

DISCUSSION FORUMS

Moodle Workshops 2020

Discussion Forums are a great way to encourage student engagement, build community, and promote peer to peer communication in an online course. Moodle forums have several features and settings to customize the look and feel of the forum, track competition, and grade posts. When using forums it is important to discuss with students how to engage with forums respectfully and to be mindful of the communication differences when writing online vs. in-person or over video. Discussion forums are asynchronous and questions and posts are not often facilitated in real-time and thus, challenging post may be left unaddressed for several hours before a TA or instructor will see them.

FORUM TYPES

Single Simple Discussion: Allows for only one topic, started by the instructor. This is best for focused discussion that are facilitated by the instructor.

Each Person Posts One Discussion: Each student can start one discussion topic and can reply to any topic, multiple times. This is best for discussions where each student is required to start a topic and for engaging in multiple threads. This can be useful for shared reflections or critiques.

Q and A Forum: An instructor posts one topic such as a question. Students must post their response before they can view other students' responses. This is best if you do not want students to see the replies until they have posted their own.

Standard Forum for General use: An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time. It allows for multiple topics that can be started at any time. This good format for introductions, general/open discussions.

Standard Forum displayed in a Blog-like Format: Similar to the general use discussion, anyone can start a new discussion/topic at any time. It displays the most recent topic at the top of the page and students reply to it behind a link.

RATINGS

Instructors and TA's can grade students' discussion posts with the rating feature. You can grade each student post and they will be aggregated into a single grade in the gradebook. The grade will be calculated based on scale selected and the chosen aggregate type below:

- Average of ratings - The mean of all ratings
- Count of ratings - The number of rated items becomes the final grade. Note that the total cannot exceed the maximum grade for the activity.
- Maximum - The highest rating becomes the final grade
- Minimum - The smallest rating becomes the final grade
- Sum - All ratings are added together. Note that the total cannot exceed the maximum grade for the activity.

*note: the gradebook will automatically populate as grades are added. If you select 'sum' and do not finish grading all of a single student posts they will see an incomplete grade.

ACTIVITY COMPLETION

Activity Completion allows you to track student participation in a discussion post, it can also be used as an alternative to the ratings system. You can determine how many posts and replies you would like students to make and at what date you would like them to complete it on. Once they have completed the set number of posts, they will receive a check-mark in the activity completion log. This allows instructors and TA's to view each student's progress simultaneously. Activity completion will not populate the gradebook.

SUBSCRIPTION MODE

With subscription mode you can determine whether or not students will be notified of discussion posts. This may be a useful tool, especially in graded discussions, so students can keep up to date with the forum. You can also allow students to choose whether or not they subscribe. The options for subscription mode are:

- Optional subscription - Participants can choose whether to be subscribed
- Forced subscription - Everyone is subscribed and cannot unsubscribe
- Auto subscription - Everyone is subscribed initially but can choose to unsubscribe at any time
- Subscription disabled - Subscriptions are not allowed

CREATIVE WAYS TO USE DISCUSSION FORUM

Discussion forums can be a creative way to interact with students asynchronously. You can use discussion forums in the following ways:

- Asynchronous critiques: Students can post their artwork in progress or complete, and receive feedback from students and staff.
- Peer to Peer Support: General discussion forums can be a great way for students to interact with one another and solve one another's questions or challenges in the course.
- Reflections: Reflection post can be a useful way for students to self-assess their learning and share their thoughts with one another.
- Introductions: Students and instructors can create an introductory discussion post with photos and a brief description of the hobbies or art practice.
- Discussion Prompts: use discussion forums to talk about readings, course material, or artwork.