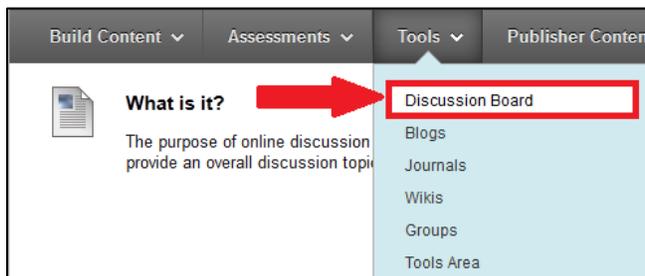# Creating a Discussion Forum

Introduction

This guide walks instructors through the process of creating and adding a discussion forum to a content area.
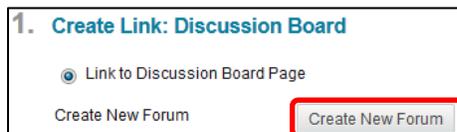
Step 1:

To create a discussion forum within a content area the first thing you need to do is select "Discussion Board' from the "Tools" menu at the top of your content area.

Step 2:

Next, click the "Create New Forum" button.

Step 3:

Now enter a name for your new discussion forum in the "Name" field and directions for your students in the "Description" box.

Step 4:
The next part of setting up a discussion forum involves reading and selecting several settings. By default every discussion option is set to allow a "traditional" online discussion experience. This means that students will be able to read, post and respond to all postings. Refer to the breakdown below to learn more about each setting (italicized.)

Viewing Threads/Replies

- "*Standard View*" is the traditional mode for discussion forums which allows students to immediately read and respond to other students posts.
- "*Participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum*" forces students to post at least once to a discussion forum before they will be able to see other students posts. Enabling this setting can be helpful if you find that your students posts are unoriginal and copied off one another.

Grade

- "*No Grading in Forum*" means that no column is generated in the Grade Center for this discussion, and it cannot be graded in myCourses.
- "*Grade Discussion Forum: Points possible*:" enables grading for this forum and allows you to enter the maximum points a student could earn for completing this forum activity.
- "*Grade Threads*" allows you to grade individual original posts a student makes as opposed to providing a single grade covering all posts they make.

Subscribe

- "*Do not allow subscriptions*" is selected by default. This setting disables the ability to receive email updates when new threads are posted to a forum.
- "*Allow members to subscribe to threads*" will make a "Subscribe" button appear next to students posts which, when clicked, triggers emails to their Zimbra whenever someone responds to their post.
- "*Allow members to subscribe to forum*" adds a "Subscribe" button to the top of the discussion forum. When an instructor or student clicks the subscribe button they will receive an email every time a thread is posted to that discussion forum.
  - "*Include body of post*" will include the actual text of the new post within the email.
  - "*Include link to post*" will only provide a link to the post on the discussion, not the actual text of the post.

Create and Edit

- "*Allow Anonymous Posts*" will show "Anonymous" as the author of every discussion post instead of students names.
- "*Allow Author to Delete Own Posts*" allows students to delete their own posts after submitting them.
  - "*All Posts*" allows students to delete a thread they have made <u>even if other people have responded to them</u>.

- o "*Only Posts with no replies*" prevents students from deleting their post in the event that someone else has replied to them.
- "*Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts*" provides students with an "Edit" button which allows them to edit a thread after they have posted it.
- "*Allow Members to Create New Threads*" removes the "Create Thread" button from the discussion forum which prevents students from creating new threads.
- "*Allow File Attachments*" allows students to attach a file to their discussion thread. (word doc, PowerPoint, etc.)
- "*Allow Users to Reply with Quote*" gives students the option to include the original posters thread text quoted above their response. This setting is default OFF and we typically recommend leaving it OFF.
- "*Force Moderation of Posts*" requires each post to be approved by the instructor (or designated student moderator) before it appears on the forum for the entire class to see.

Additional Options

- "*Allow Post Tagging*" allows student to "tag" discussion posts with metadata. This feature is useful if a forum is extremely dense with several (hundreds) of posts that need to be searched.
- "*Allow Members to Rate Posts*" provides students with a five star rating option on each other students posts.

Step 5:
Once you have pressed "Submit" to save your discussion settings you'll now need to press "Next" on the "Create Link: Discussion Board" page. The system has automatically highlighted the new forum you just created - pressing next brings you to the last required step of adding the forum to your content area.

Step 6:

On the final "Create Link" page the name of your discussion forum is automatically filled in to the "Link Name" field. There is also large "Text" box located beneath the "Link Name" box where you can text that appears in your content area beneath the title of the forum. If you do not enter anything in this box your students will only see the directions once they press the "Create Thread" button within the forum. Typically we recommend adding the same directions here or a shortened version to provide some direction for students to follow to see the full directions.

Step 7:

Once you press submit your discussion will now be visible in your content area. Navigate back out to the "Discussion Forums" area on the course menu to move on to the next part of this training.

Conclusion

We hope this guide was helpful.

For additional information or support contact the Instructional Development team by phone at 508-999-8501 or by email at myCoursesHelp@umassd.edu.