

How to Use One Sakai Course to Manage Multiple CRNs

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When does it make sense to combine enrollments from multiple course reference numbers (CRNs)?

You might want to do this if you are teaching more than one *section*¹ of the same course in a given academic term. For example, in the Fall 2013 academic term, Prof. Xavier may be assigned to teach two lecture sections (sections “01” and “02”) and two lab sections (sections “L01” and “L02”) of Chemistry 101, each identified with a distinct CRN (e.g., “50234”, “50235”, “50302”, and “50303” respectively).

Instead of using multiple Sakai courses, one for each CRN, you can use just one Sakai course to manage all the relevant course materials-- the syllabus, readings, lecture notes, assignments, quizzes, etc.-- for teaching Chemistry 101 that term. Furthermore, this content can be distributed to all the students of this course, regardless of the CRN in which the student is enrolled.

Managing one Sakai course (e.g., “CHEM101 Fall2013”) instead of multiple Sakai courses (e.g., “CHEM101-01 Fall2013”, “CHEM101-02 Fall2013”, etc.) can significantly reduce the number of copies of course materials you need to maintain. This is especially advantageous whenever you need to make corrections to them. For example, assuming you are using the same syllabus for each course section, you can correct or supplant the syllabus in one Sakai course, instead of having to update each copy of the syllabus deployed across multiple Sakai courses.

How can I request a new Sakai course that combines student enrollments from multiple CRNs?

Click [here](#) to request such a Sakai course. Simply follow the prompts to submit your request.

¹ A ‘section’ in this context means a group of students whose enrollments are associated with a 5-digit course reference number (CRN; e.g., “50234”) where the meeting schedule with the instructor—(e.g., 1:00PM-2:45PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays)—is typically distinct from other sections in the same course. Furthermore, there may be one or more sections that meet for lectures, one or more sections that meet for labs, etc.

Can I combine other CRNs into a Sakai course that already exists?

Yes, assuming that the CRNs you want to combine share the same academic term as the existing Sakai course. In other words, you cannot combine CRNs from Fall 2013 into a Sakai course from Spring 2013².

The [online request form](#) is the same as above.

How can I add CRNs that are associated with another professor for a Sakai course that we are co-teaching?

Although the [online request form](#) does not readily support the creation of Sakai courses which combine CRNs belonging to different instructors of record, the Sakai Support Team can create such courses on behalf of instructors who are co-teaching a course. To request such a course, email sakai@plu.edu and include in your request the academic term, the CRNs to combine, the instructors involved in co-teaching the course, and a title for the course to display in Sakai.

If I use just one Sakai course to teach multiple sections, how can I distinguish one section from another?

You can use 'groups' in Sakai to distinguish course sections (or any arbitrary group of students). Furthermore, many tools in Sakai are 'group-aware', meaning that such tools recognize the groups defined in your course, enabling you to perform actions on any particular group (e.g., send an email message to members of one distinct group via the Mailtool). See [below](#) for useful examples and instructions pertaining to group-aware tools in Sakai.

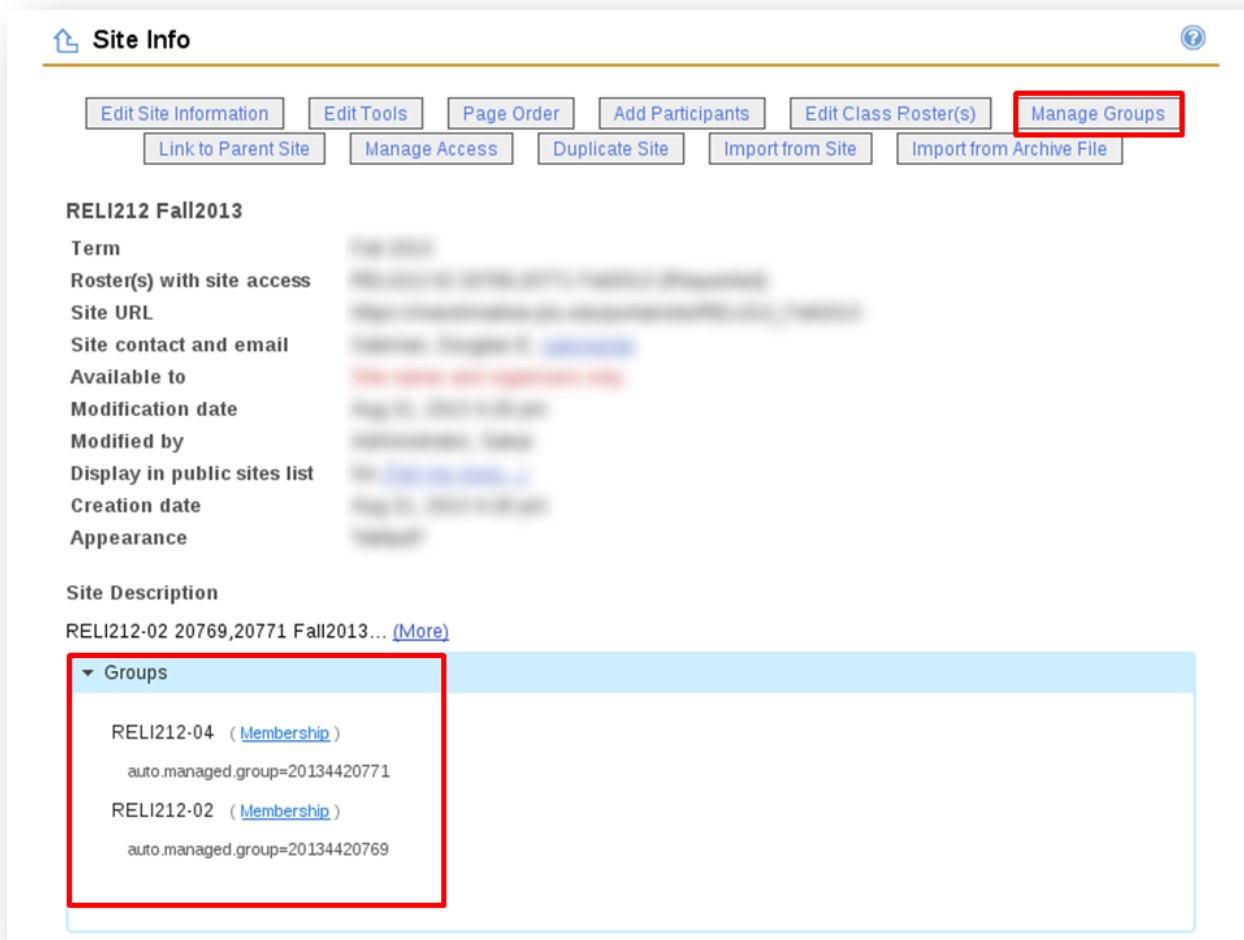
What are groups? How can I view or edit them in Sakai?

A group is simply a collection of site participants (usually students) that you can define for each course in Sakai. Groups are useful for organizing persons into particular course sections, project teams, study groups, etc. Groups are visible and editable through the Site Info tool. (See Figure 1 on the next page which outlines in red the areas on the Site Info view that pertain to groups.)

While you can use the Site Info tool to create and edit your own groups, please note that groups for CRNs can be automatically managed for you as 'auto-managed groups'. (See next item below.) As a rule, auto-managed groups should not be edited in Sakai. More details about managing groups in the Site Info tool are available in the Sakai help documentation [here](#).

² Regardless of academic term, you can import course materials into your Sakai course from any other course or project sites that you maintain in Sakai. This is done by way of the 'Import from Site' function of the 'Site Info' tool. Detailed instructions are available [here](#).

Figure 1: Site Info View with Areas Pertaining to Groups Highlighted



What are auto-managed groups?

‘Auto-managed groups’—an abbreviation for ‘automatically managed groups’—are based on course reference number (CRN) to indicate which students belong to which CRN. These groups are auto-managed such that the instructor is freed from having to maintain the membership of these groups in order to keep current with who is enrolled in which CRN. In other words, students who enroll in your course after your Sakai course has been created will be automatically added to your course and also become a member of the appropriate auto-managed group for the CRN in which they are enrolled. This automation occurs once a day.

As a rule, you should not edit auto-managed groups in Sakai.

How are auto-managed groups created?

Auto-managed groups can be created and managed on your behalf if you check the box labeled “Create groups of students in Sakai based on CRN enrollment”—(checked by default)—when making an [online request](#) for a course that combines multiple CRNs.

How can I distinguish auto-managed groups from the groups that I create manually in Sakai?

Go to the Site Info tool and look for the light-blue section labeled 'Groups'. Refer to Figure 2. In the Site Info tool you can click on 'Groups' to expand or collapse the group listing as desired. Groups that are auto-managed will have a 'key' named 'auto.managed.group' in the group description below the group name. Without the 'auto.managed.group' key and its associated value, the group is not auto-managed, meaning that group membership is not managed automatically on your behalf.

Figure 2: Identifying 'Auto-Managed Groups' in the Site Info Tool

Site Info

Edit Site Information Edit Tools Page Order Add Participants Edit Class Roster(s) Manage Groups
Link to Parent Site Manage Access Duplicate Site Import from Site Import from Archive File

RELI212 Fall2013

Term
Roster(s) with site access
Site URL
Site contact and email
Available to
Modification date
Modified by
Display in public sites list
Creation date
Appearance

Site Description
RELI212-02 20769,20771 Fall2013... [\(More\)](#)

▼ Groups

RELI212-04 ([Membership](#))

auto.managed.group=20134420771

Group name

Auto-managed group key

Auto-managed group value

Which tools in Sakai are ‘group-aware,’ and how can I perform useful, group-specific actions with these tools?

While the following list of group-aware tools in Sakai is not exhaustive, it contains typically useful examples for using groups in Sakai.

Group-Aware Sakai Tools

- Resources
- Mailtool
- Assignments
- Tests & Quizzes
- Schedule
- Forums

Resources

Objective: Make specific content or entire folders of content visible only to selected groups.

Instructions: In the main view of the Resources tool, click on the ‘Actions’ menu for a particular resource or folder and select ‘Edit Details’. Then in the ‘Edit Details’ view, you can choose to restrict the display of this folder or file to selected groups through the controls under the heading ‘Availability and Access’.

Mailtool

Objective: Send emails directed solely to members of one or more select groups.

Instructions: In the Mailtool’s view for composing an email, click on the ‘Groups’ link. It will display the list of groups in your course which you can select for recipients of your email, all of whom are blind-copied, such that the recipients will not see the email addresses of other recipients.

Assignments

Objective: If you have an assignment to deliver to multiple course sections, but details such as the due date differ depending on the course section of students, you can create representative assignments in the Assignments tool to be delivered to distinct groups.

Instructions: To create a group-specific assignment, click ‘Add’ in the Assignments tool’s main view to create a new assignment. Then under the ‘Access’ heading of the ‘Add new assignment’ view, click the ‘Display to selected groups’ option. Then select the group(s) to whom you want to give this assignment—assuming you have also set the appropriate due dates, instructions, etc. for the assignment.

Tests & Quizzes

Objective: Release a learning assessment to members of one or more select groups. Motivations for doing so are similar to those mentioned above for delivering group-specific assignments—e.g., due dates differ depending on the course section.

Instructions: For a particular assessment in the 'Pending Assessments' list of the 'Assessments' view of the Tests & Quizzes tool, choose 'Settings' in the '-- Select Action --' drop-down menu. Then, under the heading 'Assessment Released To' choose 'Selected Groups'. Then, choose the group(s) to whom you want to give this assessment. Of course, in order for the assessment to be released, it must be published.

Schedule

Objective: Make events in the course calendar visible only to members of one or more select groups.

Instructions: To make such an event group-specific, click 'Add' in the Schedule tool's main view. Then, in the 'Add Event' view, select the option 'Display to selected groups'.

Forums

Objective: Limit the visibility to or permissions for a particular Forum or Topic to members of one or more select groups.

Instructions: Instructions on how to do this are available at the bottom of the Sakai help document: [Controlling access to Forums](#).