Groups and Discussions
Forums (and other activities) can be set up in Moodle so that participants can only engage in discussion with others who are in the same group as them. This can be useful for example, if you want students to discuss different aspects of an issue (and perhaps later report their findings back to the whole class in a whole-class forum), or if the large number of students in the course makes whole-class discussion unproductive.

Working with groups does require you to be aware of how the different settings work for students. We suggest that you follow the guidelines here, to prevent problems for lecturers and students.

Setting up a Forum for Group discussions
1. **Create Groups**: Follow the instructions in the section of these notes on Creating Groups.
   
   In Moodle it is possible for participants to be in more than one group (i.e. Groups do not need to be mutually exclusive) but we recommend that you gain experience working with one set of groups before you try working with multiple sets. As the Lecturer you should normally be a member of all groups, to ensure that you can participate in all of the discussions.

2. **Create the Forum**: Follow the instructions in the section of these notes on Creating a Forum.
   
   The important change from usual practice is that you will generally choose the Group mode option for Separate groups.

   
   **Common module settings**
   
   - Group mode
   - Visible
   - ID number

   NB: The other option is for “Visible groups” which allows participants to see the discussions of people in other groups but not take part in them – which may lead some students to wait until they can view colleagues’ answers before they submit anything themselves, and may distract.
3. **Present the discussion starter in the Forum Introduction.** This means that all groups will see the same introduction without your needing to retype it for each group.

![Forum Introduction](image)

From your recent practical experiences, I would like each group to discuss what they believe to be the most important factors leading to successful knitting underwater, and why you select these. As a result of the discussion, I would like you to come up with an agreed list of the three most important and justify the choice.

This is a group discussion, so you will only see contributions from members of your group. Somebody in your group will need to begin the discussion by creating a New Discussion.

4. **When you engage with groups select to view each group individually.**

   Do this by selecting the group name from the pull-down menu at the top-left of the window.

   This way you will be clear about which group’s discussion topics you are viewing or even contributing to.

**Important points to note:**

- As the lecturer who is a member of all groups, you can choose to see the discussion postings of all participants at the same time: you will see the list of all discussion topics for all groups and can choose to view the messages in any of them.

![Group Selection](image)

From your recent practical experiences, I would like each group to discuss what they believe to be the most important factors leading to successful knitting underwater, and why you select these. As a result of the discussion, I would like you to come up with an agreed list of the three most important and justify the choice.

This is a group discussion, so you will only see contributions from members of your group. Somebody in your group will need to begin the discussion by creating a New Discussion.
• When you choose to see participants from only one group, you will see only the discussion topics listed for that group. In the screen below only Rimu group discussions are visible (except for the top one – see point below).

From your recent practical experiences I would like each group to discuss what they believe to be the most important factors leading to successful knitting underwater, and why you select these. As a result of the discussion I would like you to come up with an agreed list of the three most important and justify the choice.

This is a group discussion so you will only see contributions from members of your group. Somebody in your group will need to begin the discussion by creating a New Discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Started by</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Replies</th>
<th>Unread</th>
<th>Last post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some further things</td>
<td>Anthony Hunt</td>
<td>Rimu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Thu, 12 Feb 2008, 04:29 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s important</td>
<td>One Student</td>
<td>Rimu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Thu, 12 Feb 2008, 04:39 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing conclusions</td>
<td>Three Student</td>
<td>Rimu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Thu, 12 Feb 2008, 01:45 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• If you create a new topic while “All participants” is selected, everybody will be able to open the discussion and read your starting message, but nobody will be able to reply to it (except you).

The top discussion in the above illustration is like this – it has no group name alongside it, and belongs to no group.

• If you create a new topic while you have selected one group, then only the members of that group can read it and reply to your starting message.

• You can reply to a message in an existing discussion at any time and your reply is visible to only the members of that group.

• Students will only see discussions started by members of their group; they can read and reply to the messages in those discussions.

• Do not create a Single simple discussion type of forum for groups; you will need at least one discussion for each group!