D2L Brightspace – Daylight Experience
The Discussions Tool
# University Information Technology Services

D2L Brightspace – Daylight Experience: The Discussions Tool

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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.

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).
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).

![Figure 3 - Add New Forum](image)

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 4 - New Forum Details](image)
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. Click the **Show forum visibility options** link to set the preferred *Availability*.

![Figure 6 - Show forum visibility options](image)

7. Under *Forum Visibility*, you can select:

   a. **Forum is always visible**: Students will always be able to see the forum (See Figure 7).
   
   b. **Hide this forum**: Student will not be able to see the forum (See Figure 7).
   
   c. **Forum is visible for a specific date range**: Selecting this option enables *Start* and *End date* options to have the forum displayed (See Figure 7).
      
      i. Set a **Start Date** to make the forum available at a certain date. (See Figure 7).
      
      ii. Set an **End Date** to hide the forum from this date forward (See Figure 7).
      
      iii. Select **Display in Calendar** to display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 7)

![Figure 7 - Forum Visibility](image)
8. Click the **Show locking options** link to set the **Locking Options**.

![Figure 8 - Show locking options](image)

9. **Forum Locking Options** will appear. When a forum is locked, students see 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 9).
   b. **Lock forum**: Forum will always be locked for students (See Figure 9).
   c. **Unlock forum for a specific date range**: Selecting this option enables Start and End date options to have the forum unlocked (See Figure 9).
      i. Set a **Start Date** to unlock the forum at a certain date. (See Figure 9).
      ii. Set an **End Date** to lock the forum from this date forward (See Figure 9).
      iii. Select **Display in Calendar** to display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 9).

![Figure 9 - Locking Options](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.

10. Click **Save and Close**.

![Figure 10 - Save and Close](image)

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

b. **Topic Assessment**: Indicates that a topic can be graded (See Figure 11).

c. **Start a New Thread**: Allows you to start a new thread in the topic (See Figure 11).

d. **Filter By**: Allows you threads by *Unread or Flagged* posts (See Figure 11).

e. **Thread Title**: Takes you into the thread and related posts (See Figure 11).

f. **Subscribe**: Allows you to subscribe to the thread (See Figure 11).

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 11).

h. **Unread thread indicator**: A blue bar indicating an unread thread (See Figure 11).

i. **Sort By**: A drop-down menu providing additional sorting options (See Figure 11).

j. **Rating**: Displays thread ratings (if this has been set up when creating the topic) (See Figure 11).

k. **Last Post**: Displays the last person who posted to the thread (See Figure 11).

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![Figure 11 - Discussion Topic](image-url)
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 12).
2. Click **New Topic** (See Figure 12).

![Figure 12 - 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 Figure 13).
   a. You can also create a **New Forum** if you do not have one ready (See Figure 13).
4. Select a **topic type** from the Topic Types section (See Figure 13 - New Topic Details)
5. Enter a **Title** for your topic in the **Title** field (See Figure 13).
6. Enter a **description** of your topic in the **Description** field (See Figure 13).
7. Select your **topic options** from the **Options** section (See Figure 13).

![Figure 13 - New Topic Details](image)
8. Select your preferred Rating Scale for your topic in the Rate Posts drop-down. The available ratings are as follows:

- **No Ratings**: Posts will not have the option to be rated (See Figure 14).
- **Five-Star Rating Scheme**: Participants in the course rate posts on a scale from one to five stars (See Figure 14).
- **Up Vote/Down Vote Rating Scheme**: Participants in the course can rate posts based on Up Votes or Down Votes (See Figure 14).
- **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 14).

![Figure 14 - Rate Posts](image)

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

![Figure 15 - Show forum visibility options](image)

10. **Topic Visibility** allows you to set the visibility of a topic:

   a. **Topic is always visible**: Students will always be able to see the topic (See Figure 16).
   b. **Hide this topic**: Students will not be able to see the topic (See Figure 16).
   c. **Topic is visible for a specific date range**: Selecting this option enables Start and End date options to have the topic displayed (See Figure 16).
      i. Set a **Start Date** to make the topic available at a certain date (See Figure 16).
      ii. Set an **End Date** to hide the topic from this date forward (See Figure 16).
      iii. Select **Display in Calendar** to display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 16).

![Figure 16 – Set Topic Visibility](image)
11. Click the **Show locking options** link to set the **Locking Options**.

![Figure 17 - Show locking options](image)

12. **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 18).
   b. **Lock topic**: Topic will always be locked for students (See Figure 18).
   c. **Unlock topic for a specific date range**: Selecting this option enables **Start** and **End date** options to have the topic unlocked (See Figure 18).
      i. Set a **Start Date** to unlock the topic at a certain date (See Figure 18).
      ii. Set an **End Date** to lock the topic from this date forward (See Figure 18).
      iii. Select **Display in Calendar** display the dates in the course calendar (See Figure 18).

![Figure 18 - Locking Options](image)

**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.

13. Click **Save and Close**.

![Figure 19 - Save](image)
Adding Grade Items to a Discussion Topic

If you wish to grade discussion posts, you will need to associate the discussion topic with 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 20).
3. Click Edit Topic from the drop-down menu that appears (See Figure 20).

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

5. The Assessment window will appear. Select the appropriate Grade item from the Grade Item drop-down (See Figure 22).
   a. You can also create a New Grade Item if you do not have one ready (See Figure 22).
6. Enter the topic’s maximum score in the Score Out of field (See Figure 22).
7. The **Allow Assessment of individual posts** option allows you to grade the individual posts of students. If you wish to grade individual posts, refer to the following steps. Otherwise, skip to **Step 8**:

   a. Click the **checkbox** next to **Allow assessment of individual posts** (See Figure 23).
   b. Select your preferred **Calculation Method** from the calculation drop-down (See Figure 23).
   c. Click the **checkbox** next to **Include unassessed posts in the calculated topic score as zero** if you want to include unassessed posts in the topic score calculation (See Figure 23).

![Figure 23 - Allow Assessment of Individual Posts Setup](image)

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

![Figure 24 - 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 25 - Click the Topic](image)
2. Click Start a New Thread.

Figure 26 - Start a New Thread

3. Enter a topic for the thread in the **Subject** field (See Figure 27).
4. Enter the body of your post in the **Body** field (See Figure 27).
5. To pin your thread to the top of the discussion topic, click the **Pin thread checkbox** (See Figure 27).
6. 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 27).
7. You may add an attachment to your post utilizing the **Add attachments** option (See Figure 27).
8. Click **Post** to post your thread (See Figure 27).

Figure 27 - Creating a New Post

9. 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 28 - Click on the Topic](image)

2. Click the thread you wish to reply to.

   ![Figure 29 - Click the Thread](image)

3. Click Reply to Thread.

   ![Figure 30 - Reply to Thread](image)
4. Enter a topic for your reply in the **Subject** field (See Figure 31).
5. Enter the body of your post in the **Body** field (See Figure 31).
6. If you wish to include text from the original post, click **Add original post text** (See Figure 31).
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 31).
8. You may add an attachment to your post utilizing the **Add attachments** option (See Figure 31).
9. Click **Post** to post your reply (See Figure 31).

![Figure 31 Replying to a Thread](image)

10. Your post will appear as a part of the discussion thread.

![Figure 32 - Discussion Post](image)
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 are no options 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*.

   ![Figure 33 - Discussion Topic](image)

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

   ![Figure 34 - Click a Post](image)
3. Select your preferred rating in the Rating field (See Figure 35).
4. The post has been rated. Click View Topic to return to the Topic page (See Figure 35).

![Figure 35 - 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 36 - Click a Topic](image)

2. Click a post that you wish to rate.

![Figure 37 - Click a Post](image)
3. If you wish to provide an *Up Vote* to the post, click the + button (See Figure 38).
4. If you wish to down vote a thread, click the – button (See Figure 38).
5. Click **View Topic** on the *Breadcrumb* trail to access the Topic page (See Figure 38).

![Figure 38 - 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 39 - Click a Topic](image)

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

![Figure 40 - Click a Post](image)

3. If you wish to up vote the post, Click the + button (See Figure 41).
4. Click **View Topic** on the *Breadcrumb* trail to access the Topic page (See Figure 41).

![Figure 41 - 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 42).
3. Click Hide Topics from the drop-down menu (See Figure 42).

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 43).

5. To expand all topics, click Click to show (See Figure 43).
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.
   The **Filter by** option can be found under the *New* and *More Actions* buttons at the top of the page.

   ![Figure 44 - Filter By](image)

2. 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 45 - Unread](image)

3. 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.
   Click the **More Actions** button at the top of the page (See Figure 46).
   Select **Reorder** from the drop-down menu that appears (See Figure 46).

   ![Figure 46 - Reorder](image)
2. 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 47).

3. Click **Save**. The order of all forums will adjust (See Figure 47).

![Figure 47 - 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 48).
3. Click **Delete** from the drop-down menu that appears (See Figure 48).

![Figure 48 – Delete Topic](image)
4. A confirmation screen appears. Click Yes to confirm the deletion of the forum and its topics.

![Figure 49 - 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 50).
3. Click **Restore** (See Figure 50).

![Figure 50 - 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.

![Figure 51 - Restore Forum/Topic]
5. A confirmation message will appear. Click **Restore Topic and Forum**.

![Figure 52 - Restore Confirmation](image)

**Grading Discussions**

As an instructor, you can assess all discussion contributions for a thread from the **Assess Topic** option. 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 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 (See Figure 53).
3. Click **Assess Topic** (See Figure 53).

![Figure 53 - Assess Topic](image)
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 54 - Click Topic Score**
5. The Assess Topic window will open and display the following:
   a. View the **number of posts** by the user, and **unscored posts** left (See Figure 55).
   b. **Average Post Score** is displayed. If not calculating by the average post score, you can also enter a score for the post by clicking the **average post score** (See Figure 55).
   c. Select the **checkbox** next to **Publish score on save** if you wish the topic score to be automatically exported to the **Gradebook** after you save (See Figure 55).
   d. Enter any **Feedback**, as desired (See Figure 55).
   e. Optional: Use the **Sort By** features to sort by using the **Post Date** or the **Post Subject** (See Figure 55).
   f. Posts that the student has made in the selected **Topic** will be displayed (See Figure 55).
   g. The Score column will provide fields where you can assess **individual posts** (See Figure 55).
   h. Click **Save and Close** once finished (See Figure 55).

![Figure 55 - Assess Topic Window](image)

**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](http://uits.kennesaw.edu)