Using the "Groups" Feature in Blackboard

The "Groups" feature in Blackboard allows instructors to set up groups of students and to provide electronic communication tools for each group to use while collaborating on projects.

Another use of groups: Some instructors maintain a single Blackboard site for multiple sections of a course and use the "groups" feature to divide the "class" into sections. This way, they have one Blackboard site to maintain (where they post course documents for all sections) but can have separate discussion boards for each course section.

How do instructors set up groups in Blackboard?

Setting up groups in Blackboard is easy. Just follow these 3 basic steps:

1. Create a group
   - Go to Control Panel > Manage Groups (in upper right area)
   - Click on "Add Group"
   - Give the group a name. (Description is optional; can leave blank.)
   - Scroll down and check the "Group Options" (i.e. tools) you want to provide for the group:
        - ❑ Discussion Board
        - ❑ Virtual Classroom (real-time chat room)
        - ❑ File Exchange (space for group members to post & share documents)
        - ❑ Group Email
   - Click SUBMIT to create the group

2. Add students to the group
   - After creating a group, click "Modify" beside the group name, then click "Add Users to Group"
   - Click the SEARCH button to list all students in your course (25 per page)
   - Select the students you want to add to the group by clicking the check boxes to the left of students' names.
   - Click SUBMIT to add the students to the group.
   - Note: You do not have to add yourself to the group. Instructors automatically have access to all groups.

3. Create a discussion forum for the group
   - The instructor must create a discussion forum for each group.
   - Go to the "front end" of your course (what students see)
   - Click on "Communication" button, then on "Group Pages"
   - Click on "Group Discussion Board"
   - Click "Add new forum" and enter name, description, and select options, then click SUBMIT.

   Repeat the above steps to set up additional groups.

How do students access their group's discussion forum?

To access their group's discussion forum, students click "Communication" from the main course menu, then click "Group Pages". A list of groups will be displayed.

The title of the group to which the student belongs will be a clickable link---which the student can click to see the group's discussion forum, a list of people in the group, as well as any other tools the instructor made available to the group in Step 1 above. (Students can't access groups to which they haven't been assigned.)

How can I make a link on my main menu to the "Groups" area?

The instructor can make a link on the main course menu to take students directly to the groups area. To do this:

1. Go to Control Panel > Manage Course Menu (lower left area)

2. In the "Add" tool bar at the top, click "Tool Link".

3. In the drop-down menu beside "Type", select "Groups"

4. You can then select or type in a different name for this menu item (or simply leave the name "Groups" as is)

5. Click SUBMIT to add the new item to your menu. It will appear at the bottom. You can change the order of menu items by adjusting the number beside any item in "Manage Course Menu"