GETTING STARTED WITH COURSELINK SERIES

Discussions

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

While we are coming together today in a virtual space, it is important to recognize the physical space that connects us and brings us together. The University of Guelph and its campuses are situated on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We understand that these lands are connected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum and continue to be home to diverse communities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. By acknowledging the land, we reaffirm our commitment to decolonization and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and our responsibility to the land on which we live, learn, and play.
AGENDA

• Why Discussions?
• Common Types
• The Basics
  – Discussion creation (open & group-restricted)
  – Topic availability
  – Monitoring discussions
  – Assessment options (rubrics, grade items)
• Question & Answer Period
WHY DISCUSSIONS?

• Discussions are a useful tool in CourseLink to encourage asynchronous interaction between students as well as students and the instructional team
• Can be adapted for many purposes (asking questions, debating topics, etc.)
COMMON TYPES
COMMON TYPES

• **Weekly Discussion**
  – Students create original posts in response to weekly course materials
  – Students reply to peers

• **Thematic Discussion**
  – Students create and reply to posts grouped according to specific course themes or topics

• **Assessed Discussion**
  – Students are evaluated on the quality and/or quantity of their posts and responses
ADDITIONAL TYPES TO BOOST ENGAGEMENT

• Create an Ask Your Instructor Topic
  – Students can ask questions AND find answers
  – Popular questions/answers can be pinned by instructors
  – Enable anonymous posts for students to increase activity

• Create an Informal Discussion Area (Coffee Shop)
  – Popular in OpenEd’s DE courses
  – Allows students to discuss non-course related activities
  – Learn how to use the tool

• Add New Topics During the Semester (Current Events)
  – Connect course content with current events
  – Ask related open-ended questions in the description
  – Continue the discussion in-class
DISCUSSION CREATION
DISCUSSION STRUCTURE

- All discussions in CourseLink have the same basic structure
- **Forum**: Creates categories for discussions, helps to keep Discussions organized
- **Topic**: Space where the actual discussion will take place
- **Thread**: Start of a new idea or question
- **Reply**: Responses to a thread

**Note**: An Instructor (or TA) **must** create the Forum and Topic for students to be able to participate
## Discussion Structure

### Demo Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Threads</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Last Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demo Open Topic</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open topic, everyone can access this topic and all its contents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Threads</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Last Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demo Group Topic</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group or section topic, everyone can access this topic but students only see threads from their own group or section.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDING TOPICS

New Topic Details

Forum *

Demo Forum [New Forum]

Topic Type

- Open topic, everyone can access this topic and its contents
- Group or section topic, everyone can access this topic but students only see threads from their own group or section

Title *

Description

OpenEd
OPEN LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT
**TOPIC TYPES**

Two topic types exist in CourseLink

- **Open topic**
  - All students can see all posts and respond to them
  - Common uses:
    - FAQ topics
    - Smaller class sizes

- **Group/section topic**
  - Everyone has access, but students only see the posts from students in the same group, instructors/TAs see everything
  - Common uses:
    - Assessed discussions in larger classes to break down into more manageable sized groups
DEMO

- Create a new forum
  - Add one open topic
  - Add one group-restricted topic
FORUM & TOPIC AVAILABILITY OPTIONS
**TOPIC RESTRICTIONS - AVAILABILITY**

- **Visible with access restricted**
  - Students can see the topic but cannot access it

- **Visible with submission restricted**
  - Students can see the topic, access to view any previous submissions, but cannot create new submissions

- **Hidden**
  - Topic does not appear to students
FORUM AND TOPIC AVAILABILITY: COMMON USE 1

End Date

• Lock a topic after a specific date and time (due date)
  – Enable “Has End Date” and set a date/time
  – Select “Visible with submission restricted after end”
  – As of that date/time no new posts can be added
  – Students can still view what was posted/see rubrics

No “New Thread” Button
Forum and Topic Availability: Common Use 2

Start Date
- Hide a topic / keep activity “secret” until it begins
  - Enable “Has Start Date” and set a date/time
  - Select:
    - “Hidden before start” (hide it entirely)
    - “Visible with access restricted” (hide description)

Topic not visible to students

Topic title visible to students, but no description until date
MONITORING DISCUSSIONS
MONITORING DISCUSSIONS

- Keeping an eye on the discussions can be challenging, particularly for larger courses
- Develop a plan for regular engagement and presence within the Discussion tool
- Setting clear expectations for students around posting up front
- Discourage unwanted behaviours
  - If consistent across class, consider a public post
  - If individual student, have conversation privately (e.g., email)
DISCUSSION STATISTICS

- Provide insight into student engagement with the topic
- Includes:
  - Overall statistics
  - User statistics
- Access through topic context menu
  - View Topic Statistics
## Discussion Topic Statistics

### User Statistics

**View By:** User  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name, First Name</th>
<th>Number of Posts</th>
<th>Post Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Threads</td>
<td>Replies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 01, CourseLink</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 02, CourseLink</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 03, CourseLink</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 04, CourseLink</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DELETING A DISCUSSION POST

• There could be an instance were removing a student’s post is necessary
  – E.g., language, tone, etc.
• Instructors and TAs can delete posts from a discussion topic
• Caution should be taken as removing a post also removes any replies
• Students can delete a post as long as another student has not already replied
ASSESSMENT OF DISCUSSIONS

- Two main methods for assessment
  - Assessment with a rubric
  - Assessment of individual posts
- Access assessment panel by selecting **Assess Topic** from topic menu
- To enter assessment for a specific student, select **Topic Score**
- Assessment recommendations
  - While grading, save completed evaluations in draft form
  - Use **Publish All Feedback** to release evaluation to all students at the same time
ASSESSMENT OF GROUP TOPICS

- Default option for **View By** is Users
- Can change to **Groups** to sort by group membership
- Helpful for dividing grading assignments equally between TAs
  - E.g., TA 1 has groups 1 & 2, TA 2 has groups 3 & 4, etc.
ASSESSMENT WITH A RUBRIC

- **Overall Grade** is auto-populated based on rubric selections.
ALLOW ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL POSTS

- Overall Grade is auto-populated based on scores of individual posts.
DEMO

Example #1:
• Link a discussion topic to a new grade item
• Add a rubric to a discussion topic
• Assess topic

Example #2:
• Link a discussion topic to an existing grade item
• Assess individual posts
SUPPORT OPTIONS
DISCUSSIONS TOOL SUPPORT

CourseLink Support can provide timely assistance for how-to questions about the Discussions tool.

CourseLink Support
Email: courselink@uoguelph.ca
Phone: X. 56939
Hours:
Mon-Fri. 8:30 AM-8:30 PM, Sat. 10 AM–4 PM, Sun. 12–6 PM

CourseLink Support also has a resource page for Discussions:
https://support.opened.uoguelph.ca/instructors/courselink/tools/content/grades
ITS ASSISTANCE & DISCUSSIONS SESSIONS

If you are looking to make significant adjustments to your current discussions or starting from scratch, the ITS team offers consultations.

Contact the Instructional Technology Specialist (ITS) Team
- Email: insttech@uoguelph.ca
- Consultation Request Form: https://uoguelph.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_03zMVhZjuVsXL5H

Previous Discussions Tool Sessions (Recorded):
- Next Level Discussion Options
  https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/rethink-your-assessments-for-remote-environments-with-ed-tech#Discussion
  - Includes more information on using rating systems and bonus grades
- CourseLink Discussions Tool (Online Assessments with EdTech)
  https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/winter-2022-programming#Discussions
  - Includes more information on performing assessments in Discussions
QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD