Instructor Toolkit

MSU Commons

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MSU Commons Instructor Toolkit

What is MSU Commons?

MSU Commons is the first institutional node on the Commons network. The Commons overall enables scholars and practitioners in any field to create a professional profile, discuss common interests, develop new publications, and share their work. While the Commons network is open to anyone, regardless of field, language, institutional affiliation, or form of employment, use of MSU Commons is restricted to members of the Michigan State University community, including current students, staff members, and faculty, as well as retired staff and faculty.

More information about MSU Commons can be found [on our About page](#).

Quick Links

Help & Support:

[MSU Commons FAQ](#)
[MSU Commons Help & Support](#)

MSU Commons Help Desk

Discovery Services at the MSU Libraries is your 1st point of contact for assistance with MSU Commons.

Phone: 517-353-8700

Hours: 7:00am-12:00am (Monday-Friday), 10:00am-12:00am (Saturday-Sunday) [Eastern Time]

Email: commons@msu.libanswers.com

[Submit Question via Form](#)

Important links:

[Getting Started with MSU Commons](#)
[MSU Commons for Educators](#)
[MSU Commons for Researchers](#)
[How do I create an account on MSU Commons?](#)
[How do I change my name, title, or institutional affiliation?](#)

How do I create an account on MSU Commons?

A full guide on how to register for MSU Commons can be found [on our community forum](#).

Registration tips:

- Recommended browsers include Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome.
- Log out of all MSU systems before registering. This includes Spartan Mail, D2L, and EBS.
- Register at https://commons.msu.edu.
- If you experience issues, clear your cookies and cache and restart your web browser. You may also try a different browser or a private/incognito browsing window.

MSU Commons for Collaboration

Groups

MSU Commons can be a great tool for collaboration within the university. All faculty, staff, and current students are eligible to join, and the groups functionality is perfect for coordination of projects, events, and courses.

Things to think about when choosing where to set up your collaboration space:
- MSU Commons is restricted to MSU faculty, staff, and students. If you are collaborating with people outside of the university, you'll want to set up on [Humanities Commons](#) so that everyone can log in and participate. [Note: STEM Commons and Social Science Commons are coming later in 2021.]
- Groups can be set to public, private, or hidden:
  - Public groups can be seen not just by MSU Commons users, but are also publicly available for browsing by members of the public.
  - Private groups are listed on the website, but users must request to join.
  - Hidden groups are not listed on the website, and users must be invited by administrators to join.

Here is a [general guide for using Groups](#), and here are a couple of examples of education-focused groups on [Humanities Commons](#):

- [Open Educational Resources](#)
- [Education & Pedagogy](#)

Explore the [Humanities Commons groups page](#) for additional groups, and feel free to [create MSU-specific groups](#) here on MSU Commons.

More information can be found about groups on our [Getting Started with MSU Commons website](#) and [MSU Commons for Educators](#).

Using Groups for Courses

Groups can be an easy way to automate some onboarding for classes and facilitate discussion and collaboration. A group allows you to utilize the event calendar, discussion board, docs, and files and also enables creation of a group website that can automatically add students in the appropriate role when they join. Even if you don't intend to use the discussion board, the automation of website onboarding is worth creating a group.

Groups for Collaboration

In addition to courses, MSU Commons groups can provide digital spaces for you to chat with other educators and share or co-create teaching materials. This might look like [joining and browsing](#) materials and discussions, [discussing ideas](#) for time-management or classroom discussion strategies, or you might [work with other group-members](#) to build a rubric using the "Documents" feature within your group.

Should I create a group website when I create my group?

Creating a group website when creating a group can be convenient. Groups can be used to allow users to be assigned roles within the website upon joining. Still, there are a few things to think about as you decide how to organize your Commons presence:

- Will you use the website only for this group/section/course for the current semester? If so, then yes, create the website when you create the group.
- Will you reuse the website for multiple semesters? If so, create the website separately so that it is unconnected to the group.
- If you're unsure if you'll want a website later on you can create a group website later in the group settings.

You can continue to reuse a website that was created for a particular group, but you may need to reassess permissions on the website for group members if the group disbanded or is no longer in use. See MSU Commons websites for more information on setting up and naming a website.

More information on groups can be found in our Community Forum:
[How do I start my own group?](#)
[How do I set up a group website?](#)
[How do I set up a group discussion?](#)
[What group roles are there in websites?](#)

Guides:
[Managing group roles and memberships](#)
[Making a group website](#)
[Using discussion in groups](#)

MSU Commons Websites

The last MSU Commons tool that educators should know about is websites. As you may know, our users can build many types of websites tied to their Commons profiles including, but not limited to, personal websites, blogs, project websites, and event websites. Here, we'll look into the most relevant types of websites for educators: course websites and websites relating to course project(s).

Here is a [general guide for creating websites.](#)

More information can be found on creating websites in [our Getting Started with MSU Commons website](#) and [MSU Commons for Educators](#).

Best Practices -- Naming Course websites

If your course website will be used across multiple semesters, name it with only the course title information (e.g. MSU101: Go Green). Please bear in mind that some domains could create some ambiguity for your students. For instance, rather than "HIST101," you may want to include institution and semester information to avoid conflicts, such as "MSUHIST101FALL20" or "Fall2021-MSU101-001" if your course website will be used for only one semester. Consistency in naming conventions will make it easier for students to find and access your course website and help you keep track of your own websites as the Commons grows.

Syllabus Language

This course will use an MSU Commons website instead of D2L. On our Commons website, you will have access to [TAILOR TO YOUR COURSE: your syllabus, course calendar with due dates, assignment sheets, rubrics, assigned readings, etc.].

In order to participate in this course and gain access to our website and all of our shared content, you will need to create an MSU Commons account.

To create your account, follow these steps:

1. Before registering, log out of all MSU web systems. This includes Spartan Mail, D2L, and EBS.
2. Go to https://commons.msu.edu/

3. Click "Register" in the upper right corner, followed by "Register Now" on the next screen.
4. You'll be sent to MSU's login system, where you must log in using your MSU credentials.
5. You'll review your enrollment information and then accept or change your suggested username.
6. Finally, you'll wait for several seconds as the system builds your account.

That's it! Once you've done all that, you'll be ready to log in and get started. Be sure to choose the Spartan helmet whenever you log into your account.

To access our course website from your web browser, go to [InsertwebsiteName].msu.hcommons.org. Our website is private, meaning that only your classmates and instructor will have access to all of the content found there.

OPTIONAL: If you plan to create a group on MSU Commons to use in conjunction with your course website, use this additional template to describe the group usage for your students:

In addition to our MSU Commons website, we will also use a group on MSU Commons. Our group will be the place where we have class discussions and collaborate on group assignments and projects.

To find and join our course group on MSU Commons, follow these steps:

1. Make sure you are logged in to MSU Commons.
2. Click on **Groups** in the left menu.
3. Type [insert name of group] into the **Search Groups** bar.

    [Choose the appropriate next step from the options below, depending on the type of group you are using for your course. We recommend using a Private group for courses so that students' discussions and collaborations can only be accessed by other members of the course.]

4. Our group is Public, so click on the **Join Group** button to the right of its name in the list. This button will also appear at the top of the group's home page when you click on it.
5. Our group is Private, so click the **Request Membership** button to the right of its name in the list. This button will also appear at the top of the group's homepage.
6. Your request to join the group will be received by your instructor, who can then approve you to be added to the group. If you have requested to join but have not heard back in 48 hours, follow up with your instructor via email.