The Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology

Instructional Technology Workshops

Blackboard 9.1 SP 13
Discussion Board
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Faculty and Staff Development Programs

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CREATING DISCUSSIONS

THE DISCUSSION BOARD

Instructors have the same Discussion Board functions as students, with these additional functions:

✓ Create forums
✓ Edit forum settings
✓ Grade forums
✓ Manage forum roles
✓ Copy forums
✓ Delete forums

Discussion Board

Forums are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject. Create Forums to organize discussions. More Help

A. Create Forum – click to create a new forum and select settings.
B. Action Link – click to access the contextual menu for an item.
C. Contextual menu – select an option for the item.

Take Note

A. Create Forum – click to create a new forum and select settings.
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C. Contextual menu – select an option for the item.
CREATING FORUMS

Forum settings allow you to use the Discussion Board in different ways. For example, to control the forum, the instructor creates all threads, and moderates and grades the posts. For a student-led discussion, allow students to create new threads with the option of posting anonymously.

QUICK STEPS: creating forums

1. On the main Discussion Board page, on the Action Bar, click Create Forum.
2. On the Create Forum page, type a Name. Users click this name to access the forum.
3. Optionally, type instructions or a description in the Description text box. Format the text using the Text Editor functions, if you want. The Description appears below the forum name.
4. Under Forum Availability, select the Yes option.
5. Select Forum Settings.
6. Click Submit.

TIP: Create forums ahead of time and set the availability to No until the discussion is ready to start.
3. Forum Settings

If a Due Date is set, submissions are accepted after this date, but are marked late.

Viewing Threads/Replies
- Standard View
- Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum.
  If participants are required to create threads in order to view other threads in the forum, they cannot delete or edit their own posts, and cannot post anonymously. Those options will be set for you automatically.

Grade
- No Grading in Forum
- Grade Discussion Forum Points possible
- Grade Threads

Subscribe
- Do not allow subscriptions
- Allow members to subscribe to threads
- Allow members to subscribe to forum
  - Include body of post in the email
  - Include link to post

Create and Edit
- Allow Anonymous Posts
- Allow Author to Delete Own Posts
  - All posts
  - Only posts with no replies
- Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts
- Allow Members to Create New Threads
- Allow File Attachments
- Allow Users to Reply with Quote
- Force Moderation of Posts

Additional Options
- Allow Post Tagging
- Allow Members to Rate Posts

4. Submit

Click Submit to proceed. Click Cancel to quit.
Suggestions for Organizing Discussions

The most common approach for organizing discussions is to type your discussion topic in the forum title and add details in the forum description.

1. Type a subject or a discussion question in the forum title and provide instructions or details in the description.
2. Allow students to create threads. In the preceding example, each thread represents a student’s solution to the problem of oil addiction.
3. Users can post to existing threads to comment on given answers or create new threads to present new solutions.

Another approach is to pose the discussion question or topic in a thread. This can be an efficient way to organize related topics.
1. Type the general subject in the forum title.
2. Create threads containing the specific issues to be discussed.
3. In this case, consider disallowing thread creation, ensuring that students can only post to existing threads.

**CREATING THREADS**

Once in a forum, threads can be created. Users can create new threads, if the forum is set to allow users to add new threads and threads are not graded. Creating a thread as an instructor is the same as creating a thread as a student, with the option of grading the thread.

In the following example, a graded thread is created.

► **QUICK STEPS: creating threads**

1. Access the forum.
2. On the Action Bar, click **Create Thread**.
3. On the **Create Thread** page, type a **Subject**.
4. Type the reply in the **Message** text box. Format the text using the Text Editor functions, if you want.
5. Under **Attachments**, browse for a file to attach to your message. Use the Text Editor **Attach File** function to attach multiple files.
6. To add a grade column to the **Grade Center**, select the **Grade Thread** check box and type **Points possible**.
7. Click **Save Draft** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit**.

**Forum: Declaration of Independence**

*Organize Forum Threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the column title or the caret at the top of each column. More Help*

If the forum is set to grade by thread, decide on a thread-by-thread basis whether to grade the thread.
The new thread appears in the forum.

**Forum: Declaration of Independence**

*Organize Forum Threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the column title or the caret at the top of each column. More Help.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create Thread</th>
<th>Subscribe</th>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Display</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread Actions</th>
<th>Collect</th>
<th>Delete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Thread</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Unread Posts</th>
<th>Total Posts</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/14 11:33 AM</td>
<td>Ipsum</td>
<td>Delwar Sayeed</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/14 11:32 AM</td>
<td>Lorem Ipsum</td>
<td>Delwar Sayeed</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grade Thread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Take Note**

In the **Grade** column:

A. **Grade Thread** allows you to evaluate the posts.
B. **Grade** allows you to enable grading for a thread and type a value

**Allowing Email Subscriptions**

Students can be allowed to either subscribe to an entire forum or to specific threads within a forum.

When email subscription is enabled, Blackboard Learn™ sends out email alerts if there are new posts or replies. The instructor decides whether the subscription email contains the entire message or a link to the message.

**QUICK STEPS: allowing email subscriptions**

1. Click the forum’s Action Link to access the contextual menu.
2. Select **Edit**.
3. On the **Edit Forum** page, under **Forum Settings**, select the **Subscribe** options.
4. Click **Submit**.
ADDING A FORUM TO A COURSE AREA

▸ QUICK STEPS: add a discussion forum to a course area

1. Access the Content Area, Learning Module, Lesson Plan, or folder where the forum will be linked.
2. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
3. Point to Add Interactive Tool on the Action Bar.
4. Select Discussion Board.
5. On the Create Link: Discussion Board page, select Link to Discussion Board Page to link to the main page or select Select a Discussion Board Forum and select a forum from the list.
6. Click Next.
7. On the next Create Link: Discussion Board page, type a Link Name. Students click the Name to access the forum.
8. Optionally, add instructions or a description in the Text box. Use the Text Editor functions to format the text.
9. Select Yes for the Available option. Set other options as needed.
10. Click Submit.

ASSIGNING FORUM ROLES

▸ QUICK STEPS: assigning forum roles

1. Click the forum’s Action Link to access the contextual menu.
2. Select Manage. A list of users appears.
3. On the Manage Forum Users page, click the user’s Action Link to access the contextual menu.
   4. Select a new forum role. The new role appears in the Forum Role column for the user.
MODERATING POSTS

When a moderated forum is created, all posts to the forum are added to a Moderation Queue. The Moderator reviews each post and does one of following:

- Publishes the post
- Returns the post to the sender without a message
- Returns the post to the sender with a message

▶ QUICK STEPS: allowing moderation of posts

1. Click the forum’s Action Link to access the contextual menu.
2. Select Edit.
3. On the Edit Forum page, under Forum Settings, select the Force Moderation of Posts check box and click Submit.
4. After posts have been submitted, access the forum.
5. On the Action Bar, click Moderate Forum.
6. On the Moderation Queue page, click Moderate next to the post.
7. Read posts and publish or return them by selecting the appropriate option. Optionally, type feedback in the text box and Submit.

COPYING FORUMS

Discussion forums can be copied and added to the current Discussion Board or to a Group Discussion Board in the same course. To copy a Discussion Board to another course, use the Course Copy utility.

▶ QUICK STEPS: copying forums

1. Click the forum’s Action Link to access the contextual menu.
2. Select Copy.
3. On the Copy Forum page, type a Name.
4. Select the option to copy: Entire forum or Forum settings only.
5. Select the Location from the list.
6. Click Submit.
NOTE: Discussion forums copied to a Group Discussion Board only include messages authored by the Group's members.

Example: Copy forum settings only

Copy the settings of a forum with research paper instructions because a new forum is needed for another activity with identical settings.

Example: Copy the entire forum

If two distinct topics emerge during a discussion, it is possible to create separate forums for these topics. Copy the forum and then delete the off-topic postings from each forum.

When content is copied, all threads and replies appear in the new location, along with any file attachments.

Deleting Forums and Threads

NOTE: Do not delete graded forums or threads unless the grades are no longer needed in the Grade Center.

▲QUICK STEPS: deleting forums and threads

1. Select the check box next to the item or items to delete.
2. On the Action Bar, click **Delete**.

On the **Thread Detail** page, you can delete individual messages when viewing a post within a thread.

**GRADING DISCUSSIONS**

**ASSIGNING FORUM GRADES**

Discussion grades can be assigned within the forum or thread. Students can be graded on their participation in a discussion, on the quality of their postings, or a combination of the two. Rubrics can be created and used to grade forums and threads, but the rubrics must be created and added to the appropriate Grade Center columns in advance. First, we will look at grading forums.

**Reminder:** Grading options are enabled when the forum is created or by editing the forum. Once grading has been enabled, a Grade Center column is created.

**QUICK STEPS: assigning forum grades**

1. Click the forum’s Action Link to access the contextual menu.
2. Select **Grade**.
3. On the **Grade Forum Users** page, click **Grade** from a user’s row.
4. The **Grade Forum** page for the user appears with a collection of the user’s posts and a side panel containing three sections:
   A. **Forum Statistics:** Includes information about the user’s posts, such as **Date of Last Post**, **Average Post Length**, and **Average Post Position**.
   B. **Forum Grade:** Grade, Feedback, and Grading Notes are added in this section. The Grade Date appears here also.
   C. **Contributors:** Users, who have submitted one or more posts, appear with exclamation marks, the needs grading icon. Use the **Previous User** and **Next User** arrows in this section to navigate among users to grade or click a user’s name in the list. Click **Show All** to see all users in the course; users who have not posted to the graded forum are included in this list. Click **Show with Posts Only** to return to the list of users who have posts needing a grade.
5. In the content frame, evaluate the currently selected user's posts and click **Edit Grade** in the **Forum Grade** section.
6. Type a point total in the **Current Grade Value** text box. **Note:** If a Rubric has been created for this graded forum, click **View Rubric**.

7. Optionally, type **Feedback** for the user and **Grading Notes**, which appear to the forum Manager or Grader only. Optionally, use the **Spell Check** function in the bottom of each text box.

8. Click **Text Editor** to access all the Text Editor functions for formatting text and adding URLs, attachments, images, Mashups, and multimedia.

9. Click **Save Grade** to add the Feedback, Grade, and Grading Notes to the **Forum Grade** section and to the Grade Center.

10. The Grade or Feedback can be edited by clicking the **Edit Grade** function again at any time. The changes appear in the **Forum Grade** section and in the Grade Center. The changes are documented in the Grade Center in the **Grade History** tab on the user’s **Grade Details** page.

11. When grading is complete, click **OK** to return to the **Grade Forum Users** page or use the breadcrumbs to return to the Discussion Board.

**Note:** Only users with a role of Manager or Grader can add grades for posts. A Grader cannot view his or her own work.

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**Grade Discussion Forum Users**

Since a forum grade can be based on multiple posts within multiple threads, all messages posted by the student are included for review. You can also view information about the posts, such as the number of posts the student contributed and the average post length. Filter, sort, and print the posts using the functions on the Action Bar.
The grade is added to the Discussion Board’s **Grade** column on the **Grade Forum Users** page, as well as to the Grade Center.
ASSIGNING THREAD GRADES

If Grade Threads was enabled during forum creation, grades can be assigned for threads within that forum.

NOTE: Students cannot create new threads in a forum where threads are graded.

► QUICK STEPS: assigning thread grades

1. Click the forum containing the thread you want to grade.
2. In List View, on the thread listing page, click Grade Thread in the thread’s row.
3. On the Grade Thread Users page, click Grade from a user’s row.
4. The Thread Grade page for the user appears with a collection of the user’s posts and a side panel containing three sections:
   a. Thread Statistics: Includes information about the user’s posts, such as Date of Last Post, Average Post Length, and Average Post Position.
   b. Thread Grade: Grade, Feedback, and Grading Notes are added in this section. The Grade Date appears here also.
   c. Contributors: Users, who have submitted one or more posts, appear with exclamation marks, the needs grading icon. Use the Previous User and Next User arrows in this section to navigate among users to grade or click a user’s name in the list. Click Show All to see all users in the course; users who have not posted to the graded thread are included in this list. Click Show with Posts Only to return to the list of users who have posts needing a grade.
5. In the content frame, evaluate the currently selected user’s posts and click Edit Grade in the Thread Grade section.
6. Type a point total in the Current Grade Value text box. Note: If a Rubric has been created for this graded thread, click View Rubric.
7. Optionally, type Feedback for the user and Grading Notes, which appear to the Discussion Board Manager or Grader only. Optionally, use the Spell Check function in the bottom of each text box.
8. Click Text Editor to access all the Text Editor functions for formatting text and adding URLs, attachments, images, Mashups, and multimedia.
9. Click Save Grade to add the Feedback, Grade, and Grading Notes to the Thread Grade section and to the Grade Center.
10. The Grade or Feedback can be edited by clicking the Edit Grade function again at any time. The changes appear in the Thread Grade section and in the Grade Center. The changes are documented in the Grade Center in the Grade History tab on the user’s Grade Details page.
11. When grading is complete, click OK to return to the Grade Thread Users page or use the breadcrumbs to return to the Discussion Board.

Note: Only users with a role of Manager or Grader can add grades for posts. A Grader cannot view his or her own work.
When Grade is selected in the user’s row, the student’s post or posts made to the individual thread appear. Just as with forum grading, review and add the grade in the side panel. After a grade has been assigned, it is saved in the Discussion Board and the Grade Center.
NOTE: When you create a thread in a forum where you have enabled thread grading, you can select the Grade Thread option and add points possible. At a later time, if you did NOT select the Grade Thread option when creating the thread, you can still grade the thread by clicking Grade in the thread’s Grade column on the thread listing page. Because you enabled the grading of threads for the entire forum, you can decide on a thread-by-thread basis to grade a thread at any time. The following image shows the Grade column and the Grade and Grade Thread functions.
EMAILING STUDENTS WHEN ASSIGNING GRADES

While assigning grades, you can use the Email tool in the Discussion Board to quickly contact students. For example, send a student a question prior to assigning a grade or send feedback after assigning a grade.

► QUICK STEPS: emailing students when assigning grades

1. Navigate to the forum or thread to assign a grade.
2. On the Grade Thread Users page or the Grade Forum Users page, select the check box for the user you want to email.
3. On the Action Bar, click Email.
4. On the Email Forum User page, edit the Subject, if you want. Type a question or feedback in the Message text box.
5. Click Submit.