D2L Brightspace – Daylight Experience
The Discussions Tool
Introduction

Utilizing the Discussions tool, you have the ability to engage and facilitate meaningful and interactive discussions with students in the D2L Brightspace® – Daylight Experience environment. This document has been developed to introduce you to the Discussions Tool.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this document, you will be able to:

- Understand and navigate the layout of the Discussions Tool
- Create discussions with forums, topics, threads, and messages
- Apply a rating system to your discussions
- Grade 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 **Discussions**, located on your course *NavBar*.

![Figure 1 - Click Discussions](image)

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 (See Figure 2).
   b. **More Actions** - Allows you to copy, reorder, delete, and restore forums/topics (See Figure 2).
   c. **Filter by** - Provides filtering options for the Discussions page (See Figure 2).
   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 (See Figure 2).
   e. **Topic** - Displays the topics within the forum. Topics are where students create new threads and reply to existing threads (See Figure 2).
   f. **Topic Statistics** - Displays statistics relevant to each topic (See Figure 2).

![Figure 2 - Discussions Page](image)
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 the **New** button (See Figure 3).
2. Click **New Forum** (See Figure 3).
3. The **New Forum Details** page appears. Enter a **title** for the forum in the **Title** field (See Figure 4).
4. Enter a **description** for the forum in the **Description** field (See Figure 4).

Figure 3 - Add New Forum

Figure 4 - New Forum Details
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:
   a. **Allow anonymous posts**: Authors of posts show as *Anonymous* in the thread. Once enabled, this option cannot be reverted to reveal author names (See Figure 5).
   b. **A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum**: Posts will not appear in the topic until you approve them (See Figure 5).
   c. **Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads in each topic**: 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 (See Figure 5).
   d. **Display Forum description in topics**: Selecting this option will display the forum’s description in addition to the topic description when viewing a topic (See Figure 5).

![Figure 5 - Forum Options](image)

6. At this point, you can choose from the following options to continue:
   a. **Save and Close**: Select to save all settings and return to the *Discussions* page (See Figure 6).
   b. **Save and Add Topic**: Select to save all settings and add a topic to the forum. You will be redirected to the *Edit Topic* page (See Figure 6).
   c. **Save**: Select to save current settings. You will then be able to add restrictions to the topic (See Figure 6).
   d. **Cancel**: Select to void all settings and forum creation and return to the main *Discussions* area (See Figure 6).

![Figure 6 - Select Save Option to Continue](image)
**Restrictions Tab**
In the Restrictions tab of a discussion forum, you have the option to set visibility and access restrictions, release conditions, and group or section restrictions.

**Note:** All of these settings are optional.

1. If you selected *Save* to add restrictions, click the **Restrictions** tab (See Figure 7).
2. If the *Hide from Users* checkbox is selected, students will not be able to see the forum (See Figure 7).
3. Under *Forum Availability*, you can set specific dates for the forum to be available to students:
4. Set a **Start Date** to make the forum available at a certain date (See Figure 7)
5. Set an **End Date** to hide the forum from this date forward (See Figure 7)
6. Select **Display in Calendar** to display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 7).

![Figure 7 - Set Forum Availability Options](image-url)
4. *Forum Locking Options* will appear. When a forum is locked, students see the topics in the forum, but they cannot post. Under *Locking Options*, you can select:

a. **Unlock forum**: Forum will always be unlocked for students (See Figure 8).
b. **Lock forum**: Forum will always be locked for students (See Figure 8).
c. **Unlock forum for a specific date range**: Selecting this option enables *Start* and *End date* options to have the forum unlocked (See Figure 8).

   i. Set a **Start Date** to unlock the forum at a certain date. (See Figure 8).
   ii. Set an **End Date** to lock the forum from this date forward (See Figure 8).
   iii. Select **Display in Calendar** display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 8).

5. The *Release Conditions* section allows you to conditionally release the forum based on certain criteria being met. Here you can:

6. **Attach Existing**: Click this button to attach a release condition you’ve already created (See Figure 8).

7. **Create and Attach**: Create a release condition and attach it directly to the forum (See Figure 8).

8. **Remove All Conditions**: Remove any release conditions currently attached to the forum (See Figure 8).
6. If you would like to restrict access to this forum based on groups or sections, place a checkmark in the box and click the Add Groups and Sections button to add them (See Figure 9).

7. When you are finished modifying the restrictions, click Save and Close or Save and Add Topic (See Figure 9).

![Figure 9 - Set Group/Section Restrictions & Save](image)

**Note:** The availability options supersede the locking options. Therefore, there is no need to lock a forum when it is hidden from the students.

**Creating a Discussion Topic**

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

1. From the *Discussions Page*, click the **New** button (See Figure 10).
2. Click **New Topic** (See Figure 10).

![Figure 10 - Create New Topic](image)
3. The *New Topic Details* window will open. In the *Forum* drop-down, select the *Forum* that you wish to house your topic (See Error! Reference source not found.).

4. You can also create a *New Forum* if you do not have one ready (See Error! Reference source not found.).

5. Enter a *Title* for your topic in the *Title* field (See Error! Reference source not found.).

6. Enter a description of your topic in the *Description* field (See Error! Reference source not found.).

7. Select your *topic options* from the *Options* section (See Error! Reference source not found.).

![New Topic Details](image)

*Figure 11 - New Topic Details*
8. Select your preferred *Rating Scale* for your topic in the **Rate Posts** drop-down. The available ratings are as follows:
   a. **No Ratings**: Posts will not have the option to be rated (See Figure 12).
   b. **Five-Star Rating Scheme**: Participants in the course rate posts on a scale from one to five stars (See Figure 12).
   c. **Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme**: Participants in the course can rate posts based on Up Votes or Down Votes (See Figure 12).
   d. **Up Vote Only Rating Scheme**: Participants can only rate posts based on Up Votes. There are no options to down vote a post (See Figure 12).

![Figure 12 - Rate Posts](image)

9. At this point, you have several options to proceed:
   a. **Save and Close**: Select to save all settings and return to the *Discussions* page (See Figure 13).
   b. **Save and New**: Select to save all settings and add a topic. You will then be redirected to the *Edit Topic* page for a new topic(See Figure 13).
   c. **Save**: Select to save current settings. You will then be able to add restrictions to the topic (See Figure 13).
   d. **Cancel**: Select to void all settings and forum creation and return to the main *Discussions* area (See Figure 13).

![Figure 13 - Save Topic Options](image)
Restrictions Tab
In the Restrictions tab of a discussion forum, you have the option to set visibility and access restrictions, release conditions, and group or section restrictions.

Note: All of these settings are optional.

1. If you selected Save to add restrictions, click on the Restrictions tab (See Figure 14).
2. Hide from Users: If this checkbox is selected, students will not be able to see the forum (See Figure 14).
3. Under Forum Availability, you can set specific dates for the forum to be available to students:
   a. Set a Start Date to make the forum available at a certain date (See Figure 14)
   b. Set an End Date to hide the forum from this date forward (See Figure 14)
   c. Select Display in Calendar to display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 14).

![Figure 14 - Restrictions Tab & Availability Options](image)
4. *Topic Locking Options* will appear. When a topic is locked, students see topics in the topic, but they cannot post. Under *Locking Options*, you can select:
   a. **Unlock topic**: Topic will always be unlocked for students (See Figure 15).
   b. **Lock topic**: Topic will always be locked for students (See Figure 15).
   c. **Unlock topic for a specific date range**: Selecting this option enables *Start* and *End date* options to have the topic unlocked:
      i. Set a **Start Date** to unlock the topic at a certain date (See Figure 15).
      ii. Set an **End Date** to lock the topic from this date forward (See Figure 15).
      iii. Select **Display in Calendar** display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 15).

![Figure 15 - Set Topic Locking Options](image-url)
5. The *Release Conditions* section allows you to conditionally release the topic based on certain criteria being met. Here you can:
   a. **Attach Existing**: Click this button to attach a release condition you’ve already created (See Figure 16).
   b. **Create and Attach**: Create a release condition and attach it directly to the forum (See Figure 16).
   c. **Remove All Conditions**: Remove any release conditions currently attached to the forum (See Figure 16).

6. If you would like to restrict access to this forum based on groups or sections, place a checkmark in the box and click the Add Groups and Sections button to add them (See Figure 16).

7. When you are finished modifying the restrictions, click Save and Close or Save and Add Topic (See Figure 16).

![Figure 16 - Topic Release Conditions & Group/Section Restrictions]

**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.
Discussion Topic Overview
The layout for a Discussion Topic is as follows:

a. **Topic Drop-down** - 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 (See Figure 17).

b. **Topic Assessment** - Indicates that a topic can be graded (See Figure 17).

c. **Start a New Thread** - Allows you to start a new thread in the topic (See Figure 17).

d. **Filter By:** Allows you threads by *Unread* or *Flagged* posts (See Figure 17).

e. **Thread Title** - Takes you into the thread and related posts (See Figure 17).

f. **Subscribe** - Allows you to subscribe to the thread (See Figure 17).

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 (See Figure 17).

h. **Unread thread indicator** - A blue bar indicating an unread thread (See Figure 17).

i. **Sort By** - A drop-down menu providing additional sorting options (See Figure 17).

j. **Rating** - Displays thread ratings (if this has been set up when creating the topic)(See Figure 17).

k. **Last Post** - Displays the last person who posted to the thread (See Figure 17).

![Figure 17 - Discussion Topic View](image)
Adding Grade Items to a Discussion Topic
If you wish to grade discussion posts, you will need to tie the discussion topic to a grade item in the gradebook:

1. Go to Discussions.
2. Click the more actions drop-down arrow located next to the topic title (See Figure 18).
3. Click Edit Topic from the drop-down menu that appears (See Figure 18).

![Figure 18 - Edit Topic]

4. The Edit Topic window will open. Click the Assessment tab.

![Figure 19 - Assessment Tab]

5. The Assessment window will appear. Select the appropriate Grade item from the Grade Item drop-down (See Figure 20).
6. You can also create a New Grade Item if you do not have one ready (See Figure 20).
7. Enter the topic’s maximum score in the Score Out of field (See Figure 20).

![Figure 20 - Setting Up Assessment of Discussion]
8. The *Allow Assessment of individual posts* option allows you to grade the individual posts of students. Each user’s topic score is calculated using the method selected from the Calculation drop-down list. If you wish to grade individual posts, refer to the following steps. Otherwise, skip to Step 8:

9. Click the checkbox next to *Allow assessment of individual posts* (See Figure 21).

10. Select your preferred **Calculation Method** from the calculation drop-down (See Figure 21).

![Figure 21 - Allow Assessment of Individual Posts Setup](image)

11. Click **Save and Close** to return to the *Discussions* page.

![Figure 22 - Save and Close](image)

**Creating Discussion Threads**

After 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 discussion thread:

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

![Figure 23 - Click the Topic](image)

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

![Figure 24 - Start a New Thread](image)
3. Enter a topic for the thread in the **Subject** field (See Figure 25).
4. Enter the body of your post in the **Body** field (See Figure 25).
5. As you type, the **Word Count** will update to include the number of words in the post (See Figure 25).
6. To pin your thread to the top of the discussion topic, click the **Pin thread checkbox** (See Figure 25).
7. To subscribe to your thread so that you receive notifications when someone replies to your post, click the **Subscribe to this thread checkbox** (See Figure 25).
8. You may add an attachment to your post utilizing the **Add attachments** option (See Figure 25).
9. The discussion forum and topic you are posting to are displayed in the **Post to:** field (See Figure 25).
10. Click **Post** to post your thread (See Figure 25).

![Discussion 1](image)

11. Your new thread will be posted within the topic.
Replying to Discussion Threads

The following explains how to reply to threads and posts in the Discussion topic:

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

![Figure 26 - Click on the Topic](image)

2. Click the thread you wish to reply to.

![Figure 27 - Click the Thread](image)

3. Click Reply to Thread.

![Figure 28 - Reply to Thread](image)

4. Enter a topic for your reply in the Subject field (See Figure 29).
5. Enter the body of your post in the Body field (See Figure 29).
6. As you type, the Word Count will display the number of words in the post (See Figure 29).
7. If you wish to include text from the original post, click Add original post text (See Figure 29).
8. To subscribe to your thread so that you receive notifications when someone replies to your post, click the Subscribe to this thread checkbox (See Figure 29).
9. You may add an attachment to your post utilizing the Add attachments option (See Figure 29).
10. Click Post to post your reply (See Figure 29).

![Figure 29 - Replying to a Thread](image)
11. Your post will appear as a part of the discussion thread.

![Discussion Post](image)

**Figure 30 - Discussion Post**

**Rating Discussion Forums**

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

- **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 is no option to down vote a post.

The following explains how to rate posts based on the various scales for the Discussions tool:

**Rating Topics on a Five Star Scheme**

The following explains how to rate topics on a Five Star rating scheme:

1. From the *Discussions* page, click a topic.
2. Click the post that you wish to rate.

![Figure 32 - Click a Post](image)

3. Select your preferred rating in the Rating field (See Figure 33).
4. The post has been rated. Click View Topic to return to the Topic page (See Figure 33).

![Figure 33 - Apply Star Rating](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 a Topic.

![Figure 34 - Click a Topic](image)

2. Click a post that you wish to rate.
3. If you wish to provide an *Up Vote* to the post, click the + button (See Figure 36).
4. If you wish to down vote a thread, click the – button (See Figure 36).
5. Click **View Topic** on the breadcrumb trail to access the **Topic** page (See Figure 36).

![Figure 36 - Up/Down Voting a Post](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 a **Topic**.

![Figure 37 - Click a Topic](image)

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

![Figure 38 - Click a Post](image)

3. If you wish to up vote the post, Click the + button (See Figure 39).
4. Click **View Topic** on the breadcrumb trail to access the **Topic** page (See Figure 39).

![Figure 39 - Up Voting a Post](image)
Managing Discussion Forums

The following describes the different options available for managing forums. This includes hiding/un-hiding 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 the drop-down next to the forum (See Figure 40).
3. Click Hide from Users from the drop-down menu (See Figure 40).

4. 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 (See Figure 41).

5. To expand all topics, Click on Click to show (See Figure 41).

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 42 - 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 43 - 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 the **More Actions** button at the top of the page (See Figure 44).
3. Select **Reorder** from the drop-down menu that appears (See Figure 44).

![Figure 44 – 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 (See Figure 45).

5. Click **Save**. The order of all forums will adjust (See Figure 45).

![Figure 45 - Reorder the Forum/Topics](image)

### Deleting Forums and Topics

The following explains how to delete forums and topics from your course. The following will show how to delete a topic post:

1. Go to Discussions.
2. Click the **More Actions** button located next to the topic title (See Figure 46).
3. Click **Delete** from the drop-down menu that appears (See Figure 46).

![Figure 46 – Delete Topic](image)
4. A confirmation screen appears. Click Yes to confirm the deletion of the forum and its topics.

![Confirmation screen]

Figure 47 - Click Yes

**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 (See Figure 48).
3. Click Restore (See Figure 48).

![More Actions and Restore options]

Figure 48 - Restore

4. The Restore Forums and Topics window will open. Click the Restore button to the right of the forum/topic you wish to restore.

![Restore Forums and Topics window]

Figure 49 - Restore Forum/Topic
5. A confirmation message will appear. Click Yes.

![Confirmation]

**Figure 50 - Restore Confirmation**

**Note:** If you chose a forum with topics, the *Restore Topics* window will appear. Make your topics selection, and then click **Restore** (All threads are restored with the topics).

![Restore Topics]

**Figure 51 - Restore**
Grading Discussions

As an instructor, you can assess all discussion contributions for a thread from the Assess Topic option. This will open 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 that has been configured to allow assessment of individual posts by calculating the average post score:

**Note:** To have the assessment export to the gradebook, you will need to set up an assessment for the topic. See
Adding Grade Items to a Discussion Topic for more information.

1. Navigate to the Discussions page.
2. Next to the topic you wish to assess, click the more actions button.
3. Click Assess Topic.

Figure 52 - Assess Topic
4. The Assess Topic window will appear and a list of students will be displayed. To see all responses that a student posted, click Topic Score under their name.

![Assess Topic - How to get the most out of College](image)

**Figure 53 - Click Topic Score**

5. The Assess Topic window will open and display the following:

6. View the number of posts by the user and replies left (See Figure 54).

7. The Topic Score column will provide fields where you can assess individual posts (See Figure 54).

8. Enter any Feedback, as desired (See Figure 54).

9. Optional: Use the Sort By features to sort by using the Post Date or the Post Subject (See Figure 54).

10. Posts that the student has made in the selected Topic will be displayed (See Figure 54).

11. Click Publish once finished (See Figure 54).
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