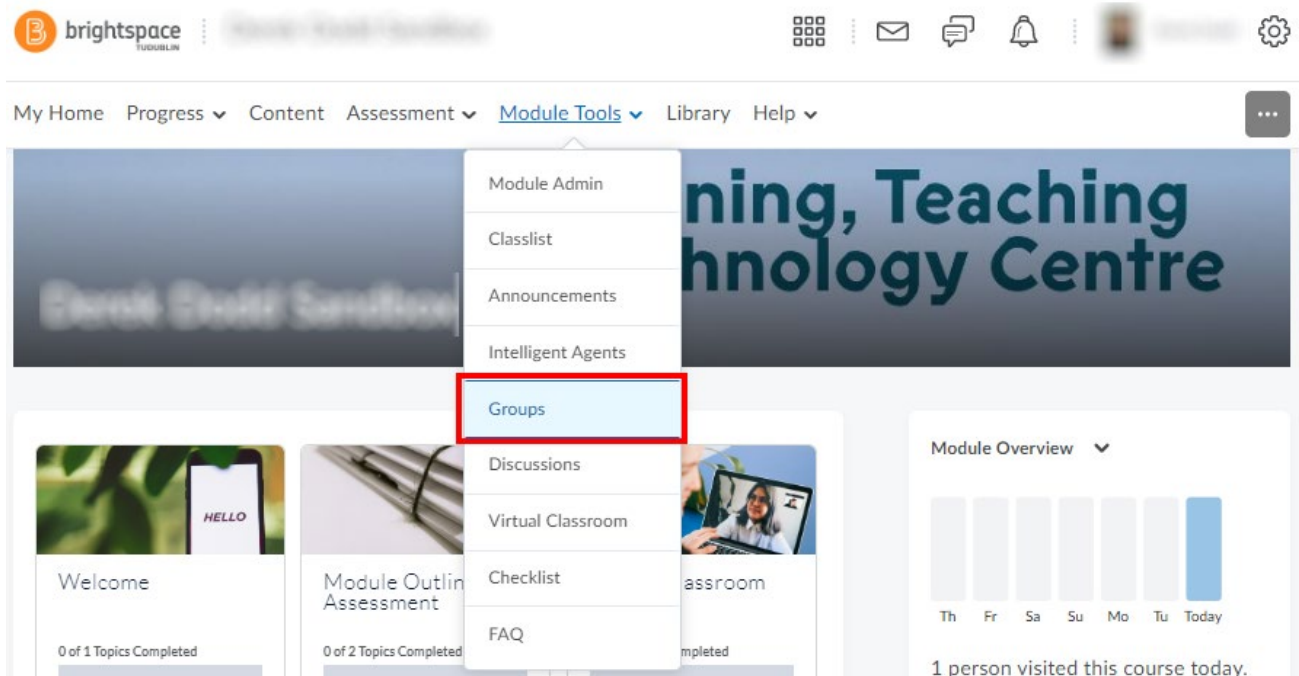# The Brightspace Groups Tool

The 'groups' tool in Brightspace allows you to organise learners into smaller teams within your modules. Each group is given a special work area in which they can discuss, share, and submit work collaboratively. D2L Community: Groups. It is accessed from the navbar by selecting 'module tools' and 'groups'.
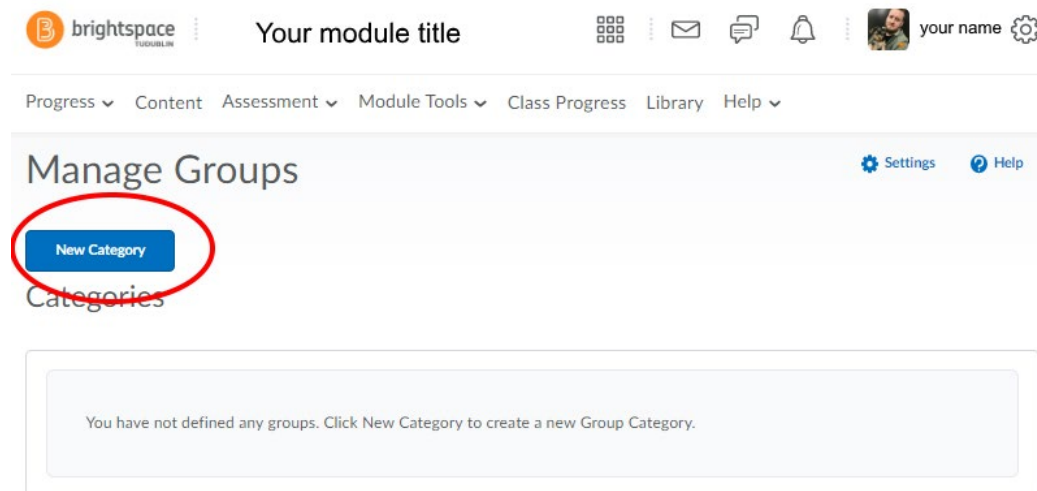
## Creating groups

# Group Categories

After selecting groups from the drop-down menu, you will be taken to the 'manage groups' page. In Brightspace, groups are organised into **'categories'** which house collections of related groups. For example, if you wanted to divide a class into a number of groups for a group project assignment, you might create a category called 'group project', then set the number of groups it should have. You can set up multiple categories with groups in your module if you want to have more than one set of groups (e.g. groups for weekly discussions, groups for assignments etc.). A D2L instructional video on creating groups can be found here: https://youtu.be/xNabPZe9d5I

To begin creating groups, then, you must first create a 'new category' on the groups management page.



On the next page, you will give your group a name (1) and description (2), select enrolment type (3) and number of groups/users (4), set enrolment restrictions (5), add a distinctive group name prefix (6) and choose from a number of advanced properties and additional options.

# Group Enrolment Types

Group enrolment types (4) define how learners are enrolled *and* how many groups are created. The options available are:

| | |
|---|---|
| **'# of Groups - No Auto Enrolments'** | Select this option if you want to manually enrol students to groups yourself |
| **'Groups of #'** | This option specifies the maximum number of students in each group. Brightspace automatically enrols them on a randomised basis. |
| **'# of Groups'** | This will auto-enrol learners into a set number of groups (based on an evenly divided class group rather than a maximum number of learners). |
| **'Groups of #  -Self-enrolment'** | This will set the maximum number of learners allowed in a single group and allow learners to enrol themselves. |
| **'# of Groups - Self-enrolment'** | This will define the number of groups and let learners enrol themselves. |
| **'# of Groups, Capacity of # - Self-Enrolment'** | This will define both the number of groups *and* the capacity of each. Learners will self-enrol. |
| **'Single user, member-specific groups'** | Though not technically a 'group', this option will allow you to create a special work area for a specific learner. This option might be used to facilitate ongoing one-to-one correspondence between the instructor & a specific learner (e.g. for supervision), or to create a private space for a learner to journal or reflect on a topic. |

***In each case, the symbol # indicates the number of groups or users, with specific numbers set after you decide your enrolment type, e.g. '# of groups', 'groups of #', '# of groups, capacity of #'.***

After selecting your enrolment type, you will then specify the number of groups or users you would like to use. The field for entering this data will change contextually based on the enrolment type you have selected.  For example, when you choose the enrolment type 'groups of #' you will be given an option to specify the 'number of users' (1). Conversely, when you choose '# of groups' you will be asked to enter the required 'number of groups' (2).

Enrolment Type

Groups of #

Number Of Users *  **(1)**

Enrolment Type

# of Groups

Number of Groups *  **(2)**

If you select a more complex enrolment type such as '# of groups, capacity of #, self-enrolment' you will be required to enter both the 'number of users' *and* the 'number of groups'.

Enrolment Type

# of Groups, Capacity of # - Self Enrolment

Number Of Users *

**(1)**

Number of Groups *

**(2)**

**Note: When you choose auto-enrolment, you will have the option under 'advanced properties' to 'randomise users in groups'. By default, learners will be enrolled in groups based in their position in the classlist.**

## Advanced Properties

▼ Hide Advanced Properties

Groups Options

☐ Auto-Enrol New Users ❓

☑ Randomise users in Groups ❓

☐ Make category and group descriptions visible to group members

**Note: If you choose a 'self-enrolment' option, you have an option to set a start date and expiry date for student self-enrolment.**

Groups Options

☐ Set Self Enrollment Start Date ❓

| 23/07/2020 | 12:00 AM | Now |

*Ireland - Dublin*

☐ Set Self Enrollment Expiry Date ❓

| 24/07/2020 | 12:00 AM | Now |

*Ireland - Dublin*

☐ Allocate unenrolled users after Self Enrollment Expiry Date ❓

**Note: For auto-enrolment types, you will have an option to 'Auto-enrol new users'. When this option is enabled and new users are enrolled in the module after groups are set up, they are automatically added to the group with the fewest users.**

## Advanced Properties

▼ Hide Advanced Properties

Groups Options

☐ Auto-Enrol New Users ❓

# Manually Enrolling Students

If you would like to manually enrol students in groups, choose an enrolment type with 'no auto-enrolment'. If you use this option, you will enrol students in groups *after* they have been created. To do so, go to the 'manage groups' page in your module (Module Tools>Groups) and - from the drop-down menu beside the group category - select 'enrol users'.



On the next screen, you will see a list of all students enrolled in your module and will have an option to assign them to groups using the relevant tick-boxes. When you are finished, make sure to click 'save' at the button of the page.



# Student Self-Enrolment

If you have enabled self-enrolment, learners will see a 'view available groups' button (1) at the top of the 'groups' page (accessed from module tools> groups). On the next page, students can click on the 'join group' button next to an available group (2)
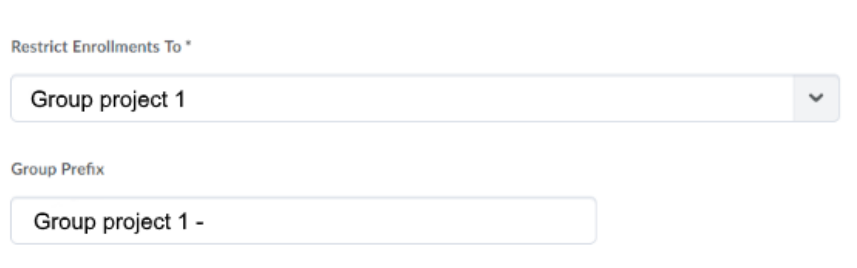


**Note: It is recommended that you provide clear guidelines for students - including self-enrolment start and expiry dates - if you have chosen to use self-enrolment (i.e. through an announcement and in the module content area).**

# Restricting Enrolment (not required)

Use the restrict enrolment option if you would like to create subgroups for your groups.

For example:

- Let's say, you have created a group of 10 learners entitled 'group project 1'
- Then, you wish to create five subgroups of 'group project 1', numbering 2 learners each
- Presuming you have already created 'group project 1', you might start by creating a new group category called 'group project 1 subgroups'
- After defining the type of group, number of students and capacity, you would then restrict enrolment to members of 'group project 1'. This way, only students already enrolled on 'group project 1' will be able to find and enrol in the groups belonging to 'group project 1 subgroups'.
- When you add this restriction, the name of the overarching group category will be added to the prefix field for your subgroup category, as such*:

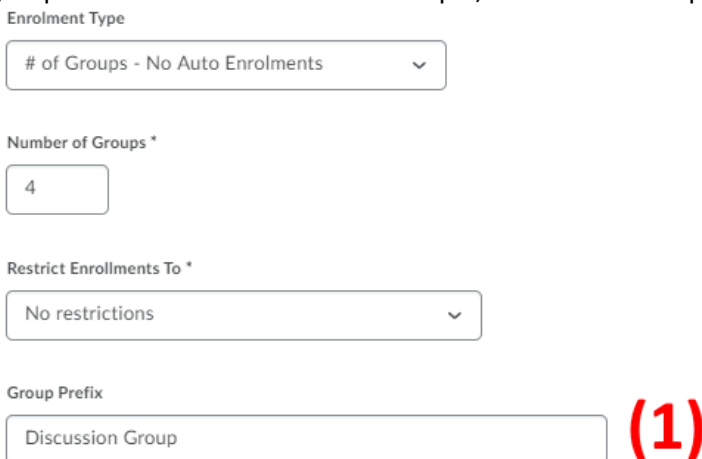**Restrict Enrollments To ***

Group project 1

**Group Prefix**

Group project 1 -

This can be a useful option for large modules already separated into groups where you wish to restrict student enrolment for specific group activities. I.e. your classlist is divided into 'group a' and 'group b' and you want to create separate subgroups for each.

## Setting the Group Prefix

After having named your group and defined its enrolment type, user/group numbers, and - if applicable – restrictions, you will be required to enter a 'group prefix'. In the example below, we have set up four groups with the prefix 'Discussion Group' for our newly created category (1). As a result, the 'manage groups' page displays four individual groups each labelled 'Discussion Group1', 'Discussion Group 2' etc (2).

**Enrolment Type**

# of Groups - No Auto Enrolments

**Number of Groups ***

4

**Restrict Enrollments To ***

No restrictions

**Group Prefix**

Discussion Group  **(1)**

**Note: You can change the name of any of these groups to something more specific by clicking on them in the 'manage groups' page and editing the 'group name' field, that is - you are not bound by the Brightspace prefix naming conventions.**

**Advanced Options and Additional Options**

Here, you can:

1. Make group categories and descriptions visible or invisible to students
2. Set up discussion areas for your groups
3. Set up file lockers for your groups
4. Set up group assignments



# Group Discussions

When you check the 'set up discussions areas' during the group setup process, you will be required to create a discussion forum. In Brightspace discussions are organised in the following way: forums include topics, and topics are made up of threads.
At this stage, you can choose to:

- Create a new forum for the group category
- Use an existing forum within your module

**Creating a new forum**

Click on the '[New Forum]' link (1) and you will be presented with a pop-up menu where you are required to provide a forum title and - if required - a description (2).



Once you click 'save', your newly created forum will be available for selection from the drop-down menu.

**Using an existing forum**

If you would like to use an existing discussion forum for your module for group work, simply select it from the drop-down menu beside the 'New Forum' link.

**Step Two: Working with Topics and Threads**

Irrespective of whether you are using a new or existing, you will next be presented with the following options:

1. **Create a new topic** - this option creates new topics within your chosen forum which are restricted to this group category
2. **Attach to existing topic** - this option will create group-restricted threads in an existing discussion topic. For this to work, this topic must have no existing posts or group restrictions.

## Creating New Topics

If you have opted to create new group-restricted topics in your discussion forum, the 'create restricted topics' page will display after you have clicked 'save' on the 'new category' page (your initial setup). Here, you can choose either to:

- Create a single restricted topic for each of your groups
- Create one topic with threads separated by group



If you would like to set up multiple group-restricted topics in a discussion forum, click on the 'Add Another' button on the bottom of this page and repeat this step as required. If you are only creating one, simply click on 'Create and Next'.

**For general information on setting up and managing Brightspace discussion forums see this guide from D2L and 'Brightspace 5: Using the Communication Tools'.**

## Group Assignments

During the group setup process, you also have the option to create group assignments. To do so, click on 'Set up assignments' on the new category page. You can also specify the assignment type here (typically 'file submission' - for more information about Brightspace assignment types see here).



When you click 'save' on the new category page, you will then be taken to the 'Create Assignments' page (after you have configured your discussion topics). This page is identical to the standard assignments tool, which you can learn about in our guide 'BS7:Creating Assignments & Giving Feedback and this short video.

**Note: You can create group work areas and discussion boards but require learners to submit individually. To do so, simply choose 'individual assignment' on the 'create assignments' page.**

**Note: If your groups need to submit two or more files for their assignment, make sure to select 'unlimited' and 'all submissions are kept' under 'submission options' during set up.**

Group assignments are accessible both from the 'manage groups' page and from the assignments page. On the latter, they are denoted by this symbol:



## Evaluating and Grading Group Assignments

The process for providing feedback and scores on group submissions is identical to individual assignments. Students view assignment feedback by visiting the assignments page (Assessment> Assignments). For feedback on their group assignment they will click a link that says 'unread' in the 'evaluation status' column next to the relevant assignment.

Group assignments can be linked to specific grade items, meaning that the grade you publish to your gradebook will be identical for each group member. For more information on the Brightspace gradebook and grade items see our unit Brightspace 6: Using the Gradebook.

**Note:** If you would like to **award a different grade to an individual student,** you can do this by accessing the gradebook (Assessment>Grades), selecting the 'manage grades' tab, and select 'enter grades' from the dropdown menu accompanying your grade item.

**Group Assignments: File Submissions**

**File submission:** Any group member can submit and view files for a group assignment. As such, you may wish to have groups delegate responsibility for making the final submission to a particular member of the group. Please note:

- If, when setting up your group assignment, you selected the options 'one file (allowed per submission)' and 'only one submission allowed' then it is possible that one group member may submit the wrong file and lock out other students from submitting. This may require you to manually enable resubmission.
- If you selected the option 'only the most recent submission is kept', then groups will not be able to upload multiple files or drafts to the assignment submission area

**It is recommended that you choose the options 'unlimited (files allowed per submission)' and 'All submissions are kept'. Otherwise you may need to manually intervene when groups make errors in their submission.**

## File Lockers

File lockers are restricted areas where members of a group can share files. Any group member can modify files posted in a group locker area. To enable a file locker for your groups, select the tick-box next to 'set up lockers' in the group category setup page.



To access a group locker, open a group category from the 'manage groups' page. For each group, you will see a link with the text 'group files' in the 'locker' column.



Clicking on this will take you to the respective group's file locker. Here you can access each of the files they have uploaded and view some information about which group members last uploaded or modified each file. Lecturers can also share files here, download or delete group files, or email groups.

**Note: Learners can submit files from their group locker to the assignments page by doing the following:**

(1) Access the group assignment from the assignments page (Assessment>Assignments) or the 'groups' page (module tools>groups). On the assignments page, it will be denoted by the following symbol:
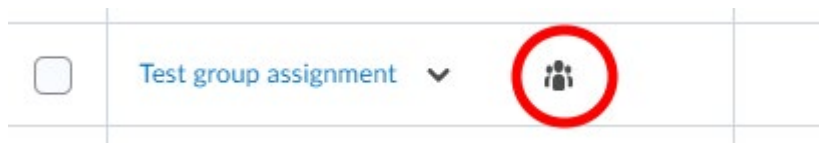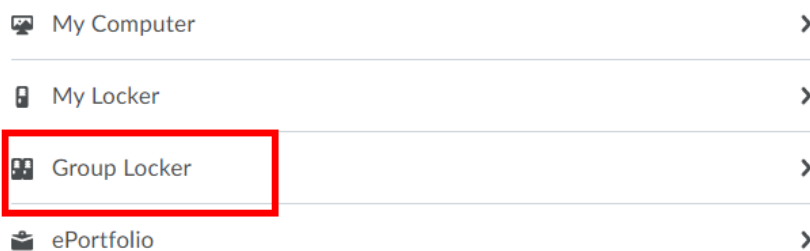


(2) Open the assignment and click on the 'add a file' button



(3) From the resulting pop-up menu, select 'group locker', then select the relevant file(s).

# Manage and Communicate with Groups

From the 'manage groups' page (module tools>groups) you can do the following:

1. Create new group categories
2. Use the drop-down menu to navigate between group categories - the groups for each category will then display in the table below
3. Email individual groups or whole group categories (select groups/categories using the tick-boxes and click on the email button)
4. Delete groups or categories
5. Click on an existing category to edit it or from the drop-down menu, add a new group to a category *or* manually enrol users
6. Click on group to edit its name, view enrolment, or manually enrol
7. View the membership of a specific group
8. Go directly to the evaluation page for a group assignment submission
9. View a group discussion forum/topic/thread
10. Access a group file locker

## Manage Groups

**(1)** New Category

### Categories

**View Categories**

Group Assignment - With Lockers ⌄    **(2)**

**(3)** ✉ Email    **(4)** 🗑 Delete

| | Groups | Members | Assignment | Discussions | Locker |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Group Assignment - With Lockers (3) ⌄ **(5)** | | | | |
| ☐ | GroupAssignment 1 **(6)** | 2/2 **(7)** | Group Assignme... ❷ **(8)** | **(9)** | Group Files **(10)** |
| ☐ | GroupAssignment 2 | 2/2 | Group Assignme... ❷ | | Group Files |
| ☐ | GroupAssignment 3 | 1/2 | Group Assignme... ❷ | | Group Files |

⚙ Settings    ❷ Help