

# Ensuring Student Data Privacy within Merged Course Sections in Canvas

Faculty in some cases may find it beneficial to merge their courses in Canvas to save time distributing the same course content to students across multiple course sections. There are several steps you can take working in Canvas with merged section to help you to stay within the FERPA regulations for student information in this situation.

## Steps for Merging Courses with Multiple Sections

1. Ensure the Canvas course shells that you want to be merged do not have any course content in them. If content is present that you need to backup, you can export the content to a Canvas export file that can later be imported into the merged course by using these instructions: [How Do I Export a Canvas Course?](#)
2. Request to have the course shells merged by completing this Xavier form: <https://services.xavier.edu/TDClient/Requests/ServiceDet?ID=71>
3. You will be notified when the course sections have been merged.

## Limiting Students to Only Interact with Other Students in the Same Section

If your course includes multiple sections, you can limit users in a section to only see users enrolled in the same section. You can set limitations when [adding users to a course](#), or after students have already been added to the course.

**Note:** Limiting students to interact by section only affects Collaborations, People, and Conversations. When enrolling instructors and TAs, section limitations allow those users to grade students in their same section(s). Discussion topics and Pages are not affected by section limitations and can be viewed by any student. These feature areas could be restricted by creating content in course groups.

Follow the instructions in this Canvas guide: [Limiting Users to Only Interact with Other Users in the Same Course Section](#)

**Note:** If you don't see the 3-dots beside your student names on the People page, click on their names and a sidebar will appear. Then, click on their name again in the sidebar and you will see the options outlined in the guide for limiting their interactions with other students.

## Additional Steps for Ensuring Student Data Privacy

1. Remove the **People, Chat, Conferences** and **Collaborations** course navigation menu links from the Canvas course in the **Settings** menu on the main navigation bar in your course. This will prevent students from viewing and interacting with another course section. View the Canvas guide on how to [Reorder and Hide Course Navigation Links](#) for instructions on how to do this.
2. **Disable** the options that allow students to **create new discussion topics** and **create their own groups**. In addition, make sure to disable the **ability for student comments when posting course Announcements**.

You can disable students' ability to create discussion topics, organize their own groups and add comments to Announcements by clicking on **Settings** in the main navigation bar on the left in your course.

Once in Settings scroll to the bottom of the page where you will see **More options**. Click on More options and you will see fewer options and a list with check boxes. Make sure "Let students create discussion topics" and "Let students organize their own groups" are not checked and "Disable comments on announcements" is checked. Then click the blue **Update Course Details** button at the bottom to save.

fewer options

- Show recent announcements on Course home page
- 3 Number of announcements shown on the homepage
- Let students attach files to discussions
- Let students create discussion topics
- Let students edit or delete their own discussion posts
- Let students organize their own groups
- Hide totals in student grades summary
- Hide grade distribution graphs from students
- Disable comments on announcements
- Only Teachers

can create, rename, and edit course pages by default

 [Update Course Details](#)

3. You will want to send separate messages to students in each section of the course for the duration of the course. The quickest method is to use the Canvas **Inbox** on the menu bar to the far left of the Canvas interface. Canvas refers to its email system as Conversations in Canvas and in Canvas Guides.

When creating a new message in the Conversations Inbox, select the Inbox, then select the course, then click the Address Book and navigate to and select the appropriate course section. You are now ready to compose a message to be sent to students in a particular section.

4. You will also want to manually create Canvas **student groups** identical to the course section enrollments to allow student interactions within course sections of a merged Canvas course site. See the Canvas Guide for steps in [Manually Creating Groups in a Group Set](#). It is not necessary to create two Group Sets – you can create multiple groups in a single Group Set but you must include both a section name and course name in the group title to prevent a name that overlaps with another course group naming convention (for example a student in 'Group 1' in two different courses). After creating these Canvas student groups corresponding with course sections, there will be completely separate group workspaces for each course section inside the course.
5. Additionally, using **Differentiated Assignments** you can create a graded assignment for a specific section of a merged course. Differentiated Assignments also allow you to create graded assignment due dates and availability dates by course section.
  - [How do I create an Assignment for a specific section?](#)
  - [How do I create a Graded Discussion for a specific section?](#)
  - [How do I create a Quiz for a specific section?](#)