

Grouping Sections in Blackboard

Managing Multiple Sections of Your Blackboard Course as One

Overview

For instructors who use Blackboard and teach courses with multiple sections, an option for grouping those course sections and managing them as one course will be available starting **August 17, 2009 at noon**. The option to group sections will be added to the Blackboard course activation/deactivation page in the Homer system at <https://homerconnect.ithaca.edu>. Instructors are advised to carefully consider the impact of grouping before choosing this option for managing their course sections.

Stand Alone Sections

Instructors use the Blackboard Application page in Homer to activate, deactivate, and (now) group their courses in Blackboard each semester. Grouping is optional: instructors who have courses with multiple sections but do not wish to group may set their course sections to "Stand Alone" on the Homer Blackboard Application page. The Stand Alone setting will allow instructors to continue managing these course sections individually.

Stand Alone will be the only activation setting for single course sections (Group A and Group B will be grayed out), and Grouping will be the only activation setting for cross-listed courses (Stand Alone will be grayed out).

Grouping Sections

Before you decide to group, carefully consider the implications of this choice. When you group multiple "child" sections of a course and manage them through one "parent" section, your course content is distributed to all sections at once (all students are listed in the Gradebook of the parent section). If the course content you are distributing is time-dependent, students may be confused by what they see in their individual sections.

For instance, when you distribute an assignment with a particular due date through your parent section, all sections will see the same due date, which may result in confusion if some sections meet on MWF and others meet on TuTh. Blackboard offers tools (such as selective release criteria and student groups) that help you get around these issues, but you will need to set them up and manage them each time you offer your course. Another way to address this issue is to manage your course from two parent sections.

You have the option to group child sections under one (Group A) or two (Group A and Group B) parent sections. Most instructors will choose to group multiple sections of the same course ("child" sections) under one "parent" section (Group A). Some courses have multiple sections that divide well into two groups and are easier to manage from two parent sections (Group A and Group B) instead of one (Group A).

After grouping, instructors will see only the parent section and child sections will be inaccessible. New parent sections will be empty.

Please note: As a special service to instructors who wish to group and have created course content for Fall 2009, child sections will be visible temporarily during the Content Transition Phase. Instructors will be able to copy Fall 2009 course content into their new parent sections only during this week. See the Content Transition Phase topic in this guide for details).

In This Guide

Overview	Page 1
Stand Alone Sections	Page 1
Grouping Sections	Page 1
Content Transition Phase	Page 3
Ungrouping Sections	Page 4
Deactivating Sections	Page 5
Frequently Asked Questions	Page 6
For More Information	Page 6

Quick Guide

Instructions for grouping multiple sections of the same course under one or two parent sections:

1. From your web browser, go to <https://homerconnect.ithaca.edu> and log into Homer with your standard user ID and password. Please note: Macintosh users must use Mozilla Firefox, not Safari, for this page to work correctly.
2. Click the Faculty & Advisors link, then click the Blackboard Application link. From the "Select a Blackboard Term" drop-down menu, choose Fall 2009. Scroll down to see your section activation options.
3. Under Activate as..., go to the Group A column and click the radio buttons in the rows that correspond to each section you want to group under one parent section within one course (see Figure 1: Create One Parent Section, Group A). After you click the radio button for your first section, a warning message will prompt you to select more than one section for your group. Click OK and continue making your selections.

Figure 1: Create One Parent Section, Group A

Course Name		Activate as ...			
		Not Activated	Stand Alone	Group A	Group B
MUTH 12100, Intro to Musical Styles					
Section 01	CRN 20532	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 02	CRN 20533	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 03	CRN 20534	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 04	CRN 20540	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 05	CRN 23455	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you have four sections or more and would like to group sections under a second parent, go to the Group B column and click the radio button in the rows that correspond to each section you want to group under the second parent section within one course (see Figure 2: Create Two Parent Sections, Group A and Group B).

Figure 2: Create Two Parent Sections, Group A and B

Course Name		Activate as ...			
		Not Activated	Stand Alone	Group A	Group B
MUTH 12100, Intro to Musical Styles					
Section 01	CRN 20532	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 02	CRN 20533	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 03	CRN 20534	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 04	CRN 20540	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Section 05	CRN 23455	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

4. Continue selecting the sections you wish to include in your group(s). You may change your section management settings as much as you wish before you click the Update button.

5. When you are satisfied that your settings are correct, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the **Update** button. Your new parent sections will be available the next business day after 9:00 am.

Please note: Choosing the Stand Alone, Group A, or Group B radio buttons for each of your course sections **activates** them and sets their section management options in one step.

6. Log into Blackboard the next day after 9:00 am and manage your course from your new parent section.

Please note: For Fall 2009 only, instructors will not see students listed in parent sections in Blackboard until the afternoon on August 24, 2009.

Content Transition Phase

ITS will provide a special **content transition phase from August 17 to 24, 2009** to give instructors temporary access to move their course content from child to parent sections; this only applies to those who have already added content for Fall 2009 to course sections they wish to group ("child" sections). **Any content left in child sections for Fall 2009 will be inaccessible after 12:00 pm noon on August 24, 2009.** After August 24, 2009, instructors who need to recover content from Fall 2009 child sections will have to contact ITS for assistance. Instructors *will* be able to copy content from previous semesters (e.g., Spring 2009, Fall 2008) into their new parent sections the first time the section is opened.

Follow the instructions under "Grouping Sections" in this guide (above). After you group multiple sections of the same course under one or two parent sections, you will need to wait until after 9:00 am on the next business day to see your new parent section(s). Once you have access to the new parent section(s) for your course, follow the steps below to move your course content from a child section to your new parent section(s).

Instructions for moving course content from a child section to a new parent section:

1. If you aren't sure which sections you grouped, log into Homer to check.

From your web browser, go to <https://homerconnect.ithaca.edu> and log into Homer with your standard user ID and password. Please note: Macintosh users must use Mozilla Firefox, not Safari, for this page to work correctly. Click the Faculty & Advisors link, then click the Blackboard Application link. From the "Select a Blackboard Term" drop-down menu, choose Fall 2009. Scroll down to see your section activation options. Verify which courses you have selected for grouping, and the number of groups you have created. Click Exit in the top right corner of the page when you are done.

2. Log into Blackboard. Review your course list in the center of the page and consider which course section(s) will be the best for copying content from the child to the new parent section. (See Figure 3: Child and Parent Sections in the Blackboard Course List.)

Figure 3: Child and Parent Sections in the Blackboard Course List



3. Click the blue link for your new parent section.
4. On the Assign Course Content page, click the radio button next to "Copy Content from Another Course," then click Continue. (See Figure 4: Assign Course Content.)

Figure 4: Assign Course Content

ITHACA My Blackboard | Accessibility | Help | Log out

09-10 Fall: MUTH 12100 (GRP A PARENT) - 09-10 Fall: MUTH 12100 (GRP A PARENT)

Assign Course Content

09-10 Fall: MUTH 12100 (GRP A PARENT) - 09-10 Fall: MUTH 12100 (GRP A PARENT)

You can assign content to this course from another course or start designing this course without assigning content. Select one of the options below and click Continue.

Set up a blank course
Select this option to start designing this course without assigning content.

Copy content from another course
Select from courses in which you are enrolled as a designer.

Import content from file
Select this option to start importing course content from exported course file.

Continue Cancel

5. Back on your Course List, select the child section from which you would like to copy content into your new parent section. Wait a moment for the content to copy.

6. Open your new parent section to verify that the content from your child section moved successfully.

Note: During the Content Transition Phase, instructors will see students in their child sections, but not in their parent sections. Students will appear in parent sections in Blackboard in the afternoon on August 24, 2009. Course registration will not be affected by these special conditions.

Ungrouping Sections

If you have grouped sections of a course under a parent section, then decide later that you want to ungroup those sections and manage them individually again, you will need to **upgroup** them. Before you ungroup your course sections, it is important to **back up** the associated parent section. Please note: backing up the parent section is only necessary if you have added content to it.

Instructions for **ungrouping** sections that have been grouped:

1. If you have already added content to a parent section, log into Blackboard and back up that section.
2. To back up a section, click on the section from the link in your Blackboard Course List.
3. Under Designer Tools in the panel on the left side of your window, choose Manage Course.
4. Choose the blue Backup link.
5. On the Course Backups page, click the Back Up Course button. Click Okay.
6. Log out of your Blackboard account.
7. From your web browser, go to <https://homerconnect.ithaca.edu> and log into Homer with your standard user ID and password. Please note: Macintosh users must use Mozilla Firefox, not Safari, for this page to work correctly.
8. Click the Faculty & Advisors link, then click the Blackboard Application link. From the "Select a Blackboard Term" drop-down menu, choose Fall 2009. Scroll down to see your section activation options.
9. Under Activate as..., go to the Stand Alone column and click the radio buttons in the rows that correspond to each section you want to ungroup within one course (see Figure 5: Ungrouping by Setting Sections to Stand Alone). After you click the radio button for your first section, a warning message will prompt you to back up your course content. Click OK and continue making your selections.

Figure 5: Ungrouping by Setting Sections to Stand Alone

		Activate as ...			
Course Name		Not Activated	Stand Alone	Group A	Group B
MUTH 12100, Intro to Musical Styles					
Section 01	CRN 20532	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 02	CRN 20533	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 03	CRN 20534	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 04	CRN 20540	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 05	CRN 23455	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. When you are satisfied that your settings are correct, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the **Update** button. Your ungrouped sections will be available the next business day after 9:00 am.

11. Log into Blackboard and begin using the individual, stand alone, ungrouped course sections again.

Deactivating Sections

If you decide not to use Blackboard to manage a course section, you may **deactivate** it. Instructors and students will not see this course sections in Blackboard if they are deactivated, but students will still be able to register for, add, and drop that course section in Homer. Before you deactivate a course section with content or student data, make sure you **back up** that section.

Instructions for **deactivating** a course section:

1. Log into Blackboard and click on the section you wish to deactivate from the link in your Blackboard Course List.
2. Under Designer Tools in the panel on the left side of your window, choose Manage Course.
3. Choose the blue Backup link.
4. On the Course Backups page, click the Back Up Course button. Click Okay.
5. Log out of your Blackboard account.
6. From your web browser, go to <https://homerconnect.ithaca.edu> and log into Homer with your standard user ID and password. Please note: Macintosh users must use Mozilla Firefox, not Safari, for this page to work correctly.
7. Click the Faculty & Advisors link, then click the Blackboard Application link. From the "Select a Blackboard Term" drop-down menu, choose the appropriate term. Scroll down to see your section activation options.
8. Under Not Activated, click the radio buttons in the rows that correspond to each section you want to deactivate (see Figure 6: Deactivating Sections). You may see a warning message. Click OK and continue making your selection(s).

Figure 6: Deactivating Sections

Course Name		Activate as ...			
		Not Activated	Stand Alone	Group A	Group B
MUTH 12100, Intro to Musical Styles		<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 01	CRN 20532	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 02	CRN 20533	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 03	CRN 20534	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 04	CRN 20540	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Section 05	CRN 23455	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. When you are satisfied that your settings are correct, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the **Update** button. The sections you have selected are now deactivated.

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens if I change my mind about grouping?

You can change your section management options in Homer as often as you wish. Blackboard is updated by changes in Homer every day at 7:00 am and the latest changes to your sections will be applied.

Why can't I see my course content in my new parent section?

New parent sections are empty. From August 17 to August 24, you can copy content from your Fall 2009 "child" section into your new parent section. After August 24, you will need to contact ITS to recover that content.

I just grouped my sections. Why can't I see my new parent section?

You need to wait until the next morning to see the new parent section. Blackboard is updated with the latest changes in Homer every day at 7:00 am. You also may want to make sure you clicked Update when you grouped your sections on the Homer section management page.

What happens if all my content was in a child section that I can't see now?

Contact the ITS Helpdesk for assistance in recovering your content.

How do I see my students from the parent section?

Students will appear in parent sections starting August 24. To see your student lists, open the Gradebook or the Course Roster in Blackboard.

My students can't see my grouped course. What do I do?

Students will be able see grouped courses in the afternoon on August 24, 2009. This is an exception for the Fall 2009 transition phase, as grouping functionality is introduced.

For More Information

A variety of support services are available from ITS if you would like additional help:

Computer training on a variety of topics is available to faculty, staff, and students at no charge through the Technology Learning Center (TLC). Check out the current TLC training schedule online at <https://www.ithaca.edu/its/workshops>

Online documentation and tutorials on IC-supported computing software and systems are available at <https://www.ithaca.edu/its/traindoc>

Frontline computing support is available through the ITS Helpdesk in 104 Job Hall; send e-mail to helpdesk@ithaca.edu or call 607-274-1000.

Backline consulting support is available in the Technology Learning Center, room 101 Friends Hall.

Copyright ©2010 Ithaca College - All rights reserved. This publication may be duplicated in its entirety for use in not-for-profit educational settings. All copies must include this copyright statement. Any other use requires permission from Information Technology Services at Ithaca College, 607-274-1000, its@ithaca.edu.