

Comparing group selection approaches

The table below provides you with an overview and comparison of ways to define and select your groups.

| Group type | Example | Pros | Considerations | Technological Tools |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Mixed pairs | Students select a partner to form a pair. Tutor then takes student selected pairs to make larger groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are given autonomy by selecting one member of their group. • Students have at least one supporter or friend in the group, which can ease anxiety and boost confidence. • Tutors can still form larger groups to fit their criteria or to enhance diversity. • Tutor can reduce opportunities for group think. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be beneficial to first year groups where students do not know their peers. • Will require time for students to form their pairs before the tutor can create final groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools such as Moodle's Group Choice activity can assist in forming the initial pairs, which you can then export onto a spreadsheet. • The Course group upload feature allows staff to upload a spreadsheet with the newly formed larger groups into Moodle. |
| Student choice by interest/topic | A selection of topics are provided to students. Students choose a topic to work on and are put in groups based on chosen topic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are given autonomy in their choice. • Student engagement may increase as they can work on a project that is meaningful to them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular topics may fill up and students may feel aggrieved if they do not get their topic. • Depending on topic, it may attract similar students increasing 'group think'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fair Allocation activity in Moodle allows students to rate/rank their preferences in topic options. Using the rankings provided the activity can then fairly allocate students into groups. |
| Student self-selection | Students select all the members of their group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may feel more comfortable with who they work with. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students new to university tend to not favour this option as they do not know their peers. • Students can be left out of groups. • Can create an echo chamber and limit students considering other voices, as they may choose to work with people who think the same as them. • Can lead to a lack of diversity and inclusion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Moodle Forum can be used to help students express interest in finding group members if they are struggling to create a complete group. • The Group Choice activity in Moodle allows them to register their group, saving tutors time from manually inputting group information. |
| Randomised | Done without any order, system or criteria, like a tutor putting names in a hat and pulling out names to form groups. Can be done using online tools and software. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered fair as each student has an equal chance of belonging to any group. • Can mimic team selection in the real world. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randomization can still generate groups lacking diversity. • Students might perceive randomisation as arbitrary, which can lead to student complaints. • May generate unforeseen groupings. • May not address the learning outcomes and the reason for group work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle can Auto-create groups with randomly allocated students. Ensure on the forum under "Group members" that "Randomly" is selected for "Allocate members". |
| Deliberate tutor selection | Tutor creating groups based on certain criteria or characteristics, such as gender, nationality, student interest, student background, performance, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More diverse voices in groups. • Peer to peer learning – groups with mixed abilities may be a benefit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutor will need to take time to gather information before creating groups. • Can lead to student complaints about lack of autonomy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Course group upload feature allows staff to upload a spreadsheet with their well-balanced and diverse groups into Moodle. |