each group, that are private from each other. This is advantageous as it means you don't have to setup multiple forums, you can achieve the same functionality with just one.

1. Add a forum to your Moodle page
2. Give the forum a **'Forum name'** and a **'Description'**
3. Configure the forum settings
4. Expand the **'Common module settings'**
5. Change the **'Group mode'** to **'Separate groups'**
6. Change the **'Grouping'** to the appropriate grouping
7. Tick the **'Available for group members only'** tick box
8. Finish configuring your forum settings
9. Click the **'Save and display'** button

Note: as a staff member you are able to select which of the private areas you want to view. If you are a student you are taken straight to your area of the forum and cannot change to the other areas. Expand the drop down menu and select which group you want to view (or email if using forced subscription)



CONFIGURING A FORUM WITH PRIVATE AREAS TO SEND EMAILS TO INDIVIDUAL GROUPS

A forum has subscription modes, this determines whether an email is sent out to the people enrolled on your Moodle course. If you set this to '**Forced Subscription**' then every group member will receive an email copy of the forum post

- **Forced Subscription** – everybody on the course will receive emails from the forum
 - **Auto Subscription** – everybody on the course receives emails from the forum but can choose not to.
 - **Optional subscription** – nobody on the course will receive emails from the forum but can choose to if they wish.
 - **No subscription** – nobody on the course will receive emails from the forum
1. Enter the forum
 2. Under '**Forum administration**' on the left hand side of the page expand the '**Subscription mode**' option and choose '**Force Subscription**'

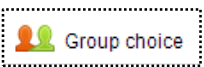
Note: you cannot rely on forums or announcements to send out time sensitive information. Students are able to alter their profile settings so that they only get one email per day with all announcements/forum posts in it. To send a time sensitive message use the '**Email Wizard**' in the '**Student Portal.**'

Email Wizard: <https://lusionline.lancs.ac.uk/EmailWizard/Email/Create>

THE GROUP CHOICE ACTIVITY

The group choice activity allows you to assign students to groups based on the results of a choice. For example, you could setup a group choice with the question: 'Which research paper do you want to critique?' with each paper being an answer. You would configure the group choice activity so that all the students who chose 'Paper A' were automatically added to 'Group A' and all students who chose 'Paper B' were automatically added to 'Group B.' You could do this manually by using the choice activity and then assigning student to groups based on the results but using this activity allows you to remove that time consuming allocation process, as it does it all for you.

Note: you need to setup groups and grouping before you can use the Group Choice activity. If you've not done this already please refer back to the previous sections.

1. Navigate to your Moodle course
2. Click the **'Add an activity or resource'** button
3. Select the  option and click the **'Add'** button
4. Choose whether to **'Display description on course page'**

Miscellaneous Settings Options

5. Choose whether to **'Allow enrolment to multiple groups'** i.e. can a student choose more than one option
6. Choose whether to **'Publish results'** i.e. should the results of the choice (what other students have chosen) be shown to the student making the choice, if so when should they be shown
7. Choose the **'Privacy of results'** i.e. should the result be anonymous or not
8. Choose whether to **'Allow [the] choice to be updated'** i.e. whether students can change their mind and choose another option after they have submitted a choice
9. Choose whether to **'Show [a] column for unanswered'**. If set to yes a column showing which students haven't made a choice will be shown
10. Choose whether to **'Limit the number of responses allowed'** this refers to number of responses per choice, not to the number of responses allowed in the group choice itself
11. (If required) set a **'General limitation'** this value will limit the amount of people who will be able to select any particular choice. This value will be ignored by any choices that have a limit value assigned direct to it.

Group Options

12. In each of the **'Group'** menus, enter one of the groups you wish the students to pick from in the **'Group'** dropdown menu. If you wish this group to only consist of a certain number of students, put this number into the **'Limit'** box. If this value is different to the **'General limitation'** in the **'Miscellaneous options'** menu, the value in the **'Limit'** box will take priority

Note: the group choice activity will automatically create a choice for each group you have in your Moodle course. If you have more groups than you intent to use in this choice you will need to ensure they are not included as a **'Group'** choice option. Do this by changing the **'Group'** dropdown menu to **'Choose a group'** for all of the groups you don't want to be included.

Restrict Answering Options

13. (If required) choose to **'Restrict answering to this time period'** (tick the tick box)
14. (If required) choose an **'Open'** date i.e. the date that students can starts making a choice
15. (If required) choose an **'Until'** date i.e. the date that students need to make the choice by
16. Click the **'Save and return to course'** button

USEFUL LINKS

Lancaster Answers

Lancaster Answers contains a large number of step-by-step guides, which explain many features of Moodle and more

<http://lancasteranswers.lancs.ac.uk>

ISS Service Desk

For further help and support, please contact the ISS Service Desk on:

Phone: 01524-510987

Email: iss-service-desk@lancaster.ac.uk

In person: Learning Zone in Alexandra Square