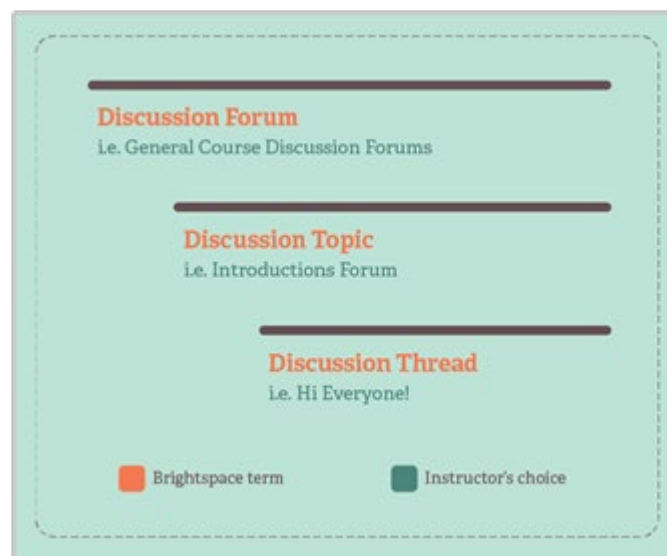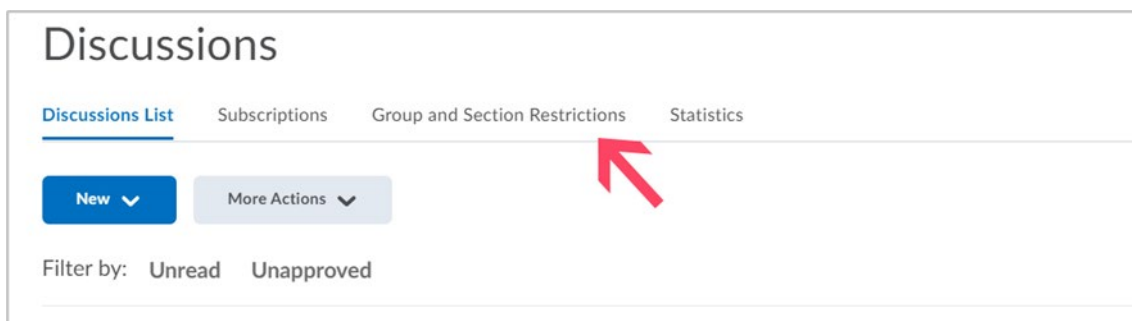# Creating Group Based Discussions

Using group activities can help build community and establish peer communication and connection, especially in online and blended learning. In large enrolment courses, assigning groups for participation in discussion forums is one of the ways to make online discussions more effective and manageable. Setting up group discussions requires knowledge of the Discussion Board hierarchy and how group restriction settings work within the Brightspace system.

If you plan on setting up discussions based on student groups, the best practice in Brightspace is to create the groups first. For detailed steps on how to set up groups please refer to ETD's 'Setting up Group Categories" document. It is also possible to create **Discussion Forums** prior to setting up groups, but the **Discussion Forum Topics** should always be left until after the groups are set up. Setting up the Topics before creating your groups is not an efficient workflow and may cause you problems in the long run.

The hierarchy of Discussion Forum components is shown in the accompanying image.

1. To create the group discussion topics, first choose Discussions from the ribbon. If you have not already, hit the "New" button and create a new forum to house the group discussion topics.

2. Click the "Group and Section Restrictions" tab.

3. Under the "View Options" section, click on the link "Automatically create restricted topics".

4. On the "Create Restricted Topics" page, choose the Group Category that will contain the discussion groups.

5. Under the Forum dropdown list, choose the Forum that contains the discussion prompt that you want the groups to discuss.

6. Click on the "Create" button.

7. The "Group and Section Restrictions" page should now show a Topic for each Group that has a checkmark in the "Restricted?" Box and a checkmark in the box of their Group Name. The restrictions mean that group members can only access their own topic area. If you want to open them up later for all groups to view, remove the restrictions at that point.

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