D2L :

Discussions Quick Start Guide

Overview --

The Discussions tool is a communication tool that can be used to enhance a course site. This feature is similar to a chat, but is designed for asynchronous use, users are not present at the same time to converse online.

Objectives –

- Creating Discussion Forums
- Participating in Discussions
- Subscribing to Discussions
- Grading Discussions

Accessing Discussions –

To open the Grades tool, click on the *"**Evaluation**"* link group in the default course NavBar and then select **Discussions.**
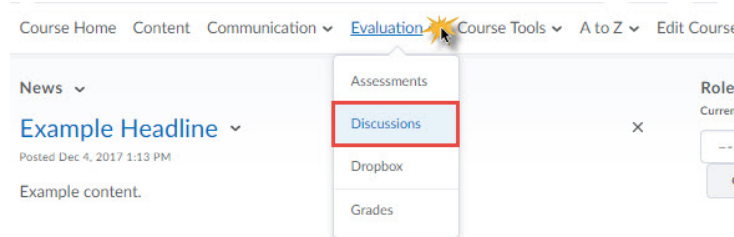
Creating Discussion Forums

Before your students can post to a discussion you must first create both a Forum and a Topic. Forums act as categories and Topics act as Prompts. Students cannot post to a Forum; they can only post to a topic within a Forum.

Creating a Forum

1. Navigate to the Discussions Tool
2. Click **New**, and then select **New Forum** from the drop-down menu (Figure 1).
3. Enter a **title** (required).
4. Enter a **description** (optional).
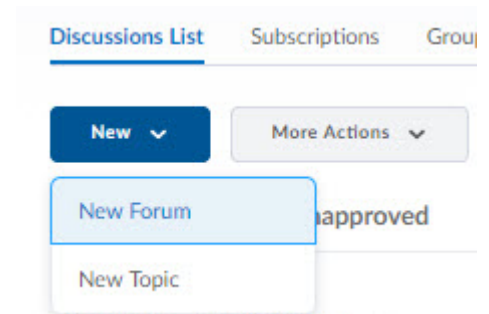5. Click **Save and Close** at the bottom of the page.

Figure 1

Creating a Topic

1. Navigate to the Discussions Tool
2. Click **New**, and then select **New Topic** from the drop-down menu
3. Select a **Forum** (required)
   - If you have already created the Forum in which you want to add a Topic, select it from the *"Forum"* drop-down menu (Figure 2).
   - If you want to create a new Forum for your Topic, click **New Forum**
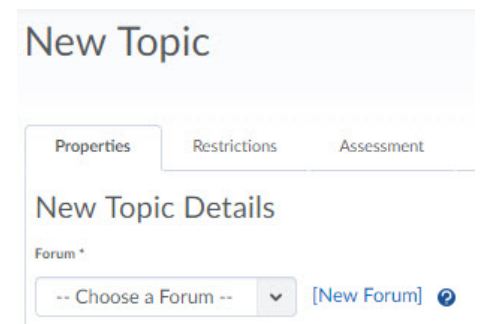4. Enter a **title** (required).

Figure 2

5. Enter a **description** (optional).
6. Select **options** for the Topic (optional):
   - **Allow anonymous posts**: This option allows students to anonymously post to the Topic.
   - **A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the topic**: This option requires you to approve posts before students are able to view them
   - **Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads**: This option requires students to post to the topic before they can read and reply to other students' posts.
7. Select a **ratings option** (optional) (Figure 3):
   - **No Ratings (default):** all ratings controls are disabled.
   - **Five-Star Rating Scheme**: students can assign each post a score from zero to five.
   - **Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme**: students can vote to increase or decrease a post's rating.
   - **Up Vote Only Rating Scheme**: students can vote to increase a post's rating (but they cannot vote to decrease it.)
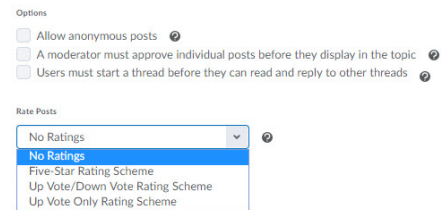8. Click **Save and Close** at the bottom of the page.

Figure 3

Edit an Existing Forum or Topic

1. Click the drop-down arrow next to the Forum or Topic you would like to edit, and select **Edit Forum** (Figure 4) or **Edit Topic** (Figure 5), depending on which one you are editing.
2. Click **Save and Close** when you are done making changes to the forum or topic.
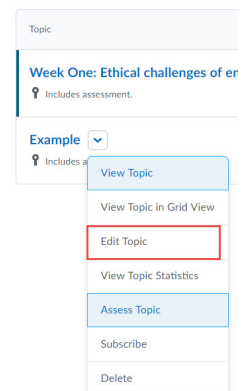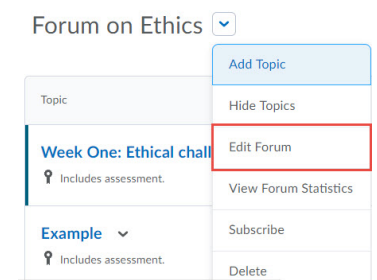

Figure 4

Figure 5

Participating in Discussions

You can participate in discussions by posting a new thread or by replying to another user's thread. A thread is the initial response to the topic.

Post a New Thread

1. Click the title of the Topic
2. Click the **Start a New Thread** button (Figure 6)
3. Enter a **Subject**
4. Enter a **Message**
   - If you want your thread to be the top post in the Topic, select **Pin** thread.
   - If you want to receive notifications when updates are made to this thread, keep **Subscribe** to this thread selected.
   - If you want to attach a file to the message, click **Add Attachments**.
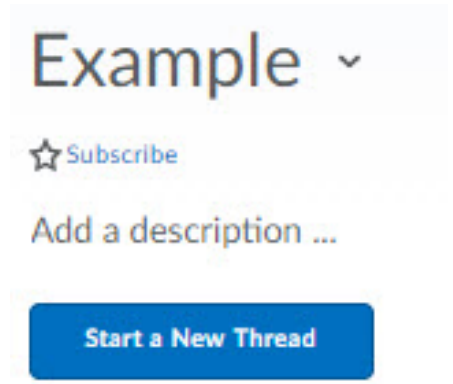5. Click **Post**.

Figure 6

Reply to a Thread

1. Click on the title of the user's thread to which you'd like to reply.
2. Click **Reply to Thread** (Figure 7).
3. Enter your reply in the **message** field.
   - Click **Add Attachments** if you want to attach a file to the message.
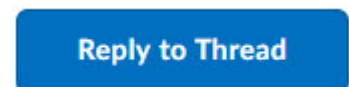4. Click **Post**

Figure 7

Subscribing to Discussions

When you subscribe to a Forum or Topic, you will receive an email notification when students post to it. You can alter the method and frequency of your notifications. Subscribing to a Forum will subscribe you to all Topics within that Forum.

Note: By default, you will automatically be subscribed to threads you post.

Manually Subscribe to a Forum or Thread

1. Navigate to the Discussion tool
2. Click the drop-down arrow next to the title of the Forum or Topic to which you would like to subscribe.
3. Click **Subscribe** on the drop-down menu (Figure 8).
   - The *Customize Notifications* dialog box will open.
4. Select a notification frequency option:
   - **Show notifications in minibar only**: receive no email notifications, but have alerts for new posts show up in D2L.
   - **Send me an instant notification:** receive a separate email notification as each student posts a thread.
   - **Include in my summary of activity**: receive a daily summary of all posts to a Forum or Topic.
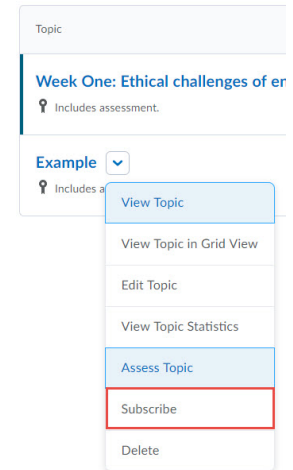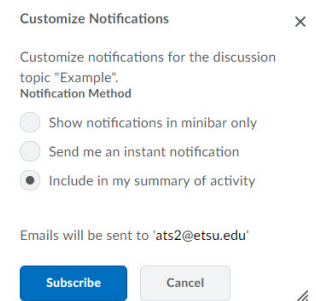5. Click **Subscribe** (Figure 9).

Figure 8

Figure 9

Unsubscribing from a Forum or Topic.

1. To unsubscribe from a Forum or Topic, click the drop-down arrow next to its title, and select **Unsubscribe**.

Grading Discussions

Assessing discussion topics allows you to enter a numeric score and provide feedback to your students. In order to assess a discussion, you must first set up the topic for assessment. You also have the option to export the grades and feedback to the gradebook. Follow these steps to set up your discussion for assessment:

Set Up a Topic for Assessment

1. Navigate to the Discussion tool
2. Click the drop-down arrow next to the Topic you want to assess, and click **Edit Topic**.
3. Click the **Assessment** tab (Figure 10).
4. Select a **Grade item** (optional):
   - If you want the Topic to be linked to a Grade item you have already created, select the item from the "**Grade Item**" drop-down list. If you want to create a new Grade item for the Topic, click **New Grade Item**.
5. Enter the maximum points assigned to the Topic in the "**Score Out Of**" field. (Figure 11).
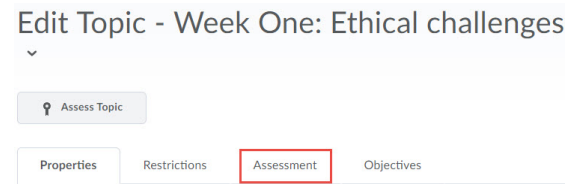6. Click **Save and Close**.

Edit Topic - Week One: Ethical challenges

Assess Topic

Properties | Restrictions | Assessment | Objectives

Figure 10

Assessment

Grade Item

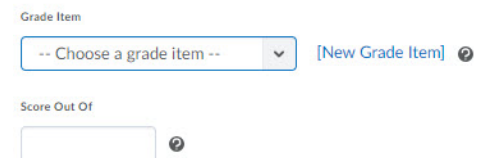-- Choose a grade item -- [New Grade Item]

Score Out Of

Figure 11

Assign Scores and Provide Feedback

1. Navigate to the Discussion tool
2. Click the drop-down arrow next to the topic you want to assess, and click **Assess Topic** (Figure 12).
3. Click **Topic Score** under the name of the student whose posts you want to assess (Figure 13). This window displays all posts made by a student within a particular topic.
4. Enter the number of points you want to assign to the student's posts in the **Topic Score** field.
5. Select **Published** (optional). *You'll only see this box if the topic is linked to a grade item.*

Topic | Threads

Week One: Ethical challenges of engineering writing | 0
Includes assessment.

Example

View Topic
View Topic in Grid View
Edit Topic
View Topic Statistics
Assess Topic
Subscribe
Delete

Figure 12

First Name, Last Name

ATS4 Training

Topic Score

Figure 13

6. Enter feedback on the student's post (optional).
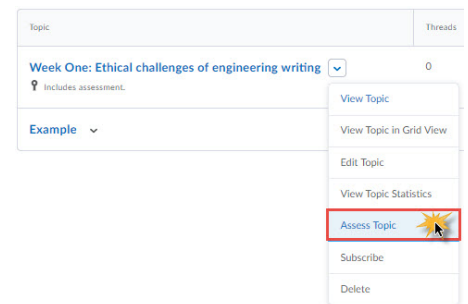
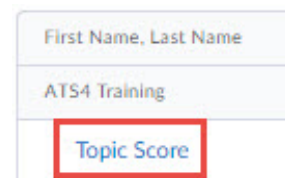7. Click **Save and Close**. To return to the "**Assess Topic**" page.

Note: If your discussion topic is linked to a grade item, the student list on the "Assess Topic" page will include an additional column, "Publish to Grades." You can select the checkboxes in this column to publish an individual student's score to the Grades area, or if you want to publish all of the students' scores to the Grades area, click Publish All Scores to Grades at the top of the page.