Blackboard CE8

The following pages have been extracted from the Blackboard Learning System CE8 Designer and Instructor reference guide.

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CHAPTER 22: GROUP MANAGER

IMPORTANT: Topics in this chapter apply to various roles. See specific topics for your role.

ABOUT GROUP MANAGER

For Section Instructors

The *Group Manager* tool allows you to group members in your course.

NOTE: The term "members" refers to users that are enrolled in your course in any of these five roles: Section Designer, Section Instructor, Teaching Assistant, Student, and Auditor.

Depending on the design of your course, groups may have been created for you or you can create groups yourself. There are three options for creating groups in *Group Manager*:

1. Create custom group
2. Create multiple groups
3. Create groups with sign-up sheets

The following table describes each option:

Option	Description
Create custom group	Creates one group in which you select the members to add
Create multiple groups	Either: • creates one or more empty groups to which you add members later • creates one or more full groups in which Students are randomly distributed
Create groups with sign-up sheets	Creates one or more empty groups that Students sign up for by using a sign-up sheet that they access from the *Course Content* tool.

After the groups are created, you can do the following:

- In *Group Manager*, you can:
  - add and remove group members.

  - create discussion topics for groups, in which group members can read and post messages.
  - create chat or whiteboard rooms for groups, in which group members can communicate in real time.
  - send mail messages to all members of one or more groups.
  - edit group settings, such as group name and description.
  - edit sign-up sheet settings, such as sign-up sheet title, instructions, and location.
  - delete groups.
- In *Assignments*, you can:
  - create assignments that can be assigned to groups, allowing Students to work collaboratively.
  - create assignments that Students work on individually but for which you provide additional instructions to groups of Students.
- In *Selective Release*, you can set selective release criteria based on membership within a group.

Working with Groups

For Section Instructors

You can:

- create custom groups.
- create multiple groups.
- create groups with sign-up sheets.
- create discussion topics for groups.
- create chat or whiteboard rooms for groups.
- send mail messages to groups.
- edit group settings.
- edit sign-up sheet settings.
- delete groups.

Creating Custom Groups

When you create a custom group, you can select members for the group.

NOTE: The same member can be added to multiple groups.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, click **Create Groups**.
2. Select *Create custom group* and click **Continue**.
3. In the *Group name* text box, enter a name.
4. In the *Group description* text box, enter a description.
5. Under *Membership Information*, click **Add Members**.
6. Do one of the following:
   - To add one or multiple members, select each member and click **Add Selected**.
   - To add all members, click **Add All**.

   The members are added.
7. If you want to save the group and create another group, do the following:
8. Click **Save**.

Creating Multiple Groups

When you create multiple groups, you can choose to:

- create empty groups in which you can add members later.
- create full groups in which Students and Auditors who are currently enrolled in your course are randomly distributed. Group size and selection are based on whether you specify the number of members that you want in each group or specify the number of groups you want created.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, click **Create Groups**.
2. Select *Create multiple groups* and click **Continue**.
3. Under *Group Information*, in the *Word or phrase all group names start with* text box, enter the unique word or phrase with which you want the group names to begin.

   EXAMPLE: If you enter the phrase `History Assignment Group`, the group names will be *History Assignment Group 1*, *History Assignment Group 2*, and so forth.
4. If you want to, in the *Default description* text box, enter a default description for the groups. Later, you can add or edit the description for each group.
5. Under *How Should the Groups Be Created?*, specify how you want to create the groups:
   - To create empty groups and add section members later:
     a. Select *Create empty groups, and add members later*.
     b. In the *Number of groups* text box, enter the number of groups you want to create.

- To create full groups in which Students and Auditors who are currently enrolled in your course are randomly distributed:
  a. Select *Create full groups, and randomly distribute Students*.
  b. If you want to include the demo student in one of the groups, under the *Students*, select *Include the demo student in one of the groups*. If you select this option, from the *Student View* tab, you will be able to view assignments that are assigned to groups in which the demo student is a member. This gives you the opportunity to test the appearance and usability of group assignments.
  c. Under *Set Up Groups*, specify how you want to set up the groups:
     - To randomly distribute the members by the number of groups, select *By number of groups* and, in the text box, enter the number of groups you want to create.
     - To assign a specific number of members to each group, select *By number of Students per group* and, in the text box, enter the number of Students and Auditors you want in each group.
  d. Under *What Should Be Done with Any Extra Members*, select whether extra Students and Auditors should be randomly distributed among the groups, put in their own group, or left to be manually added to groups later.

6. Click **Continue**.
7. If you want to, edit the group names and descriptions.
8. If you created full groups and you want to move group members between the groups, click **Shuffle Members**.
9. Click **Save**. If a group contains more than 10 members, to view all group members, click **View All Members**.

Creating Groups with Sign-Up Sheets

You can create one or more empty groups that Students can join by using a sign-up sheet. This allows Students to choose the group that they want to join. Students can sign up for only one group.

Section Instructors and Teaching Assistants can also use the sign-up sheets to add Students to groups.

After Students sign up for a group, they cannot remove themselves from the group. Only Section Instructors and Teaching Assistants can remove Students from groups.

IMPORTANT: You will not be able to see that Students have signed up for a group without logging out and logging back in to the Blackboard Learning System.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, click **Create Groups**.
2. Select *Create groups with sign-up sheets* and click **Continue**.
3. Under *Group Settings*, in the *Number of groups* text box, enter the number. This is the number of

groups that will appear on the sign-up sheet.

4. In the *Word or phrase all group names start with* text box, enter the word or phrase.

   EXAMPLE: If you enter the phrase `History Assignment Group`, the group names will be *History Assignment Group 1*, *History Assignment Group 2*, and so on.

5. In the *Default description*, enter a description. Later, you will be able to add or edit the description for each group.
6. In the *Maximum Students per group* text box, enter the number.
7. If you want Students who have not yet signed up for a group to see the names of group members on the sign-up sheet, select *Allow Students who have not yet joined a group to see the names of group members on the sign-up sheet*.
8. Under *Sign-Up Sheet Settings*, in the *Sign-up sheet title* text box, enter a title. The title will appear as a link to the sign-up sheet.
9. In the *Sign-up sheet instructions* text box, enter the instructions for Students.
10. From the *Place the sign-up sheet link on* drop-down list, select the location where you want the link to appear.
11. Click **Continue**.
12. Click **Save**.

Creating Discussion Topics for Groups

You can create threaded discussion topics for groups in which group members can participate in asynchronous communication. A threaded discussion topic is a structured discussion in which users post and reply to messages. Replies associated with the same post are grouped together, creating message threads that can be expanded and collapsed.

EXAMPLE: If you create a group assignment, you can create a discussion topic for the group in which group members can read and post messages, such as questions and ideas about the assignment.

You can create a discussion topic for one group or create multiple discussion topics at once, one for each group that you select. You can also choose to grade members on their participation in the discussion groups.

IMPORTANT: For group members to have access to a topic created for groups, *Discussions* must be added to the course menu, or the topic must be added to the *Course Content* tool.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, do one of the following:
   - To create a topic for one group or for each of multiple groups, next to each group for which you want to create a topic, select the check box.

- To create topics for all groups, in the table heading row, select the check box. All groups are selected.

2. From the *Create Group Activity* drop-down list, select *Discussion topic* and click the *Go* icon.
3. Enter a title. If you are creating topics for multiple groups, the title will be added to the group's name.

   EXAMPLE: If you are creating topics for groups named *Assignment Group 1* and *Assignment Group 2* and you enter the title, `American Poets`, the topics will be titled *American Poets - Assignment Group 1* and *American Poets - Assignment Group 2*.

4. Enter a description:
   - To enter a description in Plain Text format, enter it in the *Description* text box.
   - To enter a description in HTML format, you can use the *HTML Creator* or hand code the HTML:
     - To use the *HTML Creator*, click **Enable HTML Creator**. For more information, see *Using the HTML Creator*.

       NOTE: Depending on administrator settings, the *HTML Creator* may not be available.

     - To hand code the HTML:
       a. Select *Use HTML*.
       b. In the *Description* text box, enter the HTML code.
5. Under *Category*, if you want to add the topic to a category, do one of the following from the *Select Category* drop-down list:
   - To add the topic to an existing category, select the category.
   - To create a category:
     a. Select *Create New Category*.
     b. Enter a name and description.
6. Under *Grading*, select whether you want Students to receive a grade based on their participation in the topic:
   - If you do not want the topic to be gradable, select *Topic is not gradable*.
   - If you want the topic to be gradable, under *Allow the topic to be graded*:
     a. Select a grading scheme:

       NOTE: You can only change your original grading selection from alphanumeric to numeric, from numeric to alphanumeric, and from one grading form to a different grading form.

       - To assign a numeric grade, select *Numeric grade* and, in the *Out of* text box enter the maximum grade that can be attained.

- To assign a letter grade, select *Alphanumeric grade*.
- To grade the topic using a grading form:
  i. If you need to remove a grading form that is currently selected, click the *Remove* icon next to the form's title.
  ii. Select *Grade by grading form* and then click **Select Grading Form**.
  iii. Select the form.

  TIP: To see the content of the grading form, click its title.

  iv. Click **Select**.

b. If you want the *Grade Book* column for this topic to have a name other than the topic title, enter the name in the *Grade Book column title* text box.

c. If you want Students to see their grades for this topic in *My Grades*, select *Release grade to Students in My Grades*.

7. Under *Goals*, if you want to associate a goal with this topic:

NOTE: Goals are available only to designer roles.

a. Click **Select Goals**.

b. Select the items and click **Add Selected**.

8. Under *Group Work*, if you want to remove one of the groups for which you are creating this discussion topic, next to the group name, select the *Remove* icon.

9. Next to *Topic Behavior Options*, click the *Expand/Collapse* icon to set *Student Posting Rules* for the topic:

NOTE: These options do not apply to journal topics.

- If you want to allow Students to contribute to a topic:

  a. Select one of the following:
     - *Students can post messages and reply to messages.*
     - *Students can post messages but cannot reply to messages.*
     - *Students can reply to messages but cannot post messages.*

  b. To allow Students to edit their messages, select *Students can edit their messages after posting them*.

- If you want to allow Students to read messages but prevent them from contributing to a topic, select *Lock this topic for Students*. Section Instructors and Teaching Assistants can post messages to a locked topic.

TIP: If you want to make a topic available to a group of students or on specific dates only, apply selective release criteria to the topic. For more information, see *Adding Date Criteria to Items* or *Adding Group Criteria to Items*.

10. Under *Author Identification*, specify whether Students' names should display with their messages:
    - For user names to display, select *Authors are identified by user names*.
    - For postings to remain anonymous, select *Authors are anonymous to Students*.

    NOTE: Author names display to Section Instructors and Teaching Assistants.

11. Under *Artifact Creation for Portfolios*, you can allow Students to save their discussion messages for use in their portfolios.

    NOTE: Depending on settings, this function may not be available.

12. Click **Save**.

Creating Chat or Whiteboard Rooms for Groups

To make it easy for groups to collaborate online, you can create chat rooms, whiteboard rooms, or combined chat and whiteboard rooms for groups.

Group members can use chat rooms to engage in real-time conversations with other group members.

EXAMPLE: Study groups can use chat rooms to communicate in real-time about exams for which they are studying.

Group members can use whiteboard rooms to draw objects, insert text, import images, and create slide shows that can be viewed by other group members.

EXAMPLE: Students working on a group project can use a whiteboard room to plan the project and share project ideas.

You can:

- create one chat or whiteboard room for one group.
- create one chat or whiteboard room for multiple groups.
- at one time, create multiple chat or whiteboard rooms, one for each group that you select.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, do one of the following:
    - To create chat or whiteboard rooms for one or multiple groups, select each group.
    - To create chat or whiteboard rooms for all groups, in the table heading row, select the check box. All groups are selected.
2. From the *Create Group Activity* drop-down list, select *Chat/whiteboard room* and click the *Go* icon.

The *Create Chat or Whiteboard Room* screen appears. If you are creating a chat or whiteboard room for only one group, the *Name* text box contains the group's name.

3. In the *Name* text box, enter or edit the name for the room. If you selected more than one group and are creating a room for each group, the name that you enter will be appended with the group's name.

   EXAMPLE: If you are creating rooms for groups named *History Assignment Group 1* and *History Assignment Group 2* and you enter the name `Chat Room`, the rooms will be named *Chat Room - History Assignment Group 1* and *Chat Room - History Assignment Group 2*.

4. In the *Description* text box, enter a description for the room.
5. For *Type*, select whether the room will be *Chat and Whiteboard*, *Chat only*, or *Whiteboard only*.
6. In the *Maximum users* text box, enter the maximum number of group members allowed in the room at once.
7. Under *Group Work*, the groups that you selected in step one above are listed. If you selected more than one group, do one of the following:
   - If you want to create one room for each of the groups that you selected, select *Create a room for each of the following groups*.
   - If you want to create one room for all of the groups that you selected, select *Create one room for the following groups*.

   TIP: If you decide that you do not want to create a room for one of the groups that you selected, next to the group's name, click it's *Remove* icon. The screen updates and the group is removed.

8. If you want to further modify the room settings, next to *More Options*, click the *Expand* icon.
9. Specify the following room settings:

   NOTE: Some of this functionality may not be available.

   a. For combined rooms, if you want to allow members to hide *Chat* or *Whiteboard* so that only the other displays, select *Allow user to hide or show Chat or Whiteboard in a combined room*.
   b. If you want to allow members to send private *Chat* messages, select *Allow private Chat messages*.
   c. To maintain a *Chat* room log, select *Maintain Chat room log*.
   d. To allow members to identify themselves in the room using an alias, select *Allow alias*.

10. Click **Save**.

    IMPORTANT: For group members to have access to a room created for a group, you must add *Chat* to *Course Tools* or add a content link to the room in the *Course Content* tool.

Sending Mail Messages to Groups

IMPORTANT: You can send mail messages to groups only if the *Mail* tool has been added to *Course Tools*.

From *Group Manager*, you can send mail messages to all members of one or multiple groups.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, do one of the following:
   - To send a message to one group:
     a. Locate the group to which you want to send a message and, under *Group Name*, click its *ActionLinks* icon.
     b. Click **Send Mail**.
   - To send a message to multiple groups, select each group and click **Send Mail**.
   - To send a message to all groups:
     a. In the table heading row, select the check box.
     b. Click **Send Mail**.
2. If you want to add recipients, in the *To*, *CC*, or *BCC* text box, do one of the following:
   - To enter recipients manually, enter each recipient. Use semicolons to separate multiple recipients.
   - To browse for recipients:
     a. Click **Browse for Recipients**.
     b. If you want to send one or more recipients the message, locate the recipients and, under *To*, select the recipients.
     c. If you want to send one or more recipients a copy of the message, locate the recipients and, under *CC*, select the recipients.
     d. If you want to send one or more recipients a copy of the message but want to hide them from other recipients, locate the recipients and, under *BCC*, select the recipients.
     e. Click **Save**.
3. Enter a subject for your message.
4. If you want to mark your message as high priority, select *High priority*.
5. Enter the content of the message:
   - To create the message in Plain Text format, in the *Message* text box:
     a. Enter the message text. The message will appear exactly as you have typed it.
   - To create the message in HTML format you can use the *HTML Creator* or hand code the HTML:
     - To use the *HTML Creator*, click **Enable HTML Creator**. For more information, see *Using the HTML Creator*.

       NOTE: Depending on administrator settings, the *HTML Creator* may not be available.

- To hand code the HTML:
  a. Select *Use HTML*.
  b. In the *Message* text box, enter the HTML code.

6. If you want, insert an equation into your message. For more information, see *Creating and Inserting Equations*.
7. If you want to attach files to your message:
   a. Click **Add Attachments**. The *Content Browser* pop-up window appears
   b. Locate and select the files you want to attach. For more information, see *Navigating with Content Browser*.:
8. If you want to view the message as it will appear to the recipient, click **Preview**.

   WARNING: Clicking **Cancel** will delete the message you are creating.

9. Click **Send**.

Editing Group Settings

You can edit a group's name and description, and add or remove section members from the group. For groups with sign-up sheets, you can also edit the maximum number of Students allowed in each group and whether the sign-up sheet displays the names of group members.

NOTE: The same section member can be added to multiple groups.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, locate the group and click its *ActionLinks* icon.
2. Click **Edit Group**.
3. Modify the group settings:
   a. In the *Group name* text box, edit the name.
   b. In the *Group description* text box, add or edit the description.
4. If you want to add members to the group, do the following:
   a. Under *Membership Information*, click **Add Members**.
   b. If the section contains many members and you want to search for specific section members, see *Finding Members to Add to Groups*.
   c. Do one of the following:
      - To add one or multiple members, select each member and click **Add Selected**.
      - To add all members, click **Add All**.

5. If you want to remove members from the group, do the following:
   a. Under *Membership Information*, do one of the following:
      - To remove one or multiple members from the group, select each member.
      - To remove all members from the group, in the table heading row, select the check box.
   b. Click **Remove Selected**.
6. Cllick **Save**.

Editing Sign-Up Sheet Settings

You can edit the title, instructions, and location of sign-up sheets. You can also create additional groups that Students can sign up for on the sign-up sheet.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, under *Group Name*, locate the group with the sign-up sheet you want to edit and click its *ActionLinks* icon.
2. Click **Edit Sign-Up Sheet**.
3. Under *Basic Settings*, edit the sign-up sheet settings:
   a. In the *Sign-up sheet title* text box, edit the sign-up sheet title.
   b. In the *Sign-up sheet instructions* text box, add or edit the sign-up sheet instructions.
   c. From the *Place the sign-up sheet link on* drop-down list, edit the location on which to place the link to the sign-up sheet.
4. If you want to create additional groups that Students can sign up for on the sign-up sheet, do the following:
   a. Under *Groups*, click **Create Additional Groups**.
   b. In the *Number of additional groups* text box, enter the number of additional groups you want to create.
   c. In the *Word or phrase all group names start with* text box, enter the unique word or phrase with which you want the group names to begin.

      EXAMPLE: If you enter the phrase `History Assignment Group`, the group names will be *History Assignment Group 1*, *History Assignment Group 2*, and so forth.

   d. If you want to, in the *Default description* text box, enter a default description for the groups. Later, you will be able to add or edit the description for each group.
   e. In the *Maximum Students per group* text box, enter the maximum number of Students allowed in each group.
   f. If you want to allow Students who have not yet signed up for a group to see the names of group members on the sign-up sheet, select *Allow Students who have not yet joined a group to see the*

names of group members on the sign-up sheet.

g. Click **Continue**.

h. If you want to, edit the group names, descriptions, and maximum number of Students allowed in each additional group.

i. Click **Save**.

5. Click **Save**.

Deleting Groups

You can delete items using the **Delete** button or the *ActionLinks* icon. If a **Delete** button is available on the screen, you can use it to delete one item, several items, or all items at the same time. If a **Delete** button is not available, you can use the *ActionLinks* icon to delete one item at a time.

IMPORTANT:

- In the *Announcements* tool, designers and instructors cannot delete announcements that have been sent.
- In the *Assessments* tool, if you delete a quiz, survey, or self test, Student submissions for that assessment are also deleted.
- In the *Chat* tool, you can delete the default *Common Room* only if another room has been created.
- In the *Course Content* tool, you can delete several or all items from the *Power View*. For more information, see *using the Basic View or Power View*.
- In the *Media Library* tool:
  - designers can delete any entry.
  - users other than designer can delete only their own entries.
- In the *Web Links* tool, Students can delete only their own web links.

- Using the **Delete** button to delete one item or several items:
  1. Select the items and click **Delete**.
  2. Click **OK**.
- Using the **Delete** button to delete all items on the current page:
  1. Select the check box next to *Title*. All items on the current page are selected.
  2. Click **Delete**.
  3. Click **OK**.
  4. If there are items on additional pages and you want to delete them, repeat steps 1 through 3.

- Using the *ActionLinks* icon to delete one item at a time:
  1. Locate the item and click its *ActionLinks* icon.
  2. Click **Delete**.
  3. Click **OK**.

Managing Group Members

For Section Instructors

You can:

- add members to groups.
- remove members from groups.

Adding Members to Groups

You can add existing section members to any existing group.

NOTE: The same section member can be added to multiple groups.

1. From the *Group Manager* screen, locate the group and click its *ActionLinks* icon.
2. Click **Edit Group**.
3. Under *Membership Information*, click **Add Members**.
4. If the section contains many members and you want to search for specific section members, see *Finding Members to Add to Groups*.
5. Do one of the following:
   - To add one or multiple section members, select each member and click **Add Selected**.
   - To add all section members, click **Add All**.
6. Click **Save**.

Removing Members from Groups

When you remove members from a group, they remain enrolled in the course and in *Grade Book*.

After Students and Auditors are removed from a group, they can no longer access the following:

- any discussion topics created for that group
- any chat or whiteboard rooms created for that group

IMPORTANT: If you remove Students from a group for a collaborative assignment and the assignment has not been submitted, the Students will no longer have access to the assignment.

From the *Group Manager* screen, do one of the following:

- To remove selected members from a group:
  a. Under *Group Name*, locate the group and click its *ActionLinks* icon.
  b. Click **Edit Group**.
  c. Under *Membership Information*, select each member and click **Remove Selected**.
  d. Click **Save**.
- To remove all members from a group:
  a. Do one of the following:
     - To remove members from one or multiple groups, select the groups.
     - To remove members from all groups, in the table heading row, select the check box.
  b. Click **Remove All Members**.
  c. Click **OK**.
  d. Click **Continue**.