



Groups & Discussion Boards

November 2009

Groups

Groups can be created in Blackboard to allow students to collaborate on projects and assignments. They can be created one at a time or in sets.

Once created, each group has its own space in the course to work together. An assortment of tools can be made available to the members of the group.

To create groups locate the *Users and Groups* section of the *Control Panel* on the left side of the screen and click on the **Groups** link.

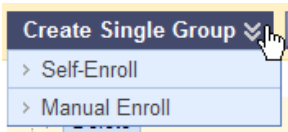


Create Single Group

Single groups can be designated as either—

Self-Enroll— allows students to add themselves to a group

Manual Enroll— requires instructors to assign students to groups

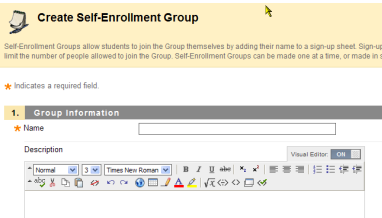


Self-Enroll

Enter a name for the group. Be sure the name is descriptive so that users will understand the nature of the group.

Use the text box to enter a description and any instructions for participating in the group. This information is optional, but can help users understand expectations and any associated goals and tasks.

Make the group available by selecting **Yes**.



Group Available No Yes Sign-up Sheet Only

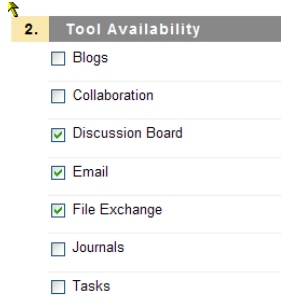
To create only a sign-up sheet (and **Not** make the group available) select **Sign-up Sheet Only**. The group can be made available at a later date.

Tool Availability

Select which tools will be available to members of the group. Tools that can be made available to a group include:

Blogs: Users within the group can post to the blog and add comments.

Collaboration: Users within the group can create and attend chat sessions and virtual classroom sessions.



Discussion Board: Users within the group can create and manager their own forums.

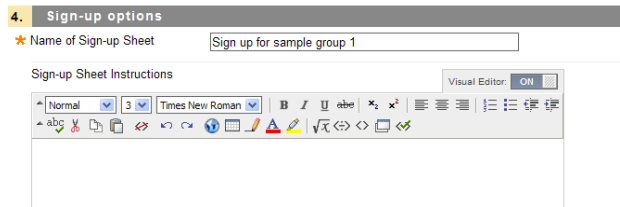
Email: Users within the group can email individual members or the entire group.

File Exchange: Users within the group and the instructor can upload files to the group space and organize them through the creation of folders.

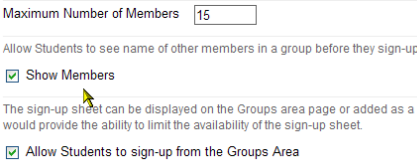
Journals: Users within the group can be assigned a private journal that allows private communication between the instructor and the user.

Tasks: Users within the group can create tasks that are distributed to all group members.

Enter a name for the Sign-up Sheet—be sure the name is descriptive. Use the text box to enter a description of the



Sign-up Sheet and any instructions for signing up. This information is optional, but can help users understand expectations and any limitations to signing up.



Enter the **Maximum Number of Members for the Group**. Once this number has been reached, other users will not be able to join the group.

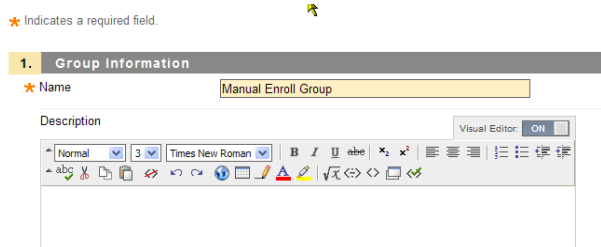
Allow users to see the others who have already signed up by selecting **Show Members**.

Allow users to access the Sign-up Sheet from the Groups Area page by selecting **Allow Students to Sign-up from the Groups Area**. Click on **Submit** to save the changes.

Manual Enroll

Enter a name for the group. Be sure the name is descriptive so that users will understand the nature of the group.

Use the text box to enter a description and any instructions for participating in the group. This information is optional, but can help users understand expectations and any associated goals and tasks.



Make the group available by selecting **Yes**. The group can be made available at a later date.

Group Available No Yes

Tool Availability

The same tools are available for each of the group setup options, select which tools will be available to members of the group.

Tool Availability

- Blogs
- Collaboration
- Discussion Board
- Email
- File Exchange
- Journals
- Tasks

Assigning Students to Groups

It is the instructor's responsibility to assign students to groups when using the manual enroll option.

All of the students in the course are listed in the selection box on the left side of the screen. Highlight the student to assign to the group and use the keys in the center of the screen to add/remove students.

The > adds students and the < removes students.

To select all students — Click on the **Select All** button and use

the arrow keys to add/remove students.

To select multiple students — hold down the CTRL key and the left mouse button to select the first student, hold down the CTRL key and the left mouse button to select the last student. All of the students between the first and last are selected — use the arrow keys to add/remove the students.

To select multiple students (not in sequence) - hold down the SHIFT key and the left mouse button to select each student — use the arrow keys to add/remove the students.

Students can be added and removed at any time once the group is created.

Create Group Set

In addition to creating single groups you can also create sets of groups. Group sets can be created so students can enroll themselves, the instructor can create the groups manually or Blackboard will randomly create the number of groups the instructor specifies.

Self-Enroll (Group)

Enter a name for the group set. Be sure the name is descriptive so that users will understand the nature of the groups.

Use the text box to enter a description and any instructions for participating in the group. This information is optional, but can help users understand expectations and any associated goals and tasks.

Make the group available by selecting **Yes**.

Group Available No Yes Sign-up Sheet Only

To create only a sign-up sheet (and **Not** make the group available) select **Sign-up Sheet Only**. The group can be made available at a later date.

Enter a name for the sign-up sheet and type any directions for students in the text box.

Enter the **Maximum Number of Members** for each group. Indicate if the members already registered should be displayed for other students to see. Also, check the box provided to allow students to sign-up from the groups area.

Maximum Number of Members

Allow Students to see name of other members in a group before they sign-up

Show Members

The sign-up sheet can be displayed on the Groups area page or added as a link would provide the ability to limit the availability of the sign-up sheet.

Allow Students to sign-up from the Groups Area

Group Set Options

Number of Groups

Enter the number of groups that are to be created in the set.

Click **Submit**.

Manual Enroll (Group)

Enter a name for the group set. Be sure the name is descriptive so that users will understand the nature of the groups.

Use the text box to enter a description and any instructions for participating in the group. This information is optional, but can help users understand expectations and any associated goals and tasks.

Enter the number of groups that are to be created in the set.

Group Set Options

Number of Groups

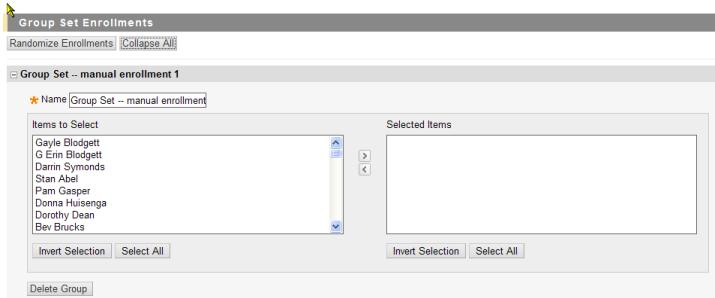
Click **Submit**.

Select the filter options that are appropriate. Check the first box to display the course roles in the available members list. Check the second box to remove members already in a group from the available members list.

Questions?

Contact the Teaching & Learning Center
tlc@icc.edu
 (309)694-8908

Instructors can add students by selecting them from the available list (either individually or in groups) and using the < and > arrows in the center to add/remove names.



Students can also be enrolled randomly by Blackboard by selecting **Randomize Enrollments**. Selecting this option will assign students to each group. These assignments can be changed by the instructor.

Group names can be changed by editing the information in the name text box above each group. Groups can also be deleted by clicking on the **Delete Group** link below each group listing.

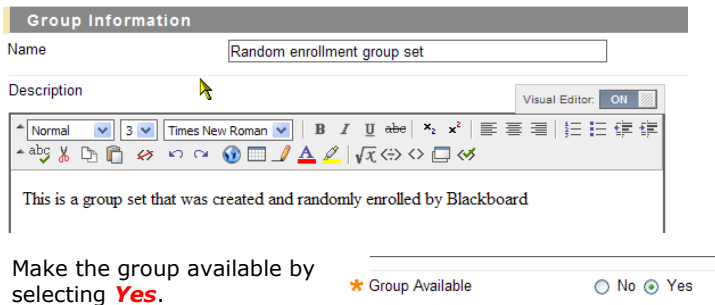
Click **Submit** when changes are complete.

Random Enroll (Group)

Random Enrollment Groups distribute membership into Groups based on the desired number of students per group, or the desired number of Groups.

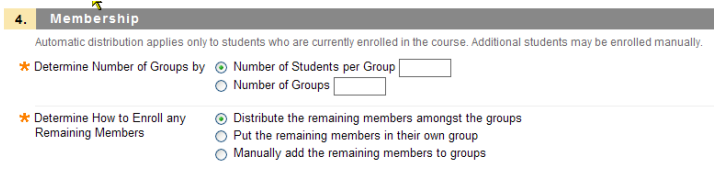
Enter a name for the group set. Be sure the name is descriptive so that users will understand the nature of the groups.

Use the text box to enter a description and any instructions for participating in the group.



Make the group available by selecting **Yes**.

Automatic distribution of students applies only to the students enrolled in the course when the groups are set up —others will have to be added manually.



Determine the number of groups to create either by entering the number of students that can be in a group OR by entering the number of groups.

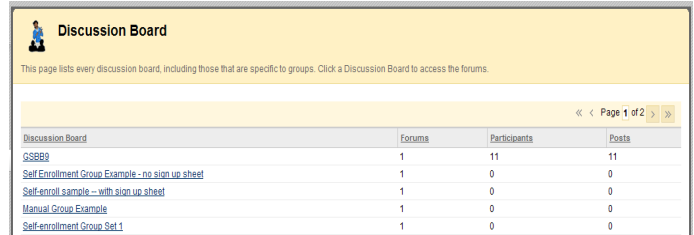
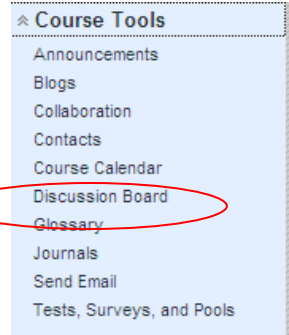
Decide how to enroll the remaining members — amongst the groups, in their own group, or manually adding the students to groups.

Click **Submit**.

Discussion Boards

Discussion boards may be placed in any content area of a course site. Both the course discussion boards and the group discussion boards are listed in the **Discussion Board** area accessed through the **Control Panel**. Discussion boards contain forums which are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject.

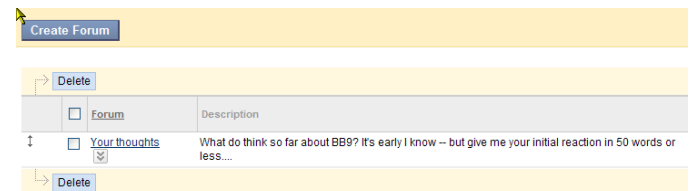
Click on the **Discussion Board** link under **Course Tools** in the **Control Panel**.



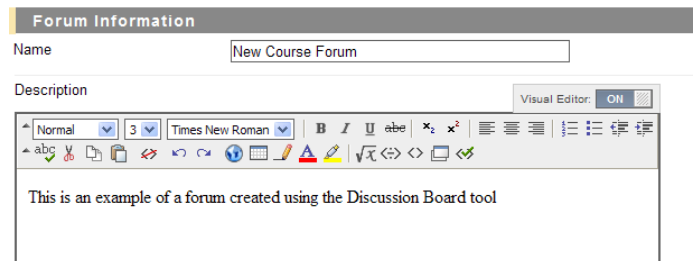
A screen will display listing the available discussion boards. At least one (the main course board) will be displayed. Within that discussion board will be listed all the forums in the course — the ones created in content areas and the ones created from the discussion board tool link. If you are creating groups with discussion boards enabled these groups discussion boards will be listed as well.

Creating a Forum

Click on the Discussion Board of interest and you will have the option to add a Forum or modify, manage, remove, or copy existing forums.



Click on the **Create Forum** button.



Enter a **Name** for the Forum. The Name becomes the link that users click to access the Forum to read and post Threads.

Enter a **Description** of the Forum in the text box. The description can contain formatted text, links, images, and attachments. Use the Description to provide information about the Forum and any instructions for posting.

Forum Availability

Select **No** to hide a Forum from users. This will make the Forum unavailable—this can be changed at any time.

Forums can be set to be available on a specific date and time and to stop being available on a specific date and time.

Forum Settings

Forums have many different settings that affect how users interact. Options for forum settings are:

- **Allow Anonymous Posts:** Users can post to the Forum without revealing their Username.
- **Allow Author to Delete Own Posts:** Users can delete all their own posts or just posts without replies. Deleted posts cannot be recovered.
- **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts:** No record of the original post is kept.
- **Allow Post Tagging:** Tagging is a way to add metadata to posts to make them easier to retrieve in searches. To tag items in a Forum, first select them and then click **Collect**. For faster Discussion Board page loading, do not allow Post Tagging.
- **Allow Users to Reply with Quote:** This setting is enabled by default. When users click **Quote**, the message they are replying to is included in the post.
- **Allow File Attachments:** This setting is enabled by default. Attaching large files will slow down the Discussion Board
- **Allow Members to Create New Threads:** This setting is enabled by default.
- **Subscribe:** Subscriptions to Threads and Forums are sent to users by email. Once a subscription option is selected users can select:
 - **Include body of Post in the Email:** The entire post is sent in the body of the email message.
 - **Include Link to Post:** A link to the post is sent in the body of the email message.
- **Force Moderation of Posts:** **This feature is not available in our version of Blackboard.** This requires all messages to be reviewed by a Moderator before they can be published to the Forum.

Click **Submit**.

Managing Forums

Once forums are created, clicking on the double-down arrows next to the forum name will allow you to open, edit, manage, copy or delete the forum.

Open

Organize threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format and can be sorted by clicking the carat at the top of each column.

Create Thread: Users can create new threads if the it is set to allow users to add threads.

Delete: Delete selected posts from the forum. Deleted posts cannot be restored. Change the status to unavailable or hidden to prevent users from seeing posts without actually deleting the threads.

Collect: Gather selected posts onto one page where they can be sorted, filtered, or printed.

Edit

Allows use to edit the forum settings.

Manage

Edit a course member's forum role by selecting a new role in the forum role select menu. Options include:

- **Manager**—grants all privileges
- **Moderator**—grants participant privileges as well as the ability to edit, delete or lock posts
- **Grader**—grants participant privileges as well as grading privileges (not available in our system)
- **Participant**—grants read and write privileges
- **Reader**—grants rights to read the contents of a form — view only — cannot add or respond to posts
- **Blocked**—blocks the user from the forum

Copy

Forums can be copied entirely including all the posts, or with settings only. Forums can be copied from a Course Discussion Board to one or more Group Discussion Boards.

Specify a name for the copy and a Discussion Board where the copy should be placed. Also select whether the entire forum or only its settings should be copied to the selected location. If copying the entire forum, all content except for uploaded file attachments will be copied to the new location.

Delete

Deleting a forum will delete all of the threads that have been created under it. You will be prompted to continue before the information is removed from the site.

Reading Forums

Click on the link on the name of the forum to read posts from students. Select the threads to read and click on **Collect** to display the posts for reading on the screen or printing.