D2L Brightspace

The Discussions Tool
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Introduction

D2L Brightspace® is an excellent tool for instructors. Utilizing the discussion tool, you have the ability to engage and facilitate meaningful and interactive discussions with students in the D2L Brightspace environment. This document has been developed to introduce you to the Discussions tool.

Objectives

The following learning objectives are covered in this document:

- Understanding and Navigating the layout of the Discussions tool
- Creating discussions with forums, topics, threads, and messages
- Grading topics
Accessing the Discussions Page

The Discussions Tool can be found on the Navbar of your D2L Brightspace Course. The following explains how to access the Discussions tool.

1. Log into D2L Brightspace using your NetID Credentials.
2. Navigate to the Course Home Page for the course that you wish to access.
3. Click on Discussions, located on your course NavBar.

4. You will be taken to the Discussions page. The layout for this page is as follows:
   a. **New** – Create a new discussion forum or topic.
   b. **More Actions** – Allows you to copy, reorder, delete, and restore forums or topics.
   c. **Filter by** – Provides filtering options for the Discussions page.
   d. **Forum Level** – Displays the forum. Forums are used to organize discussion topics into categories. You must create at least one forum before creating topics.
   e. **Topic** – Displays the topics within the forum. Topics are where students create new threads and reply to existing threads.
   f. **Topic Statistics** – Displays statistics relevant to each topic.
Creating a Discussion Board
There are four levels to the Discussions Board in D2L Brightspace. They are described below:

- **Forums**: Forums are used to organize discussion topics into categories. You must create at least one forum before creating topics.
- **Topics**: Topics are where students will create new threads and reply to existing threads.
- **Threads**: Threads are conversations within a topic. They hold the initial message and all subsequent replies.
- **Posts**: Individual messages within threads.

Creating a Discussion Forum
The following explains how to create a forum in a D2L Discussion board.

1. From the *Discussions* page, click on the **New** button.

![Figure 3 - Click on New](image)

2. Click on **New Forum**

![Figure 4 - New Forum](image)

3. The *New Forum Details* page appears. Enter a **title** for the forum in the *title* field.

![Figure 5 - Forum Title](image)
4. Enter a **description** for the forum in the *Description* field.

![New Forum Details](image)

Figure 6 - Forum Description

5. Select your preferred **Forum Options** in the *Options* section. These options will be applied to all topics within the forum and are described below.

![Options](image)

Figure 7 - Forum Options

- **Allow anonymous posts**: Authors of posts show as *Anonymous* in the thread. Once enabled, this option cannot be reverted to reveal author names.
- **A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the topic**: Posts will not appear in the topic until you approve them.
- **Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads**: Students can access the topic but it forces them to create a new post before they can gain access to the posts from other students.

6. Click the **Show topic visibility options** link to set the preferred *Availability*.

![Availability](image)

Figure 8 - Show forum visibility options
7. You can set a **Start Date** to make the forum available at a certain date. You can set an **End Date** to hide the forum from this date forward. Select **Display in Calendar** if you want the dates to appear in the course calendar.

![Visibility](image)

**Figure 9 - Visibility**

8. Click the **Show locking options** link to set the **Locking Options**.

![Show locking options](image)

**Figure 10 - Show locking options**

9. Forum locking options will appear. When a forum is locked, students see topics in the forum, but they cannot post. **Note**: The availability options supersede the locking options. In other words, there is no need to lock a forum when it is hidden from the students.

![Locking Options](image)

**Figure 11 - Locking Option**
10. Click on **Save and Close**.

![Save and Close](image)

**Figure 12 - Save and Close**

11. You will be taken back to the *Discussions Page*.

**Discussion Topic Overview**

The layout for a Discussion Topic is as follows:

![Discussion Topic](image)

**Figure 13 - Discussion Topic**

a. **Topic Assessment** - Indicates that a topic can be graded.
b. **Topic Dropdown** – Provides options to change topic view to Grid view, mark all threads to read/unread, edit topic, grade topic, view topic statistics, or delete the topic.
c. **Start a New Thread** – Allows you to start a new thread in the topic.
d. **Filter By**: Allows you threads by *Unread* or *Flagged* posts.
e. **Thread Title** – Takes you into the thread and related posts.
f. **Subscribe** – Allows you to subscribe to the thread.
g. **Thread Statistics** – Provides you statistics regarding the thread, including the number of unread posts, number of replies, as well as the number of views.
h. **ScrollSpy** – A blue bar indicating an unread thread.
i. **Sort By** – A dropdown menu providing additional sorting options.
j. **Rating** – Displays thread ratings (if this has been set up when creating the topic).
k. **Last Post** – Displays the last person who posted to the thread.
Creating a Discussion Topic

The following explains how to create a Discussion topic in D2L Brightspace.

1. From the *Discussions Page*, click on the **New** button.

   ![New Button](image1)

   **Figure 14 - New Button**

2. Click on **New Topic**.

   ![New Topic](image2)

   **Figure 15 - New Topic**

3. In the *Forum* dropdown, select the **Forum** that you wish to house your topic.

   ![Select a Forum](image3)

   **Figure 16 - Select a Forum**

4. Enter a **Title** for your topic in the **Title** field.

   ![Title Field](image4)

   **Figure 17 - Title Field**

5. Enter a *description* of your topic in the **Description** field.

   ![Description Field](image5)

   **Figure 18 - Description Field**
6. Select your topic options from the *Options* section.

![Figure 19 - Topic Options](image)

7. Select your preferred *Rating Scale* for your topic in the *Rate Posts* dropdown. The available ratings are as follows:

![Figure 20 - Rate Posts](image)

- **No Rating**: Posts within a topic will not be rated.
- **Five-Star Rating Scheme** – Participants in the course can rate posts on a scale from one to five stars.
- **Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme** – Participants in the course can rate posts based on Up Votes or Down Votes.
- **Up Vote Only Rating Scheme** – Participants can only rate posts based on Up Votes. There are no options to down vote a post.

8. Click the *Show topic visibility options* link to set the preferred *Availability*. You can set a **Start Date** to make the discussion available at a certain date. You can set an **End Date** to hide the discussion from this date forward. Select **Display in Calendar** if you want the dates to appear in the course calendar.

![Figure 21 - Availability](image)
9. Click the **Show locking options** link to set the **Locking Options**. When a topic is locked, students can read messages, but they cannot post. **Note**: The availability options supersede the locking options. In other words, there is no need to lock a topic when it is hidden from the student.

![Figure 22 - Locking Options](image)

10. If you wish to grade student posts in the discussion topic, click on the **Assessment** tab to access topic grading options.

![Figure 23 - Assessment](image)

11. Select the appropriate Grade item from the **Grade Item** dropdown. For more information on how to create grade items, refer to **D2L Brightspace: Grades** document.

![Figure 24 - Grade Item Dropdown](image)

12. Enter the topic’s maximum score in the **Score Out of** field.

![Figure 25 - Score Out Of](image)
13. The *Allow Assessment of individual posts* option allows you to grade individual posts of students in a topic. If you wish to grade individual posts, refer to the following steps. Otherwise, skip to Step 14:

a. Place a check next to **Allow assessment of individual posts**.

![Figure 26 - Assessment of Posts](image)

b. Select your preferred **Calculation Method** in the calculation dropdown menu.

![Figure 27 - Calculation Method](image)

14. Click on **Save and Close** to return to the **Discussions** page.

**Creating Discussion Threads**

Upon creating discussion Topics, you and your students will be able to create individual **Threads**. With threads, you and your students will be able to interact and reply to other posts made by course participants. The following explains how to create a thread.

1. From the **Discussions** page, click on the **Topic** that you wish to post to.

![Figure 28 - Click on the Topic](image)

2. Click on **Start a New Thread**.

![Figure 29 - Start a New Thread](image)
3. Enter a topic for the thread in the **Subject** field.

![Subject Field](image)

Figure 30 – Subject Field

4. Enter the body of your post in the **Body** field.

![Body Field](image)

Figure 31 - Body Field

5. To pin your thread to the top of the discussion topic, place a check next to the **Pin thread** checkbox.

![Pin thread](image)

Figure 32 - Pin thread

6. To subscribe to your thread so that you receive notifications when someone replies to your post, place a check next to the **Subscribe to this thread** option.

![Subscribe to this thread](image)

Figure 33 - Subscribe to this thread
7. You may add an attachment to your post utilizing the Add attachments option.

8. Click on Post to post your thread.

**Replying to Discussion Threads**
The following explains how to reply to threads and posts in the Discussion topic.

1. From the Discussions page, click on the topic that you wish to post in.

2. Click on the thread you wish to reply to.

3. Click on Reply to Thread.
4. Enter a subject and body in the **Subject** and **Description** field.

![Subject and Description](image)

**Figure 39 - Subject and Description**

5. If you wish to include text from the original post, click on **Add original post text**.

![Add Original Post Text](image)

**Figure 40 - Add Original Post Text**

6. Click on **Post**.

![Post Cancel](image)

**Figure 41 - Click on Post**
7. Your post will appear as a part of the discussion thread.

![Discussion Post](image)

**Figure 42 - Discussion Post**

**Rating Discussion Forums**

With D2L Brightspace, you have the ability to rate student posts based on three types of rating scales. They are:

- **Five-Star Rating Scheme** – Participants in the course and rate posts on a scale from one to five stars.
- **Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme** – Participants in the course can rate posts based on Up Votes or Down Votes.
- **Up Vote Only Rating Scheme** – Participants can only rate posts based on Up Votes. There are no options to down vote a post.

The following explains how to rate posts based on the various scales for the Discussion tool.

**Rating Topics on a Five Star Scheme**

The following explains how to rate topics on a Five Star Scheme.

1. From the *Discussions* page, click on a **Topic**.

![Discussion Topic](image)

**Figure 43 - Discussion Topic**
2. Click on the post that you wish to rate.

![Figure 44 - Click on a Post](image)

3. Select your preferred rating in the Rating field.

![Figure 45 - Select a Rating](image)

4. Click on View Topic on the Breadcrumb trail to access the Topic page.

![Figure 46 - Click on View Topic](image)

**Rating Posts on the Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme**

The following explains how to rate posts on the Up Vote/Down Vote rating scheme.

1. From the Discussions page, click on a Topic.

![Figure 47 - Click on a Topic](image)
2. Click on a post that you wish to rate.

![Figure 48 - Click on a Post](image)

3. If you wish to provide an *Up Vote* to the post, click on the + button. If you wish to down vote a thread, click on the – button.

![Figure 49 - Rate the Post](image)

4. Click on **View Topic** on the *Breadcrumb* trail to access the Topic page.

![Figure 50 - Click on View Topic](image)
Rating Posts on the Up Vote Only Rating Scheme
The following explains how to rate posts on the Up Vote Only Rating Scheme.

1. From the *Discussions* page, click on a *Topic*.

   ![Figure 51 - Click on a Topic](image)

2. Click on the post that you wish to rate.

   ![Figure 52 - Click on a Post](image)

3. If you wish to up vote the post, click on the + button.

   ![Figure 53 - Click on the + Button](image)

4. Click on *View Topic* on the *Breadcrumb* trail to access the Topic page.
Managing Discussion Forums
The following describes the different options available for managing forums. This includes hiding/unhiding topics, as well as reordering, deleting, and restoring discussion forums.

Minimizing/Expanding Discussion Topics in a Forum.

1. Navigate to the **Discussions** page.
2. Click on the **Hide Topics** link under the forum title.

![Figure 54 - Hide Topics](image)

3. The topics are now minimized. A link indicating the number of unread posts, the total number of posts, and the number of hidden topics appears in its place.

![Figure 55 - Minimized Topics](image)

4. To expand all topics, click on the **Click to show link**.

![Figure 56 - Click to Show Link](image)

Filtering Forums
Forums can be filtered based on the status of their discussion messages. For instance, forums can be filtered by *unread* status, so that only forums containing unread messages are displayed. The following explains how to filter your forums.

1. Navigate to the **Discussions** page.
2. The **Filter by** option can be found under the **New** and **More Actions** buttons at the top of the page.

![Figure 57 - Filter By](image)
3. Click the **Unread** link to only display topics with unread messages. A grey background appears behind the activated filter link. Only the topics with unread messages appear on the screen.

![Figure 58 - Unread](image)

4. Click the **Unread** link again to remove the filter. All topics appear on the page.

**Reordering Forums**

The following explains how to reorder forums and topics contained within the forum.

1. Go to **Discussions**.
2. Click on the **More Actions** button at the top of the page.

![Figure 59 - Click on More Actions](image)

3. Select **Reorder** from the drop-down menu that appears.

![Figure 60 - Click on Reorder](image)

4. The **Reorder Forums and Topics** page appears. Change the number to right of the forum or topic name, under **Sort Order**, to reflect the position the forum/topic should be located.

![Figure 61 - Reorder the Forum/Topics](image)

5. Click on **Save**. The order of all forums will adjust.
Deleting Forums and Topics
The following explains how to delete forums and topics from your course.

1. Go to Discussions.
2. Click the more actions button located next to the forum title.

3. Click on Delete from the drop-down menu that appears.

4. A confirmation screen appears. Click Yes to confirm the deletion of the forum and its topics.
Restoring a Forum

To restore a deleted discussion forum:

1. Navigate to the Discussions page.
2. Click the More Actions button at the top of the page.

![Figure 65 - More Actions](image)

3. Click on Restore.

![Figure 66 - Click Restore](image)

4. Click the Restore button to the right of the forum you wish to restore.

![Figure 67 - Restore](image)

5. If you chose a forum with topics, the Restore Topics pop-up will appear. Make your topics selection, and then click Restore. Note: All threads are restored with the topics.
Grading Discussions
As an instructor, you can now assess all discussion contributions for a thread from a new content menu item called, Assess Student. This will open up the topic scoring window with the students’ contributions and an area for you to grade them. The following steps will show how to assess a topic using this feature.

1. Click on the Discussions tool located in the Navbar.

2. Click the name of the topic that you wish to assess.

3. From the View Topic page:
   a. Click the drop-down tab next to the desired post.
   b. Click Assess Student.
   a. View the number of posts by the user.
   b. Enter the desired Topic Score.
   c. Select the checkbox next to Published if you wish the topic score to be automatically exported to Grades.
   d. Enter any Feedback, as desired.
   e. Optional: Use the Sort By features to sort by using the Post Date or the Post Subject (Not shown).
   f. Click Save and Close.

Figure 71 - Assess Topic Window

Additional Help
For additional support, please contact the KSU Service Desk:

KSU Service Desk for Faculty & Staff
- Phone: 470-578-6999
- Email: service@kennesaw.edu
  Website: http://uits.kennesaw.edu