Blackboard 9: Creating and Understanding Groups

Instructors and students have the ability to create groups within a course. These spaces are equipped with tools that can assist in a collaborative process: blogs, journals, file sharing and group assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Blog</th>
<th>Users within the group can post to the blog and add comments. Instructors can enable the Blog tool for use only within the course group, or can grant student access to the blog at the course level.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Users within the group can participate in real-time lessons and discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Wiki</td>
<td>Wikis are used to create a collaborative space within the Course where all students can view, contribute, and edit content. Group Wikis are enabled by the Instructor and can be read by all course members, but a user must be a member of the Group to edit a page or make a comment on a Group Wiki page. The Instructor can change the default setting to allow only Group members to view a Group Wiki.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussion Board</td>
<td>An area where course group members can post messages and replies. Instructors can use this tool to encourage discussions of course material outside of the classroom. This Discussion Board is available only to course group members, not to the entire course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File Exchange</td>
<td>Students and instructors can use this tool to upload documents to the course group area and organize them through the creation of folders in which their items can be stored. Students can access this material from within the course. Instructors have access to all folders in their course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send Email</td>
<td>All members of a course group can send email messages to selected members or the entire group. These messages are internal to the course group, they are not available to anyone outside the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Journal</td>
<td>Instructors can assign a private Journal to each user in a group to allow private communication between the Instructor and the User.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Tasks</td>
<td>This page organizes projects or activities (referred to as tasks) by defining task priority and tracking task status.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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About Group Membership
Instructors can create a single group or multiple groups in which students can be enrolled manually, automatically, or by allowing the students to enroll themselves. These enrollments can be changed at any time.

Understanding the Different Types of Enrollment Options
- **Manual Enrollment** involves the instructor selecting each member one at a time from a list of all the students in the course.
- **Random Enrollment** Instructor allows the system to divide up all the members of the course among all the groups based on criteria chosen by the Instructor.
- **Self Enrollment** allows the students themselves to become members of groups by using a sign-up sheet that Instructors create for each course group.

*Note: Random distribution applies only to students who are currently enrolled in the course. When naming a set of groups, the name of each group has a number added to it when they are first created. For example, a set of groups named "Intro to Biology" results in groups named "Intro to Biology 1", "Intro to Biology 2", "Intro to Biology 3", depending upon the number of groups in the set. The group names can be edited after they are created.*

To Enroll Course Group Members Randomly:
1) Click **Users and Groups** on the Control Panel
2) Click **Groups**
3) Select **Random Enroll** from Create **Set of Groups** drop-down list
4) Enter the **Group Information**, **Tool Availability** and **Module Personalization Setting**
5) Click **Submit**.

Enrolling Course Group Members Manually Using a Sign-Up Sheet:
1) Click **Users and Groups** on the Control Panel
2) Click **Groups**
3) Select **Self-Enroll** from either the Create Single Group or Create Set of Groups dropdown lists
4) Enter the group information, tool availability and module personalization setting
5) Click the **Sign-up Sheet Only** radio button
6) Set the necessary options for the sign-up sheet
7) Click **Submit**

**Sign-Up Sheet Options**
Enter instructions for the sign-up sheet including the maximum number of students for the group. The **Show Members** allows students to see name of other members in a group before they sign-up. You are also able to allow students to sign-up from the groups area. You can select if you would like to display the sign-up sheet on the groups area page or as a link from any content page.