

# 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
<b>Mixed pairs</b>	Students select a partner to form a pair. Tutor then takes student selected pairs to make larger groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are given autonomy by selecting one member of their group.</li> <li>Students have at least one supporter or friend in the group, which can ease anxiety and boost confidence.</li> <li>Tutors can still form larger groups to fit their criteria or to enhance diversity.</li> <li>Tutor can reduce group think by forming the larger group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May not be beneficial to first year groups where students do not know their peers.</li> <li>Will require time for students to form their pairs before the tutor can create final groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools such as Moodle's <a href="#">Group Choice activity</a> can assist in forming the initial pairs, which you can then export onto a spreadsheet.</li> <li>The <a href="#">Course group upload</a> feature allows staff to upload a spreadsheet with the newly formed larger groups into Moodle.</li> </ul>
<b>Student choice by interest/topic</b>	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"> <li>Students are given autonomy in their choice.</li> <li>Student engagement may increase as they can work on a project that is meaningful to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Popular topics may fill up and students may feel aggrieved if they do not get their topic.</li> <li>Depending on topic, it may attract similar students increasing 'group think'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <a href="#">Fair Allocation</a> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Student self-selection</b>	Students select all the members of their group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students may feel more comfortable with who they work with.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students new to university tend to not favour this option as they do not know their peers.</li> <li>Students can be left out of groups.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Can lead to a lack of diversity and inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <a href="#">Moodle Forum</a> can be used to help students express interest in finding group members if they are struggling to create a complete group.</li> <li>The <a href="#">Group Choice</a> activity in Moodle allows them to register their group, saving tutors time from manually inputting group information.</li> </ul>
<b>Randomised</b>	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"> <li>Considered fair as each student has an equal chance of belonging to any group.</li> <li>Can mimic team selection in the real world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Randomization can still generate groups lacking diversity.</li> <li>Students might perceive randomisation as arbitrary, which can lead to student complaints.</li> <li>May generate unforeseen groupings.</li> <li>May not address the learning outcomes and the reason for group work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moodle can <a href="#">Auto-create groups</a> with randomly allocated students. Ensure on the forum under "Group members" that "Randomly" is selected for "Allocate members".</li> </ul>
<b>Deliberate tutor selection</b>	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"> <li>More diverse voices in groups.</li> <li>Peer to peer learning – groups with mixed abilities may be a benefit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutor will need to take time to gather information before creating groups.</li> <li>Can lead to student complaints about lack of autonomy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <a href="#">Course group upload</a> feature allows staff to upload a spreadsheet with their well-balanced and diverse groups into Moodle.</li> <li><a href="#">Moodle Quiz</a> or <a href="#">Moodle Feedback</a> activity (with option to record usernames) can be used to gather information before creating the groups and help tutors mix the abilities of the students.</li> </ul>