Manage and Grade Discussion Board Exchanges

This guide provides the steps to use the Discussion Board for facilitation of student learning.

There is a 20 page detailed guide also available at http://irt.austincc.edu/blackboard/

From the new Discussion Board interface, you can quickly perform multiple functions that formerly required multiple steps and subsequent navigation to other pages.
It is now possible to add forums, search, read, modify, manage and grade discussions from one location.

In this workshop you will:

- Use List View
- Use Tree View
- Reply to and Quote a thread
- Attach a file
- Modify forum settings
- Use Search function
- Collect Posts
- Flag and tag threads or posts
- Grade via the Discussion Board
Discussion Board interface

First set up a Forum that serves as the container for one or more topics, or Threads. You and your students then exchange messages (or Posts) that everyone in the class can read. Anyone can make a response (or Reply), which gets attached to its parent message. Together, the Posts and Replies create the “Thread”, as in “thread of conversation”. As more students read the original Post, the number of responses grows. In this way, you and your students can have a dialogue on a number of topics, read and respond at your convenience. Threads can be displayed in a hierarchical order or “Tree” view.

1. Add Forum
2. Search function
3. Column of Forum title and description, which are boldfaced if they contain Unread Posts
4. Columns for Forum details, including whether a Forum is set up to be graded
5. Instructor controls (Modify, Manage, Remove, Copy)
6. Column to Display Order of Forums

Note: Students do not see the button for add Forums or columns for Display Order, Grading or other instructor controls.

To enter a Forum: Select its underlined title.
**View Forum**

All users, including your students, can choose how to see this page:

- **List View** displays Threads in a list that is completely “flush left” on the screen.
- **Tree View** displays Threads in a collapsible/expandable “tree” structure that indents replies.

Features common to both List and Tree views include the following:

- Each Thread includes the date/time it was entered (based on the server location in Central time), its subject line, and the name of the person who entered it.
- Any Threads with unread Posts appear in boldface.

**Instructor only** options include:

- Thread, Remove, Collect, Mark Read, Mark Unread and, if enabled, Subscribe and Forum Grading.

### List View

1. The **Flag** column will show if any Posts within that Thread have been flagged by the user (such as to remind the user to follow up).

2. On the top action bar is a **Change Status To** dropdown box. This lets you update the status of any given Thread: Published, Hidden, Unavailable, Locked or Unlocked.

3. Only the List View shows the **Status** of a Thread (see No. 2 above).

4. Select the underlined link for **Unread Posts** to Collect all of those Posts onto a single page for easier access. You can then place a checkmark by each Post and select **Mark Read**.

5. The bottom action bar includes a **Display** function that lets you choose what Status of Thread(s) you want to see: Show All, Published, Locked, Hidden, Unavailable, and Drafts.
Tree View

1. In the Tree View, the Flag options appear in the top action bar.

2. A Search function appears at top right.

3. A button to Refresh the screen is at bottom left.

4. The Tree View can show all the Posts of a Forum on one page (Expand All) or close up each Thread so only its first Post appears (Collapse All).

   To expand a single Thread, use the + (plus) sign to the left of the first Post; to collapse the Thread, use the – (minus) sign.
View a Thread and Its Posts

To read a Thread:
Select its *underlined title* OR, in List View, Select the underlined number of *Unread Posts*.

The **Thread Detail** includes the following elements:
1. An action bar with options for various actions
2. The Thread “tree” lists all the Posts of the Thread
3. Search function
4. A link to **Refresh** the screen and a dropdown for selecting or unselecting Threads used in conjunction with the Go button
5. The body Post is highlighted in blue in the Thread tree

Note: The options along the top and bottom of a Post (in this case, **Reply, Quote, Modify, Set Flag and Remove**) are largely dependent on the instructor’s custom settings.

=> If you want to move the Post area above the Thread tree, select the small black arrow that appears at the top right corner of the tree.
Select it again and the Post will once again appear under the tree.
The "minus" sign hides the tree altogether.
Reply to and Quote a Thread

Select the underlined message subject, or Select Previous Post/Next Post in the right corner of a Post to read it. To respond, Select Reply or Select Quote. The latter will place the Parent Post into the body of your response. Type your content, then Submit.

1. The Reply feature will bring up a textbox and automatic title, as in the screenshot below.

2. You may want to instruct students to write more specific subject lines that reflect the keyword of the topic of their contribution to the discussion.

3. Notice that this post Quotes the Parent Post in the message body.

4. Save a draft of a Post and come back to it later if you choose. Post will only appear in your view of the Thread until you select Modify to finish it, then Submit.

Asynchronous communication like email is not the best choice when complicated or emotional topics need to be discussed.

Author: Martha Meacham  
Date: Friday, October 26, 2007 5:45:29 PM CDT  
Subject: Under what circumstance is synchronous communication a better choice?

Under what circumstances is asynchronous communication an advantage?  
Under what circumstance is synchronous communication a better choice?  
Give examples and explain your answers.
Attach a File

You can attach a file to your posts to share any document format: jpg, pdf, html, doc etc.

Modify Forum Settings

Select Discussion Board from the course menu > Select Forum at the top of the screen.
Or, Select Discussion Board from the Control Panel and select the whole group or small group forum.

Note: The Control Panel view is a bit different from the course menu view in that it lists:

1. The main course discussion board (which shows the course ID)
2. The discussion boards for any and all groups
The **Add Forum** page asks you to complete the three main elements of a Forum:

1. Basic Information (Name and a description)
2. Availability
3. Optional Settings, then Submit.

You can outline specific details in the Forum Description, or start off discussion with the first Thread and give your instructions there.

If you do not check the boxes for **Display After** and **Display Until**, the Forum will remain available (or unavailable) for the duration of the course.
Allow Anonymous Posts
If you plan to grade participation in the Discussion Board, it's best to avoid this!
This is good feature for obtaining formative feedback from students, like using Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT) ideas of Angelo and Cross.

Allow Author to Remove Own Posts
Be aware that if you allow users to remove their own Posts without also checking “Posts with no replies,” they could potentially wipe out the Posts of their classmates.

Allow Author to Modify Own Published Posts
Go ahead and check this one so that users can correct their own typos, etc.

Allow Post Tags
Tags allow instructors (or Forum managers) to “tag” a Post with the key topics one might find in it. For
example, you might Tag any Posts that concern the topic *child-rearing*. This is different from the Search function in the sense that Search looks for keywords, whereas Tags will grab Posts that may discuss a topic but not use the actual label (in other words, a user may talk about child-rearing without ever using that particular phrase). Tags work independent of Thread or Thread Status. Be forewarned that Tagging can slow down the Discussion Board, so you may only want to use it now and then during a course.

**Allow Users to Reply with Quote**
This will allow users to include the Parent Post in the body of their Reply.

**Allow File Attachments**
This setting is automatically checked and is recommended if students will be upload papers for peer review or otherwise attach documents for others to see.

**Allow Members to Create New Threads**
This setting is automatically checked. Note that if you choose to *Grade by Thread*, Blackboard will automatically disable this so that you can create the only Thread to which students respond.

**Subscribe**
This setting will allow users to select a button that tells Blackboard to notify them by e-mail each time a new Post is added to a Thread or Forum. The result of checking this box in the Forum Settings is a button that appears along the action bar on the Forum page or in the Thread Detail. (1)

=>Note that allow *Subscriptions by Forum* is the option to choose if you will be allow students to create new Threads. If you choose *Subscribe to Thread*, Blackboard will disable the setting for allow students to create new Threads.

**Allow Members to Rate Posts**
Post ratings allows users to rate Posts in the Forum on a scale of one to five stars as a form of peer review. (2) Peer rating can be used to pedagogical advantage, perhaps as part of the grade you give.

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**Force Moderation of Posts**
A feature often seen in cyberspace, moderation refers to the screen of Posts before they are viewable by the rest of the users. Forums on the World Wide Web are often moderated to prevent inappropriate messages (foul language, anger etc.)

This feature does have some great pedagogical uses. For instance, you can use the Moderation feature to have students write Posts (or even submit files) that only you can see at first, then after you determine a grade, you Publish the Post for the rest of the class to make comments. Or, you may choose to delegate responsibility for reviewing Posts to a student Moderator, who would review submitted Posts and decide whether to Publish them.

***For details on Moderation, see the 22p Discussion Board Guide.***
Forum and Thread Grades

Instructors may choose to grade by Forum or by Thread. The grade icon will appear in the Grade column for Forums or for Threads as appropriate. The main difference is whether you will allow students to create new Threads, or if you will be writing the initial Threads yourself to which students Reply. Note that if you choose Grade by Thread, Blackboard will warn you that users will not be able to create new Threads, although a bug will still allow them. If students do create new Threads, Blackboard will let you enable grading for those Threads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graded Forum</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Modify</th>
<th>Manage</th>
<th>Remove</th>
<th>Copy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a sample forum to show how the grading feature works.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graded Threads</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Modify</th>
<th>Manage</th>
<th>Remove</th>
<th>Copy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This forum is designed to test out the grading of threads.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use Search

A search function appears at the top right of the action bar throughout the Discussion Board.

Select the Search button > Enter a keyword or phrase > Choose the desired option for where to search > Choose date restrictions (optional) > Select Go.

1. 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, including any Forums that appear in the user's groups.
**Collect Posts**

Grouping Posts into *Collections* is convenient for reading or printing multiple Posts at once. *Collect* assembles the checked Posts onto a single page for easier reading, as shown.

**Collect Threads:**

1. Select a checkbox next to the desired Posts > Select *Collect* on the action bar.

2. If you want all the Posts on the page, use the Select All dropdown at the bottom of the page, Select *Go*, and then Select *Collect*.

The default view shows the Posts in the order they were written, from the bottom up.

1. Action bar for Print or mark Posts as Read or Unread
2. Filter to show Posts based on Author, Status or Read Status (Read or Unread)
3. Selection dropdown box and Sort feature
4. Bottom action bar for act on a single Post.
**Flag Threads or Posts**

Flags are used to find Threads or Posts at a later time, perhaps to help you remember where someone cited a useful resource or to remind you to **Reply later**.

1. Select the Forum **Tree View**
2. Place a check next to the desired **Thread title**
3. Select **Flag** on the action bar.

**Flag any Post:**

On the **Thread Detail** page, place a check next to the desired **Post title** > Select **Flag** on the action bar.

Or, use the action bar that flanks the top and bottom of a Post, Select **Set Flag**.

(This action bar will only appear if a Post is not yet Flagged.)

**To unflag any Post:**

On the **Thread Detail** page, place a check next to the desired **Post title** > Select **Clear Flag** on the action bar. Or, use the action bar that flanks the top and bottom of a Post, Select **Clear Flag**. (This will only appear if a Post is Flagged.)
**Tag Posts**

Forum managers can create and apply text labels of their own choosing to messages in a Forum; other Discussion Board users can read, filter, and search messages us the Tags but cannot create new ones. Tags allow arbitrary message group independent of Thread or Thread status.

*Be sure that in Forum Settings, you have checked the box to **Allow Post Tagging** (see p.8)*

**Create Tags**

In the Forum List View, select specific Posts and Select **Collect** > Select the Posts to Tag us the checkboxes (or use the Select All dropdown and Select Go) > Enter a new Tag name in the Add Tag field in the action bar > Select **Go**. Or, **Collect** desired Posts > Select **Add** in the action bar beneath a Post > Enter a Tag name > Select **OK**.

**View Tags**

1. In the Forum **List View**,  
2. Select the underlined links in the Tag column.  
3. Or, highlight the desired Tag category in the dropdown and Select **Go**.

**Remove Tags**

Select the red “X” icon next to a Tag.
**Grade via Discussion Board**

You have the option to grade students in the Discussion Board itself at the Forum level or at the Thread level. Upon setting up the Discussion Board (p. 9), the instructor chooses at that time whether and how to grade. This can later be changed by Modify the Forum settings.

**Access the Grade Feature**

Blackboard will show a Grade icon in different areas, depending on whether you have chosen the Grade by Forum or Grade by Thread setting.

If you’ve chosen to Grade by Forum, an icon will appear in a Forum's Grade column.

When you grade via the Discussion Board, a column is automatically created in the Grade Center. When you enter grades, they will appear in the appropriate column in the Grade Center.

With Grade by Thread, the Grade icon appears to the right of the Thread list when in Forum List View.
In the Forum *Tree View*, select the **Thread Detail** link to see *Grade Thread* in the action bar. Grade Thread is visible on the **Thread Detail** page regardless of your Forum view.

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**Assign Grades**

The grading feature creates a list of all users and their number of Posts. Select *Grade* next to a student’s name will produce a page of his/her Collected Posts and a place to enter a grade.

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A user with a role of Instructor, Manager or Grader can enter grades.

1. Select the **Grade** icon in Forum *List View* or **Grade Thread** in *Tree View*
2. Select **Grade** for any given student. If necessary, review the Collected Posts for that student.
3. Enter the points earned.
4. Select **Submit** (next to the grade box) at the top of page. Select **OK** at the bottom of the page.

***Alternately, you can grade discussion Posts via the Grade Center itself. See the detailed Discussion Guide.***