



Creating and managing learning groups

Step-by-step guide for instructors

For Blackboard Vista 4.x

The Group Manager tool allows you to form learning groups and assign them to discussion topics and/or chat/whiteboard rooms. It does this by seamlessly linking you through to the relevant tool (discussions, chat/whiteboard), where you can set up the activity at the same time as you form and assign the groups.

Group manager also interacts with the assignments tool (where assignments can be assigned to groups) and the selective release map (where you can selectively release components based on group membership).

With group manager you can also control group membership and communicate by email to group members.

Note: The group manager is only available to instructors and teaching assistants, as it is accessed through the **Teach** tab.

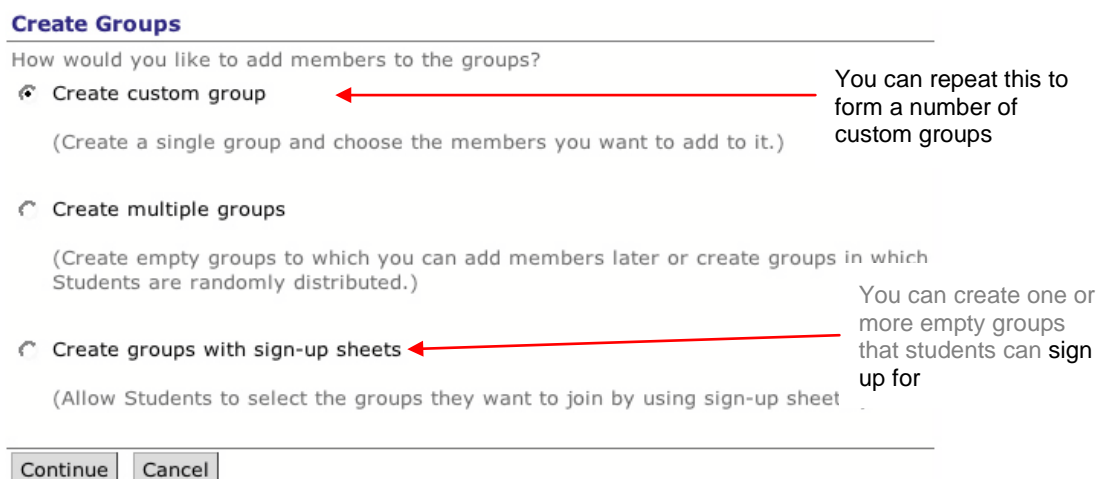
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Creating groups

You can create your own groups manually, allow students to be randomly assigned to groups, or create empty groups that students sign up for using a sign-up sheet.

- Under the **Teach** tab, click on  **Group Manager** from the **Instructor Tools** menu.
- Click on **Create Groups**. The **Create Groups** screen appears, with three options presented:



Create Groups

How would you like to add members to the groups?

- Create custom group** (Create a single group and choose the members you want to add to it.)
- Create multiple groups** (Create empty groups to which you can add members later or create groups in which Students are randomly distributed.)
- Create groups with sign-up sheets** (Allow Students to select the groups they want to join by using sign-up sheet)

Continue Cancel

You can repeat this to form a number of custom groups

You can create one or more empty groups that students can sign up for

To create a custom group

1. Select **Create custom group** and click **Continue**. The **Create Custom Group** screen appears.

Your location: [Group Manager](#) > **Create Custom Group**

Create Custom Group

Settings

*Group name:

Group description:

Membership Information

This group is currently empty. To add members to this group, click **Add Members**.

2. Under **Settings** in the window, enter a group name (required) and description (optional).
3. Under **Membership Information** click **Add Members**. In the **Add Members** pop-up window, select the check boxes next to each member to be added and then click **Add Selected**. (To select all members, click on Add All.)
4. Either click **Save** (which will return you to the Group Manager screen) or **Save and Create Another Group** (and repeat steps 1 to 4).
5. To remove a member from a group, from the **Create Custom Group** screen, under Membership Information, select the member and then click Remove Selected.

To create multiple groups

1. Select **Create multiple groups** and click **Continue**. The **Create Multiple Groups** screen appears:

2. Under **Group Information**, enter the unique word or phrase with which you want all the group names to begin (e.g. 'Zoology assignment group') and, if you want to, a description of the groups (in the **Default description** text box).
3. Under **How Should the Groups Be Created?**, specify how you want to create the groups and select either:
 - **Create empty groups, and add members later** — enter the number of groups you want in the text box
OR
 - **Create full groups, and randomly distribute students.**
It's advisable to select the check box to include the demo student so that you can test your actions in Student View.
 1. Under **Set Up Groups**, specify how you want to set up the groups:
 - To randomly distribute students by the number of groups, select **By number of groups** and, in the text box, enter the number of groups wanted.
 - To assign a specific number of students to each group, select **By number of Students per group** and, in the text box, enter the number of students wanted in each group.
 2. Under **What Should Be Done with Any Extra Members**, choose one of the three options presented.
4. Click **Continue**. The **Confirm Created Groups** screen appears. Click **Shuffle Members** if you want to move members between groups.

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- Click **Save**, and you are returned to the **Group Manager** screen.

To create groups with sign-up sheets

- Select the **Create Groups with Sign-Up Sheets** option and click **Continue**. The **Create Groups with Sign-Up Sheets** screen appears:

- Under **Group Settings**, enter the number of groups you want to create, the unique word or phrase to that all group names start with (e.g. 'Zoology assignment group') and, if you want, a description in the text boxes provided.
- In the **Maximum Students per group** text box enter the desired number. If you want students to be able to see already signed up members, select the check box next to **Allow Students**

- Under **Sign-Up Sheet Settings**, enter a title for the sign-up sheet and instructions that students will see when they access the sheet in the text boxes provided.

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From the Place the sign-up sheet link on drop-down list, select the location where you want the link to the sign-up sheet to appear (Home Page, Organizer page).

5. Click **Continue**. The **Confirm Created Groups** screen appears.
6. Click **Save**, and you are returned to the Group Manager screen.

Creating discussion topics for groups

You can create one or a number of discussion topics, one for each group selected.

1. From the **Group Manager** screen, select the group(s) you want to create a discussion topic for. (To create topics for all groups, select the checkbox next to **Group name** in the table heading row).

Create Groups

<input type="checkbox"/> Group Name	Sign-Up Sheet Title	Description	Members
<input type="checkbox"/> Group X	--	--	UTas Admin (Section Instructor, Section Designer), UTAS Admin (Section Instructor, Section Designer), Erich von Daniken (Section Instructor, Section Designer), Xeno Trout (Teaching Assistant), Guest Account, TLO Guest Account, Wendy Aitken, Megan Alessandrini, Rachel Allen, Nicole Anae View All Members
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Group Y	--	--	Erich von Daniken (Section Instructor, Section Designer), Xeno Trout (Teaching Assistant), Bernadina Elo, Adrian Osteem, Rikyu Sakata, Demo Student 16622023

[Send Mail](#) [Remove All Members](#) [Delete](#)

Create Group Activity: [Go](#)


2. From the **Create Group Activity** drop-down list, select **Discussion topic** and click the **Go** icon . The **Create Discussion Topic** screen appears.
3. Make the appropriate entries:
 - Choose the type of discussion – threaded, blog or journal.
 - Enter a title. (If you are creating the one topic for multiple groups, they will appear in the **Discussions** screen with the title appended with the group's name — e.g. Australian Poets — Discussion Group 1; Australian Poets — Discussion Group 2, etc.)
 - Enter any instructions in the **Description** text box.
 - Select the desired options regarding grading, anonymity etc (see the guide [Managing discussion categories, topics and threads](#) if necessary).
 - Expand **More Options** to locate the topic in a category.
 - Click **Save** and the topics are added to Discussions. You will be returned to the **Group Manager** screen.

Creating chat or whiteboard rooms for groups

You can set up chat rooms, whiteboard rooms, or combined chat and whiteboard rooms for groups.

1. From the **Group Manager** screen, select the group(s) you want to create a room or rooms for. (To create rooms for all groups select the checkbox next to Group Name in the table heading row.)

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2. From the **Create Group Activity** drop-down list, select **Chat room** and click the **Go**  icon. The **Create Chat or Whiteboard Room** screen appears. If you selected only one group, its name will appear in the **Name** box.
3. Make the appropriate entries:
 - Enter a name for the room (for multiple groups). The rooms will be named with this title and the group name appended in the Chat and Whiteboard screen (e.g. Australian Poets Chat — Group 1; Australian Poets Chat — Group 2, etc.).
 - Enter any instructions in the **Description** text box.
 - In the **Maximum users** text box, enter the maximum number of group members allowed in the room at once.
 - Select the type of room required by clicking the appropriate radio button.
 - Under Group Work you will see the group(s) you have selected. Select either separate rooms for each group (the first option) or the one room for all groups.
4. Expand More Options to set other features of the room.
5. Click **Save** and the room(s) are added to the Chat and Whiteboard. You will be returned to the **Group Manager** screen.

Sending mail messages to groups


From the **Group Manager** screen, you can send mail messages to all members of one or multiple groups.

1. From the **Group manager** screen, select the group(s) you want to send a message to by clicking their name.
2. Click **Send Mail**. The **Create Message** screen appears.
3. Enter details as per usual email procedures — See the guide **Using the mail tool**.


Managing groups

You change the group settings, delete groups, and add or remove members from existing groups. You can also change the settings of sign-up sheets (e.g. maximum number of students allowed in each group).

Editing group settings and changing membership


1. From the **Group Manager** screen, locate the group that you want to edit and click on its *ActionLinks*  icon.
2. Select **Edit Group** in the drop-down menu to open the **Edit Group** screen.
3. Modify the group settings and/or membership:
 - To add members, under **Membership Information**, click on **Add Members**.
 - To remove a member, select the check box next to the member(s) listed under **Membership Information** and then click **Remove Selected**.
4. Click **Save**.

Changing sign-up sheet settings

1. From the **Group Manager** screen, locate the group with the sign-up sheet you want to edit and click on its *ActionLinks*  icon.
2. Select **Edit Sign-Up Sheet** in the drop-down menu to open the **Edit Sign-Up Sheet** screen.
3. Modify the basic settings as required. To add additional groups, click **Create Additional Groups**. Enter the details as per information on page 4.
4. Confirm the changes then click **Save**.

Deleting groups

Deleting a group removes the group and its membership but doesn't affect its members' data in the Grade Book or delete any discussion topics or chat/whiteboard rooms created for the group.

1. From the **Group Manager** screen, locate the group(s) you want to delete, click on the associated *ActionLinks*  icon and select **Delete** from the drop-down menu that appears. (Alternatively, select the check box next to the group(s) name and click the **Delete** button.)
2. Click **OK** to confirm the change.

References:

Designer and Instructor Reference: Application Pack 2 for Blackboard Learning System – Vista Enterprise License (Release 4) 2006 Blackboard Inc.

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