How to Create and Use a Discussion Forum
A DEIT Tutorial adapted from ANGEL® 7.4 QuickStart Tutorial and Instructor Reference Manual

Adding a Discussion Forum
Discussion forums can be used for course discussions, involving the entire class or teams, private journals, as an informal gathering place for students, and for other collaborative activities. They can be graded and can also utilize a scoring rubric.

1. Add a discussion forum: Lessons > Add Content > Discussion Forum.

2. Enter the title and subtitle on the title page. Use the Directions text area to input the topic and instructions for the discussion.

3. Add any options within the Access tab, which does not have any components that are specific to a discussion forum.
4. The next tab, the **Post Permissions** tab, is specific to a discussion forum content item. This tab allows for different posting permissions to be given to members of different teams if teams have been created. It can also be used to limit permissions to all members.

![New Discussion Forum](image)

By default, all members can read all posts, create new posts, and reply to posts.

5. The next tab, the **Interaction** tab, is also specifically used for discussion forums.

![Interaction tab](image)

a. A variety of discussion forum modes can be chosen:

- **Normal Discussion.** The default mode with all members being able to post to the same discussion.
- **Private User Journal.** Users can see only their own posts and no one else's; often used for reflective journal activities.
- **Private Team Journal.** Users can see only posts from their own team members. Some uses include collaborative group projects or peer review/critique of papers in writing courses. Dividing a class into teams also allows for smaller discussion groups.
- **Fishbowl.** One team discusses while the other team observes the discussion.
- **Hot Seat.** One team takes an "expert" position and the other team poses questions to that team.
- **First Post.** Users cannot see any other posts until they post their own response to the discussion question.
b. Discussions display in two different views: **Threaded View** and **Nested View**. By checking the box, users can choose and switch between views.

c. Instructors can rate student posts by using a point system. A default maximum rating score can be added using the **Maximum Instructor Rating Score**, if applicable.

d. Users can be given permission to upload attachments to a discussion post, if checked.

e. Anonymous posting can be disabled, enabled, or set as a default. This might best be done for more sensitive discussions if it is not necessary to identify the poster. If enabled, you may want to also enable **Discussion Moderation** so that posts can be approved before they are displayed to others.

f. The minimum rights required to post as a new post can be set. This is usually set at **Student**.

g. Check whether students will be allowed to edit their posts. (Note that students do not have the ability to delete posts.)

h. If checked, student profiles can be accessed within a discussion forum.

i. If checked, students can rate posts as a peer review activity.

j. A number of fields display within a discussion forum; they can be chosen by checking the appropriate box.

6. More options in the **Interaction** tab can be set if settings are displayed in Advanced view.

![Advanced settings]

a. **Discussion Moderation**. Choices are to automatically approve all messages or enable moderation, which means that all posts have to be approved by the moderator before they can be displayed.

b. **Task Notifications**. Check boxes for all tasks to appear within the task list on the guide.

c. **Post Types**. Different roles for posters can be defined.
d. **Instructor/Moderator Subject Colors.** All posts from the instructor or moderator can display in a different color if defined.

e. **Reply Subject Lines.** Defines how the subject line displays for replies; **Populated** means that the subject line will contain the subject line of the top post preceded by *re*.

**Using Rubrics**
The **Assignments** tab has an additional feature for adding scoring rubrics that will automatically score student posts based on student activity. The milestone and Gradebook settings are the same as for other content items.

1. Check **Enable scoring rubrics** to begin.

2. One common rubric is to award a percentage of points based on the number of posts and replies to posts that a student makes. To do this, put the score by percent in the **Score** box and delineate the number of and types of posts needed to attain this score.

   ![Scoring Rubrics](image)

   In this example, students would receive 100% of the points possible if they posted at least one "top-level" post and two replies to other posts. (After the first **if** statement, **Add Criteria** was selected to add the second criteria for that score.)

3. Click **Add New Score** to add other scoring options. Click **Save** when all scoring options have been added to save all settings.
Discussion Forums Views

The following sections describe how to use a Discussion forum once it's been created. ANGEL discussions offer four different ways to view messages in a discussion forum:

- Threaded View
- Nested View
- Search View
- At-a-Glance View (instructors only)

Threaded View Interface

The following illustration shows the screen controls and options available in Threaded View. All of the controls in Threaded View are included in Nested and Search views.

1. **New Post** takes you to a new page where you can create a new top-level post in the forum.

2. **View Modes** let you switch between the four different discussion views.

3. **Navigation Controls** allow you to move between messages either one reply at a time (>) or one top-level post at a time (>| ). Use the drop-down list to choose which type of messages to navigate.

4. Save, Print and Refresh icons:
   - **Save Navigation Settings** saves a default navigation setting.
   - **Print** prints the exact view you have set within the post list area.
• **Refresh** refreshes the message list to include any new messages that have been posted since you opened the discussion.

5. **Directions** displays the student instructions as entered by the instructor. The instructions may be collapsed or loaded in a new window to save space on the page. **Post List Controls** let you manage the posts in the post list. They include:

- [+] and [-] expand and collapse all threads within the discussion, respectively.
- **Post Title** sorts posts by title. Sorts alphabetically by post; replies to each post are also sorted at each level of reply.
- **Flag** sorts posts by flag value. Each flag color has a value of 0–9.
- **Score** sorts posts and replies by instructor score.
- **Author** sorts posts and replies by author.
- **Post Date** sorts posts and replies by the date they were posted.
- **Rating** sorts posts and replies by their average peer rating.

6. **Post Titles** are the names of the posts. Bold items are unread; non-bold items have been read.

**Nested View Interface**

Nested View differs from Threaded View in that it displays the body text of all the messages in-line. Nested View also offers one additional interface control.

1. **View All Body Text** opens and closes all the message body text. (Available only in Nested View and Search View.)

2. **Message Bodies** lets you open or close all the message bodies. (In Nested View, all the message bodies are displayed by default.)
Search View Interface

Search View is identical to Nested View, but features an additional search filter and the Advanced Search option.

1. **View Filter** allows you to limit what types of message are searched.

2. **Search Filter** allows you to search for and navigate messages that contain the entered search term. The Search Filter works in concert with the View Filter to let you search for messages that match your search term and view.

3. **Advanced Search** displays a layer with more search options.

4. **Batch Selection & Operations** enable you to select multiple messages singly, or by selecting them all. Use the **Selected message action** drop-down list to apply an action to all selected messages. Available actions include: Approve, Reject, Score, Move, Stick, Unstick, Lock, Unlock, Mark as read, Mark as unread, Delete, and Undelete.
At a Glance View Interface

The At-a-Glance View provides instructors with a one-page summary of current activity, basic statistics, and the status of all settings.