

Single Vs. Multiple Catalogs: Pros and Cons

	Single Catalog	Multiple Catalogs
Course Management	<p>Pro: Centralized course management—course updates, additions, and modifications are managed in a single place.</p> <p>Pro: Reduces duplication of identical courses across multiple catalogs, saving time and avoiding consistency issues.</p> <p>Con: Difficult to tailor course visibility or course properties specifically for departments without complex filtering.</p>	<p>Pro: Departments can independently manage their homepage and courses without impacting others.</p> <p>Con: Risk of course duplication if multiple departments need the same courses—updates would need to be done in each catalog (if unified course catalog is not used).</p>
Content Management & Structure	<p>Pro: Unified course categorization—simplifies searching and browsing. Less risk of content fragmentation; all users access a single source of truth.</p> <p>Con: Limited category flexibility—departments are constrained to using subcategories within a shared structure. Department-specific categorization can become cluttered, making it harder for users to find relevant content.</p>	<p>Pro: Departments can define their own category structures without being limited. Greater flexibility for departments to organize and tag content as per their unique needs.</p> <p>Con: Users involved in cross-departmental training may have to navigate multiple catalogs, potentially confusing the experience.</p> <p>Con: Potential inconsistency in how categories are defined across departments.</p>
User Management	<p>Pro: Easier to manage users and permissions from a single location.</p> <p>Pro: User segmentation via SharePoint buttons and filters provides a tailored experience without needing to add users to each catalog.</p> <p>Con: May require course targeting settings to ensure department-restricted content remains hidden when needed.</p>	<p>Pro: Each department can manage its own user permissions independently.</p> <p>Pro: Reduces the risk of users accidentally accessing irrelevant departmental content.</p> <p>Con: Users belonging to multiple departments may need to be managed in multiple catalogs, which may add administrative complexity.</p> <p>Con: May be more difficult to standardize user permissions and roles across the organization.</p>

	Single Catalog	Multiple Catalogs
Reporting & Analytics	<p>Pro: Unified reporting across all departments—easier to analyze organizational-wide training data within one place.</p> <p>Con: Department-specific reporting may require additional filtering and custom report views.</p>	<p>Pro: Department-specific reports are easier to generate without the need for extra filtering. Allows departments to focus solely on their data without distractions from other departments' data.</p> <p>Con: Organization-wide reporting would require merging data from multiple catalogs, increasing complexity. Comparing department performance side by side may require additional effort. However, Power BI can help with this.</p>
Branding & Customization	<p>Pro: Consistent look and feel across the organization—supports a unified brand identity.</p> <p>Pro: Branding changes only need to be made once.</p> <p>Con: Limited ability for departments to personalize their learning environment.</p>	<p>Pro: Departments can fully customize branding (logos, colors, descriptions) to match their unique identity and provide information relevant to that department.</p> <p>Pro: Enhances the user experience by providing a more relevant and personalized learning portal.</p> <p>Con: May require additional resources to maintain consistent branding across all departments if a unified look is desired.</p>
User Experience (UX)	<p>Pro: Users only need to learn to navigate one environment.</p> <p>Pro: Department-specific filters on the SharePoint homepage provide quick access without complexity.</p> <p>Con: If filtering isn't intuitive, users may struggle to find department-relevant content.</p>	<p>Pro: Users immediately see only relevant content upon accessing their department's catalog.</p> <p>Pro: Each department can tailor navigation and UX to their audience.</p> <p>Con: Users belonging to multiple departments may find switching between catalogs cumbersome.</p> <p>Con: Inconsistent user experiences across departments could confuse users if they collaborate across teams.</p>

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Security & Access Control	<p>Pro: Centralized permissions management reduces complexity.</p> <p>Con: Complex permission layers may be needed to prevent cross-department access where restricted content exists.</p>	<p>Pro: Physical separation of content reduces accidental cross-department enrollments.</p> <p>Pro: Simpler permission configurations per department—less risk of human error exposing sensitive content.</p> <p>Con: More administrative overhead in managing separate security settings for each catalog.</p>
Administration & Workload	<p>Pro: Streamlined administration—fewer catalogs to maintain.</p> <p>Pro: Easier to apply organization-wide updates and settings.</p>	<p>Pro: Decentralized management—departments can operate independently without waiting for global admin action.</p> <p>Pro: Each department can progress at its own pace without affecting others.</p> <p>Con: Increased total workload—each catalog requires separate maintenance, updates, and support.</p> <p>Con: May require additional training for department-level admins.</p>
Cross-Department Collaboration	<p>Pro: May be easier for users to explore and enroll in cross-departmental training, fostering collaboration.</p> <p>Con: Without proper filtering, the abundance of courses could overwhelm users searching for relevant content.</p>	<p>Pro: Departments can develop specialized training paths without external interference.</p> <p>Con: May be harder for users to discover courses outside their department, potentially limiting cross-functional learning opportunities.</p>

Final Recommendations Based on Use Case

Keep One Catalog If:

- The current SharePoint filtering solution sufficiently guides users to relevant content.
- Cross-departmental training and collaboration are priorities.
- The administrative team prefers a unified approach with minimal duplication.
- Reporting and data insights across departments need to be streamlined.

Consider Multiple Catalogs If:

- Departments want full control over branding and course structures.
- User permissions and security for department-specific content are a concern.
- Department admins have the capacity to manage independent catalogs.
- Departments have vastly different training needs, categories, or user experiences.