Forums for Class Discussions

Forums are a discussion tool that allows instructors and students to post and reply to each other’s saved messages within their LATTE course. Through email subscription, students can also receive emails containing content posted to the discussion forums of their LATTE courses.

Step-by-step guide

To create a forum within your LATTE course:

1. Click on the “Turn editing on” button on the upper right-hand side of your course homepage or the link in the Administration block under “Course Utilities”.

2. Click the “Add an activity or resource” link in the week/topic area of your course outline where you want to add the forum.

3. From the menu that appears, choose “Forum” and then the “Add” button at the bottom of the menu.
4. You will be directed to a page, where you will be required to enter the title of the forum in the **Forum name** box and a description on how you want students to use the forum.

5. Select the type of forum from the **Forum Type** menu.
5. **Single simple discussion**: Used for a single topic; all posts contained on one page
6. **Standard forum for general use**: An open forum where instructors and students can start a new topic
7. **Each person posts one discussion**: A forum where each person can create one new discussion topic
8. **Q and A forum**: A forum requiring students to post before being able to view other posts

6. Select the settings for this forum, including email subscription options and ratings. (Further information on subscription options below.)
7. Click on either of the “Save” buttons at the bottom of the page.

### Starting a discussion in a Forum

1. Click on the “Add a new discussion topic” button in the forum you created.

### Forum Example

This is an example of a Forum.

### From the Moodle help pages

This activity can be the most important - it is here that most discussion takes place. Forums can be structured in different ways, and can include peer rating of each posting. The postings can be viewed in a variety for formats, and can include attachments. By subscribing to a forum, participants will receive copies of each new posting in their email. A teacher can impose subscription on everyone if they want to.

(There are no discussion topics yet in this forum)

2. Enter the topic discussion in the **Subject** box.
3. Compose your message in the **Message** box.
4. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the “Post to Forum” button.
5. Click “Continue”.

### Tracking Read and Unread Forum Posts

“Read tracking” for a forum allows users to track read and unread posts to the forum. This setting can be accessed by clicking the “Edit settings” link under the Administration block in a forum, which will show the Editing Forum page. Scroll down to the “Subscription and Tracking” section and select it.
This will show the "Read Tracking" options: optional, off, and forced.

- **Optional** (default): Students may choose to turn tracking on or off at their own discretion.
- **On**: Tracking is always on in the forum for all participants.
- **Off**: Tracking is always off in the forum for all participants.

**Subscription Options**

The instructor has options for subscribing students to each forum. In the forum, under the Administration block on the left, the instructor may change the subscription option for students, by clicking on the "Subscription mode" link.
Doing so will display a drop-down menu, from which the instructor may choose from the following options by clicking on the respective link.

- **Optional subscription** allows the participants to choose whether he/she will subscribe to the forum after posting.
- **Forced subscription** makes everyone in the course subscribed, and they cannot unsubscribe.
- **Auto subscription** subscribes everyone in the course to the forum initially but can unsubscribe themselves any time.
- **Subscription disabled** does not allow anyone to subscribe to the forum.

**Default Forums in LATTE:**

When a LATTE course is created, it comes set up with two default forums:

1) **Course News & Announcements**

- Located in the first section of the course outline.
- Only the Instructor(s), Teaching Assistant(s), and Course Assistant(s) can post to this forum.
- Set by default to force students to subscribe by email; instructors can change the subscription options.
- Posts to this forum will also appear in the Latest news block if the block is added by the instructor.
- Instructors can hide this forum from students if they do not wish to use it for their course.

2) **Introduce Yourself**

- Located in the first weekly or topic section of the course outline.
For a demonstration on how to set up forums, please see here.

For more details on communicating using the Course News Forum, please watch this screencast on updating students using the forum on Lynda.

Note: When composing long forum posts, it is best to write the post in a word processing program of some kind (e.g. WordPad or TextEdit) rather than directly in the LATTE window. This allows you to access better spelling and grammar check tools, to save partially completed documents, and to avoid losing forum posts due to system time outs, power outages, etc. However, MS Word should not be used, as it brings it's own formatting code into LATTE. For more information on this topic, click here.

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