
Using Groups & Groupings in the VLE

TUTOR GUIDE

v4.0

User Services
IT Services



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A. Groups

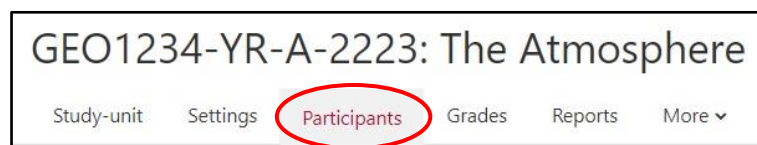
The Groups feature allows tutors to organise VLE area participants (students and tutors) into groups. Students can then undertake VLE activities within these groups, allowing them to work more closely together, and encouraging more collaboration from each member than they might get in a whole-class exercise.

When tutors use groups, they are able to create one activity instead of an activity for each group. For example, the tutor organising an online discussion for four (4) groups can set up one discussion forum that will contain four unique areas (one for each group), effectively creating four distinct discussions.

B. Creating groups

To create a group:

1. From the tabular navigation menu (beneath the name of the VLE area), click **Participants**. This will display all the students and tutors enrolled in the VLE area.

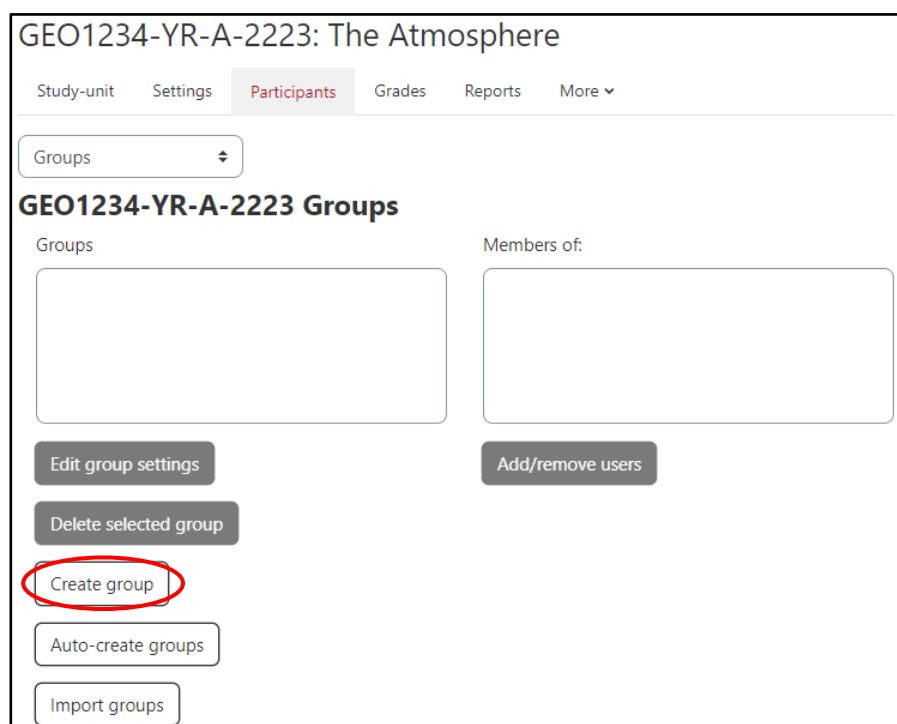


2. Click on the drop-down menu (beneath the tabular navigation menu) and select **Groups**.



The Groups page displays two columns (which are initially empty):

- **Groups**
- **Members of**



3. To add a new group, click the **Create group** button.
4. In the **Group name** field, type a name for the group e.g., *Group A*.

General

Group name

Group ID number

Group description

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Help

← → B I H-P ...

p 0 words

Enrolment key

New picture Maximum size for new files: 100 MB

You can drag and drop files here to add them.

5. In the **Group description** field, you may choose to write a brief description of the group and its purpose.
6. Click the **Save changes** button.

The name of the group will now appear in the group list. Repeat steps 3-6 to create other groups e.g., *Group B*, *Group C*, etc.

Groups

GEO1234-YR-A-2223 Groups

Groups

Group A (0)
Group B (0)
Group C (0)

Members of: Group C (0)

Note:

- To rename a group, click the group name e.g., *Group A* (in the left column) and click the **Edit group settings** button. Edit the name (and any other group settings) and click **Save changes**.
- To delete a group, click the group name e.g., *Group A* (in the left column) and click the **Delete selected group** button. You will be prompted to confirm whether you wish to proceed with deleting the group.

C. Adding participants to groups

To add participants to a group:

1. From the tabular navigation menu, click **Participants**.
2. Click on the drop-down menu (beneath the tabular navigation menu) and select **Groups**.
3. From the left column, select the group you want to add participants to, e.g., *Group A*.
4. Click the **Add/remove users** button.

The *Add/remove users* page displays two lists. The **Group members** column (left-side) lists all members assigned to the group. Initially, this column is blank. The second column lists all participants of the VLE area.

5. From the **Potential members** list (right-side), click the participant's name you want to add to the group.
6. Click the **Add** button. The selected participant's name will be displayed as a member in the **Group members** list.

If you have added a participant to a group by mistake, click the member's name in the **Group members** list and click the **Remove** button.

Repeat steps 5 and 6 for all the participants you want to add to the group.

To select multiple participants, you can select the first participant in a list, press and hold the **Shift** key on your keyboard, and click the last participant in the list. Similarly, you may also use the **Ctrl** key to select non-adjacent participants.

Add/remove users: Group A

Group members

Potential members

Selected user's membership:

Student (5)
 Dummy Student (909-dstu0001, dstu0001@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 2 (0000002S, dstu0002@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 3 (0000003S, dstu0003@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 4 (0000004S, dstu0004@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 5 (0000005S, dstu0005@um.edu.mt)

← Add

Remove →

Student (5)
 Dummy Student 10 (0000010S, dstu0010@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 6 (0000006S, dstu0006@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 7 (0000007S, dstu0007@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 8 (0000008S, dstu0008@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 9 (0000009S, dstu0009@um.edu.mt)

Tutor (1)
 Dummy Tutor (dtut1, dummy.tutor@um.edu.mt)

Search Clear

Search Clear

Search options ▶

Back to groups

7. When you have added all required participants to the group, click the **Back to groups** button.

GEO1234-YR-A-2223 Groups

Groups

Members of: Group A (5)

Group A (5)
 Group B (0)
 Group C (0)

Student

Dummy Student (909-dstu0001, dstu0001@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 2 (0000002S, dstu0002+2@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 3 (0000003S, dstu0003+3@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 4 (0000004S, dstu0004+4@um.edu.mt)
 Dummy Student 5 (0000005S, dstu0005+5@um.edu.mt)

Edit group settings

Delete selected group

Create group

Auto-create groups


Import groups

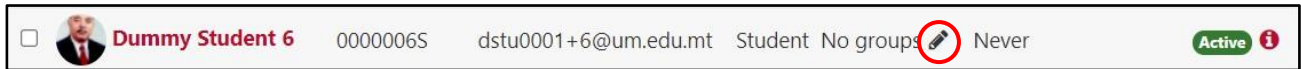
Add/remove users

Repeat steps 3-6 to add participants to other groups.

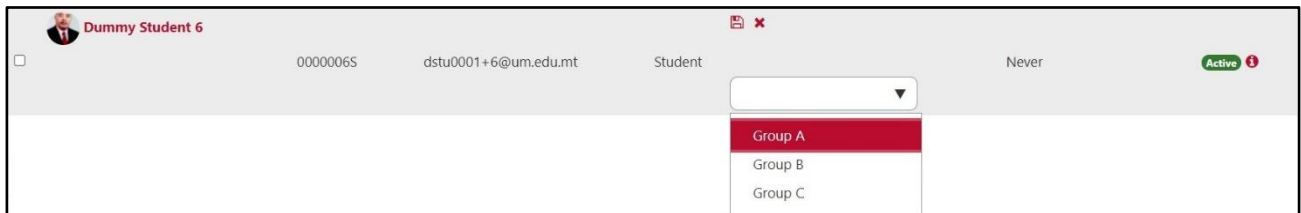
Alternatively, you may easily add participants to multiple groups from the **Participants** page.


To add a participant to multiple groups:

1. In the required VLE area, access the **Participants** page from the tabular navigation menu.
2. Locate the required participant and click the **Edit groups**  button.






3. A drop-down menu with all the study-unit's groups is displayed. Choose which group/s you would like to add the participant to.



4. Click the **Save changes**  button.

The groups will be displayed adjacent to the participant under the **Groups** column.

	First name / Last name ^	ID number	Email address	Roles	Groups	Last access to course	Status
<input type="checkbox"/>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Dummy Student 6	0000006S	dstu0001+6@um.edu.mt	Student	Group B 	Never	Active 

D. Auto-creating groups

Creating large numbers of groups and adding participants to them can be a cumbersome process. With the **Auto-create groups** feature, the VLE can automatically create and name a required number of groups, and also add participants to them.

To automatically create groups:

1. From the tabular navigation menu, click **Participants**.
2. Click on the drop-down menu (beneath the tabular navigation menu) and select **Groups**.
3. Click the **Auto-create groups** button.

4. In the **Naming scheme** text field, define how your groups will be named. You may use the '@' sign to assign a letter in sequence (A, B, C, etc) to each new group, or the '#' sign to assign a number in sequence (1, 2, 3, etc) to each new group. Consider the following examples:

'Group @' will create groups with a naming scheme *Group A, Group B, Group C*, etc.

'Group #' will create groups with a naming scheme *Group 1, Group 2, Group 3*, etc.

5. Using **Auto create based on** and **Group/member count** settings, define how groups will be created:
 - If you want to create a specific number of groups (x) with an equal number of members in each group, select **Number of groups** from the **Auto create based on** drop-down menu and type the number of groups required (x) in **Group/member count**.
 - If you want to create groups with a specific number of members (y) in each group, select **Members per group** from the **Auto create based on** drop-down menu and type the number of members required (y) in **Group/member count**.

In some cases, it may not be possible to divide participants equally between groups due to the number of participants. If, for example, 15 participants are divided into groups of 6 members each, two groups of 6 and one group of 3 members will be created.

If you do not wish to have a group with a smaller number of participants, tick the **Prevent last small group** checkbox. In the example mentioned above, the 3 members from the latter group will be added to the former two groups, thus having two groups of 8 and 7 members respectively.

- In the **Select members with role** drop-down menu, choose which participants (students, tutors or all) you want to sort into groups.
- From the **Allocate members** drop-down menu, select the method of sorting members into groups; randomly, or alphabetically by first name or last name. If you set the option to 'No allocation', the groups will be created but no members will be allocated to them. You can choose to place your new groups in a grouping, by selecting **New grouping** from the **Grouping of auto-created groups** drop-down menu, under the **Grouping** section. Alternatively, you may place groups in existing groupings from the drop-down menu. For more information on working with groupings, refer to [Section F](#).
- Click the **Preview** button to view the groups being created and members assigned to each group (if applicable). If you are satisfied with how the groups are set up, click the **Submit** button.

If you want to make any modifications, amend the settings accordingly and click the **Preview** button again.

Preview
Submit
Cancel

! Required

Groups preview

Groups (3)	Group members	User count (11)
Group A	Dummy Student 5 (0000005S, dstu0001+5@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 2 (0000002S, dstu0001+2@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 12 (0000012S-dstu0012, dstu0001+12@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 6 (0000006S, dstu0001+6@um.edu.mt)	4
Group B	Dummy Student 10 (0000010S, dstu0001+10@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 8 (0000008S, dstu0001+8@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 9 (0000009S, dstu0001+9@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student (909-dstu0001, dstu0001@um.edu.mt)	4
Group C	Dummy Student 3 (0000003S, dstu0001+3@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 7 (0000007S, dstu0001+7@um.edu.mt), Dummy Student 4 (0000004S, dstu0001+4@um.edu.mt)	3

Note:

- Whichever method is used (manual or automatic), groups are configured based on existing students in the VLE area. Students who are added to a VLE area at a later stage will need to be manually added to a group. Students removed from a VLE area, will automatically be removed from any group they are a member of. Tutors are encouraged to verify group membership in such situations.

E. Making use of groups

Once you have created groups, you can set VLE area activities with **Group mode**. There are three Group mode options that define the level of interaction of groups with each other in an activity, which are:

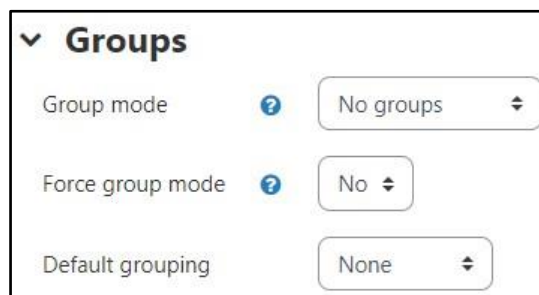
- **No groups** – All students can view and participate together in the same activities.
- **Separate groups** – Students can view and participate in activities within their own group. They cannot view or participate in other groups' activities.
- **Visible groups** – Students can view and participate in activities within their own group. They can also view other groups' contributions but not participate in them.

Group mode may be set at VLE area level or when the tutor creates an activity within an area. When Group mode is set at VLE area level, it becomes the default mode for all activities within the area. Each activity which supports groups can also define its own group mode, though if the Group mode is forced at VLE area level (explained below) the group mode setting set at activity level is ignored.

At VLE area level

To set Group mode at VLE area level:

1. From the tabular navigation menu, click **Settings**.
2. Scroll down and click to expand the **Groups** section.



The screenshot shows the 'Groups' settings section in a VLE interface. It contains three rows of settings, each with a label, a help icon (question mark in a blue circle), and a dropdown menu:

- Group mode**: The dropdown menu is set to 'No groups'.
- Force group mode**: The dropdown menu is set to 'No'.
- Default grouping**: The dropdown menu is set to 'None'.

3. From the **Group mode** drop-down menu, select how you prefer the activity (such as a forum) to operate. Definitions of the different group mode options are explained above.
4. From the **Force group mode** drop-down menu, select one of the following:
 - **No** – although the selected group mode is set for every activity in the VLE area, it can be changed at activity level (recommended).
 - **Yes** – the selected group mode will be enforced for every activity in the VLE area, and cannot be changed.
5. Click the **Save and display** button.

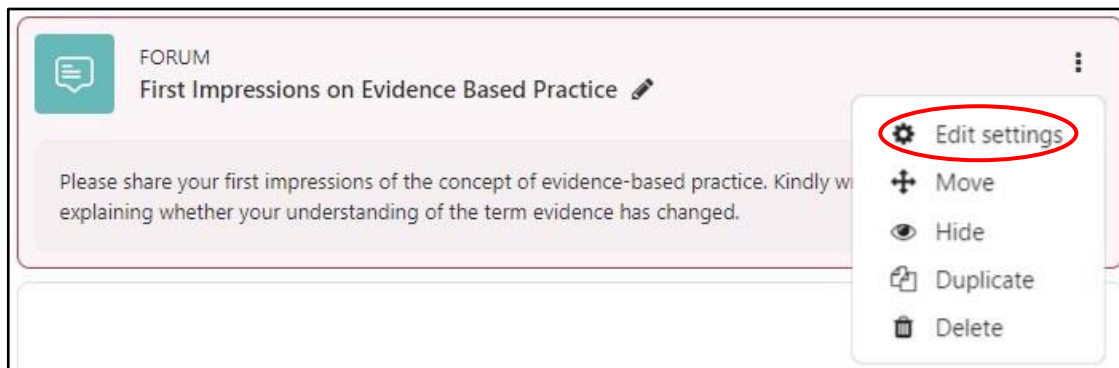
At activity level

You can set the Group mode for each individual activity so that it need not necessarily follow the Group mode set at VLE area level. However, if the **Force** option is set to **Yes** at VLE area level (explained above), Group mode settings already set at activity level are ignored.

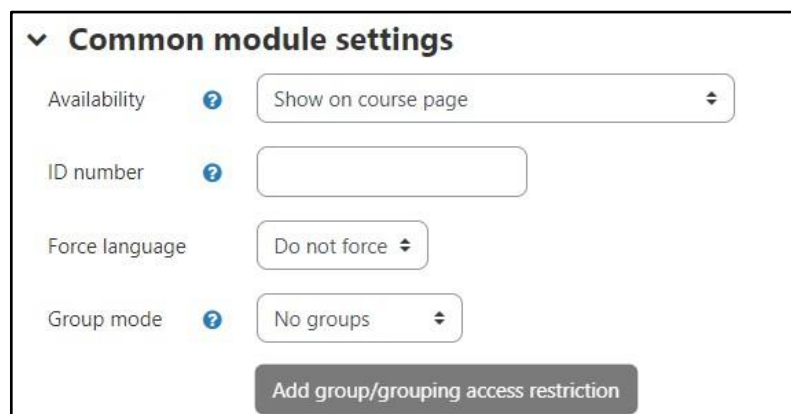
To set the Group mode at activity level:

1. Click the **Start editing** toggle button located at the top-right corner of the VLE area homepage.
2. Select the required activity from the **Add an activity or resource** chooser.

Alternatively, if you want to apply Group mode to an existing activity, click the **Edit** (3-dot) icon adjacent to the activity, and click **Edit settings**.



3. Scroll down to the **Common module settings** section.



4. From the **Group mode** drop-down menu, select how you prefer the activity to operate. Definitions of the different options are explained [above](#).

If Group mode is pre-set as either *Separate groups* or *Visible groups* (without the possibility of changing the option), this means that Group mode has been forced at VLE area level (explained [above](#)).

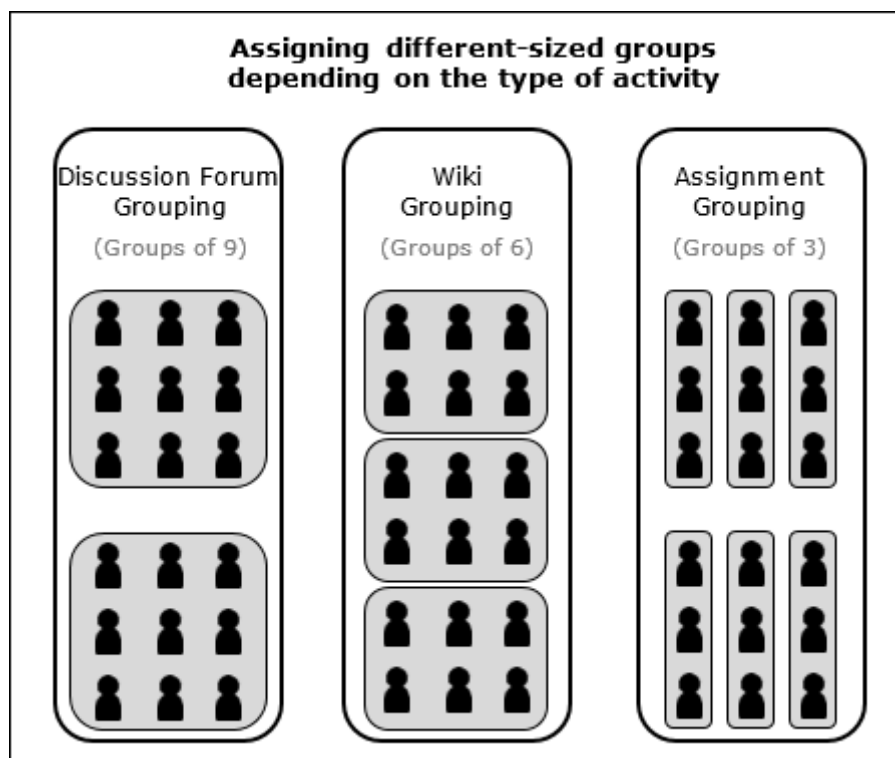
5. Click the **Save and return to course** button.

F. Groupings

The Groupings feature allows tutors to organise groups into groupings. A Grouping is two or more groups merged together for the purpose of completing an activity. For example, you may have several smaller groups working on specific tasks but may want some of those groups to come together to work on a project with a broader topic or to compare notes. To utilise groupings, tutors must first create the groups in the VLE area and add participants to each group. If groupings have been created, an activity can be set to use only groupings, or to use both groupings and groups. This is ideal for when you want students to be in multiple groups throughout the semester.

From a categorised point of view, VLE area participants belong to a group while groups belong to a grouping. Groupings can be effective when a VLE area has a large number of activities which need to be divided among different groups of participants, or when more control over which groups of participants have access to particular activities is required.

The diagram below explains a few distinct ways you can use groupings. As illustrated below, you might also want to use differently-sized groups depending on the type of activity.



Finally, there may be times when you want to create an activity that's intended for only a number of participants (e.g., a resit assignment). Since you can assign an activity to a grouping, but groups within the grouping do not have to contain every participant in your VLE area, only participants contained in that grouping can see the activity and participate. This is explained in detail in [Section G](#) below.

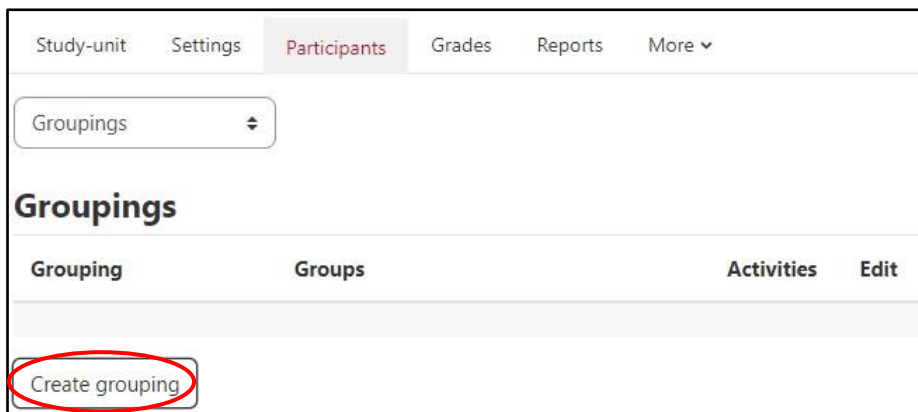
Creating groupings

To create a grouping:

1. From the tabular navigation menu, click **Participants**.
2. Click on the drop-down menu (beneath the tabular navigation menu) and select **Groupings**.



3. To add a new grouping, click the **Create grouping** button.









4. In the **Grouping name** field, type a name for the grouping e.g., *Grouping 1*.



 A screenshot of the 'Create grouping' form. The form has a 'General' section with three fields: 'Grouping name' (with a red error icon), 'Grouping ID number' (with a blue help icon), and 'Grouping description' (with a rich text editor). The rich text editor has a toolbar with icons for undo, redo, bold, italic, link, unlink, list, and help. At the bottom, there are 'Save changes' and 'Cancel' buttons. A red error icon and the word 'Required' are visible at the bottom left.

5. In the **Grouping description** field, you may choose to write a brief description of the grouping and its purpose.
6. Click the **Save changes** button.

The name of the grouping will now appear in the grouping list. Repeat steps 2-5 to create other groupings e.g., *Grouping 2*, *Grouping 3*, etc.

Grouping	Groups	Activities	Edit
Grouping 1	None	0	 
Grouping 2	None	0	 
Grouping 3	None	0	 


Note:

- To rename a grouping, click the *Edit* icon  in line with the respective grouping. Edit the name (and/or the description) and click the **Save changes** button.
- To delete a grouping, click the *Delete* icon  in line with the respective grouping. You will be prompted to confirm whether you wish to proceed with deleting the grouping or not.

Adding groups to a grouping

Note that you must first create a grouping (refer to the [Creating groupings](#) section) before proceeding with the following instructions.

To add groups to a grouping:

1. From the tabular navigation menu, click **Participants**.
2. Click on the drop-down menu (beneath the tabular navigation menu) and select **Groupings**.
3. Click the *Show groups in grouping*  icon in line with the respective grouping.

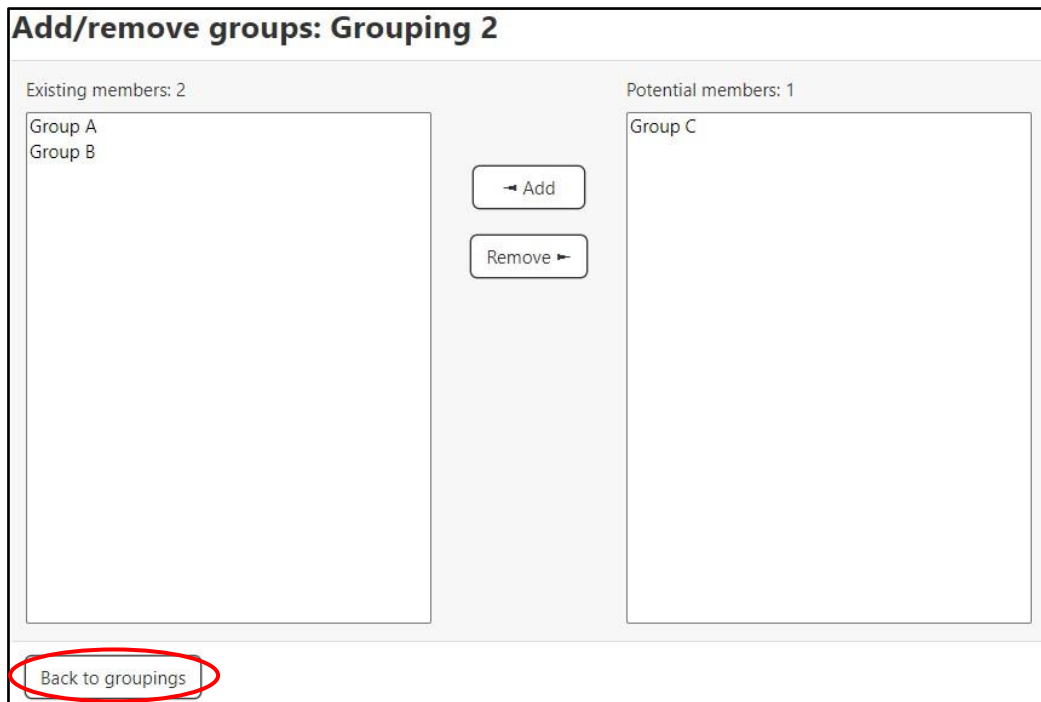
The *Add/remove groups* page displays two columns. The left column (**Existing members**) lists all member groups assigned in the grouping. Initially, this column is blank. The right column (**Potential members**) lists all groups in the VLE area.

4. From the right column (**Potential members** list), click the group you want to add to the grouping.
5. Click the **Add** button. The selected group will be displayed as a member in the left column.

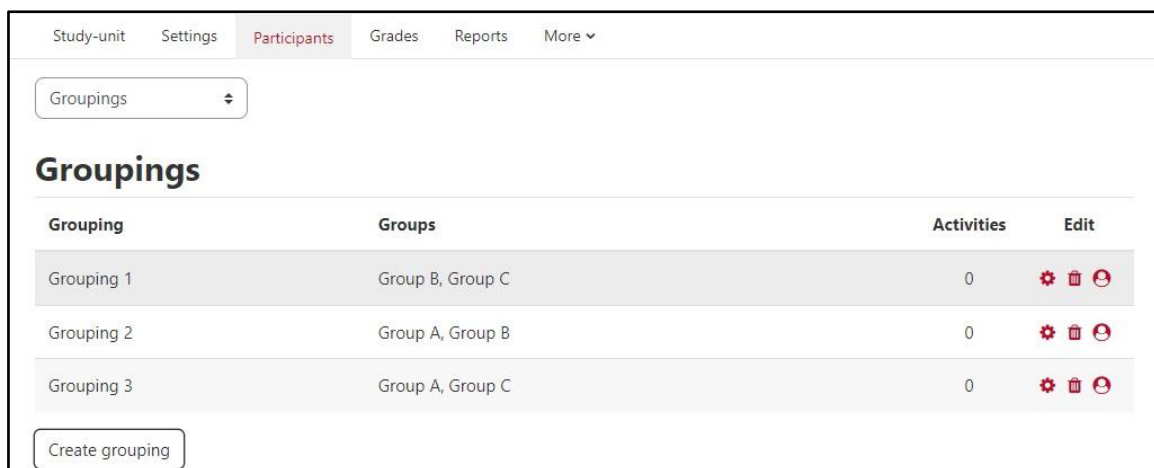
If you have mistakenly added a group to a grouping, click the group in the left column and click the **Remove** button.

Repeat steps 4 and 5 for all the groups you want to add to the grouping.

To select multiple groups, you can select the first group in a list, press and hold the **Shift** key on your keyboard, and click the last group in the list. Similarly, you may also use the **Ctrl** key to select non-adjacent groups.



6. When you have added all required groups to the grouping, click the **Back to groupings** button.



Repeat steps 3-6 to add groups to other groupings.

Using groupings

Tutors who need to create a resource or activity targeted to one or more particular groups can use the Groupings feature. By assigning a grouping to a resource or activity, the tutor can make the resource or activity accessible only to the relevant groups (within the grouping).

To make a resource or activity available to groups within a specific grouping only:

1. Click the **Start editing** toggle button located at the top-right corner of the VLE area homepage.
2. Select an activity from the **Add an activity or resource** chooser.

Alternatively click **Edit Settings** from the **Edit** (3-dot) icon adjacent the resource/activity if it already exists.

3. Expand the **Common module settings** section.

▼ **Common module settings**

Availability	?	Show on course page
ID number	?	<input type="text"/>
Force language		Do not force
Group mode	?	No groups
Grouping	?	None

Add group/grouping access restriction

4. From the **Group mode** drop-down menu, select how you prefer the resource/activity to operate. Refer to [Section E](#) for definitions of the different options.

If Group mode is pre-set as either *Separate groups* or *Visible groups* (without the possibility of changing the option), this means that Group mode has been forced at VLE area level (refer to [Section E](#)).

5. From the **Grouping** drop-down menu, select which grouping you want to assign to the resource/activity.

The name of the chosen grouping will eventually be displayed upon accessing the activity itself. This is applicable to tutors only, as students will only see the resource/activity link that they have access to.

Introduction Forum

Forum Settings Advanced grading Subscriptions Reports More ▼

Search forums

Separate groups (Grouping 2) All participants

There are no discussion topics yet in this forum

G. Restricting access to specific groups/groupings

If you would like to make the activity link unavailable to students who are not part of these groups, you may restrict access to the resource/activity.

1. Click the **Start editing** toggle button located at the top-right corner of the VLE area homepage.
2. Locate the required resource/activity. Click the **Edit** link adjacent to the resource/activity and select **Edit settings**. The respective settings page is displayed.
3. Scroll down and click to expand the **Restrict access** section. Click the **Add restriction...** button.
The **Add restriction...** dialog box is displayed.

Add restriction...

Date	Prevent access until (or from) a specified date and time.
Grade	Require students to achieve a specified grade.
Group	Allow only students who belong to a specified group, or all groups.
Grouping	Allow only students who belong to a group within a specified grouping.
User profile	Control access based on fields within the student's profile.
Restriction set	Add a set of nested restrictions to apply complex logic.

Cancel

4. Click the **Group / Grouping** button, and select the group / grouping you wish to allow access to.

Restrict access



Access restrictions


Student must match the following

Grouping Choose... Please set

Choose...
Grouping 1
Grouping 2
Grouping 3

Add restriction...

5. Click on the **Hide/Show**  icon to establish whether the activity title in the VLE area homepage will be visible:
 - When the **Click to hide**  icon is shown, the activity title will be displayed as greyed-out and will not be accessible to students who do not form part of the selected group/s or grouping/s.

- When the **Click to show**  icon is shown, the activity title will be hidden entirely from the view of students who do not form part of the selected group/s.

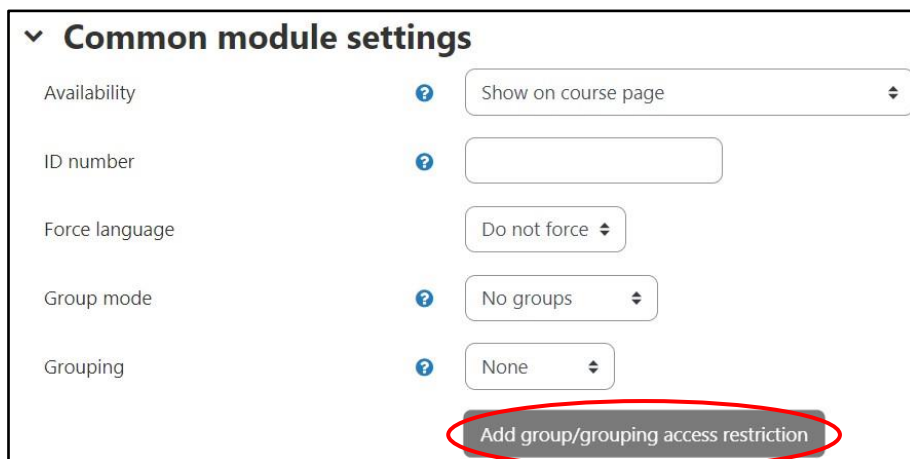


6. Click the **Save and return to course** button.

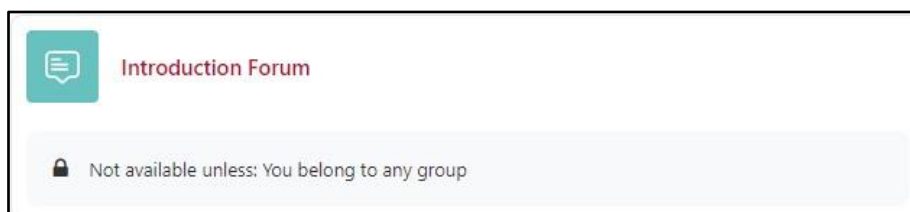
Alternatively, you may restrict access for groups and groupings using the **Add group/grouping access restriction** option in the **Common module settings** section.

If the **Group mode** option is set as *No groups* (this is the default option unless groups are forced at VLE area level), the **Add group/grouping access restriction** will be disabled.

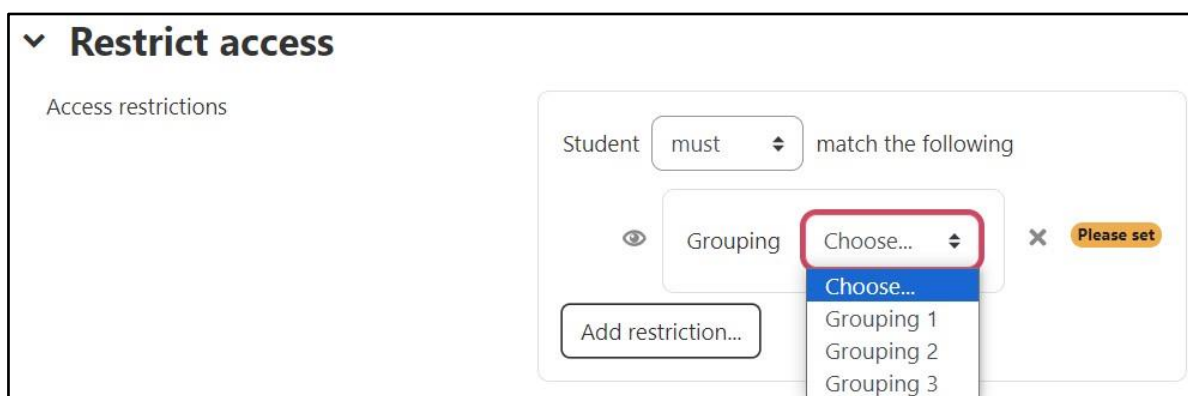
If you set the **Group mode** option as *Separate groups* or *Visible groups*, subsequently you can click the **Add group/grouping access restriction** button.



The activity's restriction will be set as **Not available unless: You belong to any group**.



Therefore, if you require the restriction to be linked to a specific group, you can update the restriction from the activity's **Restrict access** section.



If in addition to setting the **Group mode** option, you also choose a grouping and then click the **Add group/grouping access restriction** button, the restriction will be set as **Not available unless: You belong to a group in *Grouping 1***.

Note:

- The **Add group/grouping access restriction** option is only available for VLE activities (i.e., assignments, forum, quiz, etc.). The option is not available for VLE resources.

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Msida MSD 2080
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