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Discussion Board Overview

“The Discussion Board is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. The main Discussion Board page displays a list of available discussion forums that may appear anywhere in the course. A forum is an area where a topic or a group of related topics are discussed. A Discussion Board can contain one or more forums. For each forum, the page displays the total number of posts, the number of unread posts, and the number of users who have participated in the forum.” (from Blackboard Manual)

Discussion Board Terms

A Discussion Board is a public --public within a course/organization-- bulletin board that allows faculty and students to communicate asynchronously with each other.

A Forum is an instructor-created discussion area within a Discussion Board. It is the starting point, the container for topically-related Threads. Only instructors can create Forums.

A Thread is "The initial post and the entire series of replies to that post within a Discussion Board Forum." (From Blackboard Manual) A Forum may have one or more Threads. Threads can be started by instructors and, when allowed, by students.

Example of a Forum:

Ch 1 -5 Questions

Example of a Threads within the Ch 1 -5 Questions Forum:

Ch 1 Questions, Ch 2 Questions, etc.
Creating a Discussion Board Forum

1. Sign in to eCampus.
2. Select one of your courses.

3. On the Course Menu, select **Discussions**.

**Note:** You can navigate to the Discussion Board from:
- Course Menu
- Course Menu / Tools
- Control Panel / Course Tools
- (Note: When you select Control Panel / Course Tools / Discussion Board, you will see all Forums including Group Forums)
4. Select **Create Forum**.

Optional: Expand the work area over the course panels by

1) Placing the mouse arrow in the space to the right of the Course Menu.
2) When the left-pointing arrow appears, click on it.
Forum Name and Description

5. Type in the desired Forum **Name**.

6. Type in the Forum **Description**.
7. Under **Forum Availability**, select **Yes** to make the Forum available or **No** to make it unavailable. (When creating a Forum, the Forum is available by default.)
Set Forum Settings

1. Select the Grade Forum to add the forum to your Grade Center.
2. Enter the **Points possible**.
It is not recommended to select Grade Threads because a grading column will appear created in the Grade Center for each thread. Therefore, if you have multiple threads, this setting should be avoided.
Note: You can now determine how many Posts a student must submit before the needs grading (/favicon.png) icon will appear in the Grade Center.
You can now add a Rubric and show the Rubric to your students. For additional information on Rubrics, please view the Rubrics tutorial located in the Advanced Tutorials, Using Rubrics in eCampus.
If this radio button is selected, subscribed students will receive an email alert when a user posts/updates a reply.
3. Check this box if you want to **Allow Anonymous Post**. (This option is useful when discussing sensitive topics.)

**Note:** If this feature is turned off, users are identified by their username whenever they post a reply. Making members accountable for the content that they post is a deterrent for users that wish to post inappropriate content.

“Be careful when disabling this feature as there are instances where learning can benefit from anonymous post, particularly when discussing sensitive topics. If this feature is enabled, the forum cannot be graded.” *(From Blackboard Manual)*
4. Check this box to **Allow Author to Delete Own Post**.
Notice that the default radio button is: **Only post with no replies.**

**Note:** Leaving the default radio button allows an author to remove a post only if there have been no replies to that post.
5. Check this box if you want to **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts**.
6. Uncheck this box if you do not want to **Allow Members to Create New Threads**. (It is checked by default.)

**Note:** If you uncheck it, students will only be able to reply to threads you create or post on a forum.
Uncheck this box if you do not want to **Allow File Attachments**. (It is checked by default.)
If this box is selected, submitted posts will not be visible until they are published by Moderators (e.g., instructors, appointed students, students-assistants, etc.)

Once a student submits a post, Moderators may Publish or Return post.

If you want students to rate other students’ post, check this box.
For faster Discussion Board page loading, do not allow Post Tagging. Tagging is a way to add metadata to posts to make them easier to retrieve in searches. To tag items in a Forum, first select them and then click Collect.

A student cannot see a post’s current rating until after the student has submitted his/her own rating.

1. Select **Submit**.
Example of a newly created **Forum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Total Posts</th>
<th>Unread Posts</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 Questions</td>
<td>You must post at least one question each week.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Select Discussion Board in the Course Menu
Course Tools

Note: If the Discussion Board is accessed through the Control Panel Course Tools, a link with the Course Name appears in the list of Discussion Boards. This is a table showing the attributes of all current forums in the course not created for a Group.
Adding a Thread
In our next example we will add a Thread to the previously created Discussion Board Forum.

As mentioned previously, a Thread is, “The initial post and the entire series of replies to that post within a Discussion Board Forum.” (From Blackboard Manual) A Forum may have one or more Threads. Threads can be started by instructors and, when allowed, by students.

Creating a Thread

This course’s Discussion Board has a previously created forum, Week One Questions, with no threads/post.

1. To create a Thread, select Week 1 Questions Forum.
Note: If when creating a Forum, Allow Members to create new threads was not checked, students will not be able to post until the instructors creates the first Thread post.
2. To start a new **Thread** in a forum, select **Create Thread**.
3. Type the thread name and the desired message.
There is now 1 Post in the Chapter One Thread of the Week 1 Questions forum.

**Note:** Students will now be able to reply to the initial post. (If the instructor had not selected the Allow members to create new threads option, and had not created the first post to the thread, the students would not have been able to post to the forum.)
Viewing a Discussion Board Forum

To view a Discussion Board Forum, select Discussions.
2. Select the desired Forum.
Forum View

“The Forum view lists the threads in the Forum and includes several options for displaying and managing threads. The Forum is viewed in one of two contexts: Tree View or List View.” (From Blackboard Manual)

Select your preferred view. In this example, the List View is being used.
Selecting a Thread by Name

One can view a Thread by

• selecting the desired Thread's name or by
• selecting a Thread's check box and using the Collect tool

In this example we will select the Thread by name.
If you select a **Thread** by name the posts will appear as shown.

To read and reply to a post, select a post and select **Reply** or **Quote**. If **Quote** is selected, the **Reply** will contain the selected post’s text.
Scroll down and select **OK** to return to the Forum’s Thread page.
**Selecting a Thread using the Collect tool**

In this example, the Collect tool will be used to view all the postings belonging to the selected Thread.

“Collections gather posts into a printable, sortable format. Collections are a good way to organize posts for quick reading.” *(From Blackboard Manual)*
1. Select the check box next to the desired Thread.
2. Select **Collect**.
All the postings for the selected Thread are shown. (Note: To view all the postings, you will, in most cases, have to scroll down.)
**Sorting Postings**

Postings can be sorted:

- **Descending** or
- **Ascending** order
Filtering Postings

To **Filter** the postings select **Filter**.
Postings can be **Filtered** by:

- **Author:** Select **All Authors**, or select an author from the list.
- **Status:** **Show All threads**, or show **Published threads**.
- **Read Status:** **Show All** threads, show **Read** threads, or show **Unread** threads.
- **Tags:** **Show All** tags or select a tag from the list.
In this example, we are filtering the postings by Author.

1. Select the **Author** drop down box.
2. Select the desired **Author/Student**.
3. Select **Go**.

**Note:** Do not select **OK**, found at the bottom of the page, because it returns you to the Forum.

By scrolling down, we can now see all the selected **Author/Student**'s postings for this Thread.
To reply to a student’s posting, scroll down to the desired post and select **Reply** or **Quote**.
Grading a Discussion Board Forum

Making a Discussion Board forum Gradable

“Student interactions with the Discussion Board are a permanent record of participation. The Instructor has the option to grade Students at the Forum level [recommended] or at the Thread level [not recommended]. The Grade settings appear at the bottom of the Add Forum Page and the Edit Forum page.” (From Blackboard Manual)

Selecting Grade Forum allows the instructor to evaluate participants on their performance throughout the Forum.
Grading a Discussion Board Forum

There are several ways to grade a Discussion Board Forum.

In this example, we will show one of those ways.

To grade a Discussion Board Forum, select Discussions.
1. Select the desired **Forum**.
2. Select **Grade Forum**.

**Note:** If you do not see the **Grade Forum** tool,
- Go to the **Discussion Board** page
- Select the drop down menu (double chevrons) next to the desired Forum
- Select **Edit**
- On the Forum's **Discussion Board** edit page scroll down to **Forum Settings**
- Select **Grade Forum** and
- Enter the **Points Possible**
- Select **Submit**
3. Select **Grade** for the student you wish to grade.
4. Enter Grade.

5. Submit grade.
6. Scroll down and select **OK**.
The **Forum Grade** for the selected student has been entered.

Note: You can also view the grade entered by going to the **Grade Center**.
Viewing a Forum **Grade** in the **Grade Center**.