

Engaging Your Online Students: FORUMS

Marian Online 2 Faculty Workshop

4/22/2013

Marian University

Lynda Schultz

There are currently 5 types of forums. Each one behaves a little differently than the others, however there are commonalities, such as the fact that students have the ability to upload files and share them.

A SINGLE SIMPLE DISCUSSION:

Students will see the text you have placed in the Forum introduction setting as the first post of the discussion. Below you will find the replies that have been posted. This kind of forum is very useful if you are interested in keeping students focused on a particular issue. They cannot add a topic; they can only reply to the single topic you've created as well as reply to each other. In the example below, the student sees that their reply was rated.

Display replies in nested form

This forum allows everyone to choose whether to subscribe or not
Everyone can now choose to be subscribed
[Unsubscribe from this forum](#)

A single simple discussion
by [Teacher Demo](#) - Thursday, 17 July 2008, 10:26 PM

How is the weather?

I will rate your posts. Refer to the [course information section resource](#) for the Standard Evaluation Guidelines using the 10 point scale.

[Reply](#)

Re: A single simple discussion
by [Student Demo](#) - Thursday, 17 July 2008, 10:13 PM

The weather is super here in Franconia. I see it is cloudy and threatening freezing rain in Perth.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Maximum rating: **8 / 10**

Introduction area

Teacher rated this post

Student view of **A single simple discussion** forum type

EACH PERSON POSTS ONE DISCUSSION:

The view will be basically the same as in the previous case, the only difference is the **Add a new discussion** option. Viewing a forum page, the student will see the text you have written in the **Forum introduction** space while creating the forum, and, if there are any, the discussions that have been started. This would be useful when each person needs to post an assignment or question or if you want each student to start a discussion. Each discussion can then have multiple replies. A single discussion topic per person allows students a little more freedom than a single discussion forum.

This forum allows everyone to choose whether to subscribe or not
Everyone can now choose to be subscribed
[Unsubscribe from this forum](#)

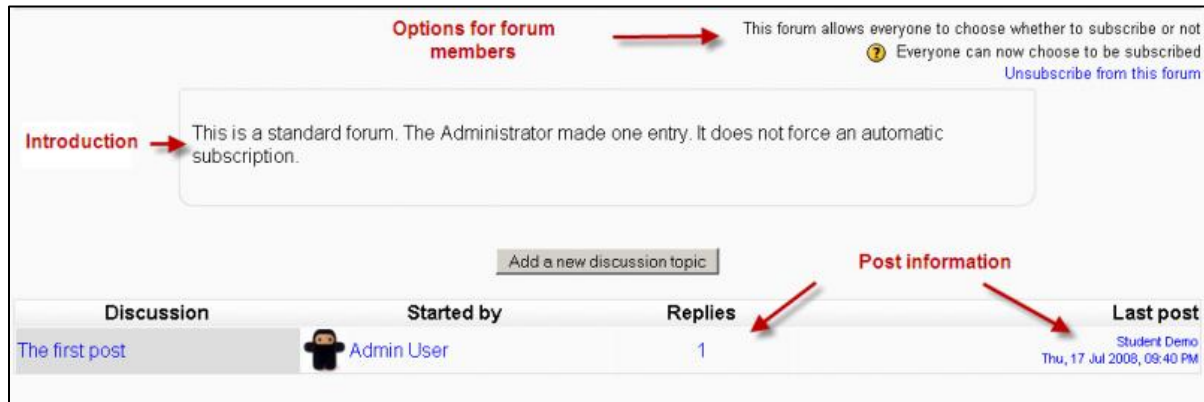
Introduction → Please post one discussion point about your favorite artist and attach a picture of their work.
This is for fun but your participation will count towards your grade.

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Andrew Wyeth	Student Demo	0	Student Demo Thu, 17 Jul 2008, 10:57 PM

Student view of **Each person posts one discussion** forum type

STANDARD FORUM FOR GENERAL USE:

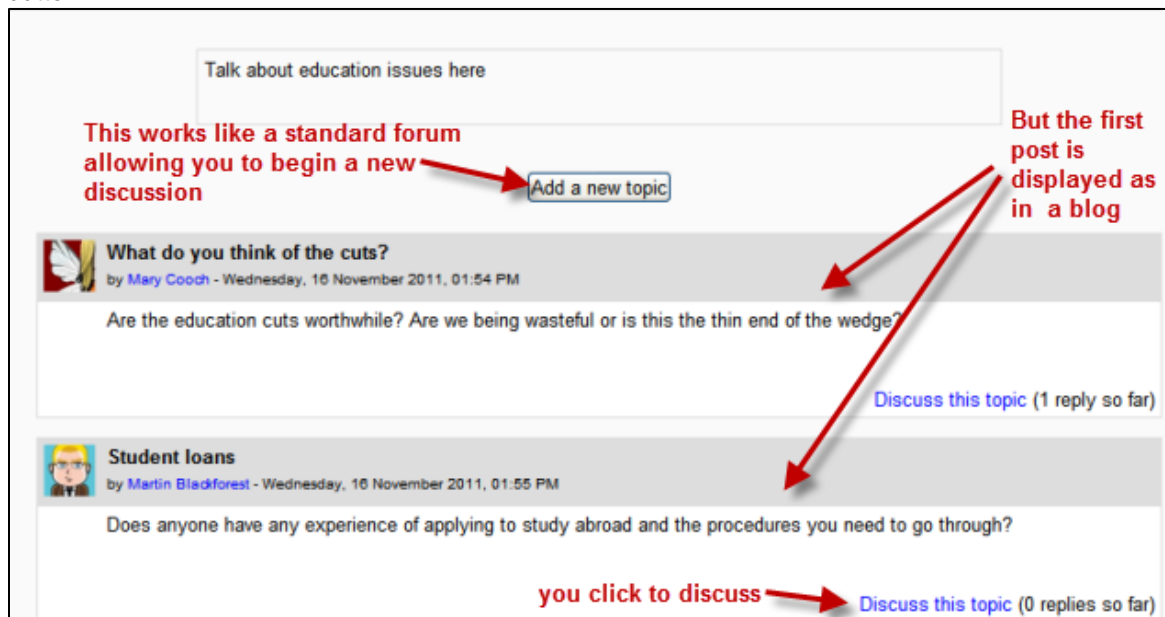
In this forum type, students will see the introduction text in a separate space above the discussion field, in which you will see the information such as the title of the discussion (which means the forum's title), its author, the number of replies and the date of the last post. There can be one or more discussions in this forum, and anyone with permission can post multiple discussion threads. This type of forum is probably most useful for large discussions that you intend to monitor/guide. Also, it's a good general-purpose forum.



Student view of "Standard forum" type

STANDARD FORUM DISPLAYED IN BLOG-LIKE FORMAT:

In the upper right corner of the home forum screen (above the introduction), the student may see the options the teacher has set for subscriptions to the forum, and the 'Jump to' field, with which you can 'jump' to any part of the course. This is also place where the teacher will find the "Update this forum" button.




QUESTION AND ANSWER FORUM

This forum requires students to post their perspectives before viewing other students' postings. After the initial posting, students can view and respond to others postings. In a Question and Answer forum, you post the question and students respond with possible answers.

Or it can be used when you have a particular question that you wish to be answered.


This is a question and answer forum. In order to see other responses to these questions, you must first post your answer

Olympics Q & A forum

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Combining the Games	 Mary Cooch	1	David Beckham Thu, 13 Sep 2012, 10:05 PM

Initial view of Q&A forum

This is a question and answer forum. In order to see other responses to these questions, you must first post your answer

 **Combining the Games**
by [Mary Cooch](#) - Thursday, 13 September 2012, 9:58 PM

Do you think the Olympics and Paralympics should be combined? If yes, why, and if no, why not?

[Reply](#)

Subject (hidden)
Author (hidden)

This post cannot be viewed by you, probably because you have not posted in the discussion or the maximum editing time hasn't passed yet.

Students cannot see posts until they post

 **Combining the Games**
by [Mary Cooch](#) - Thursday, 13 September 2012, 9:58 PM

Do you think the Olympics and Paralympics should be combined? If yes, why, and if no, why not?

[Reply](#)

 **Re: Combining the Games**
by [David Beckham](#) - Thursday, 13 September 2012, 10:05 PM

I think in an ideal world they should be combined but in reality I think it would cause a lot of organisational problems and create so many more categories the games would be come unmanageable.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Combining the Games**
by [Bradley Wiggins](#) - Thursday, 13 September 2012, 10:07 PM

Absolutely! Yes! Bring it on!

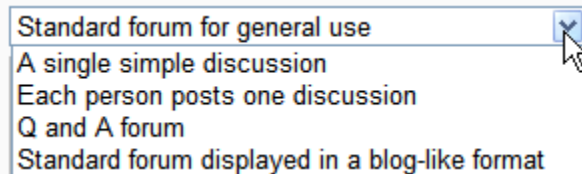
Other posts are visible when editing time is over (5 minutes.)

Forum name

This is a short name of the forum (e.g. "Introductions"), which will be displayed on the course homepage.

Forum type

There are five forum types to choose from:



A News forum is a special type of forum that is automatically created with a new course. Use it to post announcements to your students – anything posted there will be automatically emailed to everyone. Students are unable to post to this forum.

Forum introduction

Place the description of the forum here. It has the standard Moodle HTML editor toolbar to assist you.

TIP: Include precise instructions for students regarding the subject of the forum and the rating and grading criteria that will be used in this forum.

Subscription mode

When a user is subscribed to a forum, they will receive notification (via popup and/or email, depending on the user's messaging settings preferences) of each new posting. By default, posts are recorded about 5 minutes after the post was first written. Depending upon the email settings of each forum member, they may be sent an email immediately after the 5 minute edit window is closed, or in a batch at a time fixed by the site administrator.

People can usually choose whether or not they want to be subscribed to each forum. However, the teacher can choose to force subscription on a particular forum; then all course users will be subscribed automatically, even those who enroll at a later time.

There are 4 subscription mode options:

- 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.

The subscription mode and subscribe or unsubscribe links appear in the **Settings** menu under **Forum administration** when viewing the forum. Teachers can quickly change the mode via the **Subscription mode** options and view the current subscribers via the **Show/edit current subscribers** link.

Tips:

- Forcing everyone to subscribe can be overwhelming to most students. All of a sudden, their inbox is flooded with emails and they aren't sure what to do about it. Most end up reading none of them.
- Changing the setting from "Yes, initially" to "No" will not unsubscribe existing users, it will only affect those who enroll in the course in the future. Similarly changing "Yes, initially" will not subscribe existing course users but only those enrolling later.
- **The recommended setting is the "Subscriptions not allowed" setting** which prevents students (accidentally) from subscribing to the forum. This also prevents the deluge of emails which then prompts the students to log in more frequently to see the postings.

Read tracking for this forum?

"Read tracking" for a forum allows users to track read and unread messages in the forum.

There are three options for this setting:

- Optional (default) - students can turn tracking on or off for the forum at their discretion
- On - tracking is always on in this forum for all members. **This is the recommended setting**, especially when subscriptions are off.
- Off - tracking is always off in this forum for all members

Maximum attachment size

The maximum file size that may be attached to a forum post is 64 MB. Unless you have a reason to do otherwise, you will probably want to allow the maximum. That prevents students from being frustrated when they can't upload something they want to share.

Maximum number of attachments

The maximum number of attachments a user can add to their forum post (from 0 to 100) can be specified here.

Post threshold for blocking

Students can be blocked from posting more than a specified number of posts in a given period.

Grade

Forum posts can be graded. This is a useful tool for giving students participation grades. Any ratings given in the forum are recorded automatically in the gradebook.

Aggregate type

You can set an aggregate type; in other words, decide how all the ratings given to posts in a forum are combined to form the final grade (for each post and for the whole forum activity). Some scales do not lend themselves to certain types of aggregates. There are five options:

- Average of ratings (default) - This is the mean of all the ratings given to posts in that forum. It is especially useful when there are a lot of ratings being made for multiple posts.

- Count of ratings - The counts the number of rated posts which becomes the final grade. This is useful when the number of posts is important. Note that the total cannot exceed the maximum grade allowed for the forum. A count may be used if the teacher simply wants to acknowledge that a reply was given in the case students being required to make a certain number of posts in the discussion. Note: Count of ratings does not work for the "Separate or Connected Ways of Knowing" scale or custom scales due to the limitation imposed by the max grade.
- Maximum rating - The highest rating is returned as the final grade. This method is useful for emphasizing the best work from participants, allowing them to post one high-quality post as well as a number of more casual responses to others.
- Minimum rating - The smallest rating is returned as the final grade. This method promotes a culture of high quality for all posts.
- Sum of ratings - All the ratings for a particular user are added together. Note that the total is not allowed to exceed the maximum grade for the forum. Note: Sum of ratings does not work for the "Separate or Connected Ways of Knowing" scale or custom scales due to the limitation imposed by the max grade.

Restrict ratings to posts with dates in this range

The teacher can allow only posts within a certain date range to be rated. This is useful if the teacher wants to keep students focused on the most recent content and maintain a specific pace within the forum or course.

Common module settings

Using groups with forums

The **group mode** setting has three options:

1. No groups
2. Separate groups - each group can only see their own group, others are invisible
3. Visible groups - each group works in their own group, but can also see other groups

If the group mode is set to separate groups:

Adding a new discussion topic to a forum set to separate groups

- Teachers are given the option of adding a new discussion topic for all participants or for a selected group. If a teacher adds a new discussion topic for a selected group, then only group members can reply to it. If a teacher adds a new discussion topic for all participants, then students can't reply to it. (This is to ensure that groups are kept separate.)
- Students can only start discussions for their own group.
- Students can only reply to discussions started by other group members or discussions for their own group started by a teacher.

If the group mode is set to visible groups:

- Teachers are given the option of adding a new discussion topic for all participants or for a selected group. If a teacher adds a new discussion topic for a selected group, then only group members can reply to it.
- Students can only start discussions for their own group.
- Students can only reply to discussions started by other group members or teachers.

Note: Single simple discussions cannot be set to separate groups. Instead, a standard forum should be used.

Visible to students

You can hide the activity from students by selecting "Hide" here. It is useful if you wouldn't like to make the activity available immediately.

ID number

Setting an ID number provides a way of identifying the forum for grade calculation purposes. If the activity is not included in any grade calculation then the ID number field can be left blank.