**Creating Groups & Sites**
CUNY Academic Commons Quick Guide

The CUNY Academic Commons provides several options for hosting courses. Faculty members can setup a course website (site), a course group, or both (linked group site).

Existing Groups (orange) and Sites (blue) can be found in the Main Menu. You can browse through existing groups and sites by clicking the appropriate link.
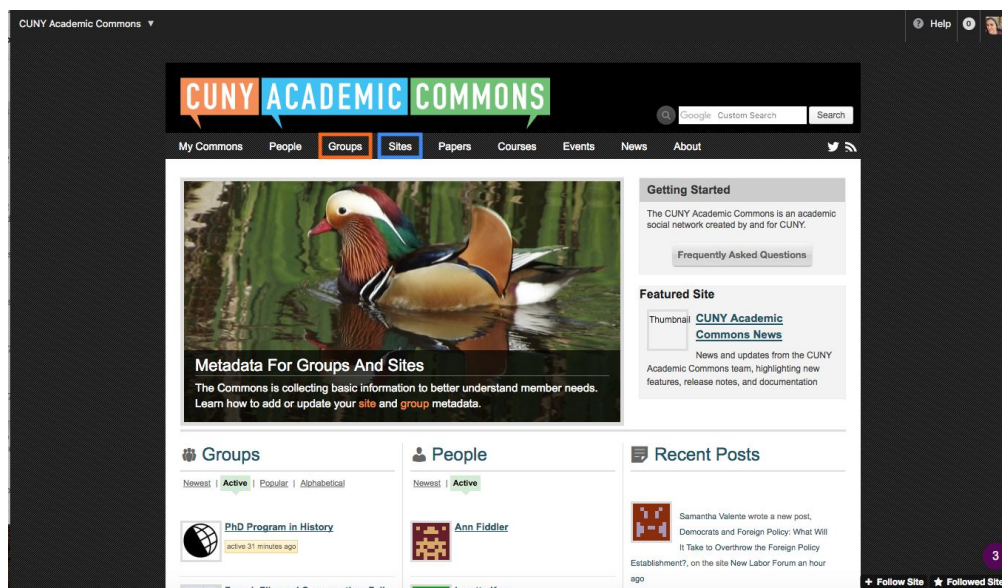
Once you click into Groups or Sites from the main menu, you can create a new group, site, or linked group site by clicking the "Create a New Group/Site" button (green).
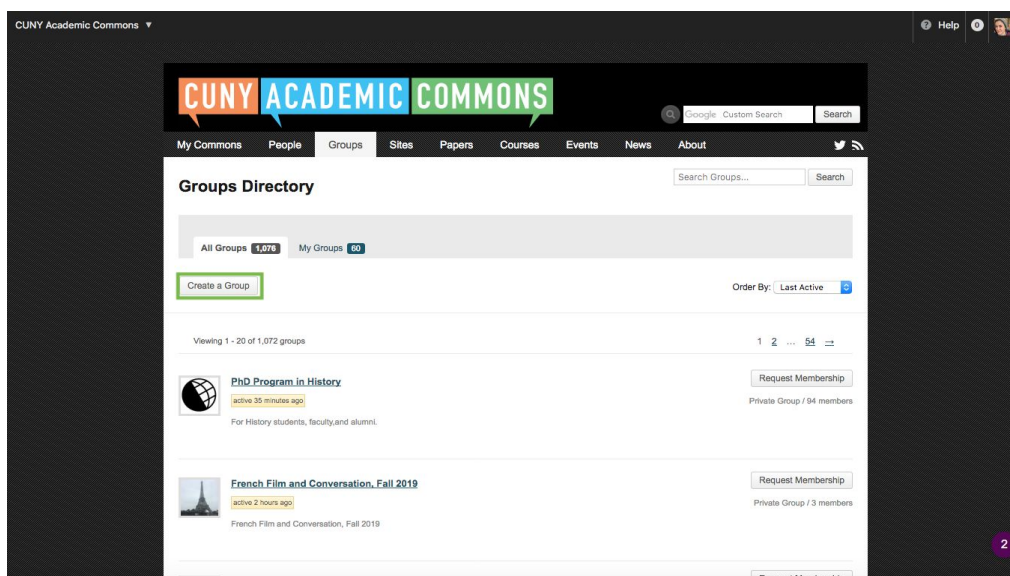
The Creation page explains the differences between groups and sites. More information about the differences are below.
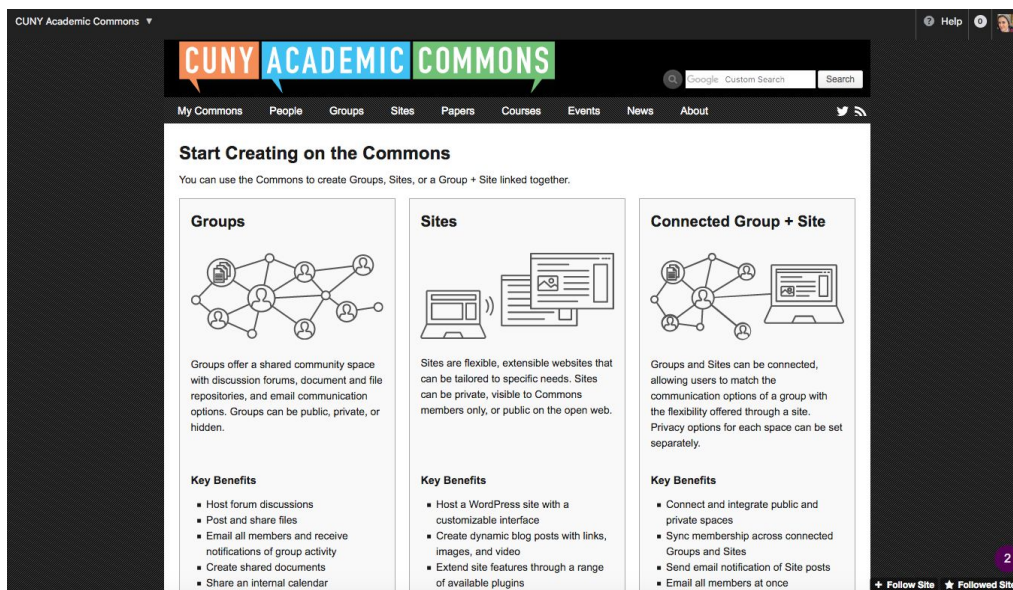
Commons Groups: A group offers a private or public space with varying functionality. In a group, faculty and students can post in a *Forum* (and have threaded discussions), upload documents to a common *Files* section, collaboratively edit *Docs*, post *Events* to a common calendar, and access shared, collaborative *Papers*. If the Group is "Private" documents, forum posts, and other group functions are not visible or accessible if users are not logged into the Commons.

Commons Sites: Course sites offer a range of publishing options for faculty and students. Sites can be private (visible to site members only), semi-private (visible to Commons users only), or public. On course websites, faculty can make the course syllabus and assignments visible to students in a dynamic format (with links and multimedia). Students can also add content by posting and/or commenting on their peers' writing.

Course sites can have "pages" for static content (Syllabus, course information) and "posts" for dynamic and multimedia content. Faculty can customize course site menus and add widgets and plugins to expand site functionality.

Linked Group Site: "Group Site" pairings can work well for classes where both public and private spaces are desired. By connecting a group to a site, professors can email students through the Commons and users can receive updates when posts are added to the course site.   airing a private group with a public site can allow faculty to make certain documents available only to members of the class, while also allowing members of the class to publish for a broader audience on a public course site.

If setup correctly, when a student is added as a member of the course group, they will be automatically added to the course site. **If you decide to use both, you can setup the group and site so they are linked.**

Group Basics

When viewing a Commons Group, all group activity will appear on the main "Home" page. This RSS activity feed will aggregate group forum posts, doc editing stats, files uploaded, and member information (joining, leaving, etc.). The gray menu on the left facilitates navigation to the various group areas.

Group Areas

- **Home**: group landing page and activity feed
- **Forum**: threaded discussion space (each entry sent to group members' via email)
- **Events**: calendar to display group events (can be added by any group member)
- **Site**: direct link to a connected site
- **Papers**: create collaboratively written/edited docs; students can work in same 'Paper' at once; can comment, annotate paper (run by Social Paper)
- **Files**: upload Word docs, PDFs, etc to make available to group members
- **Docs**: create a 'doc' to share with the group; docs can be edited by any group member but only one member can work in doc at a time (each doc update sent to members' email)
- **Members**: list of members in group
- **Send Invites**: invite new Commons user to group via username
- **Email Options**: each group member can customize email options
- **Manage**: group settings area; change member roles, accept group join requests, edit privacy settings, connect to site, and more


Site Basics

On sites you can add pages for static content or posts for more dynamic content.

Navigating and Editing your Site

When viewing your new site you will see the default theme and the "Hello World!" message.

At the top of the page you will see the black admin bar. This bar is important for navigating from the "frontend" of your site (what site visitors see) and the "backend", also called the "Dashboard" where you will can changes to your site.
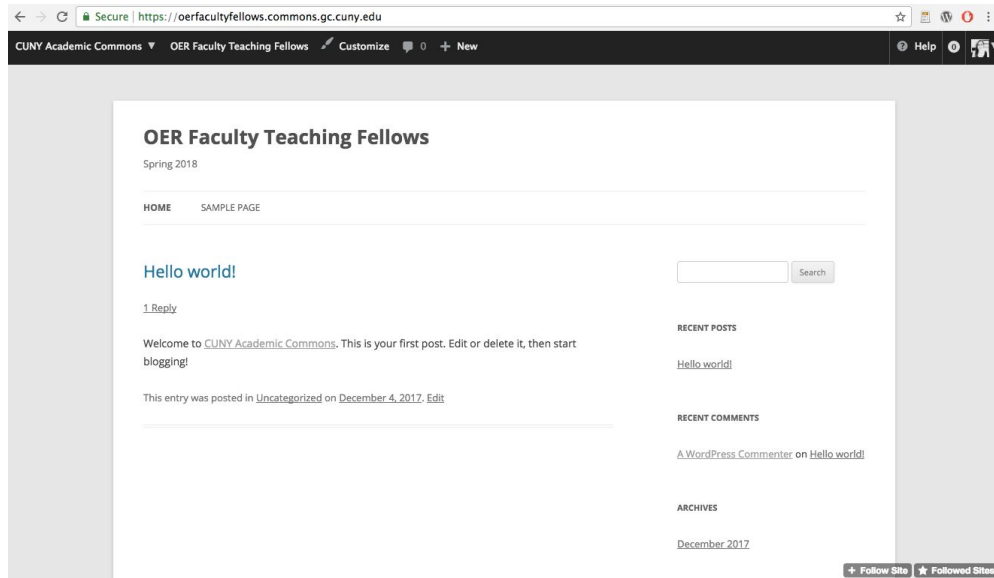
Front End: public facing, what visitors see (depending on Privacy settings)

From the black admin bar, you can create a New post by clicking "+ New" or click the title of the site (below: "OER Faculty Teaching Fellows") to go to the back end of the website where you will find all the site editing and design options.

Once you are on the Dashboard (backend, below), you will see the black sidebar menu on the left. This menu contains the options for editing, designing, adding content to your site.
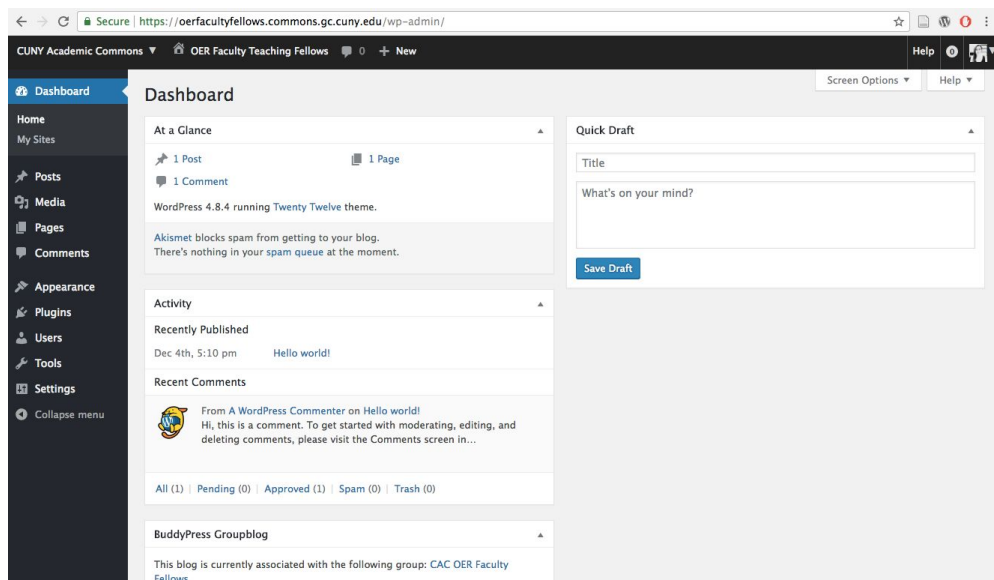
Back End: internal, what site Admins see