

CIE DigiGuide: How to create groups in Canvas

This guide offers a step-by-step overview of creating groups in Canvas, it does so by mainly curating relevant Canvas instructor guidance pages.

A bit of Canvas terminology

Canvas has two types of groups:

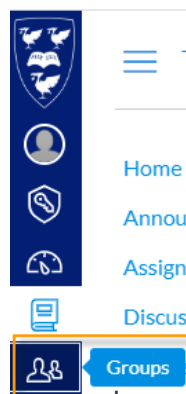
- **Group set:** a shell or container that contains groups which can be used for graded assessments; can be set up automatically or manually. *E.g. a group set called 'Project group' can be created indicating 100 groups, and Canvas will create these 100 groups numbered them as 'Project group 1, Project Group 2, etc.'* A student can only belong to one group within a group set.
- **Student groups:** groups which are self-organised by students and **cannot** be used for graded assignments. Can be created by students or tutors. Unlike other types of groups, students can belong to more than one of these groups at a time.

Other terms:

- **Group** (within a group set): a group of students who can be assigned to a group randomly or manually by the tutor, or via self sign-up.
- **Canvas course:** we will use the term 'course' to refer to your semester-long teaching unit (e.g. MODU101 module) in order to differentiate it from a *Canvas module*, which refers to a container for course content in Canvas.

Key features

- Canvas creates a group space with various tools for each group.
- You need to create a Group Set first which will contain your groups. Groups can then be created at the same time within a Group Set or at a later stage.
- Group spaces are accessible via the **People** pages of your Canvas area or via the left Canvas menu (people icon > **Groups**).




- Groups can be assigned student leaders, randomly or set as the first person who joins the group.
- If using self sign-up, students can move themselves from one group to another.
- Students can create their own student groups, if enabled in the Canvas course. Only use this if the group work is not used for assessment.

How to set up groups in Canvas

What you need to know before setting up your groups:

- How many groups do you need? (You can also create them later, if you are not sure.)
- Have you got your students already enrolled in the Canvas course? (Though you can amend group membership later also.)
- Do you want group membership to be allocated randomly, manually by you, or as self sign-up by students?
- Do you want one student to be nominated as a leader of the group?

1. First, you need to create a **Group Set** to house your group or groups.
2. Login to **Canvas** and your course (e.g. MODU101).
3. Click on **People** in your left menu.
4. Click on **Group set** (top right) to create your Group set.



5. Follow the Canvas guide on [Adding a group set](#).

Note: if you want to create a Group set for students to sign-up to groups themselves, you need to do this within this step. In this case, follow this guidance on [creating a self sign-up group set](#).

6. Next, you will need to **add groups** (+Group icon) within your group set, so choose between:
 - [Creating group spaces automatically within a group set](#) (useful for large number of groups at the same time);
 - [Creating group spaces manually within a group set](#) (e.g. for few or small number of groups).
7. Once you have your groups ready, you need to **add students to groups as members**, so choose between:
 - [Randomly/automatically assign students to groups](#) (if groups already exist);
 - Tutor [manually assigns students to groups](#) (with drag-and-drop);
 - Students [self sign-up to groups](#) – see step 5 above.

FAQs

How / where do I check student activity and content in their groups?

You can check what groups are doing or have done by going to their group space and checking out [student activity or content produced within a group](#). You can also participate to your groups' activities.

Where can my students see their groups / group spaces?

Students have two ways of getting to their group space:

- From within their relevant Canvas course (e.g. MODU101): [view groups as a student](#).
- Directly from the Canvas menu, [viewing all groups on all of their Canvas courses](#).

How /where can I check my groups and membership in my module?

You can [check all your groups and their membership](#) in your Canvas course.

My student reports that they cannot see or access their group

Advice may be dependent if this is a tutor-created manually assigned group, or a self sign-up group or a student group (a student-managed group).

- First, it may be worth checking that group membership is set up correctly and the student is member of the group they want to access.
- You can also refer the students to [Canvas guidance to students on Groups](#), which includes topics such as viewing, joining, leaving groups, uploading files, collaborations etc.

How can I assign a student leader of a group?

Having a student leader is able to change the title of the group or manage members of the group. Follow these instructions on [assigning a student leader](#).

How can I move a student to another group?

Follow the Canvas guidance on [moving students between groups](#).

Important! If you are planning to set a group assignment, only publish the assignment once your groups and their members are finalised. Grades and submissions may be affected for students who were not in a group at the time of assignment submission, but who were later added to a group. Please check the Canvas page for more information on this.

How can I stop students switch groups (with self-signup groups)?

When self-signup is enabled for a group, students are able to switch groups. See guidance on [disabling and preventing students from switching self sign-up groups](#) which can be done at any point.

Can students set up their own groups?

Yes, this is possible. Use this option for setting up what Canvas calls 'student groups' (students setting up their own groups), if you are not then planning to use these groups/members for setting graded assessment tasks. Follow Canvas guidance on [enabling students to set up their own student groups](#) in a Canvas course. Then ask your students to consult the [student guidance on setting up a group](#).

If you **do want** to use groups for assessment tasks, then [set up groups within group sets enabling self sign-up by students](#).

Can I batch allocate students to groups (e.g. uploading spreadsheet)?

This is not available, however, staff have found the group application in Canvas easy to do.



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