

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BOARD

Overview

The Discussion Board is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. The Discussion Board is made up of forums that may appear anywhere in the course but are also all centrally located in the Discussion Board tool.

Students usually participate in forums with no administrative privileges. However, a Student may be granted some forum administration privileges within a group.

Discussion Board Terms

The table below outlines the terms used to describe Discussion Board features.

TERM	DEFINITION
Thread	The initial post and the entire series of replies to that post within a Discussion Board forum.
Thread Detail	The page that displays the threaded view of all posts in a thread along with the selected post.
Post	A Discussion Board entry posted to a thread or used to start a thread. Also used as a verb to refer to the act of submitting a post.
Forum Role	A role type that is assigned to all members of the Discussion Board for each forum and enables specific privileges within the forum. A user may have one role per forum, however, a user's role in each forum may differ.
Blocked	A forum role that blocks the user from accessing the forum.
Reader	A forum role that grants the user the rights to read the contents of a forum. Users with this role may only view content and cannot add or respond to posts.
Participant	A forum role that grants the user read and write privileges in the forum.
Grader	A forum role that grants the user Participant privileges as well as the Grading privileges for the forum.
Moderator	A forum role that grants Participant privileges as well as the ability to modify,

TERM	DEFINITION
	delete, and lock posts. If a Moderation Queue is used, the Moderator may also approve or reject posts in the queue.
Manager	A forum role that grants all privileges.
Grade Forum	The process of assigning a grade to a user for their performance in a forum.
Grade Thread	The process of assigning a grade to a user for their performance in a thread.
Rate Post	The process of evaluating a post based on a fixed, 5 point scale.
Collect Posts	The process of selecting one or more posts or threads for inclusion in on a page that can be sorted, filtered, printed, and saved as a document. The collection is gathered into a format that can be sorted, filtered, printed, and saved as a document that can be viewed in a browser.
Flag	A mark used to call attention to the post.
Copy Forum	The process of creating a clone of a forum or the forum settings in the same discussion board or in another discussion board in the same course or organization.
Save Posts	The act of saving a post as a draft.
Published Post	A post that has been submitted and, if necessary, approved by a moderator.
Post Position	The position of a post in a thread relative to the other posts.
Draft	A post that has been saved for future editing.
Locked Thread	A thread that is visible for reading but cannot be modified. Users may not post to a locked thread.
Unavailable Thread	A thread that is hidden and inaccessible to all users except forum Managers.
Hidden Thread	A Thread that is locked and not visible by default. Users may view hidden threads by enabling the Display Hidden Threads feature.
Moderation Queue	A list of posts that must be approved before they will appear in the Discussion Board.

VIEW AND ORGANIZE DISCUSSION BOARD CONTENT

Overview

Forums can appear throughout a course. Each group may also have a private Discussion Board with forums available only to those users that are a part of the group. All forums that are not a part of a group are accessible from various points in the course or by going to the Discussion Board tool. The Discussion Board tool centralizes all of the forums in the course.

Search

A search function appears at the top of the page throughout the Discussion Board. The search includes a keyword field, date restrictions, and options for where to search. The search function starts at the current level and options exist to work up. For example, in a thread, the default search option only searches that thread but options exist to search the entire forum or all forums. From the search function, users can search all forums in the course, including any forums that appear in the user's groups.

Thread Status

The Forum Manager can change the status of a thread to one of the following:

- **Published:** A published thread is available to users.
- **Locked:** Users may read the thread but not make any additions or modifications. Locking a thread allows Grades to be assigned without users updating or changing posts.
- **Unlocked:** Unlocking a thread allows users to modify and add to the thread.
- **Hidden:** Hidden threads do not display unless the user chooses. Hidden threads may not be modified. Hiding threads removes outdated threads and makes relevant content easier to find.
- **Unavailable:** Unavailable threads are only visible to forum managers. Even then, forum managers must choose to view these threads. Making threads unavailable means that users can no longer view the thread.

Follow these steps to change the status of a thread:

1. Open a forum in the Discussion Board.
2. Select threads.
3. Choose a new status for the selected threads using the **Change Status to:** drop-down list.
4. Click **Go**.

Forum View

The forum view lists the threads in the forum and includes several options for displaying and managing threads. The list of threads can be sorted by clicking the carat at the top of each column. Posts within the thread are viewed by clicking on the hyperlinked name of the thread in the Thread column.

The functions at the top of the page include a Display option to show threads of different status and a search function. There is also an action bar that includes the following functions:

FUNCTION	PURPOSE
Add Thread	Initiate a new thread.
Remove Thread	Remove the selected threads from the forum. Deleted threads cannot be restored. Use the unavailable function to completely hide threads from users without actually deleting the threads.
Collect	Gather selected threads onto one page where posts can be sorted, filtered, or printed.
Change Status to:	Update the availability status of the selected threads.

Thread View

Clicking on a thread in a forum brings up the Thread Detail. The thread view is divided into three parts. Post viewing and management functions appear at the top of the page. The middle of the page displays a list of posts, with replies nested underneath the original post. The bottom of the page displays the current post.

The following options are available when viewing a thread:

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Action Bar	
Collect	Group posts into an organized filterable and sortable set.
Flag	Mark a post for later attention.
Unflag	Remove a flag applied to a post.
Message List	
Select Threads	Select each thread using the checkboxes or the select all/unselect all options. Selected Threads are included in Action Bar operations.
Current Post	
Subscribe	Receive an email alert when a post is updated or a user posts a reply.
Reply	Generate a response to a post.
Modify	Change the content of the post.
Remove	Remove the post. Removing a post also removes all the replies to that post.
Rate this Post	Select a score for the post on a 1 to 5 scale.
Previous Post	Post/Next Post
	Click these options to navigate through the posts in the thread.

Collections

Collections gather posts into a printable, sortable format. Collections are a good way to organize posts for quick reading.

INITIATE A THREAD

Overview

Threads are a series of posts related to a similar topic. When creating a forum, the Forum Manager has the option of allowing or not allowing users to start threads. If threads are graded, users cannot start threads. Generally, the purpose of the forum will dictate whether or not users can start threads. A moderated, graded forum used to evaluate student performance will usually be tightly controlled. In this case, it would not be appropriate to allow users to create threads. Other forums are designed for users to share opinions and thoughts on tangential or unrelated topics. In this case, it is safe to allow users to create threads and spark discussions.

Start a Thread

Follow these steps to start a thread.

1. Open a Discussion Board Forum.
2. Click **Add Thread** in the action bar. The Add Thread page will appear.
3. Enter a **Subject** and a **Message**. It is also possible to attach files to the post.
4. Click **Save** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to create the thread.

RESPOND TO A DISCUSSION BOARD POST

Overview

Threads grow as users respond to the initial, and subsequent, posts. Replies build on one another to construct a conversation.

Reply to a Post

Follow these steps to reply to a post.

1. Open a thread in a forum.
2. Find a post.
3. Click **Reply** for that post.
4. Enter a **Subject** and a **Message**. It is also possible to attach files to the post. Only one file can be added using the Attachment function below the text box. When using the Visual Text Box Editor, multiple files may be added.
5. Click **Save** to store a draft of the post or click **Submit** to create the thread.
6. The post will appear in the thread underneath the original post.