

# Groups in Moodle

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Groups in Moodle serve two important purposes:

1. Provide online support to students working on projects together.
2. Identify the students enrolled in different CRN's in a combined (meta) course site to make managing a combined site much easier.

The instructions in this document will help you successfully create and manage groups.

## I. Creating Groups

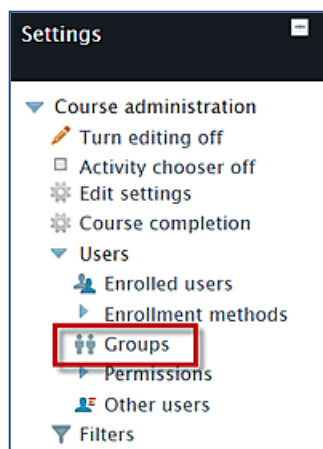


Figure 1: Groups Link

1. Locate group options by clicking on the **Users** link in the **Course administration** block (Figure 1).
2. Click on **Groups**.
3. On the **Groups** page (Figure 2), you can **create groups** and assign users manually, or have Moodle **auto-create** random groups and populate them automatically.

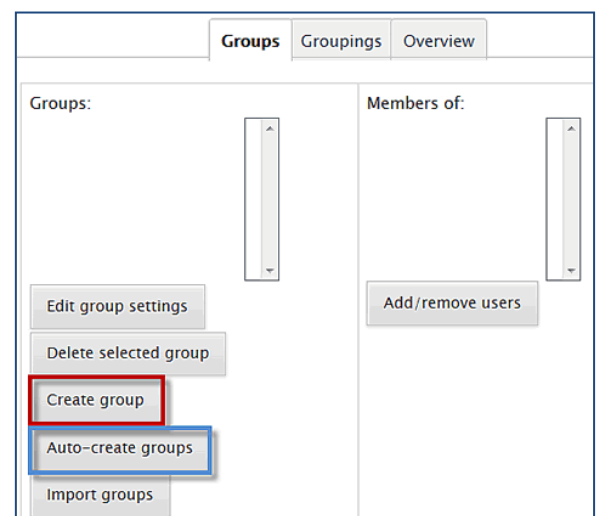


Figure 2: Create Group Options


Both options are explained in detail below.

## Auto-creating Random Groups

Moodle can automatically create groups and randomly assign students to these groups. Groups can be totally random or can be selected alphabetically by first or last name. To create random groups of students:

1. Click on **Auto-create groups** (Figure 2, above).
2. Indicate whether you want to create a specific number of groups **or** if you want a certain number of students in each group in the **Specify** drop-down menu (Figure 3).
3. Enter the desired number of groups or number of students per group in the field labeled **Group/member count**.
4. In the **Naming scheme** field, the default is Group @ with the @ symbol representing a series of letters (resulting in groups named Group A, B, C, etc.). To number your teams (Group 1, 2, 3, etc.), replace the @ symbol with the pound sign (#). You can also rename your groups by replacing Group with Team, Peer Group, etc. (**Note:** An @ or # symbol needs to remain in the field to count off each group.)
5. To create groups of students alphabetically by first name or last name, click **+ Show more...** and choose an "Allocate" option.
6. If you wish, **preview** the groups to see if the distribution of students is appropriate, then click on **Submit** to create your groups.

**Note:** You can manually change randomly created group assignments as necessary.

 **CAUTION!** Students who enroll in your course **after** groups have been auto-created will **NOT** be enrolled in a group. Follow the instructions below to manually assign them to groups.

## Creating Groups Manually

In many cases, you'll want to manually assign students to groups. For example, you may wish to group students by CRN to make it easier to enter grades or take attendance. Or you might want to have your students select specific projects to work on together.

**TIP:** You can poll students in Moodle to let them sign up for team options. See the article on "[Facilitating Group Sign-Ups](#)" for instructions.

To manually create groups and assign specific students to them:

1. In the **Groups** page (Figure 2, p. 1), click on **Create group**.
2. **Name** the group as you wish (Figure 4). For example, the group name could be the CRN, class meeting time, or name of project.
3. Enter a description for the group if you wish—this will not appear in the student view.

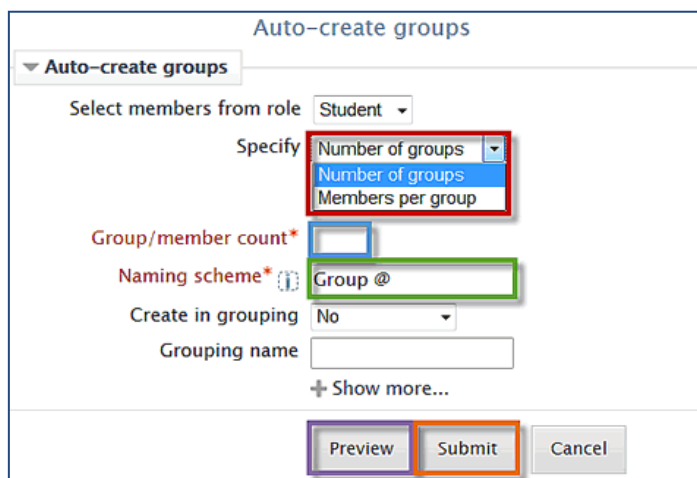


Figure 3: Auto Create Groups

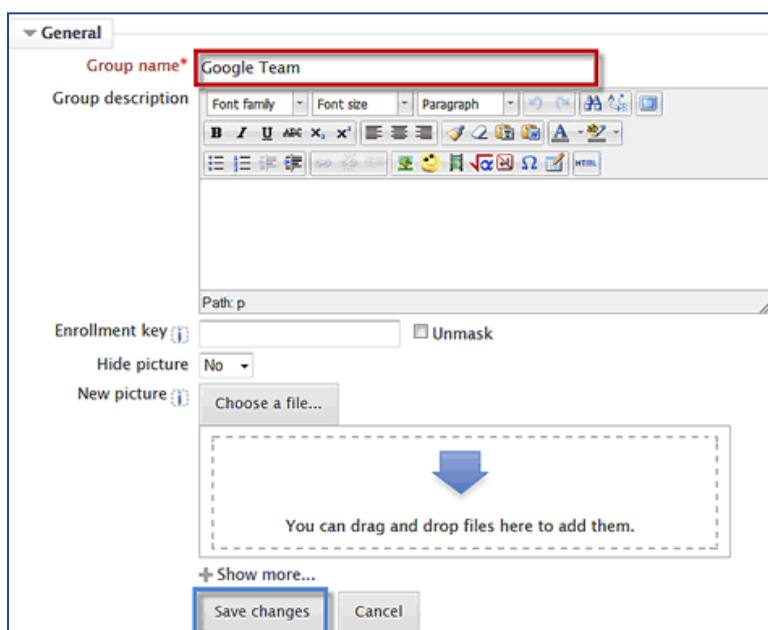


Figure 4: Manually Create Group

4. Do not enter an enrollment key, but feel free to upload an image (in .jpg or .png format) if you wish. Images are cropped to 100 X 100 pixels. If you upload an image for the group, each time a student posts in a forum, the group image will be displayed along with the student's individual profile image.

5. [Save changes](#) to return to the **Groups** page.

Continue adding groups until you have created the total number of groups you need.

### Assigning Students to Groups

1. On the main **Groups** page, click on a group name from the list of groups in the left column.

2. Click on the **Add/remove users** link.

3. Select a student's name and click on **◀ Add** to include him/her in the group (Figure 5).

As students are assigned to groups, Moodle will indicate how many groups they belong to.

**Note:** You don't need to enroll yourself in groups, as you will be able to view and join in on group activities without being enrolled.

**TIP:** To add multiple students at one time, hold the Ctrl key down as you click on each name.

4. Click on **Back to groups** after adding students to the group.

Click on the group name to display the list of students assigned to it (Figure 6). The number of members is displayed next to the group name.

To add or remove users from a group, click on the group name and then click on **Add/remove users**.

## II. Verifying Group Membership

It's a good idea to make sure that every student has been assigned to a group. Students who are not enrolled in a group will not be able to access course activities reserved for groups.

### Instructor Views of Group Membership

There are three quick ways for instructors to verify who is in a group:

1. On the **Groups** page, click on the name of a group (Figure 6). Its members will appear in the column on the right.
2. On the **Groups** page, click on the tab labeled **Overview** (Figure 7).

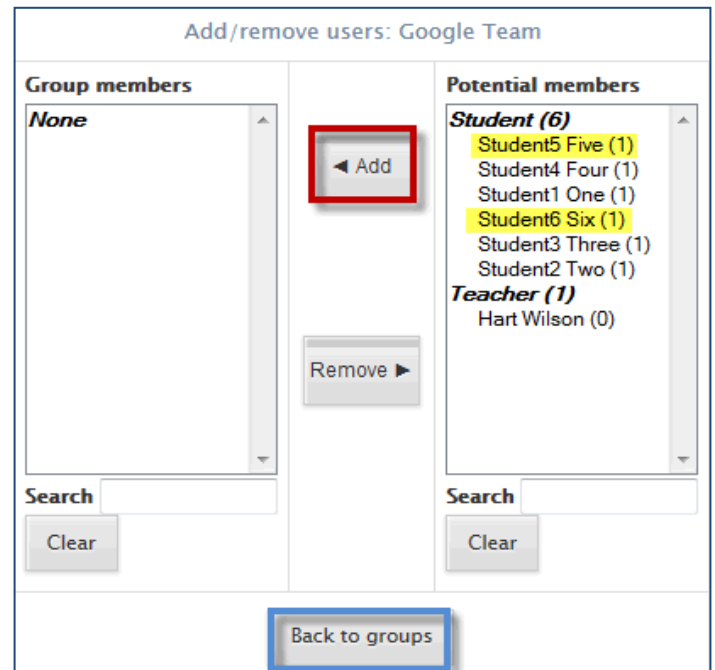


Figure 5: Select & Add Users to Group

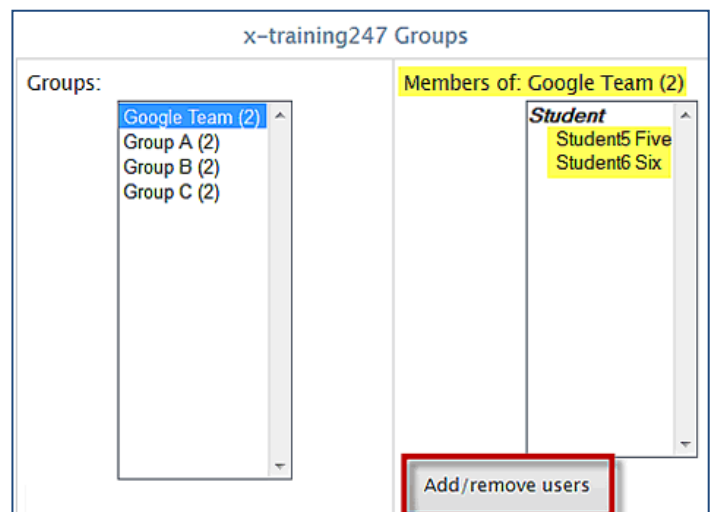


Figure 6: Verify Membership/Add or Remove Users

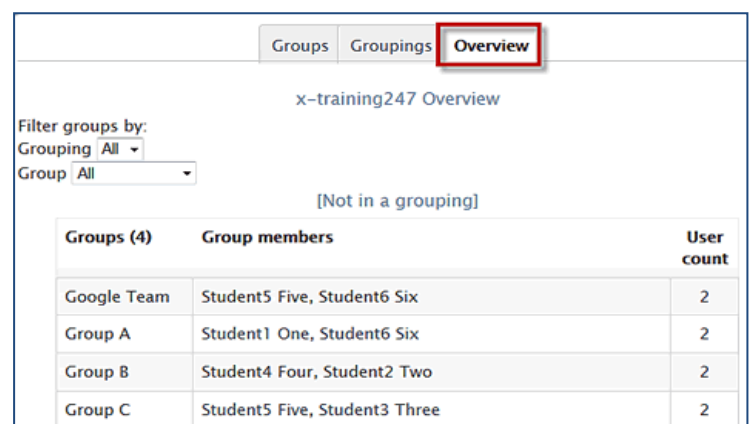


Figure 7: Overview of Groups

- In the **Course administration** block, click on **Users**, then **Enrolled users**. The second column from the right is reserved for designating group membership (Figure 8).

First name / Last name	Last access	Roles	Groups	Enrollment methods
Student1 One	23 hours 29 mins	Student	Group A	Manual enrollments from Wednesday, January 15, 2014, 12:00 AM
Student6 Six	1 day 20 hours	Student		Manual enrollments from Wednesday, January 15, 2014, 12:00 AM

Figure 8: Enrolled Users - Groups Column

**Note:** If students enroll in your course after you have created and populated groups, they will not automatically be added to a group and will not be able to participate in any group activities. The easiest way to see if any students need to be enrolled in a group is to use Step 3 above. In the example above (Figure 8), Student 1 is assigned to Group A while Student 6 is missing a group assignment. Click on the **Add member** icon to enroll the student in a group.

### Student Views of Group Membership

Students can easily see what group they belong to when they open a group activity, but cannot immediately see who else is in their group. Adding the **Quickmail** block to your course site makes it possible for them to quickly check out who else is in their group. In addition, it allows you and your students to send a message to any class participant or to any group in the class. See [Add Quickmail Block](#) in the Moodle Knowledgebase for instructions.

Students can click on the **Compose New Email** link in the Quickmail block and see group affiliations displayed next to each student's name in the **Potential Recipients** field (Figure 9). If they click on the name of a group in the **Potential Sections** field, all of the group members' names will be highlighted in the **Potential Recipients** field below.

**TIP:** Not all students know how to find out who is on their team, so we recommend including instructions for using this Quickmail solution in your communications for group work.

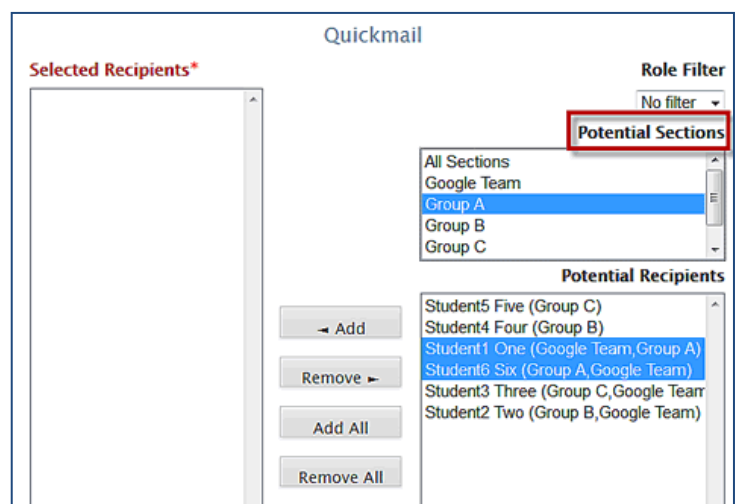


Figure 9: View Group Members in Quickmail

Planning to use small groups as well as breaking out CRN's in your course site? See [Managing Diverse Groups with Groupings](#) on page 7.

### III. Creating Work Spaces for Groups

Once you've set up groups, you can create a single activity (forum, chat or wiki) to create a work space for all groups. **It is not necessary to create a separate activity for each group** as long as you set the Group Mode for the activity to Separate or Visible groups. This allows each student to work exclusively within a designated group even though all students click on the same link. "Separate" allows groups to see only their own work; "Visible" allows students to see what other groups are doing, although they can only participate in their own group.

## Creating a Group Forum

The most common work space for groups is a forum. See "[Guide to Discussion Forums](#)" for general instructions on creating forums. The following notes pertain specifically to working with forums for groups.

- In the description area, inform your students that they should use the "Add a new discussion topic" link to share their thoughts and files.
- **IMPORTANT!** Choose **Standard forum for general use** as the forum type. For group work, do **NOT** use the Single, simple discussion or Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format because these will not allow students to post messages or files.
- In the **Attachments and word count** options area, check that attachments are enabled so that students can post files for each other. Set the number of files they can attach to accommodate the work they are doing together.
- In the **Common module settings** area (Figure 10), select "Separate" or "Visible" groups from the drop-down menu in the **Group mode** field.
- Check the **Available for group members only**, box to hide the forum from students who are not enrolled in the specified group or grouping.
- **Note #1:** Students not enrolled in a group won't be able to make any posts in a forum set for Separate or Visible groups.
- **Note #2:** The Visible group setting can be confusing to students who expect to be able to reply in all forums. If you'd like students to be able to view the discussions of other groups at the conclusion of the discussion period, you can create the forum for Separate groups and then change it to Visible groups when the discussion activity is completed.

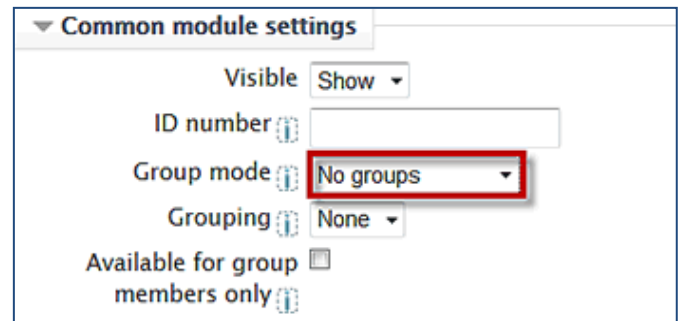


Figure 10: Group Mode Menu

## Participating in Group Forums

If a forum is set for Separate groups, students can only see and post messages for their own group.

In forums set for "Visible groups," students can also view (but not reply to) messages posted by other groups. A **group drop-down menu** (Figure 11) will appear at the top of the forum. To post a message or reply to another student's post, students must select their own group name from the menu.

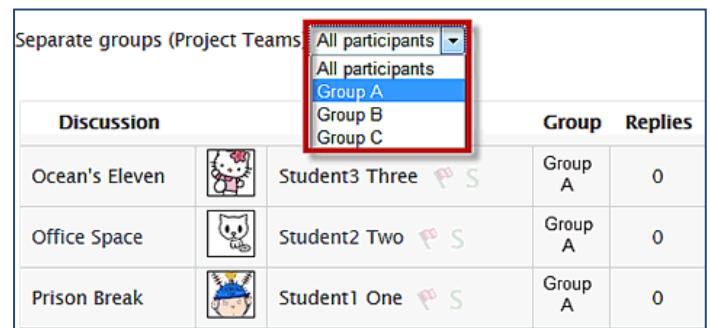


Figure 11: View Group Forum Posts

Instructors can view and reply to all student postings.

To view what students are doing in their group, select the name of a group from the **drop-down menu** (Figure 11). Only the posts made by the members of that group will be displayed, allowing you to view their work in context.

- **CAUTION:** Avoid adding a thread by using the "Add a discussion topic" link if you are viewing All participants in the forum. If you do, there will **NOT** be a **Reply** link attached to your post, so students won't be able to respond to it. Be sure to provide whatever discussion prompt you want students to consider in the Description field instead. To post a message that students can reply to, select a team from the group drop-down menu before creating the message. You can always reply to a post and have students respond to you, regardless of whether you are viewing all participants or a single group.

## Creating Group Assignments

For general instructions on creating Assignments, see [Assignment Links in Moodle](#) in the Moodle Knowledgebase.

Assignments have a **Group mode** menu in the **Common module settings** area just like the one shown in Figure 10 on page 5. Selecting Visible or Separate groups here allows you to select individual groups in the "View/grade all assignments" page. Just selecting the group mode does **not** enable students to work together on the assignment or allow you to assign the same grade and feedback to all group members at one time. It also will not restrict access to the link in any way or allow group members to see each other's work.

You can facilitate group work on an assignment activity by designating an assignment as a group activity. In the **Group submission settings** area (Figure 12), set **Student submit in groups** to **Yes**. Doing so makes it possible for one student to submit an assignment on behalf of the group's members and for you to assign the same grade and feedback to all group members at one time. For more information about this feature, see [Assign Group Grades](#) in the Moodle Knowledgebase.

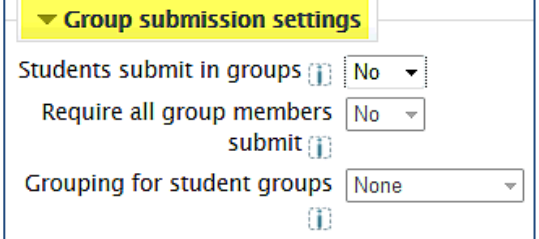


Figure 12: Assignment Group Submission Settings

## Examples of Other Group Activities

- Set your **Announcements** (news) forum for groups to send announcements to specific groups as well as to all students.
- Set the [Attendance](#) link for separate groups, then create different sessions for each CRN to enable you to see just the students associated with a particular CRN when taking roll.
- Enter events and due dates in the course calendar by group.

**Note:** Remember, it is **not** necessary to create a separate forum (or assignment or other activity) for each group in Moodle. One link will serve all students; students will only have access to their assigned group's materials.

## IV. Optimizing Your Course for Group Management

It's easiest to work in a combined CRN course if you set the course itself up for groups. Having the course designated for groups will prepare the grade book for entering grades by section, and every new activity subsequently created in the course will automatically be set for groups. To set up your site for groups:

1. Click on **Edit settings** in the **Course administration** block and open the **Groups** option area.
2. Set the **Group mode** field to "Visible groups" (Figure 13).
3. Leave the **Force group mode** and **Default grouping** fields set to "No" and "None."
4. **Save changes**.

Note: Remember that each time you create a new forum or other activity, the default group mode will be Visible groups. Be sure to double-check this in case you want to set this new item to Separate groups or No groups.

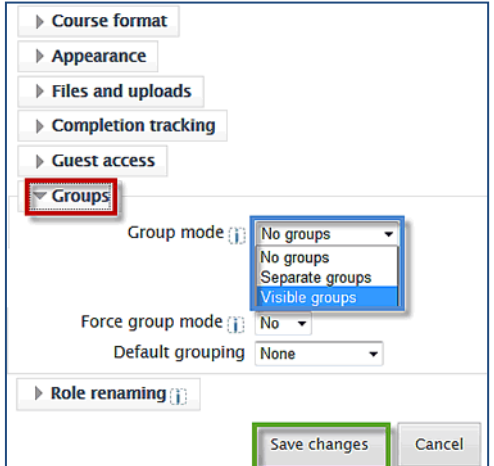


Figure 13: Set Course for Groups

## V. Managing Diverse Groups with Groupings

Moodle makes it possible to set up "groups of groups." The Grouping function allows you to combine students in sets of groups for specific purposes. For example, let's say you have a meta course that combines three sections. You want to create a group for each CRN so that you can take roll easily and enter grades more quickly for each section. In addition to those large groups, you also want to have your students work in small groups of six or eight for discussion purposes. To make it even more complex, you also want them to work on teams of four or five on a term project. You might end up with sets of teams like those shown here in Figure 14.

CRN Groups	Discussion Groups	Project Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1234</li> <li>• 1235</li> <li>• 1236</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group 1</li> <li>• Group 2</li> <li>• Group 3</li> <li>• Group 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team 1</li> <li>• Team 2</li> <li>• Team 3</li> <li>• Team 4</li> <li>• Team 5</li> <li>• Team 6</li> <li>• Team 7</li> </ul>

Figure 14: Sample Groups

Without some way to tie a specific set of groups to a particular activity, things could get pretty confusing! That's where grouping comes in.

### Creating Groupings

1. In the **Course administration** block, click on **Users**, then on **Groups**.
2. Click on the tab labeled **Groupings** (Figure 2, p. 1).
3. Click on the **Create grouping** button.
4. Enter a name for the grouping and a description, if desired (Figure 15).
5. **Save changes**.

Figure 15: Create Grouping

Create as many groupings as you need (one for group discussions, one for CRNs, etc.).

### Assigning Groups to Groupings

Once you have created your groupings, you need to assign each set of groups to its related grouping.

1. On the Groupings page, click on the **Show groups in grouping** icon (Figure 16).
2. Select the groups that belong in the selected grouping and click on **Add** (Figure 17).

**Note:** You can also enroll a single group in a grouping if you plan to reserve a module or activity for a specific group (for example, if one CRN is composed of graduate students, and you want a forum reserved for graduate students only).

3. Use the **Back to groupings** button to verify grouping membership and to assign groups to the next grouping.


Groupings			
Grouping	Groups	Activities	Edit
Project Teams	None	0	

Figure 16: Add Groups to Grouping

Figure 17: Select & Add Groups to Grouping

## Applying Grouping Settings to Activities

When you have finished assigning groups to your groupings, you can designate a specific activity for a particular set of groups. To do so:

1. Create an activity (or update an existing one).
2. In the Common module settings options area, choose **separate groups** or **visible groups** from the **Group mode** drop-down menu (Figure 18).
3. In the **Grouping** field, select the grouping that represents the set of groups that you want to participate in the activity.
4. If you wish, you can reserve the activity solely for a specific grouping by selecting the **Available for group members only** option. The activity will remain invisible to any student not enrolled in a group that belongs to the grouping.
5. **Save changes!**

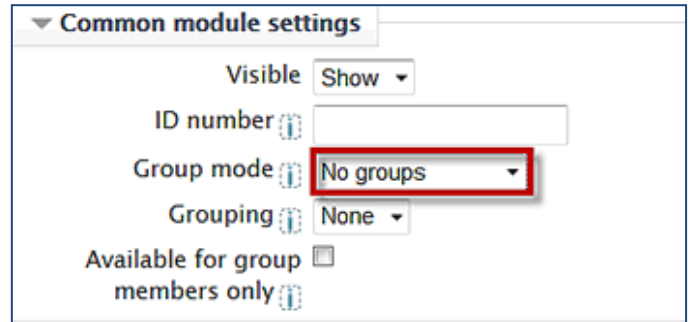


Figure 18: Group Mode Menu

The activity will remain invisible to any student not enrolled in a group that belongs to the grouping.

**Note:** If students belong to more than one group, be sure to designate a Grouping in addition to the Group mode in any new group activities you create in this course. Otherwise, students will have to choose if they should be participating with say, CRN 1234, Group 2 or Team 6.

## Dedicating a Module to a Grouping

You can dedicate a topic module for each grouping in a course site so that only students in given section can see and access the materials you post for them. Here's how to set a module aside for a particular grouping:

1. With editing turned on, click on the **Edit summary** icon in the selected module (Figure 19).
2. Provide a title for the module in the textbox provided or uncheck the **Use default section name** box and enter a title in the **section name** field (Figure 20).
3. Open the **Restrict access** options area.
4. From the **Grouping access** field, use the drop-down menu to select the name of the grouping to which you are dedicating this module.
5. Leave the rest of the fields as they are and **Save changes**.



Figure 19: Edit Summary Area

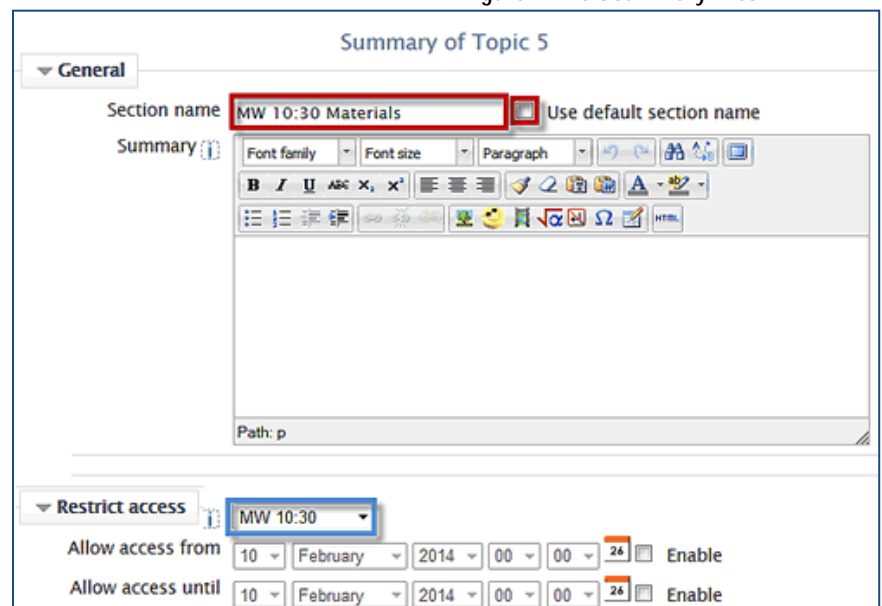


Figure 20: Dedicate Module to a Grouping

**Note:** When you switch to student view, any modules restricted to groupings will not be visible to you, since you don't belong to the groups that comprise the grouping.