

# COURSELINK BASICS: COLLABORATION

Exploring the Discussions and Groups Tools

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

While we are coming together today in a virtual space, it is important to recognize the physical space that connects us and brings us together. The University of Guelph and its campuses are situated on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We understand that these lands are connected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum and continue to be home to diverse communities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. By acknowledging the land, we reaffirm our commitment to decolonization and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and our responsibility to the land on which we live, learn, and play.

# AGENDA

## **Basics, features & limitations, as well as common uses of:**

- Discussions
- Groups

## **Demos of each tool, including:**

- Where to find them
- How to use them
- Tips and tricks along the way

## **Wrap Up**

- Where to find support
- Question & Answer Period

# COLLABORATION TOOLS

## *Discussions & Groups*

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# WHY DOES THE COLLABORATION SESSION FOCUS ON THESE 2 TOOLS?

More so than any other tool, the Groups tool is most frequently associated with the Discussions tool

- In larger classes, online discussions can quickly become unmanageable for instructors (derailed/unfocused discussions, too many posts, difficult to assess, etc.)
- They can also be intimidating for some students (200+ peers will see their posts), or dominated by only a few voices and ideas from a small number of students
- Leveraging the Groups tool to create group-restricted discussion topics can alleviate many of these issues

# DISCUSSIONS

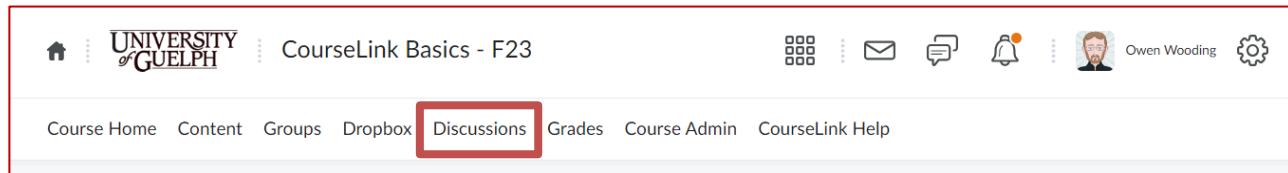
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## DISCUSSIONS: BASICS


- The Discussions tool is one of the default tools that appears as a link on every course site's navigation bar



- Discussions use a hierarchical structure of:
  - ❑ **Forum** (container for topics)
    - **Topic** (place to post)
      - **Thread** (user-created post)
        - **Reply** (user-created response to a post)


# DISCUSSIONS: BASICS


Forum Example ▾

Topic	Threads	Posts	Last Post
<b>Topic Example</b> ▾	1	2	 ITS Demo Instructor 3 minutes ago

← **FORUM**

← **TOPIC**




 **New Thread Example** ▾  
ITS Demo Student posted Sep 18, 2023 11:46 AM • 9 Words [Subscribe](#)

← **THREAD**

This is a new thread created by a user.

[Reply to Thread](#)

Filter by: [All Posts](#) ▾ | [Clear filters](#) Show: [Threaded](#) ▾

 **ITS Demo Instructor** ▾  
just now • 38 Words

← **REPLY**

This is a reply to a thread created by another user.

<<< Replied to post below >>>  
Authored by: ITS Demo Student  
Authored on: Sep 18, 2023 11:46 AM  
Subject: New Thread Example

This is a new thread created by a user.

[Reply](#)



## DISCUSSIONS:

# FEATURES AND LIMITATIONS

- Allows asynchronous communication between students & their peers as well as students & instructors
- Topics can be restricted to specific groups or sections (Group 1 members only sees posts & replies from Group 1)
- Topics can be set to allow posts - as of, until, or between specific dates and times (E.g., must post by Mon. @ 5pm)
- Advanced features can: Allow anonymous posts, require moderation, or require a student make a post before reading other posts
- Rating systems can be enabled (5-star, up vote, etc.)
- Topics can be associated with grade items for assessment
- For group-restricted discussions, students typically lose access to their previous posts if/when moved to a new group

## DISCUSSIONS: COMMON USES

- A space for students to pose questions to the instructor (or instructional team)
- A space for continuing class discussions (post seminar/post lecture)
- Creating opportunities to engage with students that may not be as likely to participate during in-person classes
  - Allowing anonymous posts
  - Using small group discussions
- Low stakes discussion assignments
  - Leveraging topic assessment & submission end date
- A dedicated space for your students to get to know each other, form study groups, etc.

# DEMO: DISCUSSIONS TOOL

- **Creating a Discussion Forum and Topic**
  - Settings for forums and how they impact topics
  - Availability dates
  - Groups/section restrictions
  - Posting options (anonymous, must post first, moderation)
  - Setting the topic as graded and evaluation options
- **Creating and Reading Discussion Posts**
  - Starting a new thread, reading a thread, replying, pinning
  - Using filters (groups)
  - Accessing statistics
- **Assessing Discussion Topics**
  - How to access the assessment interface
  - Assessing with a rubric
  - Adding overall feedback
  - Publish vs. Save Draft

# GROUPS

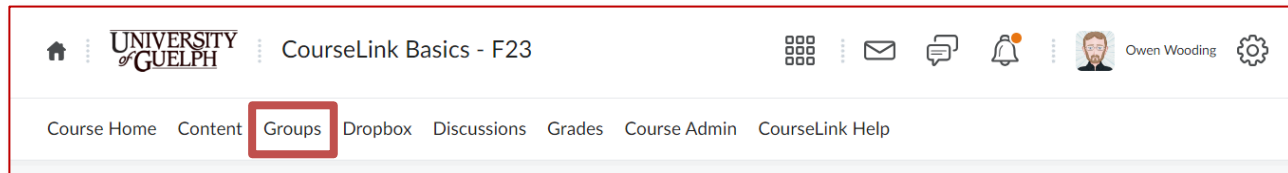
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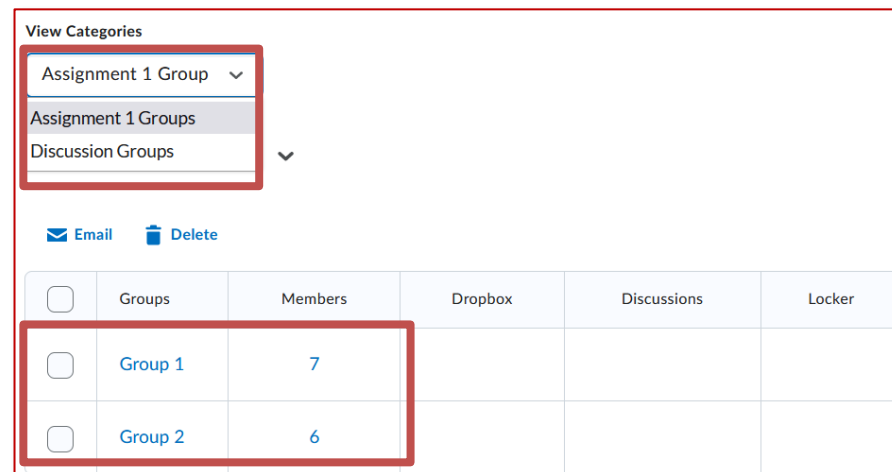
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# GROUPS: BASICS

- The Groups tool appears as a link on every course site's default navigation bar



- The Groups tool allows the creation of Group Categories & corresponding groups, but will only display one category



## GROUPS:

# FEATURES AND LIMITATIONS

- Groups can be associated with:
  - **Discussion Topics** - for more manageable communications between students
  - **Dropbox Folders** - for the submission and assessment of group assignments
- Groups can be populated manually, automatically, or can be set to allow students to self-enroll (7 category types!)
- Groups can also be leveraged to restrict access to content items via release conditions
- Groups often won't carry over to third-party integrations like Gradescope or Video Assignments
- Manual group management can be time-consuming
- Getting complete group enrollment data for a category or multiple categories from the Groups tool is difficult

## **GROUPS:**

# **COMMON USES**

- **Group-Restricted Discussion Topics**
  - Can be used in any type of discussion activity
  - Very beneficial for assessed discussions
- **Group Projects**
  - Create a space for student groups to submit their assignment with a group-restricted dropbox folder
  - Create a space for students working together on group assignments to communicate asynchronously online
- **Sign-Up Sheets**
  - Use self-enrolment groups for students to sign up for paper topics, presentation times, etc.
  - Use the capacity of number option to limit availability
  - Use the expiration date and auto-enrol option to auto-assign students who do not select by a specific date

# DEMO: GROUPS TOOL

- **Creating a “# of Groups” Group Category**
  - Exploring advanced properties options:
    - Auto-Enrol New Users, Randomize, Description Visibility
  - Create corresponding group-restricted discussion topics
- **Create a “# of Groups, Capacity of # - Self Enrolment” Group Category**
  - How to set the # of Users and # of Groups
  - Exploring advanced properties options:
    - Start Date, End Date, Allocate Unenrolled Users
  - Create a corresponding group-restricted dropbox folders
  - How students enrol in a group
- **Managing Groups**
  - Renaming groups
  - Moving students between groups



# SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

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# SUPPORT & RESOURCES

## OpenEd Documentation & Support Site:

- Discussions Tool  
<https://support.opened.uoguelph.ca/instructors/courselink/tools/content/discussions>
- Groups Tool  
<https://support.opened.uoguelph.ca/instructors/courselink/tools/content/groups>

## CourseLink Support

- Email: [courselink@uoguelph.ca](mailto:courselink@uoguelph.ca)
- Phone: x.56939

## Instructional Technology Specialist (ITS) Team

- Request a consultation: <https://bit.ly/UG-ITS-Consult>
- Email: [insttech@uoguelph.ca](mailto:insttech@uoguelph.ca)

# RELATED PROGRAMMING:

## CourseLink Basics Series (final session)

- Sep. 26 – Grading (Rubrics, Grades, Final Grades)  
<https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/fall-2023-programming#Grading>

## Previous Related Sessions (with recordings):

- CourseLink Tool Spotlight: New Discussion Creation Experience  
<https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/summer-2023-programming#Spotlight>
- Get a Grip on Groups - Exploring the CourseLink Groups Tools & How it Works with Other Tools  
<https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/instructional-technology-webinar-series#Grip>

## Online Drop-In Support for Teaching and Learning Technology

<https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/fall-2023-programming#TLTTechnology>

- 2–3:30 pm on Sep. 27, Oct. 25, & Nov. 29 (last Wednesday each month) – No registration required!